

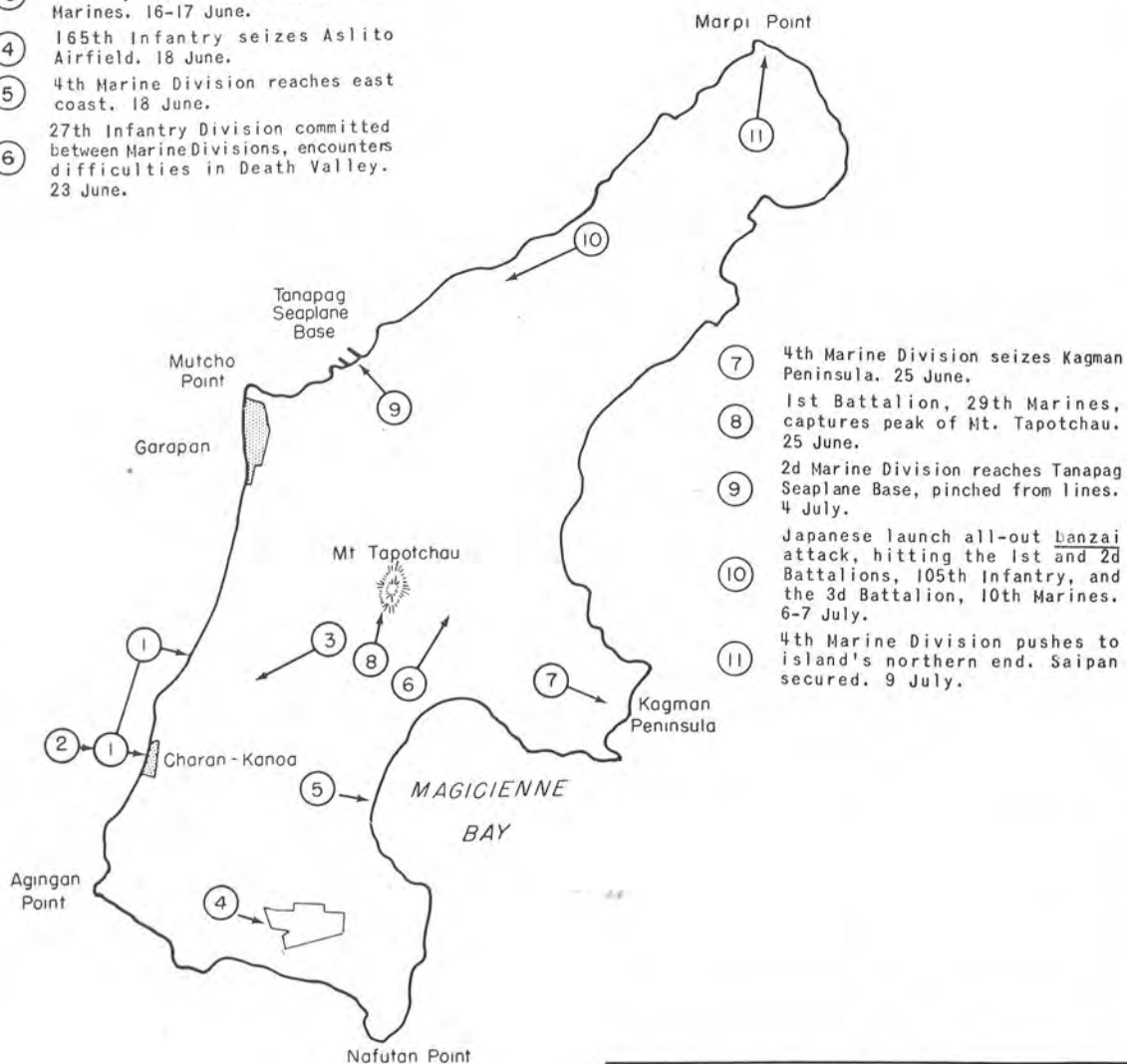
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SAIPAN

- ① 2d and 4th Marine Divisions land. 15 June.
- ② 27th Infantry Division (Corps reserve) lands; 165th Infantry on night 16-17 June, 105th Infantry on 17 June, 106th Infantry on 20 June.
- ③ Japanese launch night tank-infantry counterattack against 6th Marines. 16-17 June.
- ④ 165th Infantry seizes Aslito Airfield. 18 June.
- ⑤ 4th Marine Division reaches east coast. 18 June.
- ⑥ 27th Infantry Division committed between Marine Divisions, encounters difficulties in Death Valley. 23 June.



- ⑦ 4th Marine Division seizes Kagman Peninsula. 25 June.
- ⑧ 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, captures peak of Mt. Tapotchau. 25 June.
- ⑨ 2d Marine Division reaches Tanapag Seaplane Base, pinched from lines. 4 July.
- ⑩ Japanese launch all-out banzai attack, hitting the 1st and 2d Battalions, 105th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines. 6-7 July.
- ⑪ 4th Marine Division pushes to island's northern end. Saipan secured. 9 July.

PRINCIPAL GROUND EVENTS BATTLE OF SAIPAN

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U.S. Marine Corps.

SAIPAN:

THE BEGINNING OF THE END



Major Carl W. Hoffman, USMC

HISTORICAL DIVISION

HEADQUARTERS

U. S. MARINE CORPS

1950

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The Defense of Wake
The Battle for Tarawa
Marines at Midway
Bougainville and the Northern
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The Assault on Peleliu
Saipan: The Beginning of the End

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THE COVER OF THIS NARRATIVE shows Marines pitching grenades at an entrenched foe. One grenade is in the air, another is smoking and ready to go.



Foreword

SAIPAN was one of the key operations in the Pacific War; key because it unlocked vast potentialities to the United States in projecting its might against the Japanese homeland; key because it opened the door of distance which had meant security to the Empire.

Invasion of Saipan provided the supreme challenge in which the enemy was forced to select one of two alternatives: conserve his naval resources for a later decision, leaving uncontested this penetration of his inner defense; or lash out in a vicious, showdown fight. The fact that he chose the latter course, and suffered a resounding defeat, is now history.

The conquest of Saipan was, among Pacific operations up to that time, the most clear-cut decisive triumph of combined arms of the United States over the Japanese. By June 1944, U. S. forces, long superior in quality of personnel and organization, were finally greatly superior in matériel with which to fight. Victory at Saipan made this apparent to all.

C. B. CATES

GENERAL, U. S. MARINE CORPS,
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS.



Preface

SAIPAN is the sixth in a series of operational monographs being prepared by the Historical Division, Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, to present for the military student, as well as the casual reader, a factually accurate narrative of the Marine Corps' World War II operations. When these individual narratives are completed and arranged in chronological order, they will be integrated into a single operational history of the Marine Corps in World War II.

Grateful acknowledgement is made for the valuable information furnished by the scores of officers consulted by interview or letter and for the assistance provided by the Historical Division, U. S. Navy; the Office of Naval Records and Library; the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army; and the Marine member of the Historical Section, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Maps and sketches were prepared by the Reproduction Department, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia. All photographs are official Marine Corps, Navy or Army.

CLAYTON C. JEROME
BRIGADIER GENERAL, U. S. MARINE CORPS,
DIRECTOR OF MARINE CORPS HISTORY.



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SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

CHAPTER I

Plans and Preparations

STRATEGIC SITUATION

DURING the first months of 1944, determined thrusts by the Allies were cracking Japanese defenses throughout the Pacific. On land, Japan's hold on Burma was being systematically whittled down; at sea, the United States Fleet was spreading destruction far and wide in preparation for new strategic moves. Submarines were littering the bottom of the Pacific with the wrecks of a large part of Japan's merchant fleet. Frequent and shattering attacks from shore and carrier-based aircraft were tormenting the Japanese from many quarters.

In February 1944 the seizure of Kwajalein, Majuro and Eniwetok in the Marshalls and Task Force 58's strikes against Truk Atoll (16-17 February) and the Marianas (22 February) had profoundly affected the strategic situation in the Pacific Ocean Areas. Seizure of bases in the Marshalls afforded protected, forward-area anchorages for the entire fleet and for the assembly of large amphibious forces, together with sufficient land area for airstrips suited to all types of aircraft.

Strikes on Truk had rendered that important enemy base temporarily useless, had revealed its relative weakness and, coupled with the Marshalls' invasion, made the Japanese Navy realize that its southeastern Pacific bases were untenable. The withdrawal of Japanese naval aviation from Rabaul, a process begun in 1944, was hastened by the Truk raids. The United

States "leapfrog" strategy was following a consistently effective pattern.¹

The carrier strike on the Marianas, following immediately that on Truk, was conceived as a continuation of pressure which would keep the Japanese off balance in their dispositions and planning. Certainly, a major objective of this particular strike was the desire to gain aerial photographic coverage of the island. The United States had never had complete coverage of the Japanese Marianas and had taken no photographs of Guam since that island's early-war capture by the enemy.

Strategically, however, the Marianas strike had the effect of displaying the capabilities of fast carrier task forces in long-range operations and emphasizing to the Japanese that their inner defense line was now seriously threatened. The stage was set for the next major operation in the Central Pacific, by which United States forces proposed to establish themselves firmly in the inner perimeter of Japan's defense. This offensive was to be against the Marianas Islands.

Another carrier raid, one against the Western Carolines (30 March-1 April), though not

¹ The basic concept of the "leapfrog" strategy was to seize those islands essential for our use, bypassing many strongly held intervening ones which were not necessary for our purpose. The disparity between our naval power and that of the enemy made it virtually impossible for the Japanese to support the garrisons of bypassed islands, and these bases became innocuous. (Though considerable effort was required to keep them that way.)

influencing selection of the Marianas as an objective or the time of the operation's execution, exerted a vital, direct impact on the entire strategic picture.²

The Marianas form a vital link in an almost unbroken chain of islands extending 1,350 miles southward from Tokyo. Many of these islands are small, rocky, and valueless from a military viewpoint, but others are so located as to provide a series of mutually supporting airfields and bases, like so many stepping stones, affording protected lines of air and sea communications from the home islands of the Japanese Empire to their island fortresses. Capture of the Marianas by United States forces would effectively cut these admirably-protected lines of enemy communication and provide bases from which we could not only control sea areas farther west in the Pacific, but also on which we could base long-range aircraft to bomb Tokyo and the home islands of the Empire.³

Of the 15 islands which comprise the group, only Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and Guam—all in the southern Marianas (150° East longitude, 15° North latitude)—were worthwhile military objectives. The group's northern islands protrude in precipitous, conical peaks from the surrounding seas. Anatahan, for example, is only a fraction the size of Saipan, yet rises over a thousand feet higher. (See Map 1.)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

When Magellan discovered the islands in 1521, he was impressed by the sailing ability of the native boys and named the group "Islas de las Velas Latinas" (Islands of the Lateen Sails); but his officers, angered by the natives' thieving habits, called them "Islas de los Ladrones" (Islands of Thieves). The latter name stuck until Queen Maria Anna, second wife of Philip IV of Spain, sent missionaries and soldiers there and, thus, gave the group the name Marianas.

² USSBS, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 204, hereinafter cited as *Campaigns*. The War Reports, Admiral King's Report, 586, hereinafter cited as *King*. Ltr from Adm R. K. Turner to CMC, 4Jan50, hereinafter cited as *Turner*.

³ *King*, 589

The native Marianas' islanders, the Chamorros, were of small stature, brown-skinned with scanty beards, and had the slanted eyes of the Malay. Through the years, however, the appearance changed; the present Chamorros are ethnically-mixed descendants of the Spanish, Mexican, and Philippine soldiery who garrisoned the islands. The natives' language was permanently influenced by the Spanish domination.

The Marianas remained under Spanish control until 1898. The American cruiser *Charleston* entered the harbor of Guam early in the Spanish-American War, accepted the island's surrender, and, thus, provided the United States with a much-needed coaling station for ships en route to the Philippines. After the war, Guam was retained by the United States. In 1899, Spain sold all the other islands of the Marianas and Carolines to Germany for four and a half million dollars. In contrast to the Spanish regime, which emphasized missionary work, the German administration was directed toward economic development.

Shortly after the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Japan seized Germany's Pacific dominions. The League of Nations recognized the seizure and in 1920 mandated the Marianas, with the exception of Guam, to Japan.

Japan set about the settlement and development of these islands in a vigorous fashion. Until 1935, she regularly prepared an annual report for submission at Geneva, in accordance with the terms of the mandate; but after 1935, when she withdrew from the League of Nations, she ceased her reports and let it be known she would not tolerate any challenge to her sovereignty in this part of the Pacific. Between 1936 and the outbreak of the Pacific War, the territory was very jealously guarded against visits by Europeans. It was generally known, however, that by 1938 the Japanese immigrant settlers outnumbered the natives and that, in defiance of the terms of the mandate, Japan was planning powerful naval and air bases throughout the archipelago. Few of their extensive plans reached fruition, however. Japan had long desired possession of Guam, and one of her first moves after the outbreak of war was to seize that island.⁴

SAIPAN

Saipan, situated some 1,250 nautical miles south by east of Tokyo, was closer to the Japanese Empire than any other large Mandated Island. (See Map 2.) Together with the neighboring island of Tinian (three nautical miles to the southwest), it formed the key point of the Marianas defense and was an important supply base and communication center for the Central Pacific. Tanapag Harbor, on Saipan's west coast, was used as a fueling and supply station for ships en route to and from the Empire. A part of the naval task force for the ill-fated attack on Midway was assembled there in May 1942. Surface patrols for the Marianas shipping routes were based in the harbor.

Two airfields and a seaplane base at Saipan and two airfields on Tinian served as stopover and refueling stations for the aircraft ferry route between Japan and the south. In addition, a large portion of the planes providing air cover for the Marianas were based on the Saipan-Tinian fields.

Though used extensively as a rest and replacement center and as a training area for troops, Saipan lacked the natural facilities of a major naval base. Only a few vessels could find suitable anchorages at Tanapag Harbor.

Irregularly shaped and with its long axis running generally north and south, the island of Saipan is approximately $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles wide. Its area is roughly 72 square miles. The east coast of the island is free of coral reefs, except within the limits of Magicienne Bay; the west coast, on the other hand, is almost completely fringed by reefs which extend in width from one-fourth to two miles from the shoreline. Generally, the northern and eastern coasts are clearly defined by cliffs along the shoreline (except in Magicienne Bay and two small areas on Kagman Peninsula's northeastern side); the western coast is lower-lying and offers relatively few natural obstacles to movement inland.⁵

⁵ G-2 Study of the Southern Marianas, V Amphibious Corps, 21, hereinafter cited as *G-2 Study*. JICPOA Information Bulletin 7-44, 50.



⁴ The foregoing account of the historical background is a synthesis of the following sources: *Pacific Islands Under Japanese Mandate*, Tadao Yanaihara, 8-28; *The Pacific Islands Handbook, 1944*, R. W. Robson, 150-151; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. XVII, 4-5; *JICPOA Information Bulletin 7-44*, "Marianas," 5; Smithsonian Institution War Background Studies Number Sixteen, *Peoples of the Western Pacific, Micronesia and Melanesia*, Herbert W. Krieger, 35.



ASLITO AIRFIELD as seen from the air. Mt. Tapotchau is visible in the background. Magicienne Bay juts from the right of picture. Black smoke at upper left is coming from the Garapan-Tanapag Harbor area.

Almost in the center of Saipan, Mount Tapotchau humps its back against the sky to a height of 1,554 feet. It seems higher, so steep are its sides. This mountain, by all odds the island's key terrain feature, afforded the Japanese excellent observation of the beachhead for 10 days after the landing.

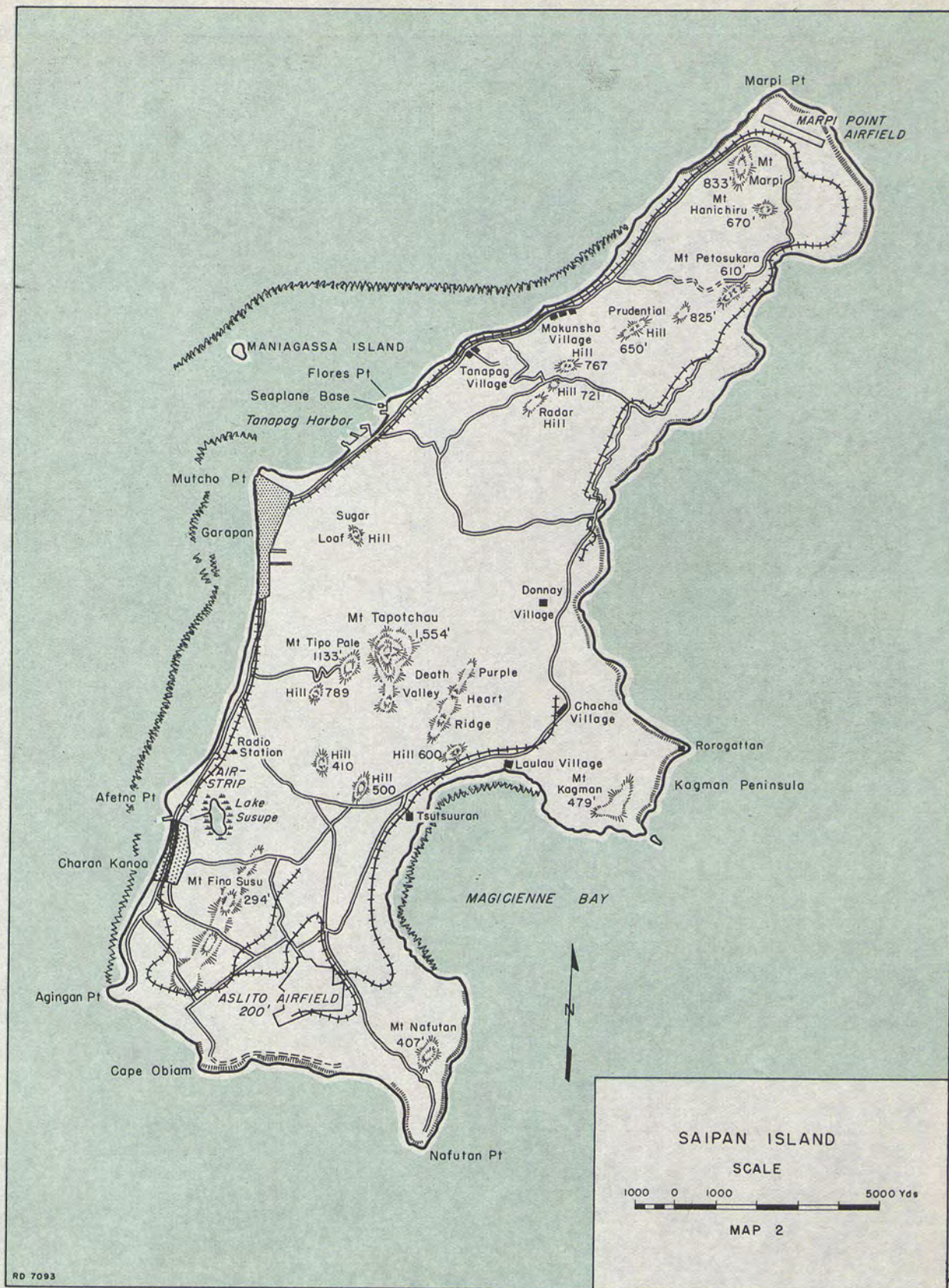
Much of the eastern and northern part of the island is a series of hills and rolling plateaus which tilt sharply down to narrow coastal flats or end abruptly in high cliffs that drop sheer to the sea. The southern and western areas, however, are much flatter, and the land levels off into a coastal plain.

On the southern flatlands, at a point about one mile from the south coast, the Japanese built Aslito Airfield. Its main runway, on an

east-west axis, was 3,600 feet long and 900 feet wide. A second, shorter runway, in the form of an arm, protruded southwestward from the main strip. The field was hard-surfaced with crushed coral rock.⁶

Just north of Charan Kanoa and but a short distance inland, the Japanese had half completed a small fighter strip, then abandoned

⁶Unlike other Japanese airfields, Aslito had no provision for turning circles, but wide runways afforded sufficient space for this function. Jutting to the north from the center of the main runway was the larger of two service aprons. This apron, 900 feet long and 600 feet wide, gave access to the three main hangars. About 250 yards to the east, a secondary apron (900 feet by 165 feet) fronted two small hangars.





MARPI POINT AIRFIELD, at Saipan's northern end, was under construction at the time of United States landings.

the project. This strip ran north and south, perpendicular to the prevailing east-west wind. Since such an arrangement is highly undesirable from a pilot's point of view, it is odd that the work was ever begun. This strip was not unique, however, inasmuch as other Japanese airfields, on other islands, were similarly positioned.

At Saipan's extreme northern end, amidst a maze of rocky hills and depressions, there exists a plateau of sufficient size for the construction of an airfield. Here the Japanese were building the Marpi Point Airfield when United States landings interrupted their plans. The shortage of construction equipment, a factor that had hampered work all over the island, slowed progress on this field to snail's pace.

The coastal plain along the western shore contains most of the settlements of Saipan, including the two largest: Garapan and Charan Kanoa. In these two towns were some well-constructed buildings, most of which were made of wood and tile, although, in some of the better structures, masonry was used. A narrow-gauge railroad ran around most of Saipan's coastal areas.

Just inland and behind the town of Charan Kanoa is Lake Susupe, fed principally during the rainy season and becoming very shallow during dry periods. Surrounding the lake is a large swamp, which presented a major obstacle to movement through the area. There are no rivers on Saipan, but two springs exist near Tanapag, on the west coast, and others near



GARAPAN, neat and trim here, was reduced to rubble by United States bombardment. Picture is of northern part of town.

the village of Donnay, on the east coast.⁷

The climate on Saipan is characterized by two seasons, the dry winter monsoon that begins in November and lasts through March, and the wet summer monsoon that starts in April and ends in late October or early November. These two seasons' temperatures show little variance, but all other phenomena have marked differences.

During the winter monsoon there is a great deal of fair weather, broken occasionally by storms of short duration, but the summer monsoon brings thunder-showers and the threat of typhoons.⁸ An average of one typhoon yearly originates in the area (August or September), but in June and July the local weather is subject to the influence of typhoons originating within 500 miles. Even though Saipan may escape the storm's direct path, these "near misses" often take on the proportions of a considerable gale. The corrugated tin roofs on the

native abodes are sometimes flung recklessly about the island by the winds, providing a threat to life and limb.

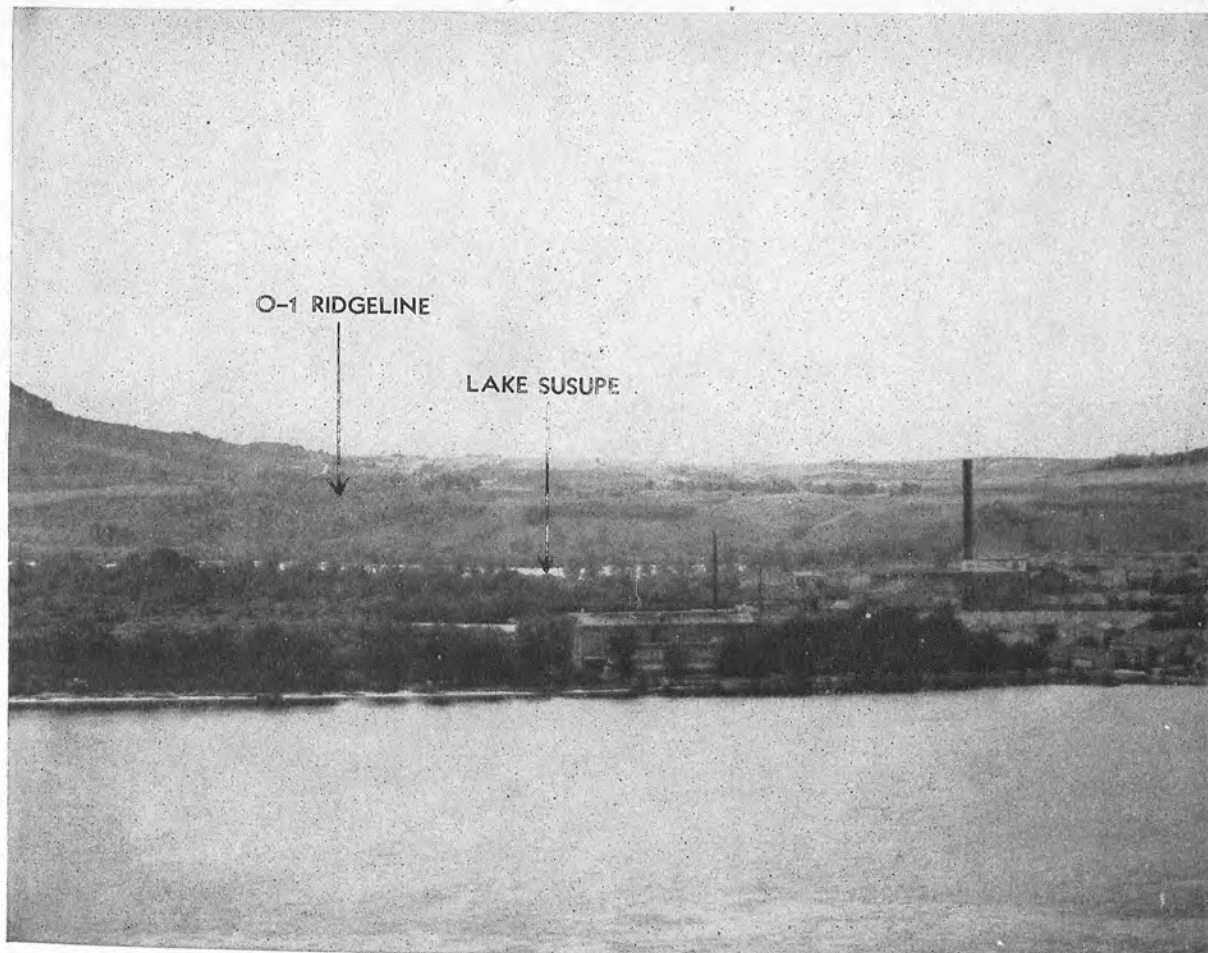
Annual rainfall at Saipan averages between 120 to 125 inches.⁹ From November to June, Saipan's monthly rainfall averages from two and one-half to six inches, but from July to October, frequent downpours increase the average to a foot per month. Due to the regularity of its precipitation (275 days per year are rainy),¹⁰ Saipan depended largely on rain water, collected in tanks placed under the eaves of buildings, for its domestic water supply. A few wells existed on the island, but these—and the

⁹ This is double the amount that annually falls on New Orleans, our wettest city; is triple that of New York City, Washington, D. C. and Philadelphia; five times that of Omaha; six times that of San Francisco; and dwarfs the fall at Yuma, Arizona by 33 times. Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, World Weather Records, Vol. XC, 316-356, hereinafter cited as *World Weather Records*.

¹⁰ Though this seems like considerable rain, Saipan gets the least of any island in the region (Carolines, Marianas, Palaus). *Sailing Directions for the Pacific Island*, Vol. I, 566.

⁷ Northern Troops and Landing Force, G-2 Report, 74, hereinafter cited as *NTLF G-2 Report. G-2 Study*, 23.

⁸ JICPOA Information Bulletin 7-44, 51-52.



CHARAN KANOA BEFORE the blow fell. 2d Eattalion, 8th Marines, after landing north (left) of here, fought along the coast and seized beach area (Green 3) shown.

already-mentioned springs—furnished only a small portion of the population with water.¹¹

The average monthly temperature is relatively constant throughout the year, with 76° in January and February and 80° in June. In the United States, constancy of temperature similar to Saipan's is experienced only by the inhabitants of Key West, Florida. Saipan's hottest days are in June, when the thermometer occasionally climbs to 95°. February brings the coolest weather, with periodic drops to 61°. Relative humidity is high, averaging 78% in winter and 84% in summer.¹²

¹¹ G-2 Study, 27.

¹² JICPOA Information Bulletin 29-44, Weather Survey for Carolines and Marianas, 2-3. *World Weather Records*, 331.

Saipan's major industry (under Germany and Japan) was sugar production. The South Seas Development Company (Japanese) operated three large plantations and two sugar mills. Each mill had a capacity of 1,200 tons of sugar cane daily, from which 120 tons of crude sugar were produced. Several plants produced alcohol and liquors from the molasses by-product. Part of this was converted into synthetic Scotch whiskey, port wine, and four or five other beverage concoctions for Japanese consumption.¹³

Other than sugar cane, Saipan's agricultural

¹³ After D-Day this production stopped, but the flies did not. Making the most of the situation, these insects embarked on a veritable orgy of feasting and reproduction.



JAPANESE BOATS photographed off Charan Kanoa pier during Task Force 58's strikes of February 1944. 3d Battalion, 23d Marines, landed on beach shown (Blue 1) on D-Day.

products included tapioca, sweet potatoes, papayas, cotton, and vegetables. None of these was grown in sufficient quantity for export, however. In 1930, a little less than ten percent of the copra collected in the Mandated Islands came from Saipan. This commodity, together with sugar and alcohol, formed the chief items for export. A coffee plantation was established there in 1928, but results were not particularly gratifying.

Fishing was also an important industry. In 1936, nearly four and a half million pounds of bonito and tuna were caught in the Marianas group and shipped to Japan. This, plus small amounts of tobacco and tropical fruit, completed the list of secondary articles for export.

The Japanese on Saipan held most of the "white-collar" jobs in the towns, while the Chamorros, for the most part, were farmers, each possessing an average of 15 to 25 acres of land. Also included on the island, apparently as part of a Japanese colonization project, were

a large number of Koreans and Okinawans. The latter had been saturated with Japanese propaganda to the effect that they could expect only the cruelest handling from the Americans.¹⁴

JAPANESE DEFENSES

Saipan was dependent on Japan for imports of foodstuffs (mainly rice), manufactured articles, lumber, building materials, machinery, petroleum products, dry goods and drugs. With the advent of war, these imports became secondary to the more important items necessary for maintenance of the military establishment.

Apparently, however, the shipment of construction material so vitally needed for fortification work was not accorded an early enough priority. This was due, first, to the rapid pace of the United States thrust through the Gilberts and Marshalls and the bypassing of the Central Carolines, which left the Japanese little

¹⁴ JICPOA Information Bulletin 7-44, 58-60.



STORAGE VAULT for 120mm dual-purpose gun ammunition. Powerfully constructed positions such as this would have been more common at Saipan if Japanese had not been hampered by a shortage of cement and other materials.

time for shipment of these supplies; second, to the devastating effectiveness of United States submarine activity, which was exacting a heavy toll of enemy shipping intended for Saipan;¹⁵ and, third, to the incorrect assumption by the Japanese that the next United States objective would be the Palaus, causing them to assign a priority of construction material to those islands.

Time and time again, ships loaded with cement and steel (as well as personnel) had been sent from the Empire only to be sunk by American submarines. The effect of this is indicated in a Japanese document, dated 10 May 1944, entitled "Present State of Supplies and Materiel in the Southern Marianas:

The current freight shortage, which is caused by shipping losses, has deprived the area of much needed materiel. One ship out of three is sunk, and a second damaged, by enemy action.

It was this situation, largely, which caused the Japanese Chief of Staff, 31st Army, to com-

plain to the Chief of Staff, Central Pacific Fleet, that —

... we can not strengthen the fortifications appreciably now unless we can get materials suitable for permanent construction. Specifically, cement, barbed wire, lumber, etc., which can not be obtained in these islands. No matter how many soldiers there are, they can do nothing in regard to fortifications but sit around with their arms folded, and the situation is unbearable. I would like this matter of supply of construction materials dealt with immediately.¹⁶

That the Japanese defenses were incomplete at the time of our 15 June landings is partially explained by the fact that their defensive installation building plan called for completion about November 1944.¹⁷

Another indication that the Japanese time schedule was not adequately keyed to the situation is found in an enemy document, published on 20 May 1944 (less than a month before United States landings), entitled "Outline of Defensive Plan of Northern Marianas Force:"

The various units will so prepare their defensive strength, beginning with the immediate construction of defensive positions, that when they are fully developed they can destroy the enemy landing force on the beach. We will transform these islands into a fortress so that we can expect, absolutely, to hold our airfields. On account of this, *although it is tardy*, [author's italics] we will complete our field positions by the first ten days in June and thereafter we will rapidly construct permanent defensive positions in strategic places.

It is interesting to note that no specific mention was made of the construction of permanent defensive positions inland. The whole Japanese scheme of defense was committed to "destroying the enemy landing force on the beach."¹⁸

As indicated, the Japanese failed to exploit fully the defensive potentialities of Saipan. The island's natural features—including excellent observation, long fields of fire, natural obstacles that canalized movement, cover and concealment—made it nearly ideal from a defense viewpoint.

¹⁶ CINCPAC-CINCPA Item #9652.

¹⁷ NTLF G-2 Report, 6.

¹⁸ Task Force 56 (Expeditionary Troops), G-2 Report, hereinafter cited as *TF 56 G-2 Report*, 7.

¹⁵ Report on Japanese Defense Plan for the Island of Saipan, Southern Marianas, prepared by the Engineer, Expeditionary Troops (TF 56), July 1944, 1, hereinafter cited as *TF 56 Engineer's Report*.



OPEN TRENCHWORKS were employed extensively by the Japanese at Saipan, because they lacked adequate amounts of construction materiel.

JAPANESE ORGANIZATION

The Japanese organization on Saipan was extremely complicated; in some cases there were three possible nomenclatures for a single unit. Early in the war, Japanese army organizations were known as "expeditionary forces" and received numerical designations relating to the islands upon which they belonged; thus, the 1st Expeditionary Force was on Saipan, the 6th on Guam, etc. In May 1944, because of numerous inter-island transfers and the influx of reinforcements, the Japanese changed their system of nomenclature. Infantry personnel was organized into "independent infantry battalions" and numbered consecutively. The battalions then became part of "independent mixed brigades," to which were attached one or more

battalions of artillery and an engineering company or antiaircraft unit, or both. These brigades were, in turn, assigned numbers. In addition, there were numbered regiments, variously composed, to complicate the picture further.

The intricacies of this organization were either not explained or insufficiently explained to the individual Japanese soldiers, who habitually identified themselves by their original unit names. Certainly the mystery caused United States intelligence agencies more headaches than code names ever could. Thus, with their flair for making the simple difficult, the Japanese delayed United States identification of enemy units and establishment of an accurate order of battle.

American submarines further abetted the

confusion. Numerous ships were sunk in waters adjacent to Saipan with the result that many survivors and stragglers made their way to the island, arriving without records or equipment. In addition, a number of units intended for transfer to more remote stations were trapped on the island by our landings. The order of battle, as now reconstructed, is the result of a careful cross-check of operation orders and maps, quartermaster and mess hall records, tables of organization, field orders, casualty reports, and prisoner of war interrogations.

Saipan's forces were jointly commanded by Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo and Lieutenant General Yoshitsugu Saito. Admiral Nagumo, Commander Central Pacific Fleet and 5th Base Force, was an illustrious officer, having established his fame on 7 December 1941, as commander of forces afloat during the Pearl Harbor attack and, later, at Midway and Santa Cruz. His Central Pacific Fleet command was a newly-created administrative unit which, as a practical matter, never progressed beyond the paper stage.

The senior officer in the area, Lieutenant General Hideyoshi Obata, commanding general of the 31st Army and the Army administrative command for the Marianas-Bonins-Marshalls-Carolines, was at Palau on an inspection trip at the time of the United States landings. The actual command of Saipan's defense devolved, therefore, upon Lieutenant General Yoshitsugu Saito, commanding general of the Northern Marianas Army Group and the 43d Division (reinforced).

The two basic army fighting units were the 43d Division (reinforced) and the 47th Mixed Brigade. The former, directly under Saito's command, was composed of three infantry regiments (118th, 135th [less 1st Battalion], and 136th) and additional units to perform transportation, medical, ordnance and communication services. The 47th Mixed Brigade,¹⁹ commanded by Colonel Oka, was made up of three independent infantry battalions (316th, 317th and 318th), three battalions of artillery, and an engineer company.

¹⁹ This unit was the original Saipan garrison force and prior to the change of its name had been called "1st Expeditionary Force." In his order of 8 June

Also important to Saipan's defense but not part of the two major army units were a tank regiment, an infantry battalion, an antiaircraft regiment, two regiments of engineers, and two transportation companies.

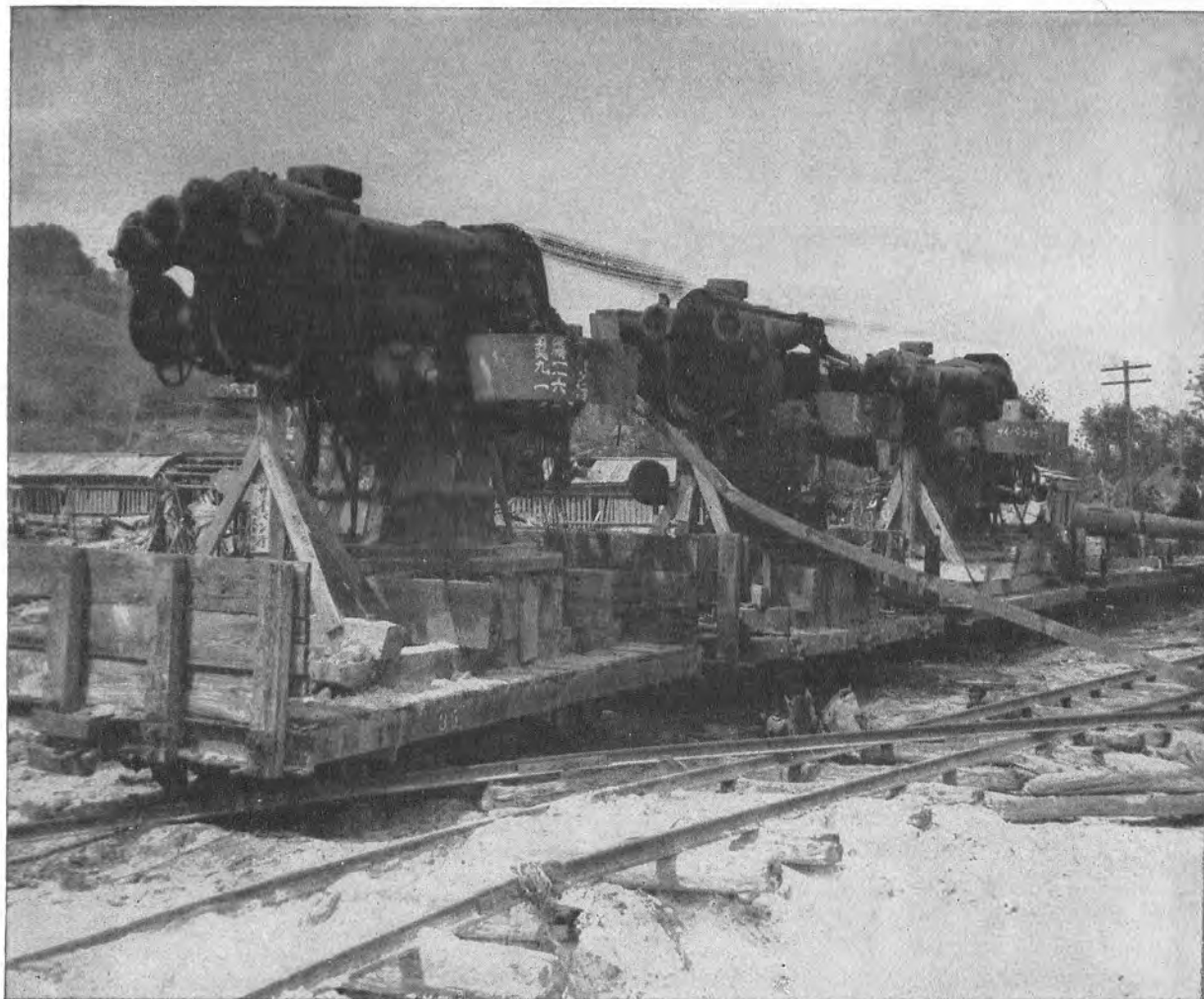
In addition to these regularly-assigned army units, there were numerous straggler units. In most cases, these were ill-equipped and poorly-organized and could not participate as efficient fighting organizations. But, certainly, in sniping and infiltrating roles, these units performed valuable service for the Japanese. Army forces on Saipan totalled 22,702.

The Japanese Navy was also well represented, the two principal fighting units being the 55th Naval Guard Force (Maizuru Keibitai) and the 1st Yokosuka Special Naval Landing Force. All naval units were commanded by the combined staff of the Central Pacific Fleet Headquarters and the 5th Special Base Force, both under Vice Admiral Nagumo. In addition to the two major naval forces, there were units to handle details of communication, construction, supply, transportation, pay and routine administration.

Most of the air personnel originally based in the Marianas had left those islands during May and early June to provide air support for the reinforcement of Biak Island, near New Guinea's north coast. Operational losses, as well as disease, claimed a large percentage of these personnel. During the second week in June, the survivors were ordered back to the Palaus and Marianas. Few, however, reached even the Palaus on the return trip, and, apparently, none ever got back to the Marianas. Small detachments of several air organizations remained at Saipan, indicating that the Japanese had planned to send planes back in time to contest a United States incursion.

Though the totals changed from day to day, the number of naval (including air) personnel

1944, LtGen Obata had ordered that the 47th Independent Mixed Brigade be transferred to Tinian and relieve the 50th Infantry Regiment of the task of defending that island. The 50th would then go to, and defend, Rota. The transfer was to commence about 15 June 1944, but United States landings on that date disrupted Obata's plans. CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #9645.



THESE JAPANESE 8-INCH GUNS, still loaded on flatcars, are but three of the scores of weapons unemplaced at the time of United States landings.

on the island on 15 June 1944 was approximately 6,960, bringing the total of Japanese military forces on Saipan to 29,662.²⁰

For the defense of Saipan, the Japanese divided the island into four defense sectors (as shown in Map 3): the northern sector included the northern third of the island to Tanapag; the Navy sector included Tanapag, Garapan and Mutchu Point; the central sector included the western beaches upon which the 2d Marine Division landed on D-Day; the southern sector, by far the largest, included all of the area,

²⁰ NTLF G-2 Report, 66-69 and App. J. For a detailed Order of Battle, with strengths of individual units, see Appendix VIII.

Charan Kanoa-Agingan Point-Aslito Airfield-Nafutan Point-Magicienne Bay-Kagman Peninsula. The unit assignments to sectors were:

Northern sector, 135th Infantry Regiment.

Navy sector, 5th Special Base Force (Navy unit).

Central sector, 136th Infantry Regiment (less two companies).

Southern sector, 47th Mixed Brigade.

In addition to those units assigned to specific sectors, a reserve of four infantry companies and two shipping companies was stationed in the Chacha-Tsutsuuran area with orders to "train principally in seaborne maneuvers." One mountain artillery regiment and

Marpi Point

A hand-drawn map of Sector 5. The map shows a road that curves from the bottom left towards the top right. A rectangular building is drawn on the road near the top right. An arrow points from the word "SECTOR" to the road. The number "5" is written in the bottom left corner.

A map of the area around Mt Tapotchau. The map shows a road with 'x' marks, a river, and a north arrow. Key locations marked include Donnay, Mt Tapotchau, 4 Inf Cos, 2 Shpg Cos, and Chacha. A legend indicates that a box symbol represents the 4th Infantry and 2nd Shpg Cos, and a dot symbol represents Chacha.

Gen Res

Lailau


Kagman Peninsula

9

Mt Tsutsuuran
FA
←
MAGICIENNE BAY
SOUTHERN

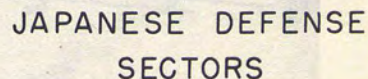
ASLITO
FIELD

SECTOR

 47

(3 Independent Inf Bns

Nafutan Point



MAP 3

one battalion of field artillery, stationed in the vicinity of Mt. Fina Susu, were designated as the "artillery defenses of Saipan." A tank regiment was located in the Chacha-Laulau area. Antiaircraft artillery employed the bulk of its strength to protect Aslito Airfield; a smaller force covered the air over Tanapag Harbor. Most of the service elements were located on the west coast in the Charan Kanoa-Garapan base area.²¹

By counterattacks, launched during the night from specified points, the Japanese hoped to "demolish the enemy landing units at the water's edge." These thrusts were to employ troops in the vicinity of the area to be counterattacked, plus reserves from other parts of the island if necessary. A plan was prepared in which assembly areas, firing positions, and directions of movement were shown for counterattacks on the most likely areas of United States penetration.

The same plan designated those areas considered strategically and tactically important. (See Map 4.) A peculiarity of this terrain evaluation is that Mr. Tapotchau did not fall into either category, although that feature certainly dominates most of the island.²²

Even the best informed Japanese commanders could not fully appreciate the great need for speed. By 14 June, however, Admiral Nagumo was forced to the conclusion that "the Marianas are the first line of defense of the homeland," and, "it is a certainty that the Americans will land in the Marianas Group either this month or next." The landing on Saipan took place the next day.

Large numbers of heavy weapons (ranging from 200mm mortars to 5-inch coastal defense guns) and literally dozens of searchlights and antiaircraft guns still remained in naval depots or loaded on railroad cars or still packed in cosmoline near partially excavated gun posi-

tions. The high ground in the island's center had received little attention in the defensive preparations; and, indeed, beach defenses themselves were in many cases far from complete.

In this small theater, so suitable for the employment of field artillery, the Japanese had neither horses nor adequate vehicles to provide necessary mobility for that arm. Apart from manpower, the only means for moving field guns were rear-drive trucks designed for use on roads, a factor which led to abandonment of a great number of artillery pieces as the Japanese withdrew.

In so far as training in defensive warfare is concerned, Japanese forces displayed a marked deficiency; there was little evidence of organization of the ground, the principal airfield (Aslito) was virtually undefended against ground troops, and their counterattack plans were poorly conceived.²³

Despite the apparent deficiencies of the defensive installations and plans, one vital characteristic of a good defense was present—the individual defender was determined to hold the island and was willing to give his life to realize this end. It was this characteristic which would present the greatest difficulty to our forces throughout the battle for Saipan.

HIGH-LEVEL PLANNING

Casablanca Conferences

As already indicated, the Japanese were

²³ TF 56 Engineer's Report, 1-2.



UNDAMAGED 75MM FIELD PIECE captured by the 27th Division. Lacking suitable prime-movers, the Japanese were forced to abandon many artillery pieces.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8-9. It will be noted that the 118th Infantry Regiment was not assigned a specific mission. This unit arrived during the first week in June and, therefore, was too late for the defense order. Its presence, however, afforded General Saito a sizeable reserve to use wherever he chose.

²² *Ibid.*, 8-9.



THE ENEMY, possessing fighting characteristics of which any nation could be proud, generally favored death to surrender. This superior private, among the 3 percent of Japanese soldiers taken prisoner, poses in an internment camp.

well aware of the Marianas' importance in the defense of their homeland. There was almost unanimous recognition that a United States attempt to move into the Marianas area would precipitate a struggle which could decide the war's outcome. Most Japanese felt that, given enough time, the outcome of such a battle would be favorable to themselves.

Some United States planners, notably Admiral Ernest J. King, attached the same importance to the Marianas and, likewise, predicted that an all-out naval engagement would be provoked. Many other top-echelon planners, however, were unconvinced of the necessity for seizing the Marianas. As will be seen, the selection of the Marianas as an objective was in no sense inevitable or obvious; the selection could more accurately be termed a development in the strategic situation. Because the development was an integral part of the strategic

planning for the entire Pacific, it will be necessary to discuss the over-all planning which took place.

Although the Joint United States Strategic Committee had begun preparation of a strategic plan for the defeat of Japan in August 1942, this was not completed by January 1943 when the Combined Chiefs of Staff²⁴ met at Casablanca. In fact, there was no final, approved plan in existence for the defeat of Japan at this time. Pre-war strategic plans, while helpful, could serve only as a general guide, since many of the assumed conditions and situations did not obtain. In the absence of a concrete, detailed, written study, Admiral King orally presented to the Combined Chiefs his analysis of the strategic picture. In it he indicated that Rabaul and the Philippines were major objectives, while Truk and the Marianas would constitute vitally important intermediate objectives. The latter islands King considered the "key," because they lay athwart the Japanese lines of communication in the Central Pacific.

From the January 1943 Casablanca conferences emerged a strategic outline, similar in many respects to prewar plans, which was to serve as a framework for later formal, written plans. That framework was this: a line of communications through the Central Pacific to the Philippines would be opened, following a route through the northwestern Marshalls and thence to Truk and the Marianas.²⁵

General Douglas MacArthur, Commander in Chief Southwest Pacific, disliked the Central Pacific route from the outset and made himself voluble on the subject on many occasions. In his Reno I (campaign plan for the Southwest Pacific area), published on 25 February 1943, MacArthur expressed the opinion that the Central Pacific route would be "time consuming and expensive in our naval power and

²⁴ These were the American and British Chiefs of Staff meeting together. It is pertinent to note that, in the war with the most amphibious characteristics of any in history, no senior United States Marine was included on the high planning level.

²⁵ CCS 56th Meeting, 14 Jan 43.

LEGEND



Expected points of U.S. landings.



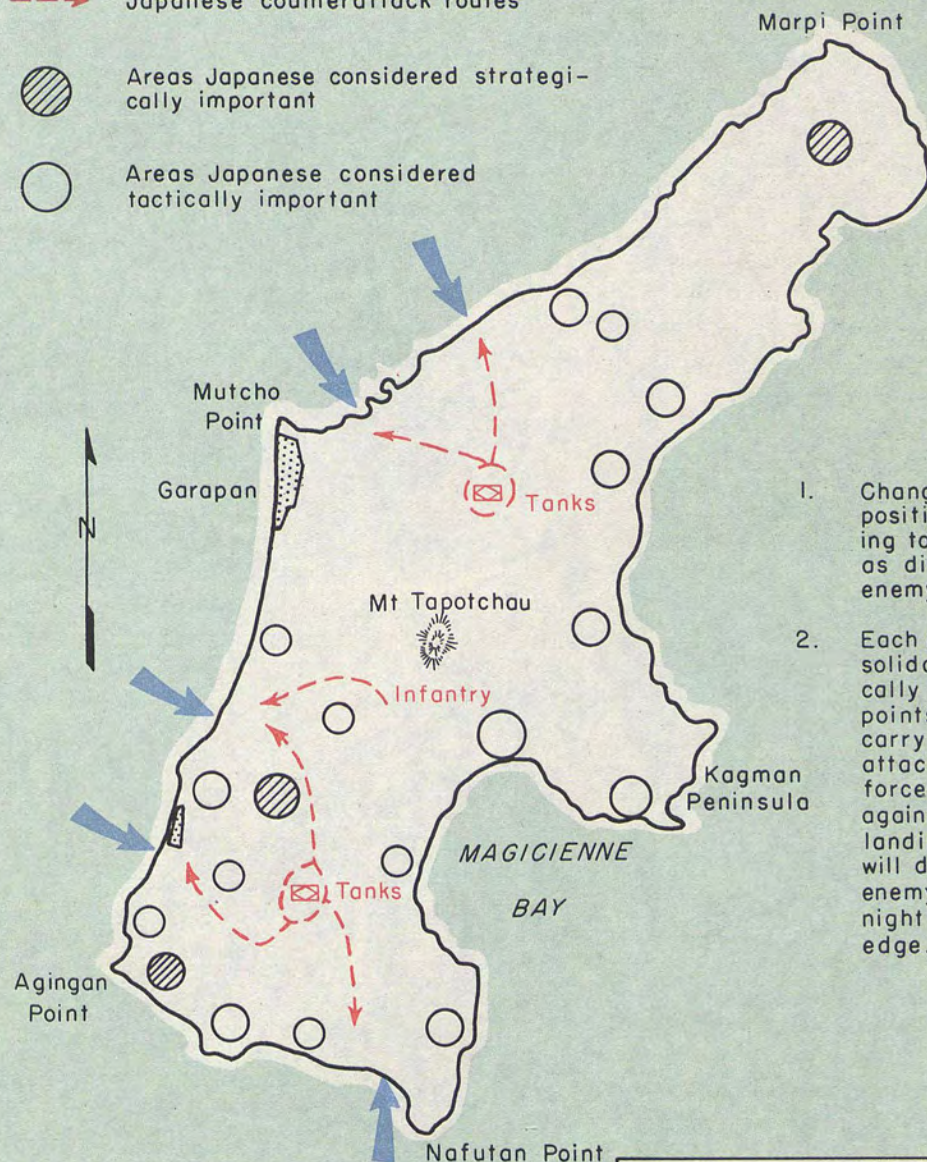
Japanese counterattack routes



Areas Japanese considered strategically important



Areas Japanese considered tactically important



1. Change troop dispositions according to this plan as direction of enemy attack varies.
2. Each unit will consolidate strategically important points and will carry out counterattacks with reserve forces and tanks against the enemy landing units and will demolish the enemy during the night at the water's edge.

JAPANESE COUNTERATTACK PLAN

1000 0 1000 3000 Yds

MAP 4

shipping." In addition, a reorientation of an established front in the South and Southwest Pacific areas would be required and the use of land-based air support would not be possible. On the other hand, MacArthur felt, an approach through the Southwest Pacific, north-westward along the north coast of New Guinea, offered much better chances for success.²⁶

MacArthur's objections notwithstanding, the United States Joint Chiefs presented a plan to the Combined Chiefs at Washington in May of 1943 which concluded that the Central Pacific route was the better one, since success here would have more decisive strategic results. The British representatives agreed and the Joint Chiefs' proposal was adopted.²⁷

Washington and Quebec Conferences

At the Washington Conference, Admiral King again discussed the Marianas as a specific objective. Speaking in much the same tenor as he had at Casablanca five months before, the admiral described the Marianas as the "key" to the Pacific situation because of their location astride the Japanese Central Pacific communication lines. It appears that the admiral's intense interest in the Marianas stemmed from a realization on his part that the true importance of this target was not unanimously felt. Significant in this connection is the fact that the Marianas had not been prescribed as a specific objective even at this time.²⁸

News of the decisions of the Washington conferences was not happily received in General MacArthur's headquarters. In protest, MacArthur pointed out that the Central Pacific route was a return to pre-war plans, which had not assumed the availability of Australia as a staging base for offensive operations.²⁹ On 3 August 1943, Headquarters Southwest Pacific Area promulgated Reno II, a revision of Reno

I based upon limitations imposed by the Combined Chiefs' decisions.³⁰

Further evidence that many officers on the joint planning level were not whole-heartedly convinced that the Marianas were a necessary target is found in the fact that these islands were not mentioned in the written plans which the Joint Chief of Staff took with them to the Quebec conferences in August 1943. Once there, however, Admiral King again mentioned the Marianas, and, in addition, the Combined Staff Planners, a subordinate committee of the Combined Chiefs, listed the Marianas as a possible objective. The result of this was that the Combined Chiefs approved the Marianas as an objective, noting that it might be a "necessary or desirable" campaign. But, in formulating a time schedule for all operations in the Pacific and Far East, the Marianas were again omitted.

Perhaps the most significant decision reached at the Quebec conference was that Rabaul would not be occupied. This departure from previous plans, together with the "approval" of the Marianas, constituted the major changes from the Washington conferences four months earlier.³¹

General MacArthur was very disappointed by the conclusions reached at the Quebec conferences. The weight of evidence indicated—to the general—that the Combined Chiefs planned to give the United States Navy responsibility for the prosecution of the war against Japan and that Southwest Pacific operations would be terminated at the Vogelkop Peninsula, New Guinea's western extremity.³²

Realizing that General MacArthur was disappointed with the decisions, General George C. Marshall, a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, sent MacArthur a lengthy message explaining the decisions and allaying any fears that Southwest Pacific forces were assuming a position of unimportance from the strategic

²⁶ RENO I, 25Feb43.

²⁷ JPS 67/4; JCS 287 and 287/1; Minutes JCS 76th and 80th Meetings.

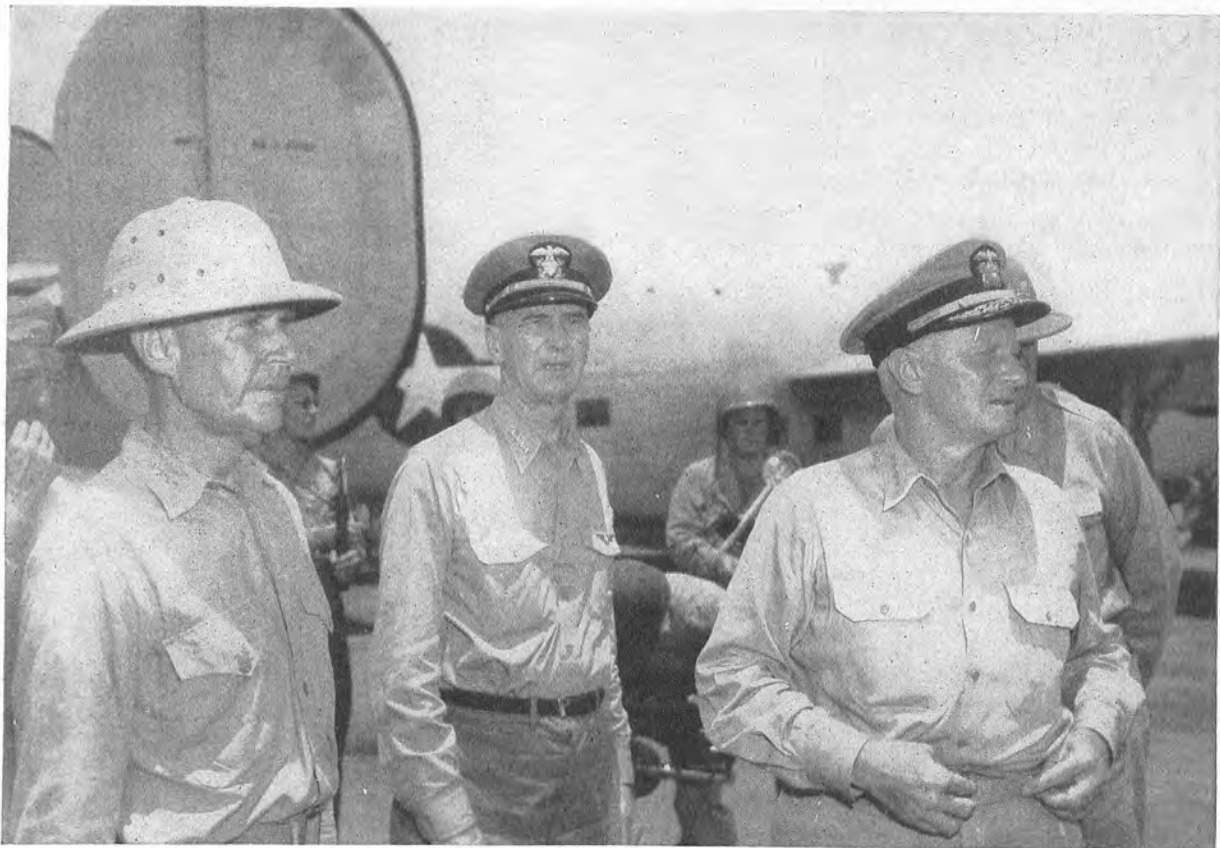
²⁸ TRIDENT, 21May43. 92d Meeting.

²⁹ Radio message, CINCSWPA (Gen MacArthur) to WARCOS (Gen G. C. Marshall) C-3302, 20Jun43, CM-IN 13149.

³⁰ RENO II, 3Aug43.

³¹ CCS 313, 18Aug43, Appreciation and Plan for the Defeat of Japan; Minutes CCS 110th Meeting, 17Aug43.

³² Radio message, CINCSWPA to WARCOS, C-6131, 28Sep43, CM-IN 19656.



THREE TOP ADMIRALS look at Saipan. From left to right: Admiral Spruance, who commanded the fleet of which the landing force was a part; Admiral King, who pressed for the operation's execution on the JCS-CCS level; Admiral Nimitz, who allocated ships and troops from his Pacific Forces to take Saipan.

point of view.³³

Based upon this message and the decisions of the Quebec conferences, General MacArthur published another revision of his Reno plans, this one called Reno III.³⁴

From what has already been written it may be seen that the selection of the Marianas as a target area was far from a random one. By the autumn of 1943, however, this objective was receiving more prominent mention, if not unanimous agreement. On 6 September 1943, the Joint War Plans Committee, on its own initiative, prepared a study entitled "Outline Plan For The Seizure Of The Marianas, Including Guam." This study was circulated for consideration of the Joint Staff Planners, who

³³ Radio message, WARCOS (for JCS) to CINCSWPA 8679, 20Oct43, CM-OUT 630.

³⁴ RENO III, 20Oct43.

agreed at their 99th meeting to inform the Joint Chiefs that the study had been prepared and was available. One interesting feature of this particular study is the prediction that the Japanese fleet would likely contest the move.³⁵ This was not necessarily an original prediction, however, since Admiral King had made it earlier.

Unlike General MacArthur, Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz had found little to protest in the Combined Chiefs' decisions. As Commander in Chief United States Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Area, Nimitz would command operations over the Central Pacific route, designated the main effort. In a letter to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, dated 30 September 1943, Nimitz outlined his garrison requirements for 1944, assuming in his letter that all operations

³⁵ JPS 264, 6Sep43.

scheduled or approved by the Combined Chiefs would take place. For planning purposes, operations would advance to the western Carolines (Palau and Yap) by the end of 1944, the latter offensives commencing 31 December. In regard to the Marianas, the letter commented that these would constitute a satisfactory alternative for the Palaus. Thus, the axis of advance through the Central Pacific could follow either the Gilberts-Marshalls-Carolines-Palaus-Philippines axis, or detour northward through the Marianas-Bonins and thence to the Japanese home islands.³⁶

Cairo Conferences

In preparation for the next meeting with their British counterparts, the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed two matters which would have tremendous weight in the selection of objectives in the Central Pacific. These matters, condensed to single terms, were Truk and the B-29.

Truk had long been recognized as a formidable enemy stronghold, one which would exact a dear price from attackers. Yet because of its dominance of Central Pacific sea lanes, it seemed to demand seizure. During meetings on 15 and 17 November 1943, the Joint Chiefs probed a possibility which had not before been officially considered: the feasibility of by-passing Truk. Before arriving at a firm decision in this respect it was decided the the United States Navy should launch strong carrier attacks against Truk as soon as possible to determine and test the strength of that mysterious position. The results of these attacks would be the influencing factor in a by-passing decision.³⁷

The Army Air Forces' huge new bomber, the B-29, now being produced in quantity, was scheduled to deliver attacks against the Japanese homeland from bases in China at the earliest possible date. During the November meetings, General Henry H. Arnold, commander Army Air Forces and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, voiced a doubt that had been under discussion by Air Force planners for

some time: could the Chinese protect the B-29 bases from Japanese ground capture? General Arnold pointed out that it would be a normal enemy reaction, after the first raids against the homeland, to launch inspired ground offensives toward the China B-29 bases. Fate of the B-29 plans, then, would rest in the hands of the Chinese, in whom General Arnold expressed lack of confidence. Without recommending any drastic rearrangement of plans in regard to the use of China bases, Arnold suggested that these plans be expanded to include use of airfields in the Marianas Islands. These, the general considered, would be next to impossible for the Japanese to recapture, once United States forces were in possession. As an important technical matter, General Arnold assured the other JCS members that the B-29's could carry their maximum bomb load from the southern Marianas to the Japanese home islands.

At last Admiral King was enjoying active support in his long struggle for recognition of the Marianas as a "key" objective. With the added weight thrown behind the project by the Army Air Forces, the question was no longer in doubt. The Joint Chiefs decided that, although the first B-29 raids would be launched from China bases commencing in early June 1944, strikes from the Marianas would start in December of that year.³⁸

Following these mid-November JCS agreements were the late November-early December 1943 meetings in Cairo, Egypt. While the conference—code named SEXTANT—concerned itself chiefly with discussions and decisions regarding operations in Europe, some vital agreements pertaining to Pacific operations were also reached. The Combined Chiefs' "Report for the President and Prime Minister," a summary of agreements and conclusions of a long-range, global nature, was approved and initialed by Roosevelt and Churchill.³⁹ Included

³⁸ JCS 123d and 124 Meetings, 15 and 17 Nov 43.

³⁶ Ltr from Adm C. W. Nimitz to the JCS, 30 Sep 43, subject: "Garrison Requirements in the Central Pacific Area."

³⁷ The Truk strikes had the additional purpose of covering the landings at Eniwetok.

³⁹ Churchill classified the report as a "masterly survey of the whole military scene" and gave his opinion that when military historians came to adjudge the decisions of the SEXTANT conference, they would find them fully in accordance with the "classic articles of war." SEXTANT, 5th Plenary Meeting.

in the report were two documents which were to serve as a foundation for more detailed planning: "Specific Operations for the Defeat of Japan" and "Over-all Plan for the Defeat of Japan."⁴⁰

The former paper established a time schedule for planning purposes in 1944 and included an operation for the "seizure of Guam and Japanese Marianas" on 1 October 1944 and the initiation of "very long range bombing of vital targets in Japanese 'Inner Zone'⁴¹ from bases in Marianas."⁴² That the time schedule was for planning purposes and not intended as a hard and fast calendar of events, was indicated by an enclosure to the document which pointed out that certain "developments" might make possible a speedup. These "developments" which might permit short-cuts were: first, defeat of the Japanese Fleet at an early date; second, sudden withdrawal of enemy forces from certain areas (as from Kiska); third, an earlier defeat of Germany than 1 October 1944, coupled with an increase in Allied means (such as by acceleration of the assault ship building program); and, fourth, Russia's early collaboration in the war against Japan.⁴³

The other document, "Over-all Plan for the Defeat of Japan," was approved in principle and would be the basis for further investigation and preparation.⁴⁴

The revised plan, circulated to Nimitz and MacArthur on 23 December 1943, established the strategic concept within the Pacific. This concept prescribed "two series of operations" which would be undertaken concurrently and would be mutually supporting. One of these "series" would be MacArthur's route along the New Guinea-Netherlands East Indies-Philip-

pinas axis; the other, Nimitz' route through the Central Pacific, embracing the Mandated Islands. The latter route would be favored where conflicts in timing or means developed, since it promised a "more rapid advance toward Japan and her vital lines of communication," would provide "earlier acquisition of strategic air bases closer to the Japanese homeland," and would be "more likely to precipitate a decisive engagement with the Japanese Fleet." The concept envisaged that both series of operations should progress to a point from which to launch a "major assault" against the Formosa-Luzon-China area in the spring of 1945.⁴⁵

Campaign Plan Granite

Decisions reached at the Cairo Conference, together with the discussions and deliberations of the Joint Chiefs prior to those meetings, provided Admiral Nimitz and General MacArthur with considerable detail for the formulation of their own plans. Some changes in both officers' previous planning was necessitated by the new decisions. For example, the Marianas as an objective was no longer a flexible matter; it was now a definite, scheduled operation. In addition, a carrier strike against Truk had to be executed at an early date.

Admiral Nimitz' campaign plan GRANITE, preliminary draft published on 27 December 1943, planned the Central Pacific operations for 1944. This document tentatively established the sequence and timing of operations for the Pacific Ocean Areas and of Southwest Pacific operations requiring support of major Pacific Fleet units as follows:

<i>Operation</i>	<i>Tentative Target Date</i>
Capture of Kwajalein	31 January 1944.
Capture of Kavieng and air attack on Truk	20 March 1944.
Capture of Manus	20 April 1944.
Capture of Eniwetok	1 May 1944.
Capture of Mortlock	1 July 1944.
Capture of Truk	15 August 1944.
Capture of Tinian, Saipan, and Guam	15 November 1944.

⁴⁰ "Report to the President and Prime Minister," CCS 426/1. CCS 136th and 137th Meetings, 5th Plenary Meeting.

⁴¹ The "Inner Zone" included: Japan proper, Manchuria, Korea, North China, Karafuto (Japanese Sakhalin) and Formosa.

⁴² "Specific Operations for the Defeat of Japan," CCS 397 revised.

⁴³ Enclosure to CCS 397 (revised).

⁴⁴ "Over-all Plan for the Defeat of Japan," CCS 417 and 417/1. CCS 130th, 134th and 137th Meetings, 1st and 2d Plenary Meetings.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, CCS 417/2, 23Dec43.

As may be seen, the Marianas operation was planned as the final and culminating operation of 1944. GRANITE emphasized, however, that the sequence and timing were purely tentative, that if means became available more rapidly than could be anticipated, the program would be accelerated. The plan pointed out, moreover, that a major fleet action, although it might delay amphibious operations for a brief period, would greatly accelerate them thereafter. Likewise, a successful action might, by decreasing the size and strength of forces required to protect lines of communication, justify the omission of an operation even as important as the capture of Truk.⁴⁶

On 13 January, only 17 days after publication of the preliminary draft, another GRANITE was issued. This one changed certain of the operation dates of the previous draft: operations to seize Mortlock and Truk were moved to 1 August; and, if carrier strikes against Truk should indicate its capture unnecessary, it could be by-passed and Central Pacific forces could move direct to the Palaus (which had not been mentioned in the previous draft) on 1 August. This eventuality would change the first Marianas' landings to the first of November. Of particular interest in this plan is the revelation that, at least for a short time, Admiral Nimitz was thinking in terms of seizing the Palaus and then backing up to take the Marianas.⁴⁷ This scheme did not reappear in subsequent documents, however.

Representatives of the South, Southwest and Central Pacific assembled at Pearl Harbor on 27 and 28 January 1944 to discuss, coordinate and integrate their planning. In addition to considering a general speed-up of all Pacific operations, the conferees discussed two alternative schedules proposed by Admiral Nimitz:

- (a) Truk, 15 June; Marianas, 1 September; Palaus, 15 November.
- (b) Truk, bypass; Marianas, 15 June; Palaus, 10 October.

The second alternative seemed the most favorable to the assembled officers; but, also, there

were many present who favored bypassing the Marianas too. Their reasoning was that the Marianas, because of an almost complete lack of good harbors, would afford poor staging bases. Moreover, they felt that the proposed B-29 operations from the Marianas would not be particularly effective. Further, this group (a decided majority at this conference) felt that the Marianas would be a costly operation, the price of which would not be justified by results achieved.⁴⁸

While these discussions of the 27-28 January Pearl Harbor conference are interesting, it is apparent that the final decisions in regard to the Marianas had already been made by the Joint Chiefs, and the Truk-by-pass decision would await the results of the carrier strikes.

General MacArthur continued his opposition to the Central Pacific route as late as February 1944, when he sent his deputy, Lieutenant General Richard K. Sutherland, USA, to Washington in a desperate effort to convince the Joint Chiefs that both Truk and the Marianas should be by-passed and that the impetus should be along the New Guinea-Mindanao axis of advance. General Sutherland had been in Washington but a short time when he found it necessary to advise MacArthur that the die was, indeed, cast: the Marianas operation was a certainty; the Central Pacific route was inevitable.⁴⁹

Also arriving in Washington for conferences with the Joint Chiefs during the month of February 1944 was Admiral Nimitz. The latter pointed out certain factors which had been under discussion at Pearl Harbor a month before: the Marianas did not offer satisfactory bases for the fleet and, if Truk were by-passed, other fleet bases would be required. Nimitz rec-

⁴⁸ Radio Message, CINCPAC to CINCSWPA, 070521/Z Jan44, CM-IN 8330; Radio Message, CINCSWPA to WARCOS, C-1217, 2Feb44, CM-IN 1443; Memo from Col W. L. Ritchie to Gen T. T. Handy, 4Feb44, subject: Brief of Pacific Conferences, Pearl Harbor 27-28Jan44; *General Kenney Reports*, George C. Kenney, 347-349.

⁴⁹ General Marshall's Incoming-log; telephone conversation between Gen R. K. Sutherland (in Washington) and Gen R. J. Marshall in Brisbane, WD Telecon 192, 15Feb44.

⁴⁶ GRANITE, 27Dec43, 7.

⁴⁷ GRANITE, 13Jan44.

ommended Ulithi, 400-odd miles southwest of Guam, as an objective, since it would provide an exceptionally good base for the projected offensive against the Luzon-Formosa-China coast area.⁵⁰

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, for some time, had been looking to acceleration of the entire Pacific offensive, but the Truk imponderable forbade drastic speed-up alterations in existing plans. When, on 17 and 18 February 1944, the Truk carrier strikes⁵¹ removed the trappings of mystery surrounding that position, and it was revealed as considerably weaker than supposed, the Joint Chiefs agreed that substantial changes in plans were in order.

Not that the results of the Truk strikes, which indicated that by-passing would be feasible, were the only consideration. Other developments had their influence: the Marshalls operation (30 January–20 February) had been executed with greater speed and less cost than had been anticipated; General MacArthur's Southwest Pacific forces had advanced the invasion of the Admiralties from 1 April to 29 February; MacArthur's RENO IV plan (presented to the Joint Chiefs on 5–6 March) contemplated by-passing the Hansa Bay and We-wak areas and advancing directly to Hollandia; Admiral Nimitz had recommended launching a major amphibious operation against either Truk or the Marianas in mid-June, followed by an assault on the Palaus about 1 October; and, in addition, the Army Air Force was again pressing for early capture of the Marianas.

⁵⁰ JCS Memo for Information No. 200, 7Mar44, subject: Sequence and Timing of Operations, Central Pacific Campaign, a report by CINCPAC. Supplementary minutes, JCS 150th Meeting, 7Mar44.

⁵¹ This was the occasion for a message from the British Chiefs of Staff: "... warm congratulations on the brilliant success of the operations in the Pacific which have culminated in the devastating bombardment of Truk and have led to the dismissal of Field Marshal Sugiyama and Admiral of the Fleet Osami Nagano. . . . May Truk be but the prelude to even greater successes on the way to final victory in the days that lie ahead." JCS 148th Meeting 22Feb44.

JCS Directive of 12 March

The culmination of these early-1944 developments and the termination of a number of debates was the Joint Chiefs of Staff directive of 12 March 1944. This directive ordered General MacArthur to cancel the operation against Kavieng and to isolate that island and Rabaul. Hollandia was to be occupied, target date 15 April 1944, using forces originally assigned for Kavieng-Manus with the exception of Marine units assigned for those operations, fast carrier groups and old battleships.

The directive further ordered General MacArthur to return all Pacific Fleet transports, cargo vessels and command ships, which had been allocated for Kavieng-Manus-Hansa Bay, as well as Pacific Fleet combatant vessels, to Admiral Nimitz not later than 5 May. Following seizure of Hollandia, MacArthur was to conduct operations along the New Guinea coast and such other operations as were deemed feasible in preparation for operations against the Palaus and Mindanao.

The occupation and development of the Admiralties was to be expedited, so that suitable bases would be provided for the neutralization of Rabaul, Kavieng, Truk and the Palaus. If additional air base facilities were required, Emirau⁵² and Mussau were to be occupied and developed.

The same JCS directive ordered Admiral Nimitz to "institute and intensify" aerial bombardment of the Carolines and to conduct carrier attacks on the Marianas, Palaus, Carolines and other profitable targets. The Southern Marianas were to be seized, target date 15 June 1944, and B-29 bases and secondary naval facilities developed there. Admiral Nimitz was also to "provide cover" for General MacArthur's moves against Hollandia and other operations in the Southwest Pacific.

MacArthur and Nimitz were further ordered to coordinate their plans to provide for mutual

⁵² Plans for the seizure of Emirau were well underway before the Joint Chiefs' 12 March directive. The 4th Marines (reinforced) landed on Emirau 20 March 1944. See Marine Corps Historical Monograph "Bougainville and the Northern Solomons."

support of all impending operations.⁵³

It will be noted that the directive did not include Ulithi, which objective Admiral Nimitz had recommended in his late February visit to Washington. This omission would seem to indicate that the Joint Chiefs felt that the fleet could find satisfactory anchorages within the Palaus.

Immediately after receiving these changes from the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Nimitz sent a secret dispatch (13 March) to major subordinate units directing that the Truk planning cease and that highest priority be assigned to the preparation for the Marianas operation. At the V Amphibious Corps Headquarters, tentative plans for the seizure of Truk had been evolved simultaneously with those for the Marianas, but with Nimitz' new order, all effort was concentrated on the Marianas.⁵⁴

On 20 March, the CINCPAC FORAGER Joint Staff Study was issued. This document contained a recapitulation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff directive and set forth the assumptions upon which the Marianas operation was based. Essentially, these assumptions were: first, that Hollandia, the Admiralties, and Emirau had been seized and were available as bases; second, that neutralizing attacks were continuing against enemy air installations at Nauru, Wake, Ponape and in the Marshalls; third that Truk had been subjected to both destructive carrier attacks and sustained bombing from the Marshalls and Bismarcks; and, fourth, that United States sea and air forces had been able to prevent effective use of Truk by major Japanese Fleet units and that United States air superiority and control of the sea in the area of operations had been maintained.

The purpose of the operation, as stated in the study, was to establish bases from which to attack the enemy's sea-air communications, support operations for the neutralization of by-passed Truk, initiate B-29 bombing of the Japanese home islands, and support further offensives against the Palaus, Philippines, For-

mosa and China. More generally, the purpose was to "maintain unremitting military pressure against Japan" and to "extend our control over the Western Pacific."⁵⁵

The Marianas operation involved the amphibious assault and seizure of three fortified islands 1,200 miles from the nearest American base and from 4,000 to 7,000 miles from the areas in which troops would be mounted. The Fifth Fleet, the largest ever assembled in the Pacific with control over more than 800 ships, was assigned to transport, land, cover, and support the landing and garrison forces of Task Force 56. The forces of Commander South Pacific, Admiral William F. Halsey, USN, and of Commander in Chief Southwest Pacific, General Douglas MacArthur, USA, were already performing long-range air search and attack missions against the Carolines and Palaus to interdict any enemy threats from

⁵⁵ CINCPAC, FORAGER Joint Staff Study, 20Mar44.



VICE ADMIRAL RICHMOND K. TURNER, commander Joint Expeditionary Force and Northern Attack Force.

⁵³ JCS 713/4, 12Mar44.

⁵⁴ Task Force 56 (Expeditionary Troops), G-5 Report, 1, hereinafter cited as *TF 56 G-5 Report*.

those areas. Submarines of Task Force 17 would continue to provide their supporting operations west of the Marianas.

Since the original GRANITE was no longer in effect, a new campaign plan—GRANITE II—was issued on 3 June. The sequence and timing of the projected operations was much changed; the Marianas operation was listed as the first of the period, instead of last. GRANITE II established the tentative schedule of operations as follows:

<i>Operation</i>	<i>Target Date Tentative</i>
Capture of Saipan, Guam and Tinian	15 June 1944.
Capture of Palau	8 September 1944.
Occupation of Mindanao	15 November 1944.
Capture of Southern Formosa and Amoy ⁵⁶	15 February 1945.
or	
Capture of Luzon	15 February 1945. ⁵⁷

COMMAND RELATIONS

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had designated Admiral Nimitz to command the over-all Central Pacific campaign of which the Marianas was a part. Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, USN, Commander Fifth Fleet, was, in turn, designated to direct all forces engaged in the operation. Charged with command of the Joint Expeditionary Force, which included all task organizations employed in the amphibious operations at all Marianas' objectives was Vice Admiral Richmond K. Turner, USN. The Joint Expeditionary Force was divided into five major and several minor (the latter chiefly garrison) task forces and task groups. The major task groups and forces were: Support Aircraft Headquarters, Expeditionary Troops,

Northern Attack Force, Southern Attack Force, and Joint Expeditionary Force Reserve. Rear Admiral Richard L. Conolly, USN, commanded the Southern Attack Force (Guam), while Turner, himself, operating in a dual capacity, commanded the Northern Attack Force (Saipan). Rear Admiral Harry W. Hill, USN, second-in-command of the Joint Expeditionary Force, commanded the Western Landing Group,⁵⁸ which actually executed the Saipan landings.

Embarked in Admiral Turner's flagship or ashore was the Commanding General, Expeditionary Troops, Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, who commanded the landing force for the entire Marianas operation. During the assault phase, Smith also commanded garrison troops ashore. His command was exercised at the respective objectives through the Commanding Generals of the Northern and Southern Troops and Landing Forces. General Smith, like Admiral Turner, served in a dual capacity as Commanding General both of Expeditionary Troops and of Northern Troops and Landing Forces. Major General Roy S. Geiger was Commanding General, Southern Troops and Landing Force.

All troops ashore would remain under Holland Smith until Admiral Spruance decided that the capture and occupation phase at a given objective was completed, whereupon command ashore would shift to the island commander. Saipan's island commander was Major General Sanderford Jarman, USA, who, at such time as Spruance directed, would be responsible for base development, civil affairs, and other matters of the island's administration.⁵⁹ (See Appendix VI for basic organization of high echelons.)

Because of General Smith's dual role, it was necessary to reorganize the headquarters of the

⁵⁶ This operation, never actually executed, would have employed all of the Marine Divisions except the 3d; the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions would have constituted part of the Formosa assault force, landing on 15 February 1945; the 4th, 5th and 6th Divisions were to seize the port of Amoy, China, on 7 March 1945.

⁵⁷ GRANITE II, 3 Jun 44, 9-13 and 25-26.

⁵⁸ The Western Landing Group was composed of the Northern Troops and Landing Force, Assault Transport Group, LST Flotillas, Control Group, Gunboat Support Group, Beach Demolition Group, Beachmaster Group, LST Flotilla, and the Pontoon Barge Unit.

⁵⁹ Amphibious Operations, Invasion of the Marianas, Commander in Chief United States Fleet, P-007, 1-9, hereinafter cited as *COMINCH P-007*.



LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOLLAND M. SMITH, Commanding General Expeditionary Troops and Northern Troops and Landing Force. In the Marianas, General Smith had the largest force commanded by a Marine General up to that time.

V Amphibious Corps to form two staffs so that each echelon would be represented.⁶⁰ Actually,

⁶⁰ Col Robert E. Hogaboom, who served as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, of the Northern Troops and Landing Force during the Marianas Campaign, points out that General Smith actually had a triple status at the time: "First, he was the administrative commander for certain designated Marine Forces in the Pacific; second, he was Commanding General, Expeditionary Troops; and third he was Commanding General, Northern Troops and Landing Force. Accordingly, General Smith initially had three staffs functioning under his command. One staff under a deputy commander remained in Pearl Harbor to conduct administrative matters during the campaign. A second staff, Expeditionary Troops staff, was embarked in the flagship of the Expeditionary Force and remained aboard that ship throughout the operation. A third staff, Northern Troops and Landing Force, initially embarked on the flagship of Rear Admiral Hill, went ashore on Saipan directly under General Smith." Ltr from Col R. E. Hogaboom to CMC, 30Apr47.

the preliminary planning was accomplished prior to the reorganization on 12 April, but after that date these staffs became known as the "Red Staff" and the "Blue Staff." The former subsequently became the staff for Commander, Northern Troops and Landing Force and the latter for Commander, Expeditionary Troops. The two groups operated in separate office spaces at Pearl Harbor but had identical sources of information on which to draw as detailed plans were prepared.⁶¹

In keeping with principles of concurrent planning, the V Amphibious Corps Staff had anticipated future actions and initiated planning; a rough operation plan for the Marianas was completed as early as 14 March. This served as a basis for the final Expeditionary Troops Plan.⁶²

Available to the Northern Troops and Landing Force for the Saipan landings were the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions, commanded by Major Generals Thomas E. Watson⁶³ and Harry Schmidt, respectively. General Geiger's Southern Troops and Landing Force would be composed of the 3d Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. In Expeditionary Troops reserve, prepared to land at either objective, was the 27th Infantry Division, United States Army, commanded by Major General Ralph E. Smith. The 77th Infantry Division, United States Army, was to be held in the Hawaiian Islands as strategic reserve and called into the Marianas area after D-plus 20. This time schedule was demanded because it would take that long for ships carrying assault echelons to return from Saipan to Oahu.

LOGISTICS AND ADMINISTRATION

The logistical support plan progressed concurrently with operation plans. Early in the planning phase, close liaison was established between all major units in order to transmit

⁶¹ Northern Troops and Landing Force Report, 2-3, hereinafter cited as *NRLF Report*.

⁶² *TF 56 G-5 Report*, 1.

⁶³ The 2d Marine Division was commanded by Major General Julian C. Smith until 10 April 1944 when General Watson assumed command.

available information without delay. Conferences between key logistical officers insured that uniformity and consistency would prevail throughout the preparation. Experiences in previous operations, availability of shipping space, and the tactical situation, determined initial supply requirements. The Marianas would be a departure from atoll type operations to a campaign on a limited land mass; still, important lessons had been learned which would be invaluable to logistical planning. Initial supplies to be taken by assault forces were as follows:

- Class I (Rations) ---32 days.
- Class II (Organizational and Individual equipment) -----20 days.
- Class III (Fuels and Lubricants) --20 days.
- Class IV (Miscellaneous supplies)--20 days (except medical supplies which were 30 days).
- Class V (Ammunition) -----7 units of fire ground weapons; 10 units of fire for antiaircraft weapons.

Resupply shipments were set up in 3,000-men blocks for 30 days of Class I, II, III, and IV. Items suitable for the block shipment plan were shipped separately in "optional loaded ships." Class V, ammunition, would be loaded in specially designed ammunition ships containing no other type or class of supply. To offset possible losses of initial or resupply shipments, mobile reserves were established in the Marshalls area, subject to the call of the Commander, Expeditionary Troops.

All major units were required to submit a consolidated list of organizational equipment to Headquarters, Expeditionary Troops for screening. This was done to assure that the equipment did not exceed shipping allocations and, also, for the purpose of coordinating the

equipment of assault and garrison units to prevent unnecessary duplication.⁶⁴

Details of hospitalization and evacuation presented at least one major innovation: civilians would need medical care during and after the battle. Our own needs would come first, however. Nineteen APA's, five AP's, six AKA's, and three LST's were to be available at Saipan for evacuation of casualties. The three LST's had been especially equipped with supplies and personnel to receive casualties from the beach for further transfer to the transports until such time as the tactical situation permitted transports to approach beaches near enough to warrant transfer of casualties direct to the transports. The plan would place one LST off of the beaches upon which the 2d Marine Division would land and one off the 4th Division's beaches. The third LST would relieve whichever LST received 100 casualties first.⁶⁵

The sequence of building the logistical plan continued with base development considerations. Great quantities of construction material would need shipment to the objective area in order that the base might develop its necessary facilities. Several preliminary conferences were held at CinCPac Headquarters to discuss the amounts and types of matériel needed, shipping required, and related problems. A rear echelon of the Expeditionary Troops G-4 section remained in Oahu to coordinate all activities.

The Marine Supply Service formed the 5th and 7th Field Depots to support Marine units initially and in the ensuing garrison phase. To afford assistance by augmenting the divisions' shore parties, representative portions of the 5th and 7th Field Depots were embarked in assault shipping. Other echelons of the field depots were scheduled to arrive in early garrison shipping.

⁶⁴ Task Force 56 (Expeditionary Troops), G-4 Report, 2-11 hereinafter cited as *TF 56 G-4 Report*.

⁶⁵ Task Force 51, Operation Plan A10-44, Annex H, Medical, 2. Each of the three LST's had one doctor and eight hospital corpsmen aboard. Since this number was inadequate to care for the expected number of casualties, two doctors and 16 corpsmen would be transferred to each LST after arrival in the transport area.

The rehabilitation plan was conceived with a view to economizing matériel, effort, and shipping. Since the 4th Marine Division would leave the Saipan-Tinian area after the operation and the 2d Marine Division would remain, the 4th would turn its organizational equipment in to the 7th Field Depot for processing, repair, and reissue to the 2d. A similar plan was evolved for Guam, from whence the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade would leave after the operation, while the 3d Marine Division would remain. By this plan, shipping space was conserved and possible damage to equipment enroute eliminated. In addition, man-hours were saved because equipment was not loaded back aboard ships.

To permit coordination and to reduce possibilities of misinterpretation, all major units submitted advance copies of their administrative orders to Headquarters, Expeditionary Troops, for checking and comparison.⁶⁶

Requirements for shipping in which to embark the Northern Troops and Landing Force were submitted to the Commander of the Northern Attack Force. When the available shipping was provided, NTLF prepared general loading plans and allocated shipping to subordinate units. A schedule for loading, prepared in conjunction with the Navy, fitted as closely as possible the time of availability of the ships and the time desired by the troops. This posed a considerable problem in view of limited harbor facilities from which to mount such a large force. By careful and complete planning, however, the entire force was loaded on time and in the manner necessary to fit the tactical plans.

About a week prior to commencement of loading, the Transport Group Commanders and either the captain or cargo officer of each ship visited the unit whose troops their ships were embarking. This early liaison settled many questions regarding loading arrangements in a most satisfactory manner.⁶⁷

The work of the G-1 Section of the Expeditionary Troops staff during the period of preparation consisted of its normal functions—supplying replacements to units committed to the operation, attaching reinforcing units to the divisions, organizing specialized units to be employed, alerting units for embarkation, assigning billeting space for staff officers and men aboard ship, and furnishing personnel data required by other sections of the staff.⁶⁸

INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION

The Corps G-2 Section was handicapped during the planning stage, as no accurate information concerning enemy installations in the Southern Marianas was available until the carrier strikes of 22-23 February. On the basis of these strikes, intelligence studies were begun. The studies were necessarily incomplete because of inadequate photographic coverage. The carrier photographs of 22-23 February, partly covering Saipan, Tinian and Aguijan, were not supplemented by full coverage until 18 April. Lack of subsequent photographs prior to departure from Pearl Harbor was a source of some irritation to the G-2 Section and greatly complicated its task. Corps had requested photograph coverages on D-minus 90, D-minus 60, D-minus 30, and D-minus 15 days, but this schedule, because of many other demands upon the Navy, could not be completely met. There was, therefore, a consequent lack of timely intelligence information which would have been helpful during the planning and assault phases. At Eniwetok, enroute to the objective, Saipan photographs of 28 May were delivered to the attack force. These were interpreted and disseminated to the divisions' headquarters prior to departure from Eniwetok. The slower travelling LST groups, carrying the initial assault elements, however, had already departed; Marines were required to make their 15 June landings on the basis of 18 April information of the enemy situation.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ *TF 56 G-4 Report*, 11-15.

⁶⁷ *NTLF Report*, 7-8. This procedure was not possible in all instances, however; two transports assigned to the 2d Marine Division were on the west coast of the United States at this time. Ltr from Col R. J. Straub to CMC, 13Jan50.

⁶⁸ Task Force 56 (Expeditionary Troops), G-1 Report, 1, hereinafter cited as *TF 56 G-1 Report*.

⁶⁹ *TF 56 G-2 Report*, 1-2. Some fine submarine photographs (taken by the *Greenling*) of the target area were available; but the preferred landing beach areas on Saipan were not included.

These inadequacies in aerial photographic coverage were due to the prevailing naval situation and not to faulty cooperation between Navy and Marine higher echelons. In all instances, the Navy made sincere effort to comply with any and all reasonable requests. It is obvious that Marine planners were desirous of obtaining as many pictures of the objective as possible, and that they would tend to base their requests upon that desire. It is also apparent, however, that the Navy was confronted with a tactical situation which made it virtually impossible to comply with all requests. According to Admiral R. K. Turner, it was necessary for "naval fliers to pick and choose among the very numerous items in Corps requests and then to obtain what coverage they could while fighting battles."⁷⁰

It is interesting to note that Admiral Spruance, commander Fifth Fleet, gave careful consideration to making a second raid on the Marianas before the actual landings. Aside from the undesirability of pin-pointing the Marianas as the next objective, the scheme was ruled out because of other demands upon available ships.⁷¹

The 1:20,000 battle map of Saipan-Tinian-Aguigan was based on the incomplete photograph coverage of 22-23 February and on Japanese charts captured during the Marshalls operation. The contours shown on the map were actually "logical" contours adapted from captured charts and partially revised from existing photographs. Once the map was in use, it was ascertained that these contours were not only inaccurate but that they offered a misleading representation of the basic features of the island. As examples, sheer cliffs sometimes appeared as slopes and box canyons as ravines or draws, a condition somewhat relieved after the 4th Marine Division captured an excellent Japanese map of the island.⁷² The NTLF G-2

Section made the latter map available to units in time to be used during operations conducted north of the Garapan-Mt. Tapotchau-Magicienne Bay line.⁷³

Another Japanese map, captured by the 8th Marines (2d Marine Division), was found to be especially helpful in that regiment's operations around Mt. Tapotchau. A great deal of care had to be exercised in transposing coordinates from Japanese to the United States maps, however, due to variations in ground forms.⁷⁴

Estimates of enemy strength prior to the landing on Saipan were considerably below the actual strength encountered. On 9 May the estimate had been 9,000, to 10,000. On 24 May, G-2 Summary No. 20 had increased the estimate:

Should the enemy continue his present rate of reinforcement, it seems logical to estimate that by D-day, combat troops will number 15,000 to 18,000. This estimate does not include "Home Guard" units.

After the operation the count indicated that there were approximately 29,662 combatant Japanese on Saipan on D-Day.⁷⁵

In all fairness to personnel responsible for divining enemy strength, it should again be emphasized that photographic coverage left much to be desired. Analysis of aerial photographs was one of G-2's best sources; and, since coverage was inadequate, there was a scarcity of detailed enemy information. It should be remembered, however, that a vast expanse of water separated Saipan from the closest United States holdings, and the Navy's problems were many. As the G-2 of the Northern Troops and Landing Force (Lieutenant Colonel Thomas R. Yancey, USA) writes:

Usually, photographic planes accompanied attacking fighter planes on sorties against enemy bases . . . [and] honest effort was made to obtain adequate and complete coverage of the target area. However, during the spring and early summer months in the Marianas area, there are few days when the sky is not partially covered with low cumulus clouds, ob-

⁷⁰ Turner.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² The exact time and place of this capture are not indicated in records consulted, but the time is assumed to be in the period D-Day to D-plus 6, during which time the advance was toward the east coast.

⁷³ TF 56 G-2 Report, 4. These maps were reproduced by the 64th Engineer Topographic Battalion.

⁷⁴ Ltr from BrigGen C. R. Wallace to CMC, 27Dec49, hereinafter cited as *Wallace*.

⁷⁵ NTLF G-2 Report, App. A and B, 7.

scuring some of the most important installations or key terrain features. . . . This, of course, was unfortunate, but clouds handicapping the photographer provided protection for fighter aircraft.

Strikes against enemy bases were mainly for the purpose of destroying . . . enemy installations, and photographic coverage, while important, was usually reduced to a secondary consideration.⁷⁶

In addition to difficulties already discussed, the fact that Saipan was serving as a staging area further contributed to the G-2's problems. Many Japanese units were just passing through when the United States blow fell; others were shipwrecked survivors whom fate had guided there. Probably even the Japanese would have found it difficult to determine how many troops they had on the island.

TACTICAL PLANS

As stated before, the CinCPac Joint Staff Study of 20 March 1944 assumed the capture of certain bases for the support of the Marianas campaign. By 22 April General MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Forces had successfully effected the capture of Hollandia and the Admiralties, and the 4th Marines had occupied Emirau. The following day Admiral Nimitz published his Operation Plan 3-44 for the Marianas. Subsequently, orders were issued by the Commander, Fifth Fleet (Admiral Spruance) and by the Commander, Joint Expeditionary Force (Vice Admiral Turner). The mission of Task Force 56 (Expeditionary Troops) was to capture, occupy and defend Saipan, Tinian and Guam, and to be prepared for further operations.⁷⁷

That part of the mission pertaining to Saipan and Tinian was assigned to the Northern Troops and Landing Force (NTLF) with the following major units being assigned:

Corps Troops (Administrative and Service Elements).

1st Battalion, 2d Marines.

2d Marine Division (Reinforced) (less 1st

Battalion, 2d Marines) (plus 1st Battalion, 29th Marines).⁷⁸

4th Marine Division (Reinforced).

XXIV Corps Artillery.

Saipan Garrison Force (Task Group 10.13).

Tinian Garrison Force (Task Group 10.12).⁷⁹

In Expeditionary Troops reserve, prepared for commitment on Saipan, Tinian, or Guam, was the United States Army's 27th Infantry Division. This division prepared 21 separate plans for possible employment on any of the three islands, 16 of these in anticipation of Saipan landings. As the planning of higher headquarters progressed, a few plans were discarded.⁸⁰

Concurrent planning was the rule; the day following issuance of the Expeditionary Troops plan, NTLF Operation Order 2-44 (Tentative) was published. This plan and a later one (Operation Plan 3-44, issued on 1 May 1944) ordered the two Marine divisions to land on Saipan's western beaches in the Charan Kanoa vicinity, 2d Division on the Red and Green Beaches (north of Charan Kanoa) and 4th Division on the Blue and Yellow Beaches (facing the town itself and the area south of it). After the simultaneous landing, both divisions would advance rapidly inland to objective O-1, the first dominating ground inland. Thereafter, the 2d Division would push up and seize Mts. Tapotchau and Tipo Pale, while the 4th Division would shove across to the island's east coast, capturing Aslito Airfield on the

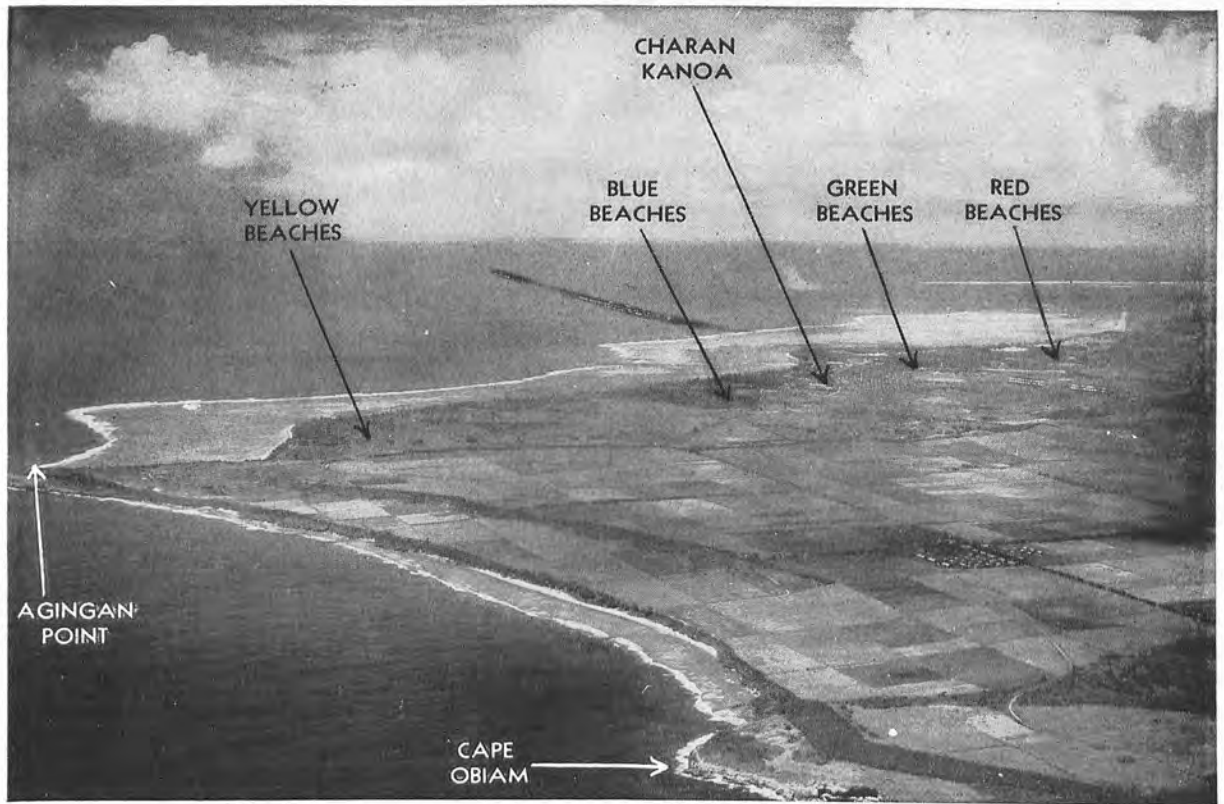
⁷⁸ The 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, had been attached to the 2d Marine Division to fill the vacancy created when the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, was assigned a special mission under landing force control (see below). Formed from personnel of the 2d Division, the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, was later to join the 29th Regiment (6th Marine Division) for the Okinawa campaign. This "orphan" unit remained with the 2d Division throughout the Saipan operation.

⁷⁹ Task Force 56, Operation plan 3-44 (26 Apr 44), Annex Able, Task Organization. For the detailed Task Organization, see Appendix VII.

⁸⁰ 27th Infantry Division, G-3 Report, 6, hereinafter cited as *27 Inf Div G-3 Report*.

⁷⁶ Ltr from LtCol T. R. Yancey, USA, to DirPub-Info, 8Jul49, hereinafter cited as *Yancey*. This officer was one of several United States Army officers who served on the Corps staff.

⁷⁷ Task Force 56 (Expeditionary Troops), G-3 Report, hereinafter cited as *TF 56 G-3 Report*, 2.



PREFERRED BEACHES ON SAIPAN. Reef demanded that the ship-to-shore movement be executed in amphibian tractors.

way. (See Map 5 for scheme of maneuver.)

As part of the same plan, the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines (Reinforced), was ordered to "land on the night of D-minus 1-D-Day, on selected beaches of Magicienne Bay, move rapidly inland, seize Mt. Tapotchau⁸¹ before daylight, and defend same until relieved."

This mission, intriguing to the imagination, was later fortunately cancelled. Not, however, before the battalion had altered its organization to fit assigned shipping (six destroyer transports), or before its supplies and heavy weapons were embarked aboard two escort car-

riers (with plans to parachute-drop needed items from torpedo planes), or before it had completed considerable specialized training. As will be seen, these arrangements caused much inconvenience.⁸²

Even with the cancellation of the mission, the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, remained as an immediate subordinate unit of the Northern Troops and Landing Force with orders to "be prepared *after How-hour* [author's italics] to land on order on selected beaches of Magicienne Bay, or on other beaches to be designated."⁸³ (For a detailed analysis of the original mission and its subsequent cancellation, see Appendix V.)

Both divisions, it will be noted, had been ordered to "seize Objective O-1" after landing. This objective embraced the first commanding

⁸¹ At first glance it may appear that there was duplication in the mission assigned to the 2d Division and the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, inasmuch as both were instructed to seize Mt. Tapotchau. It should be pointed out, however, that the battalion could seize only the summit of the mountain, leaving the expansive slopes to the division. Elements of the 2d Division were to move up and join the battalion at the peak.

⁸² Ltr from LtCol W. B. Kyle to DirPubInfo, 13Nov48, hereinafter cited as *Kyle*.

⁸³ NTLF Operation Plan 3-44, Change No. 1.

ground inland from the beaches, a distance varying from 1,200 to 1,500 yards in the middle and tapering to the beach on both flanks. It was essential that this line be occupied rapidly, since, until then, no relief from the enemy's direct fire weapons could be expected. Every man was impressed with the fact that the high ground was the immediate goal and that this should be seized as soon as possible. As will be seen, however, the two divisions, though actuated by the same purpose, chose different means to achieve this end.

A diversionary demonstration, beginning shortly before the actual landing and continuing sometime thereafter, was to be conducted in the area northwest of Tanapag Harbor.⁸⁴ This effort, for the purpose of diverting enemy reserves and supporting fires from the area of the actual landing, would be afforded added realism by supporting fires from Fire Support Unit Four (TU 52.17.4), including battleships *Maryland* and *Colorado*, light cruiser *Louisville* and four destroyers.⁸⁵

The divisions wasted no time after receipt of the NTLF Operation Plan. Soon, tentative plans were submitted for approval. Actually, the divisions had carried on planning, based on tentative drafts and conferences, before receipt of the formal NTLF plan. The 2d Division planned to land with the 6th and 8th Marines⁸⁶ abreast, 6th over the Red Beaches, 8th over the Green Beaches.

The 4th Marine Division would employ the 23d and 25th Marines in the assault, the 23d landing over the Blue and the 25th over the Yellow Beaches.

For the demonstration at Tanapag Harbor, the two divisions would use infantry elements not committed to the initial assault. These included the 2d Marines and the 1st Battalion,

29th Marines, from the 2d Division, and the 24th Marines from the 4th Division.⁸⁷

In the event that later intelligence information indicated that the Charan Kanoa (preferred) beaches were too strongly defended to permit landings, an alternate plan was conceived. This plan contemplated landings to the north of Garapan on beaches Black and Scarlet. The 2d Division, in the event this plan were used, would land on Black Beach at H-Hour, followed three hours later by the 4th Division, which would land on Scarlet Beaches in Tanapag Harbor.⁸⁸ Some excellent submarine photographs made careful study of the alternate beaches possible, and all hands were as well briefed on this plan as the preferred one.

Since the preferred beaches on Saipan were fringed by a reef and since it would be impossible to negotiate a crossing of the reef in conventional landing craft, the landing plan contemplated the use of LVT's (Landing Vehicles, Tracked, often called "amtracs") as the principal assault vehicle. LVT's were to be transported to the objective aboard LST's (Landing Ships, Tank). Sufficient LVT's were allocated to allow for the preloading and direct landing of assault units as well as one reserve battalion for each division. By making other LVT's available after arrival in the transport area and by executing transfer operations from landing craft to LVT's, it would be possible to land the bulk of the two divisions in these vehicles. LVT battalions were assigned as follows: 2d Marine Division—2d, 5th and 715th Amphibian Tractor Battalions (the latter an Army Battalion); 4th Marine Division—534th and 773d Amphibian Tractor Battalions (both Army) and the 10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, less its Company A and plus Company C of the 11th Amphibian Tractor Battalion.

Preceding the first wave of troop-carrying LVT's would be a wave of armored amphibian tractors (LVT(A)'s), each of which mounted

⁸⁴ NTLF Operation Plan 3-44.

⁸⁵ Task Unit 52.17.4 Report, 7.

⁸⁶ Throughout this monograph, the designation "8th Marines," "23d Marines," etc., will be used rather than Regimental Combat Team 8 (RCT 8), RCT 23, etc. Thus, reinforcing troops (which make a regiment an RCT) are considered included in the 8th Marines (23d Marines) designation. In like manner, the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, is used rather than BLT 1/2.

⁸⁷ 2d Marine Division Report, Section V, 2-3, hereinafter cited as *2d Mar Div Report*. 4th Marine Division Report, Section VI, 13, hereinafter cited as *4th Mar Div Report*.

⁸⁸ NTLF, Operation Plan 4-44 (3May44).

a 75mm howitzer in an armored turret. These vehicles were to cover the landing and movement of assault waves to O-1. Preceding the 2d Marine Division was the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion, while the Army's 708th Amphibian Tank Battalion would provide a similar mission for the 4th Division.⁸⁹

The 10th and 14th Marines (artillery regiments of the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions, respectively) were each assigned four LST's for the operation. One LST was capable of lifting the howitzers and about 275 men of one artillery battalion. The remaining personnel was carried in transports (APA's). Of this latter group, some were transhipped from APA's to LST's at Eniwetok Lagoon for the final leg of the trip. Organic motor vehicles of the artillery regiments, with drivers, were carried to the objective in cargo ships (AKA's).⁹⁰

The 10th Marines loaded all four of its organic battalions (two battalions of 75mm pack howitzers, two battalions of 105mm howitzers) in LST's. The pack howitzers were preloaded in LVT's and the 105's in DUKW's (amphibious trucks, normally called "ducks"). The 10th Marines had been reinforced with the 2d 155mm Howitzer Battalion, V Amphibious Corps, whose guns, ammunition and equipment were loaded aboard three AKA's and most of the personnel aboard APA's.⁹¹

The 14th Marine Regiment was organized into five battalions, the 1st and 2d armed with 75mm howitzers; the 3d, 4th and 5th with 105mm howitzers.⁹² The 14th Marines used

three LST's to lift the three battalions of 105mm howitzers pre-loaded in ducks. The fourth LST allotted them carried 75mm pack howitzer ammunition. The two pack howitzer battalions of the 14th Marines were loaded aboard transports. It was planned that the 75's would land after transfer from landing craft (LCVP's) to ducks which would return after landing the 105mm battalions. This part of the plan was not carried out, however, due to the slow return of the ducks after debarking the 105's, and the 75mm battalions were subsequently landed in LVT's.⁹³

TRAINING AND REHEARSAL

As over-all plans for the Marianas operation evolved and specific tactical plans developed, the concurrent assembly and preparation of forces was being accomplished. Initially, training of units was general in nature; but, as more detailed information relative to the scheme of maneuver, the terrain features, and the enemy forces became available, the program was supplemented to conform to the expected character of the operation.⁹⁴

For a period of several months prior to the operation, Headquarters, V Amphibious Corps, prepared participating elements so that a state of advanced readiness would exist prior to the target date. This preparation involved filling existing personnel shortages, provisions for supply and logistical support of assault and garrison elements, and an extensive training program. The latter involved a period of over-all instruction, a period of amphibious training and, finally, full-dress rehearsals.

The divisions and separate elements were issued training directives based on Corps standing operating procedures and experience gained in past operations, designed to prepare the units for their assigned missions. Emphasis was placed on individual and small unit train-

⁸⁹ NTLF Opn Order 3-44, Annexes A and K. 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion Operation Order No. 2.

⁹⁰ 4th Mar Div Report, Annex C, 2. 2d Mar Div Report, Section II, I. Ltr from LtCol H. N. Shea to CMC, 13Jan50, hereinafter cited as *Shea*.

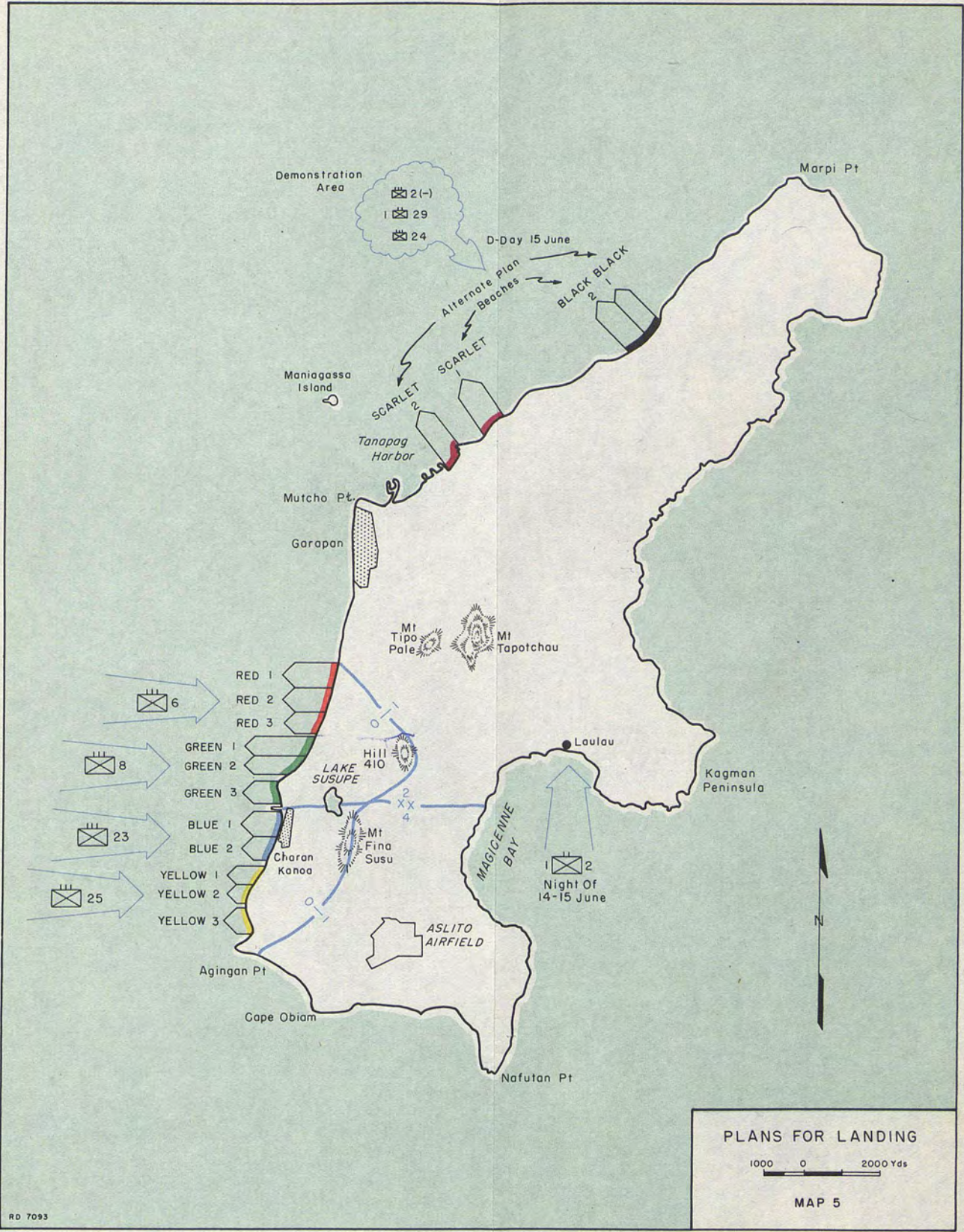
⁹¹ 10th Marines Report, I, hereinafter cited as 10th Mar Report. *The Field Artillery Journal*, Mar-Apr 48, "Amphibious Artillery," Maj E. J. Rowse.

⁹² Technically the 5th Battalion had already been designated "4th 105mm Howitzer Battalion, V Amphibious Corps"; but, since it was administratively and operationally attached to the 14th Marines, it was most often referred to as the 5th Battalion. After the Tinian operation the unit received 155mm howitzers, and its designation was changed to "4th 155mm Howitzer Battalion, V Amphibious Corps," under which

name it participated at Iwo Jima. Ltr from LtCol D. E. Reeve to author, 11Aug49, hereinafter cited as *Reeve*.

⁹³ 4th MarDiv Report, Annex C, 11. Interview with LtCol F. J. Karch 6Jan49, hereinafter cited as *Karch*.

⁹⁴ TF 56 G-3 Report, 3.



ing (which had paid such big dividends in previous campaigns), on the integration of the infantry-tank-artillery-engineer team, and on the use of the battalions, regiments and entire divisions as units. All weapons were fired in problems involving units the size of a squad to a division. Exercises were conducted both day and night in terrain varying from that of jungle and cane fields to that typical of larger volcanic land masses.

Several key Japanese phrases, like "*Tay-oh-ah-geh-tay-deh-tay-koi*" (put up your hands) and the Japanese equivalents of "hurry up," "come out and we will give you food and water," etc., were introduced into the vocabularies of all hands with the hope that some of the routine conversational exchanges would not require the services of an interpreter. These lessons were administered to the Marines at their most receptive time: before the evening movie.⁹⁵

The phases of general training culminated for all divisions in a period aboard ship. The 2d Marine Division conducted amphibious maneuvers during the period 12-31 March on beaches at Maalaea Bay, Maui, with all of its elements participating. Similar training was conducted in the same area by the 23d and 25th Marines of the 4th Marine Division during the period 13-26 April. The 24th Marines and 4th Division Troops participated in several preliminary boat exercises, using the facilities of the Maui Amphibious Training Center. During the later part of April, the 27th Infantry Division executed its shipboard training at Maui. The elements of the Corps Special Troops were instructed initially by Corps; but once attached to divisions, these elements participated in division training to familiarize them with their roles and to acquaint them with the infantry units with which they would operate.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ By the time these expressions had received the treatment of a Brooklyn accent, with occasional profanity added, the effect was both humorous and confusing. Later, many Marines became quite wrathful when the Japanese could not understand them.

⁹⁶ *TF 56 G-3 Report*, 4-5. *4th MarDiv Report*, Section 3, 6.

The divisions did not accomplish their training without difficulty, however; the 2d Division's camp on the island of Hawaii and the 4th Division's camp on Maui were incomplete in many respects. Considerable time was necessarily spent making these camps liveable. At Camp Maui, the ubiquitous red clay caused much annoyance. In dry weather, everything was covered with red dust, in wet weather, with red mud. Camp Tarawa, the 2d Division's camp at Kamuela, was located near vast, sprawling lava fields, and movement through these was dangerous. Many sprained ankles and bruised knees resulted from marches over the jagged gray eruption.

On the credit side of the ledger, both divisions had ample room to conduct firing exercises. The artillery regiments of the two divisions, in particular, enjoyed the wide open spaces which allowed them to spread out and fire at long ranges. Much attention was devoted to coordination and integration of the various arms throughout the period of preparation.

One device which proved very fruitful was that employed by the 2d Marine Division at the culmination of its training program. This was a "walk through" rehearsal, executed on dry land but using the identical scheme of maneuver to be employed at Saipan. As explained by Major General Thomas E. Watson, the division commander:

In preparation for the exercise, the successive phase lines which had been designed to control the advance of the Division from the landing beaches to the Force Beachhead Line were laid out on the ground exactly to scale. In front of the staked-out beaches were marked the adjacent water areas over which the ship-to-shore movement was to take place off Saipan. Over this terrain game board the entire division was moved in accordance with the time schedule calculated for the actual assault and employing the scheme of maneuver designed for the attack. In this manner, every officer and man learned the part he was to play in the landing and came to appreciate the time and space factors involved. Yet, only a few commanders and staff officers of the thousands of men who participated in this rehearsal actually knew the real name of the target.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Ltr from LtGen T. E. Watson to DirPubInfo, 9Jun49, hereinafter cited as *Watson*.

Both Marine Divisions had previous amphibious combat experience: the 2d at Guadalcanal and Tarawa, the 4th at Roi-Namur. Portions of the 27th Division had served with the V Amphibious Corps before: the 165th Infantry Regiment during the Gilberts operation at Makin and the 106th in the amphibious assault against Eniwetok Atoll. The XXIV Corps Artillery was newly-organized, its 155mm gun battalions being former coast artillery units. All eight amphibian tractor battalions assigned (four Marine and four Army) were well trained. Of these, one of the Army battalions and two of the Marine battalions had previously experienced combat.

Concurrently with the final training and preparation for the rehearsal and final embarkation of the assault forces, the garrison forces were assembled. Major General Sanderford Jarman, USA, was assigned as Commanding General, Saipan Garrison Force, and Major General James L. Underhill, USMC, as Commanding General, Tinian Garrison Force. In close harmony with the plans of the assault and naval forces, these units prepared for their missions. The 864th Antiaircraft Artillery Group under Colonel Kenneth M. Barager, USA, part of the Saipan Garrison Force, was ordered to land with the assault forces on Saipan to "furnish antiaircraft protection in the zones of action of the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions."⁹⁸

On 17 May a full-scale Corps landing was undertaken at Maalaea Bay, Maui. The 2d and 4th Marine Divisions landed abreast with a tactical problem ashore to simulate the actual planned scheme of maneuver to be employed on Saipan. Owing to the habitation of Maui, no live ammunition could be fired there. On 19 May, another exercise was undertaken at Kahoolawe, Hawaiian Islands.⁹⁹ Troops boated

in LVT's approached to within 300 yards of the beach under actual naval gunfire bombardment and aerial support but did not land. Immediately following this rehearsal, shore fire control parties of the Landing Force landed on Kahoolawe and conducted fire missions with their initially assigned fire support ships.¹⁰⁰

Similar rehearsals were conducted by the 27th Infantry Division with the naval elements of the Joint Expeditionary Force Reserve between the 20th and 24th of May. As plans for a special commitment of the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, were still under consideration, that unit with Company A of the Corps Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion conducted a separate final rehearsal at Hanalei Bay, Kauai. Air drops of supplies, made during this exercise, proved the method employed satisfactory.¹⁰¹

Three unfortunate operational accidents occurred during the rehearsal phase which resulted in two dead, 17 missing and 16 injured.¹⁰² Aboard LST 485, which was transporting a portion of the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, men were sleeping in a Landing Craft Tank (LCT 988) which was secured on the deck of the LST. The weather was rough and the strain on the cables was too great; at 0230 on the morning of 14 May the craft was pitched overboard with the sleeping men aboard. Nineteen men were either missing or killed, and five were injured as the craft was rammed and sunk by the next LST in column.

Similar accidents occurred aboard LST's 71 and 390, when LCT's 999 and 984 slipped overboard. Losses on these two, however, were not as great. LCT 999, its ramp door closed, suffered little damage and was towed back to

⁹⁸ NTLF Report, 4-5.

⁹⁹ Kahoolawe, just south of Maui and east of Lanai, absorbed more rounds than any island in the Pacific—and looked the part. Under Marine officer supervision, thousands of rounds of naval ammunition were expended monthly, concurrently providing training for ships and shore fire control personnel. In this manner, naval gunfire officers participated in firing exercises with the ships they would control in com-

bat. Ships that were available to fire the Kahoolawe course were unmistakably superior in shore bombardment technique to those that were not. Courses similar to the one at Kahoolawe were located at San Clemente and in the Guardalcanal area. *Marine Corps Gazette*, "Naval Gunfire Training in the Pacific," Jun 48, LtCol R. D. Heintz, Jr. *Turner*.

¹⁰⁰ TF 56 G-3 Report, 5-6. TF 56 Naval Gunfire Officer's Report, 8, hereinafter cited as TF 56 NGF Report.

¹⁰¹ Kyle, 3. TF 56 G-3 Report, 6.

¹⁰² TF 56, G-1 Journal, 16 May.

Pearl Harbor. LCT 984, however, had its ramp and engine doors open when launched and became so badly waterlogged that it capsized and sank slowly, assisted at the end by gunfire. The search for survivors continued throughout the night, and many were rescued.

An investigation of the accidents revealed that insufficient and, perhaps, improper securing, plus the fact that at least two of the LCT's were carrying heavy loads of fresh water, may have been chiefly responsible for the accident. The weight of extra ammunition for the LCT's 4.2-inch chemical mortars may also have been a contributory factor to the mishaps.¹⁰³

The rehearsals proved particularly valuable in the training derived from the ship-to-shore movement—involving over 700 LVT's—and in the test of the overall communication plan. Critiques were held following the rehearsal, and minor defects that had been discovered were pointed out and corrected in so far as practicable. Benefit was derived from the experience and familiarization gained by various elements of the Joint Expeditionary Force actually working together under circumstances closely paralleling those expected during the actual operation.

When the rehearsal was completed on 19 May, the bulk of the force returned to Pearl Harbor and Honolulu for rehabilitation. One-half of the LST's with embarked assault troops, however, remained at Maalaea Bay, Maui. With such a large force at Pearl Harbor, sufficient facilities and space for exercising the troops were not available. It was possible, however, to bring small units ashore each day for recreation. At the same time, the remainder of the loading was accomplished.¹⁰⁴

On 21 May, with ships tightly clustered at Pearl Harbor readying for the final approach to the objective, disaster struck.

LST 353, tied up at West Loch unloading its 4.2-inch mortars and ammunition for those weapons, suddenly, unaccountably, burst into

flames and exploded.¹⁰⁵ Black smoke billowed wildly from the scene, shattering explosions rent the air as the fire spread to five more LST's. Other ships in the vicinity of those doomed hastily got underway to prevent further spread of the destruction. Marines and sailors aboard the burning ships dived into the water, leaving weapons, clothing and equipment behind in their frantic efforts to escape. Many swam ashore with only a pair of trousers or shorts left of their possessions.

As the fires continued, small ships equipped with fire-fighting apparatus moved in close to LST's and tried to subdue the inferno. Personnel watching the catastrophe stood with nervous anticipation, fearing further explosions which would mean almost certain death for the fire fighters. Their devotion to duty excited the admiration of all onlookers. Perched precariously on their tiny red craft, these men moved closer than safety or common sense would dictate. Continuous small blasts sprayed the area with fragments of shells and pieces of equipment, and there was no assurance that the entire area might not go up in one gigantic explosion at any moment. But the fire fighters remained stubbornly at their posts.

In the end, they could not save the ships that were burning, but they were successful in preventing a spread of the damage. By dark, six LST's were lost ¹⁰⁶ with heavy resultant casualties in personnel and equipment. By good fortune, however, most of the amphibian tractors and DUKW's had debarked from the ships for routine checkups ashore prior to the fire.

¹⁰⁵ At the time of the explosion, LST 353 had on board the only LCT with 4.2-inch mortars that had not gone overboard on the tragic night of 14-15 May. An investigation, following the accidental launchings, had concluded that the excessive weight of 4.2-inch mortar ammunition was a contributory factor in the mishaps. This, plus the fact that it was too late to get more craft fitted with 4.2-inch mortars anyway, caused Admiral Turner, commander Joint Expeditionary Force, to order the project's abandonment. LST 353 was in the process of complying when the accident occurred. *Turner*.

¹⁰⁶ These were LST's 39, 179, 480, 43, 69 and 353. The latter three had LCT's aboard which were also lost in the disaster.

¹⁰³ Joint Expeditionary Force Report, TF 51, Encl A, 2, hereinafter cited as *TF 51 Report*. Annual Sanitary Report For The 2d Marine Division 1944, 91.

¹⁰⁴ *TF 56 G-3 Report*, 6-8. *NTLF Report*, 5-6.

As the LST's were transporting assault troops and in view of the imminence of the operation, the losses were especially critical. The 2d Marine Division lost a total of 95 men and the 4th Division 112 in this disaster. Rumors were rife that sabotage had caused the disaster, but an investigation failed to reveal that it was other than an unfortunate accident.¹⁰⁷

Immediately following the explosion, all agencies concerned were called into action to assist in caring for the injured and surviving troops. Clearing stations were organized through which survivors were directed to the hospitals or to the Transient Center, V Amphibious Corps. Replacements had to be supplied as soon as possible. This was accomplished promptly from personnel at the Replacement Center.¹⁰⁸

The LST's were to have sailed on the morning of 24 May, less than three days after the costly fire. It was apparent that a delay in departure would be demanded. But for how long? The gears of the attack machine were meshed to an established target date; delays could upset the smooth timing. Concern along these lines was soon relieved, however, as efficient staff work paid off. Ships, personnel, equipment and supplies were replaced in four short days and LST's sailed only 24 hours late, with the lost day being made up en route.¹⁰⁹

MOVEMENT TO THE OBJECTIVE

The Northern Attack Force departed from Pearl Harbor in echelon. The slow-moving LST groups with assault troops, LVT's and artillery embarked, left on 25 May. Attack Group One, embarking the remainder of the 4th Marine Division and Headquarters, Expedi-

tionary Troops, sailed on 29 May. Attack Group Two, with the 2d Marine Division and Headquarters, Northern Troops and Landing Force embarked, left Pearl Harbor on 30 May. Other echelons of Garrison Forces and re-supply shipping were scheduled to depart at later dates.

En route to the objective, every individual was thoroughly briefed on the plans for the attack on Saipan. Schools and staff exercises were conducted, lectures were given; photographs, relief maps, terrain models and charts had been prepared and furnished all units. Every individual was completely informed of the detailed plans for the attack. The force arrived at Eniwetok Lagoon for final staging between the 6th and 11th of June.¹¹⁰

The troop-carrying limitations of LST's precluded the comfortable embarkation of complete tactical units for the lengthy voyage from Hawaii to Saipan. Though each of these vessels carried sufficient amphibian tractors to lift an entire rifle company, they failed to provide adequate sleeping spaces for the full complement of troops. It was therefore ordered that surplus personnel, who could not be thus accommodated, travel from Hawaii in the comparative comfort of AP's and transfer to appropriate LST's at Eniwetok. Tactical advantages of arrival at Saipan as integrated assault units warranted the overcrowding during the last six days of the trip, and despite the fact that the Marines were packed like sardines during this period, there is no evidence that fighting efficiency was impaired.¹¹¹ At all times crews and maintenance details for embarked LVT's and LVT(A)'s were billeted in LST's bearing their vehicles.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ *TF 51 Report*, Encl A, 2. *2d Mar Div Report*, Sec. VI, 1. *4th Mar Div Report*, 11. Interview with Col M. C. Horner, 13Jul49.

¹⁰⁸ *TF 56 G-1 Report*, 2-3. The commanding officer of the 23d Marines, the regiment that suffered heaviest in this accident, commented that though the replacements were adequate in numbers, they "were not trained to carry out the functions of those lost." Ltr from MajGen L. R. Jones to LtCol G. D. Gayle 8Feb50, hereinafter cited as *L. R. Jones*.

¹⁰⁹ *NTLF Report*, 8.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9. Eniwetok was also used as an assembly and staging point for all shipping moving to and from the Marianas. A convoy and routing organization was set up to control ships of all types, and was designed to prevent an undesirable congestion of ships in the Marianas, while at the same time making promptly available in that area such ships as were required. Fifth Fleet, Final Report on the Operation to Capture the Marianas Islands, 2, hereinafter cited as *5th Fleet Final Report*.

¹¹¹ Aggressiveness was perhaps increased. After six crowded days aboard an LST, many Marines were ready to fight anybody.

¹¹² *2d Mar Div Report*, Sec. II, 2.

NAVAL GUNFIRE AND AIR BOMBARDMENT

While LST's and transports carrying assault forces churned toward Saipan, preparatory bombardment of targets areas had begun. On the afternoon of 11 June, Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's Task Force 58¹¹³ initiated three and one-half days' intense bombardment of Saipan, Tinian, Guam, Rota and Pagan.

Originally, softening of the target was to have begun to 12 June; but this was changed when Admiral Spruance approved Mitscher's recommendation that a fighter sweep be executed on the afternoon of the 11th. Mitscher gave as the principal reason for this alteration the desirability of varying the pattern of strikes and taking advantage of the opportunity for surprise. "Heretofore," reported Mitscher after the operation, "all of our carrier attacks had been made in the early morning. It was believed that the enemy had become accustomed to this and would expect us to continue this practice."¹¹⁴

While the carriers were still 200 miles east of the islands, a 225-plane fighter sweep surprised

¹¹³ TF 58 contained eight large carriers (*Hornet*, *Yorktown*, *Franklin*, *Bunker Hill*, *Wasp*, *Enterprise*, *Lexington* and *Essex*), eight light carriers (*Bataan*, *Cabot*, *Belleau Wood*, *Monterey*, *Princeton*, *San Jacinto*, *Cowpens*, and *Langley*), seven new (fast) battleships (*Alabama*, *South Dakota*, *Indiana*, *New Jersey*, *Iowa*, *Washington* and *North Carolina*), 13 cruisers (*Boston*, *Baltimore*, *Canberra*, *Oakland*, *San Juan*, *Santa Fe*, *Mobile*, *Biloxi*, *Vincennes*, *Houston*, *Miami*, *San Diego* and *Reno*) and 58 destroyers. From its 16 carriers, TF 58 could provide an air fleet of 900 planes. Fifth Fleet Operation Plan 10-44, 12-13. *The Navy's Air War*, Aviation History Unit OP-519B, DCNO (Air), edited by Lt A. R. Buchanan, USNR, 204-205, hereinafter cited as *The Navy's Air War*.

¹¹⁴ CTF 58 ser. 00388, 11Sep44, 31. Some histories have mentioned the reason for the speed up was that a Japanese search plane had spotted the Task Force as it sortied from Majuro and that Mitscher had decided to move as rapidly as possible. Admiral Spruance, however, says that this is incorrect. "A Japanese search plane . . . made a high altitude reconnaissance of Majuro a day or two before Task Force 58 sailed and again about three days after it had gone." This had no effect upon the change in the fighter sweep, however. Ltr from Adm R. A. Spruance to CMC, 17Jan50, hereinafter cited as *Spruance*.

the Japanese in the Marianas and destroyed 150 planes in the air or on the ground. This crippling blow depleted the local air strength by about one-third and thereafter prevented the enemy from reacting in strength. The United States advantage, once gained, was never lost. "Control of the air," reported Admiral Nimitz, "had been effected by the original fighter sweep on 11 June."¹¹⁵ The tactic of the afternoon strike had proved feasible and, according to the commanding officer of one of the participating air groups, was "an excellent innovation . . ."¹¹⁶

On 12 June the serious bombing began; Saipan and sister islands felt the impact of tons of high explosives dropped upon airfields and installations. The 13th brought a resumption of the rain of bombs. With most of their planes either burned on the ground or missing in action, the Japanese responded only with sporadic dusk and night attacks during this preliminary phase of the operation.

The inability of the enemy to foresee the imminent danger to the Marianas left two vulnerable convoys in the area when Mitscher's Task Force entered. The first of these, a formation of 20 ships, fleeing on a northerly course 125 miles west of Pagan Island, was attacked on the afternoon of the 12th by planes of Rear Admiral William K. Harrill's Task Group 58.4. To the south, 135 miles west of Guam, the other convoy (six ships) became the target for a special attack mission sent by Rear Admiral Joseph J. Clark, commanding Task Group 58.1. Between the two attacks 12 cargo ships, three submarine chasers, and one patrol-torpedo boat were sunk.¹¹⁷

Surface ships of TF 58 began to bombard Saipan on 13 June (D-minus 2). The fast battleships fired their main and secondary batteries for nearly seven hours into the western coast of Saipan and Tinian, turning the im-

¹¹⁵ CINCPAC Operations in the Pacific Ocean Areas, Jun44, 30.

¹¹⁶ *Yorktown*, ser. 0020, 29Jun44, 52.

¹¹⁷ *The Navy's Air War*, 205-206; *King*, 590; "Japanese Naval and Merchant Ship Losses During World War II By All Causes," Joint Army-Navy Assessment Committee (JANAC), 12 and 60-61, hereinafter cited as *JANAC*.

pact areas into scenes of desolation. Aircraft, aviation facilities, antiaircraft emplacements, coast defense guns, canefields and enemy installations of many types were struck. At night, the persistent harrassing fires of TF 58's destroyers denied the Japanese even an hour's relaxation. This "around the clock" shelling prevented last minute improvement and repair of positions and greatly complicated the enemy commanders' tasks of readying their commands.¹¹⁸

The enemy's reaction to Mitscher's strikes of 11-12-13 June is indicated by the diary account of a Japanese tank noncommissioned officer, Tokuzo Matsuya:

11 June—At a little after 1300, I was awakened by the air raid alarm and immediately led all men into the trench. Scores of enemy Grumman fighters began strafing and bombing Aslito Airfield and Garapan. For about two hours, the enemy planes ran amuck and finally left leisurely amidst the unparalleledly inaccurate anti-aircraft fire. All we could do was watch helplessly.

12 June—With daybreak enemy planes (even more than yesterday) made a sudden attack. The all day strafing and bombing was much heavier. It must have caused great damage at Garapan and Aslito Airfield.

13 June—At 0930, enemy naval guns began firing in addition to the aerial bombing. The enemy holds us in utter contempt. If only we had a hundred planes or so.¹¹⁹

Sitting in a ringside seat on Tinian (six miles south of Saipan), an unidentified Japanese noncommissioned officer wrote in his diary on 12 June:

Of all the tens of Japanese planes one can't see even one during a raid. The planes which cover the sky are all the enemy's. They are far and away more skillful than Japanese planes. Now begins our cave life. Enemy planes overhead all day long—some 230 in number. They completely plastered our airfields. . . . Where are our planes? Not one was sent up. Our AA guns spread black smoke where the enemy planes weren't. Not one hit out of a thousand shots. The Naval Air Group has taken to its heels.¹²⁰

As already indicated, Admiral Mitscher's Task Force inflicted considerable damage and contributed much to the eventual successes on

Saipan, but its effectiveness was limited by several factors which are worthy of note. First, the seven fast battleships were required to remain beyond the range of shore batteries and outside possible mined areas. In regard to this, Admiral Spruance has written "... the broad shelf to the westward of the island gave minable depths. As the minesweepers did not arrive and start sweeping until D-1 Day (14 June), the fast battleships obviously ought not to steam through what might be mined waters to conduct their bombardment."¹²¹

As a result, fires were delivered from ranges in excess of 10,000 yards. Experience in the Gilberts, Marshalls and Eniwetok had taught that ships must close the range and fire direct fire, spotting from the ship itself, if complete destruction of installations, and fortifications were to be realized. In contrast to the desired employment, there were instances of battleships firing 5-inch 38 at ranges in excess of 16,000 yards—too great for destruction of point targets.

The fast battleships, as a group, lacked the training and experience necessary for effective shore bombardment.¹²² This type of firing, involving methodical, patient adjustment, was fundamentally different from the firing necessary to succeed in an engagement at sea. Where ships had not received specific training in shore bombardment, their effectiveness on this mission was considerably reduced. Task Force 58, of necessity, had devoted the bulk of its training and thinking to fighting surface engagements, with due emphasis on speed and maneuverability. Consequently, the special difficulties attendant to the destruction of small land targets had received but scanty attention. Both in size and distinctiveness, a well-camouflaged pillbox presented an entirely different type of target than an enemy ship.

Since TF 58 was dependent on air spotters for adjustment of its fires, it follows that these

¹²¹ Spruance.

¹¹⁸ King, *loc. cit.* Naval Gunfire Support in the FORAGER Operation, 10, hereinafter cited as FORAGER NGF Report.

¹¹⁹ CINCPAC-CINCPMA Item #10,238.

¹²⁰ CINCPAC-CINCPMA Item #11,405.

¹²² The exception that proves the rule: LtCol Joseph L. Stewart, Assistant G-3, NTLF, comments that "the North Carolina [one of the fast battleships of TF 58] was one of the best shooting ships I ever fired." Ltr from LtCol J. L. Stewart to CMC, 9Jan50.



UNDAMAGED JAPANESE PILLBOX harmonizes with surrounding terrain. Such inconspicuous targets received scant attention from bombarding ships. Only those positions receiving direct hits were silenced.

spotters should be adept in locating and recognizing important enemy ground installations and defenses. Spotters, in most cases, lacked the vital training necessary to develop this ability and, consequently, directed fire on obvious buildings and terrain features which made interesting but unprofitable targets. A case in point is the sugar mill at Charan Kanoa. This building, a prominent landmark, easily identified, had been riddled with shot and shell. The Japanese, however, were not inside, nor were they using the mill for military purposes.

In addition to those reasons already given, the effectiveness of TF 58's bombardment was further limited because of an overemphasis on covering all assigned areas, (so-called "area-shooting") to the neglect of specific point targets within those areas. Intercepted radio transmissions indicated that ships often shifted to new targets without applying the air

spotter's last correction and adjustment.¹²³

A comment by Admiral Spruance in regard to the employment of the fast battleships for shore bombardment is pertinent:

The use of the fast battleships . . . was done with a view to increasing the number of large bombardment shell that could be carried in the heavy ships . . . without too great a reduction in the armor piercing rounds that the [fast battleships] must carry for a fleet engagement. This served a useful purpose, but it was never intended to take the place of the close-in fire of the [old battleships] to which it was a useful preliminary.¹²⁴

On 14 June (D-minus 1) fire support ships of the Northern and Southern Attack Forces (TF's 52 and 53), under the command of Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf, arrived off Saipan and joined TF 58 in a blasting bombardment

¹²³ *FORAGER NGF Report*, 2-10. NTLF, Naval Gunfire Report, 5, hereinafter cited as *NTLF NGF Report*.

¹²⁴ *Spruance*.



SUGAR MILL IN CHARAN KANOA, an obvious target, received more naval gunfire than it deserved. Smokestack provided one ingenious Japanese an observation post for several days after United States landings.

of beaches and installations. For the D-minus 1 and D-Day naval gunfire preparation, Admiral Turner divided the islands of Saipan and Tinian into seven fire support sectors and assigned a fire support unit to each. (For sectors and ships assigned to each, see Map 6.) Fire Support Unit Eight was not assigned a specific sector for the D-minus 1 bombardment and was to "deliver counterbattery fire only as required." On D-Day, with its ammunition supply virtually intact, Unit Eight would move into the western portion of Sector 6 and deliver "intense enfilade fire at the Charan Kanoa beach installations."

Ships firing in critical Sector 1 (which included the preferred landing beaches) would furnish covering fire for mine sweepers and underwater demolition teams as well as to "destroy beach defenses... particularly including Afetna Pont." These ships were also to destroy all buildings and installations at Charan Kanoa except those facilities that might later be converted to our own use.

The six destroyers of Fire Support Units

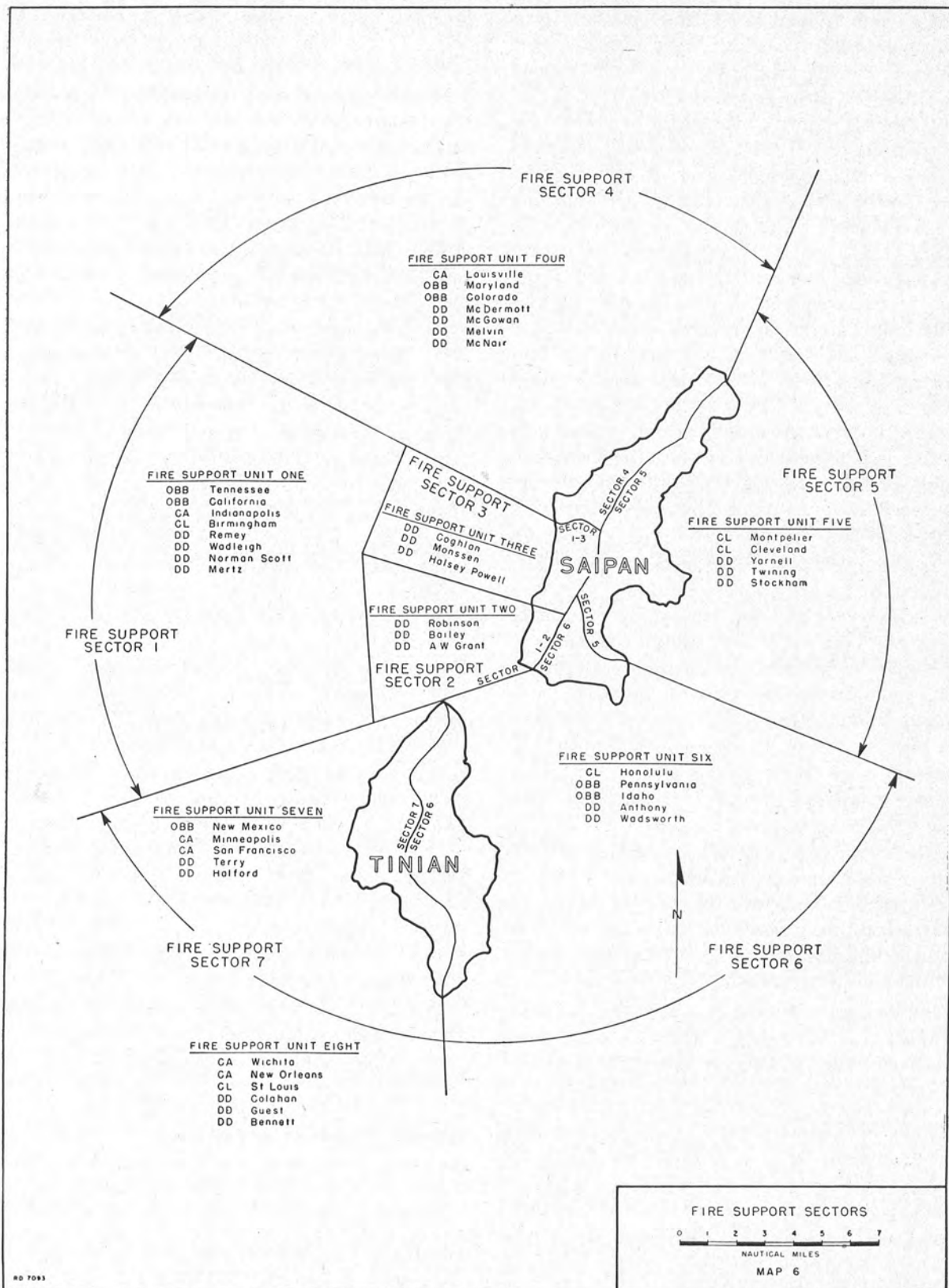
Two and Three would participate in the D-Day bombardment only. On D-minus 1, these ships would afford protection to the advancing LST's and transports of TF 52. It will be noted that sectors 2 and 3 were smaller segments of sector 1, with the range very much reduced. The reason for this preponderance of power off the western coast was that the Charan Kanoa beaches had been selected as preferred landing areas.

Fire Support Unit Four, in addition to covering mine sweepers and underwater demolition teams operating within its sector, would prepare the alternate landing areas for possible use and cover the Demonstration Group.

Fire Support Units Five, Six and Seven would destroy enemy guns and installations lying within their sectors.

In addition to the specific targets assigned, support ships were to "fire all unburned cane fields (using WP projectiles) within their sectors."¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Task Force 52 Attack Order A11-44, Annexes A and C.



The bombardment of 14 June generally proceeded according to plan; certain alterations, however, were demanded by the development of the situation. Rear Admiral Howard F. Kingman's Fire Support Unit One experienced difficulty in destroying Japanese installations on Afetna Point; combined fires of *Birmingham* and *Indianapolis* throughout the morning failed to achieve destruction or, indeed, even complete neutralization, inasmuch as mortar fire, apparently emanating from the point, constantly menaced the ships. Because of this situation, Admiral Kingman issued orders to *Tennessee*, *California* and *Birmingham* to concentrate on Afetna Point during the afternoon instead of assigned targets in Charan Kanoa. In addition, two strafing-bombing strikes were placed on the point during the afternoon. The result of all this was that defense positions appeared to be neutralized but not destroyed.¹²⁶

Fire Support Unit Four (commanded by Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf, who also commanded the Task Group) did not experience the expected opposition from Flores Point or from Maniagassa Island, and *Maryland* and *Colorado* were therefore directed to concentrate on Japanese batteries in the vicinity of Mutcho Point. The cruiser *Louisville* took over the missions formerly assigned the two battleships.¹²⁷

Rear Admiral Robert W. Hayler's Fire Support Unit Five covered its assigned sector on Saipan's east coast, though it experienced difficulty in locating enemy installations. This unit was assigned to remain off Saipan, delivering harassing fires throughout the night of 14–15 June, while the remainder of the task group retired to the westward.¹²⁸

Operating in Sector 6 was Rear Admiral Walden L. Ainsworth's Fire Support Unit Six,¹²⁹ covering its assigned area without special

incident. One point of interest, however, is found in the fact that the battleship *Pennsylvania*, after firing at Nafutan Point (on the southeast tip of the island) for approximately eight hours, failed to achieve complete neutralization. Almost as soon as the *Pennsylvania's* fire ceased, a Japanese shore battery impudently opened fire upon, but failed to hit, the cruiser *Montpelier*. This again illustrated that neither destruction nor neutralization was guaranteed even by relatively long periods of bombardment.¹³⁰

Fire Support Unit Seven, commanded by Rear Admiral George L. Weyler, bombarded the west coast of Tinian throughout the day in accordance with its instructions, while Rear Admiral Charles T. Joy's Fire Support Unit Eight observed Tinian's east coast to protect Unit Six from Japanese shore batteries.¹³¹

With the arrival on 14 June of the old battleships, cruisers and destroyers of the Joint Expeditionary Force, the quality of the shore bombardment improved greatly. The reason for this was no mystery; these ships had devoted considerable time to shore bombardment, both in training and battle experience. During the rehearsals at Kahoolawe, a month prior to the operation, the old battleships had received valuable experience. They knew the necessity of slow, painstaking adjustment in shore bombardment, that merely covering an area was not sufficient. At Tarawa, where the development of the technique was still suffering growing pains, the fallacy of area-shooting was clearly revealed. Methodical pin-pointing of targets, complex bookkeeping, careful weighing of priorities, and studious damage assessment are requisites to efficient shore bombardment.¹³²

While the old battleships practiced, TF 58's new battleships had been far at sea executing raids, with little or no opportunity to train in

¹²⁶ Task Unit 52.17.1 Report, 6–7.

¹²⁷ Task Group 52.17 and Task Unit 52.17.4 Report, 7.

¹²⁸ Task Unit 52.17.5 Report, 1–3.

¹²⁹ Admiral Ainsworth was also in command of Task Group 52.10, which included Fire Support Units Six, Seven and Eight. Ships of these three units were from

the Southern Attack Force, earmarked for fire support at Guam.

¹³⁰ Task Group 52.10 and Task Unit 52.10.6 Report, 1.

¹³¹ Task Unit 52.10.7 Report, 2. Task Unit 52.10.8 Report, 2.

¹³² *Marine Corps Gazette*, "Naval Gunfire Support in Landing," Sep45, Maj R. D. Heintz, Jr., 42.

shore bombardment. This, plus the aforementioned range restriction, resulted in area-shooting rather than systematic pin-pointing.

Even with the improvement of shore bombardment beginning with the arrival of the old battleships, however, certain factors limited a really effective preparation. First and foremost was the shortage of time with respect to the very large number of targets. Since the older battleships did not arrive until D-minus 1, allowing them to participate in only one day of preliminary bombardment (as distinguished from the D-Day fires), it is apparent that adequate time for these ships did not exist. Second, was a failing already discussed in relation to TF 58—lack of training of air spotters in distinguishing important targets ashore. (Here, again, obvious targets attracted entirely too much attention.) Third, was the necessity that support ships of TF 53 (Fire Support Units Six, Seven and Eight) conserve ammunition for the bombardment of Guam, expected to take place within a few days. On D-Day another restrictive would be added—targets farther than 1,000 yards inland were to be attacked only by aircraft until H-Hour. Although done in the interests of employing both supporting arms to the maximum without using precious time coordinating their efforts, it resulted in some targets escaping the fires of the weapon best suited for their destruction.¹³³

Operation reports mention a number of reasons which contributed to prevent satisfactory neutralization or destruction of targets on Saipan—the size of the island, the large number of defensive installations, the enemy's excellent use of camouflage, and the mobility of many of his weapons.¹³⁴ These same characteristics, however, could as well apply to many other islands (Guam for example), and do not represent conditions peculiar to Saipan.

Operating under cover of naval gunfire three underwater demolition teams (UDT's)¹³⁵ moved close inshore during daylight of 14 June

to perform their hazardous tasks. There, with eyes anxiously searching for signs of enemy activity, skilled hands prodded the reef floor for obstacles, mines, and the like. Once found, such obstacles had to be removed or destroyed. Teams were assigned as follows: Beaches Red Two and Three and Green One and Two—UDT #5; reef at the north side of Tanapag Harbor, leading to Beaches Scarlet One and Two (alternate plan beaches)—UDT #6; Beaches Blue One and Two and Yellow One and Two—UDT #7.

UDT #5 (covered by *California* and *Birmingham*) and UDT #6 (covered by *Maryland*, *Colorado* and *Louisville*) proceeded according to plan, neither team suffering casualties. For the men of UDT #7, however, it was a different story; heavy fire from Beaches Blue and Yellow greatly complicated their tasks. To assist them, *Tennessee* and *Indianapolis* laid down an intense 5-inch and 40mm barrage along the beaches but were unable to neutralize enemy positions sufficiently for UDT #7 to conduct a complete reconnaissance. Hostile fire notwithstanding, UDT #7 executed its reconnaissance to the following distances from beaches: Blue One—Waterline; Blue Two—75 yards; Yellow One—Reconnaissance impossible except lip of reef; Yellow Two—100 yards.

At 0956, Commander UDT #7 requested smoke to screen rescue of survivors—including seven wounded. For this screen, the destroyer *Wadleigh* fired 87 rounds of 5-inch 38 white phosphorous. The battleship *Tennessee* also fired several white phosphorous rounds along the beach to assist in the evacuation. This constituted the Navy's only use at Saipan of screening smoke for other than screening transport areas and anchorages.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ A detailed smoke plan had been prepared which included the screening of the front and flanks of boat waves; except as stated, however, the plan was not used. Adm Harry W. Hill, Commander Western Landing Group, stated that smoke was not used in the ship-to-shore movement because it was unnecessary. "Smoke is a double-edge weapon. Though it screens the enemy's observation, it also greatly complicates control and coordination. We felt that more was to be lost than gained by the use of smoke in the ship-to-shore movement at Saipan." Interview with Adm

¹³³ *FORAGER NGF Report*, 11.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, *COMINCH P-007*, 3-2.

¹³⁵ Each team consisted of approximately 16 officers and 80 men, all Navy except for one Army and one Marine liaison officer per team.

No one was disappointed to find that pre-assault demolitions would be unnecessary at Saipan. But, despite the lack of obstacles, the UDT's were able to provide some valuable information to the landing force, information concerning reef conditions, depths of water, channels, surf, tide, current, and defenses on the beach.¹³⁷

More information in this connection had been acquired on 13 June (D-minus 2) by Commander William I. Martin, USN. Leading his torpedo-bomber squadron (VT 10) from the carrier *Enterprise* in strikes against beach defenses, Martin's plane was downed by Japanese antiaircraft fire near the radio station north of Charan Kanoa. Although his two crewmen were killed, the commander swam out to the reef. While awaiting rescue, he noted down a number of pertinent facts regarding tidal conditions, depth of water over the reef, and nature of the reef floor. This report was transmitted to the landing force prior to D-Day.¹³⁸

Also jotting down notes was Japanese non-commissioned officer Tokuzo Matsuya. In his diary entry for 14 June, he reveals bitterness at the failure of Japanese planes to appear over Saipan, coupled with very realistic philosophy:

Where are our planes? Are they letting us die without making any effort to save us? If it were for the security of the Empire, we would not hesitate to lay down our lives but wouldn't it be a great loss to the "Land of the Gods" for us all to die on this island? It would be easy for me to die but for the sake of Japan's future I feel obligated to stay alive.¹³⁹

Actually, this NCO saw through the picture more completely than did most of his superiors,

Hill on 20Sep49. To this, Adm Turner adds: "Actually, at Saipan we had too much smoke during the landing. The ship bombardment set up a heavy wall of smoke, due to the light off-shore breeze, that did not dissipate until after about the second wave had landed. Turner.

¹³⁷ Details of UDT operations at Saipan are a synthesis of the following sources: *COMINCH P-007*, 4-1 and 8-1; Task Force 52 Attack Order A11-44, Annex G, 1-2; Task Unit 52.17.1 Report, 5-6.

¹³⁸ *Naval Air Operations In the Marianas*, Naval Aviation History Unit OP-501D, C-32, hereinafter cited as *Naval Air Operations In the Marianas*.

¹³⁹ CINCPAC-CINCPAA Item #10,238.

who thought that it was just a matter of time until the mighty Japanese air arm asserted itself.

The imposing array of sea power off Saipan might have frightened a less persistent foe to silence, but the Japanese periodically emerged from cover to answer the challenge. In most instances their shells only churned the water, but twice on 14 June they found their intended mark. Destroyer *Braine* (of Fire Support Unit Seven) and battleship *California* (of Fire Support Unit One) were hit by one shell each while engaging in shore bombardment. Though neither ship suffered critical damage, the shelling had its effect; *Braine's* number 2 torpedo mount and after fireroom were put out of commission by a 6-inch shell from Tinian, and *California's* main battery director and forward radar were rendered inoperative by an exploding missile (estimated 105mm) from Saipan. The destroyer had three men killed and 15 injured, the battleship one killed and nine wounded.¹⁴⁰

It should be noted that preliminary bombardment of Saipan was limited to carrier and surface strikes. There was no land-based air support prior to the landing. While land-based air assisted the operation indirectly by attacks on other islands, none could be employed against Saipan itself because of distances involved. Also, there was no possibility of artillery support prior to the landing from lesser islands within supporting range, as had been possible at Kwajalein, Roi-Namur, and Eniwetok. There was no continued preparation of any sort over an extended period of time, such as that which was to prove so effective in the preparation for the Guam and Tinian operations.¹⁴¹ In this connection, General Holland

¹⁴⁰ Fifth Fleet, Initial Report on the Operation to Capture the Marianas Islands, 15-16, hereinafter cited as *5th Fleet Initial Report*. *TF 51 Report*, Encl L, 1.

¹⁴¹ This opinion is not shared by Adm Turner, who writes: "After a great deal of thought, I have come to the conclusion that the prolonged bombardments of Guam and Tinian actually had very little good effect. . . . In any case, it would have been unwise and impracticable, from the standpoint of major tactics, to have had a longer preparatory period for Saipan. . . ." Turner.

Smith later wrote: "The initial mistake was this: we did not soften up the enemy sufficiently before we landed."¹⁴²

Saipan was the most heavily defended of the three islands, despite the fact that the Japanese defensive preparations were incomplete at the time of our landing. One may only speculate on how much more costly the operation would have been if the Japanese defensive plans had reached fruition. Likewise, we may only speculate on how much less costly it would have been if preparatory fires had been adequate.¹⁴³

RELATED COVERING ACTIONS

The scope and extent of the Saipan venture demanded that many areas in the Pacific be at least temporarily neutralized, so that the Japanese would have false clues as to the target area and so that our approach and landing would not be strongly contested by enemy aircraft. This build-up was vital to success.

Among the far-removed covering actions were the operations of the Eleventh Army Air Force, flying from its bases in Alaska and the Aleutians against Japanese installations in the Kurile Islands. This unit's raids, mounted in the face of harsh Arctic conditions, affected the Saipan operation in an indirect—yet important—manner: a portion of the Japanese air force was diverted from the Central Pacific and sent to defend the icy north.¹⁴⁴

Wake and Marcus, which flanked on the north our approach to the Marianas, were the targets for a carrier raid almost a month before the Saipan landings. This raid, under the

¹⁴² *Coral and Brass*, Gen H. M. Smith, 162, hereinafter cited as *Coral and Brass*.

¹⁴³ Analysis of these inadequacies in preparatory fires is drawn from hindsight, a much easier procedure than determining—before an operation—what the needs will be. In this connection, VAdm Harry W. Hill has written: "It is my recollection that during the planning period everyone was pretty well agreed that the naval gunfire, while not greatly in excess of requirements, certainly appeared to be adequate for the job." Ltr from VAdm Hill to CMC, 12Jan50.

¹⁴⁴ *The War Reports*, Second Report of the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, Gen H. H. Arnold, 388, hereinafter cited as *Arnold*.

tactical command of Rear Admiral Alfred E. Montgomery, USN, was designed both to neutralize the threat to the projected supply line from the Marshalls to the Marianas and to indoctrinate several new air groups. Three carriers participated—*Essex*, *Wasp* and *San Jacinto*.¹⁴⁵

Wake and the by-passed atolls were methodically bombed by the land-based Army planes of Major General Willis H. Hale, USA, acting under the general direction of Vice Admiral John H. Hoover, USN. Truk, also, was kept neutralized by these forces in coordination with land-based planes from the South and Southwest Pacific.¹⁴⁶

More intimately keyed to the target date were the strikes on the Palaus. Executed by aircraft of MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Forces, the bombardment began on 3 June; from 9 June until the Saipan landings these islands and others in the western Carolines were harassed daily. This activity minimized possibilities of trouble from the south and southwest.

To prevent the Japanese from staging aircraft through the Bonins in the north, two task groups (Clark's 58.1 and Harrill's 58.4) of TF 58 departed Saipan on 14 June for an attack. This move was the deepest penetration of Empire waters ever made by a carrier striking force up to this time. In the teeth of a growing gale, fighter sweeps and bombing missions were launched against Iwo Jima, Chichi Jima and Haha Jima; and, despite airborne opposition and unfavorable flying conditions, the mission was accomplished and the effectiveness of the Bonins as an aircraft staging area was greatly reduced.¹⁴⁷

FINAL APPROACH OF THE NORTHERN ATTACK FORCE

Details of staging at Eniwetok Lagoon, meanwhile, had been completed on time, and the Northern Attack Force departed by echelon on the 8th, 9th and 10th of June. The en-

¹⁴⁵ *The Navy's Air War*, 204.

¹⁴⁶ *Arnold*, 384-385. *A History of the United States Navy*, Dudley W. Knox, 555, hereinafter cited as *Knox*.

¹⁴⁷ *The Navy's Air War*, 206.

tire movement to the objective was uneventful, the weather was pleasant, and no portion of the Northern Attack Force was detected. During the movement of the attack force to Eniwetok, while there, and in the subsequent move to Saipan, radio silence (except on very high frequency) prevailed.¹⁴⁸

LST's with assault waves embarked and transports of the Joint Expeditionary Force arrived at the target area before dawn of 15 June. Strategic surprise appears to have been gained, but the bombardment which had begun on 11 June, together with the work of the Underwater Demolition Teams, denied any hope of tactical surprise.

¹⁴⁸ Task Force 56 (Expeditionary Troops), Signal Officer's Report, 8.

The armada now in position off the western coast of Saipan was tremendous. One hundred ships were required to transport the Northern Landing Force, plus four to five times that number of supporting vessels.¹⁴⁹

Personnel aboard those ships had been much heartened during their approach by an optimistic dispatch from Admiral Mitscher (whose Task Force 58 had been pummeling Saipan and sister islands for several days): "Keep coming, Marines; they're going to run away." But, on an island only fourteen and one-fifth miles long and six and one-half miles wide, there isn't much room to run—if, indeed, one wished to run.

¹⁴⁹ COMINCH P-007, 1-3 and 5-4. TF 56 G-3 Report, 13.



SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

CHAPTER II

D-Day—15 June 1944

PRE-H-HOUR PREPARATIONS

At about 0400, 15 June 1944, the landing force, readying itself aboard ships for the supreme test, received an anxiously awaited report: that of the underwater demolition teams. These had accomplished their dangerous mission on D-minus 1 under cover of naval gunfire. Their report cleared up many points: the reef itself offered no obstacles, natural or artificial, to a crossing by our amphibious vehicles; the depth of the water in the lagoon¹ was a little greater than had been expected; no mines had been found on the reef, or in the lagoon; tanks could be landed on the reef, although a path to the beach was undetermined; the beach was organized throughout the landing area with an occasional pillbox and many trenches; and mobile artillery was observed shifting into position.

Generally the report was not too disappointing. The presence of tetrahedron obstacles and barbed wire on the reef would have complicated the landing. From the reports received there was no cause to alter plans. One factor, not revealed in reports of underwater demolition teams, which later complicated the ship-to-shore movement: mortar and artillery registration flags on the reef and in the lagoon.

¹ Lagoon, as here used, refers to the expanse of water between the reef's edge and the beach.

These markers, which enabled the enemy to place accurate fire on assault waves, could be plainly seen on the morning of 15 June even from ships many thousands of yards off shore. It is possible, since underwater demolition teams made no mention of them, that the flags were placed after the teams' 14 June reconnaissance.²

Transport Groups A and B, with portions of General Watson's 2d Marine Division and General Schmidt's 4th Marine Division embarked,³ moved into position in the transport area 18,000 yards offshore of Charan Kanoa at 0520. Aboard the *Rocky Mount*,⁴ Admiral Turner's

² Lieutenant Colonel Wendell H. Best, executive officer of the 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, at Saipan, writes: "One Japanese artillery firing chart which we captured indicated pre-fired data on the reef, lagoon, and beaches. . . . It is my opinion that the fire would have been equally devastating without the flags." Ltr from LtCol Best to CMC, 8Jan50, hereinafter cited as *Best*.

³ These "portions" included everyone of the two divisions not embarked in LST's.

⁴ The *Rocky Mount*, like her sister the *Appalachian*, is an especially designed amphibious command ship (designated "AGC") for the use of the attack force and landing force staffs. Special features include: a teletype screen upon which all incoming messages are flashed, large conference rooms to facilitate coordination and integration of staff actions, and extra communications to insure an uninterrupted flow of messages.

flagship, was General Holland M. Smith and his Expeditionary Troops staff. With Admiral Hill (Turner's second-in-command) aboard the *Cambria* was General Erskine and the NTLF Staff.

Silhouetted in the hazy east was Mount Tapotchau and the rocky hills which form the island's spiny backbone. As light improved, the town of Charan Kanoa and the reef channel opposite its pier could be discerned. To the north was the island capital—Garapan. Farther north at Tanapag Harbor were several beached, half-sunken, smoking ships—the results of the preparatory air and naval gunfire bombardment. Also in Tanapag Harbor was tiny, fortified Maniagassa Island.

Fire support ships were climaxing efforts of previous days to destroy enemy installations. Off Tanapag Harbor, Transport Divisions 10 and 30 proceeded to their assigned area. These two transport divisions, with the 2d and 24th Marines and the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, embarked, composed the Demonstration Group which was to conduct the diversion off beaches northeast of Tanapag Harbor.⁵

At 0542, Admiral Turner ordered, "Land the Landing Force." H-Hour was set for 0830. Aboard all ships, everything was ready. A substantial breakfast had been nervously devoured; guns and winches were manned, boats being lowered, hatches cleared; troops were alert and keyed to the occasion. The day was clear—there would be no serious trouble with the weather.

Shortly after 0700, the LST Flotilla was in position in its area about 1,250 yards in rear of the line of departure. After troops and LVT's were debarked, most of the LST's (except the three designated as hospital ships) were to retire to seaward until again needed. There were 34 LST's carrying the assault elements of the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions in position nearest the line of departure. Slightly behind them were eight LST's with both divisions' artillery, two LST's with the antiaircraft artillery, and two LST's with XXIV Corps Artillery embarked. Two Landing Ships Dock (LSD's),⁶

⁵ *TF 56 G-3 Report*, Encl B, 2-4.

⁶ These ships were originally designed to transport LCT's from the United States to Europe. When it

carrying tanks in Landing Craft Mechanized (LCM's), were in rear of each division's beach.

Control vessels with Marine and Navy representatives embarked moved to their assigned positions. All vessels flew flags to designate the beach approaches over which they would exercise control. A special control vessel was designated to handle traffic in the narrow channel that existed in the reef near Charan Kanoa (off Green 3).⁷

Since dawn, naval gunfire support ships had hurled salvo upon salvo at Saipan. At 0730, Admiral Hill (Commander Task Group 52.2) assumed control of Fire Support Unit One (TU 52.17.1), in order that fires on the selected beaches would be coordinated by the officer in command of the landing itself.⁸ In addition to the ships of the previous day, the six destroyers of Fire Support Units Two and Three delivered screening fires on the Charan Kanoa beaches as they escorted tractor groups into position. (See Map 6.) Tractor Group Able, which consisted of the LST's carrying assault elements of the 2d Marine Division, was escorted by Fire Support Unit Three (TU 52.17.3, commanded by Captain Harry B. Jarrett, USN); Tractor Group Baker, transporting assault elements of the 4th Marine Division, was escorted by Fire Support Unit Two (TU 52.17.2, Commander Phillip H. Fitzgerald, USN). On bombardment stations by 0800, these two task units delivered intense fires on the landing beaches, close to the waterline.⁹

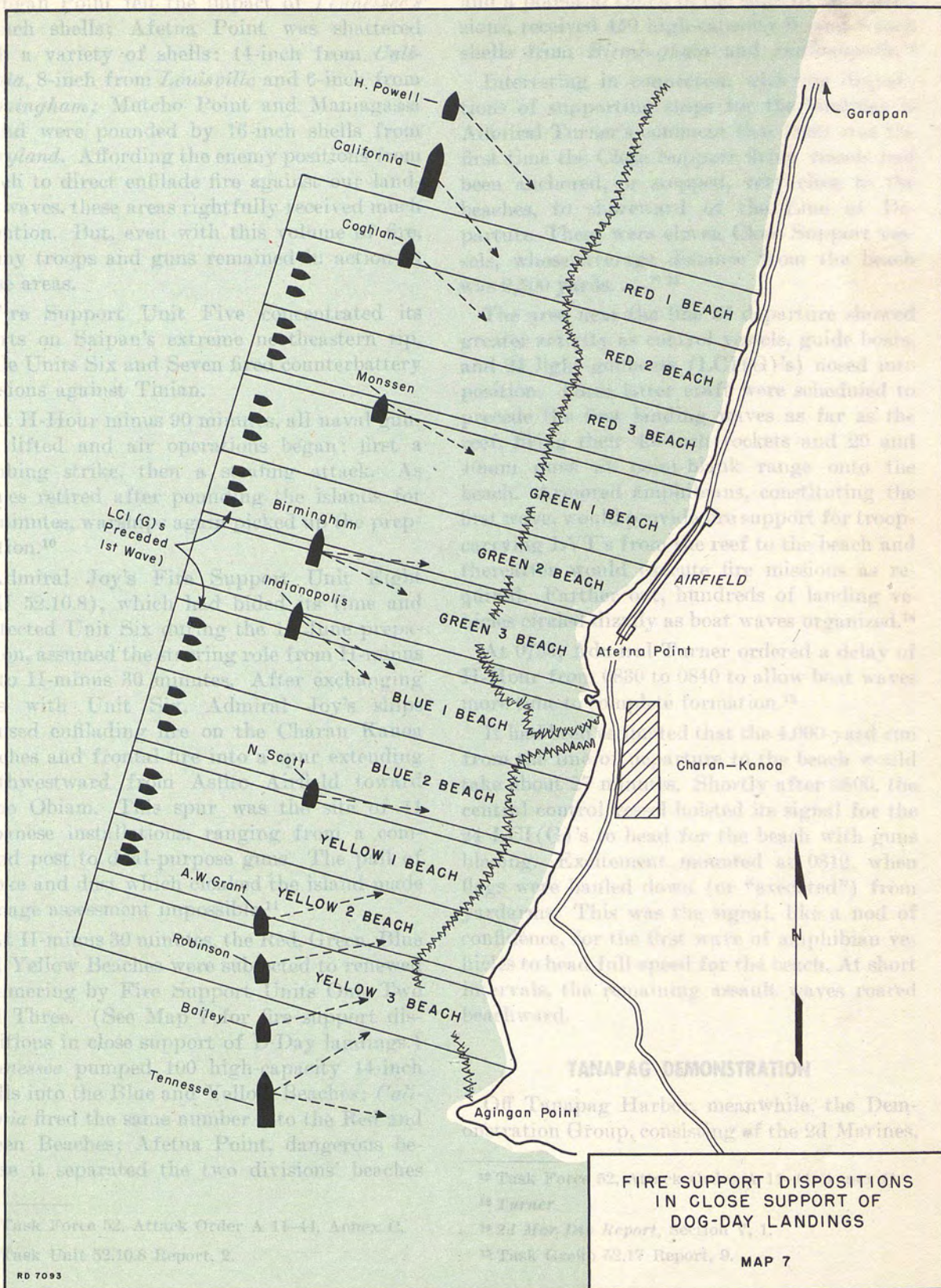
Fire Support Units One and Four, commencing at dawn, continued their fires against Saipan's west coast, with particular emphasis on the points which dominated landing beaches.

was found that LST's could perform this carrying service, the LSD's were diverted to another purpose—transporting tanks, embarked in LCM's. The peculiar design of the LSD's allowed water to enter the shell of the ship, whence LCM's (carrying tanks) could move under their own power. When debarkation was complete, water could either be expelled or the ship could stand by to repair damaged craft (up to and including LCT's).

⁷ *NTLF G-3 Report* 13-14.

⁸ Task Group 52.17 Report, 8.

⁹ Task Unit 52.17.3 Report, 1. Task Unit 52.17.2 Report, 1.



Agingan Point felt the impact of *Tennessee's* 14-inch shells; Afetna Point was shattered with a variety of shells: 14-inch from *California*, 8-inch from *Louisville* and 6-inch from *Birmingham*; Mutcho Point and Maniagassa Island were pounded by 16-inch shells from *Maryland*. Affording the enemy positions from which to direct enfilade fire against our landing waves, these areas rightfully received much attention. But, even with this volume of fire, enemy troops and guns remained in action in these areas.

Fire Support Unit Five concentrated its efforts on Saipan's extreme northeastern tip, while Units Six and Seven fired counterbattery missions against Tinian.

At H-Hour minus 90 minutes, all naval gunfire lifted and air operations began: first a bombing strike, then a strafing attack. As planes retired after pounding the islands for 30 minutes, warships again picked up the preparation.¹⁰

Admiral Joy's Fire Support Unit Eight (TU 52.10.8), which had bided its time and protected Unit Six during the 14 June preparation, assumed the starring role from H-minus 60 to H-minus 30 minutes. After exchanging jobs with Unit Six, Admiral Joy's ships focused enfilading fire on the Charan Kanoa beaches and frontal fire into a spur extending southwestward from Aslito Airfield toward Cape Obiam. This spur was the site of 11 Japanese installations, ranging from a command post to dual-purpose guns. The pall of smoke and dust which cloaked the island made damage assessment impossible.¹¹

At H-minus 30 minutes, the Red, Green, Blue and Yellow Beaches were subjected to renewed hammering by Fire Support Units One, Two and Three. (See Map 7 for fire support dispositions in close support of D-Day landings.) *Tennessee* pumped 100 high-capacity 14-inch shells into the Blue and Yellow Beaches; *California* fired the same number into the Red and Green Beaches; Afetna Point, dangerous because it separated the two divisions' beaches

and a potential thorn in the sides of both divisions, received 450 high-capacity 6- and 8-inch shells from *Birmingham* and *Indianapolis*.¹²

Interesting in connection with the dispositions of supporting ships for the landings is Admiral Turner's comment that "this was the first time the Close Support firing vessels had been anchored, or stopped, very close to the beaches, to shoreward of the Line of Departure. There were eleven Close Support vessels, whose average distance from the beach was 2,500 yards. . . ." ¹³

The area near the line of departure showed greater activity as control vessels, guide boats, and 24 light gunboats (LCI(G)'s) nosed into position. These latter craft were scheduled to precede the first landing waves as far as the reef, firing their 4.5-inch rockets and 20 and 40mm guns at point-blank range onto the beach. Armored amphibians, constituting the first wave, would provide fire support for troop-carrying LVT's from the reef to the beach and thereafter would execute fire missions as required. Farther out, hundreds of landing vehicles circled dizzily as boat waves organized.¹⁴

At 0753, Admiral Turner ordered a delay of H-Hour from 0830 to 0840 to allow boat waves more time to complete formation.¹⁵

It had been estimated that the 4,000-yard run from the line of departure to the beach would take about 27 minutes. Shortly after 0800, the central control vessel hoisted its signal for the 24 LCI(G)'s to head for the beach with guns blazing. Excitement mounted at 0812, when flags were hauled down (or "executed") from yardarms. This was the signal, like a nod of confidence, for the first wave of amphibian vehicles to head full-speed for the beach. At short intervals, the remaining assault waves roared beachward.

TANAPAG DEMONSTRATION

Off Tanapag Harbor, meanwhile, the Demonstration Group, consisting of the 2d Marines,

¹⁰ Task Force 52, Attack Order A 11-44, Annex C.

¹¹ Task Unit 52.10.8 Report, 2.

¹² Task Force 52, Attack Order A 11-44, Annex C.

¹³ Turner.

¹⁴ 2d Mar Div Report, Section V, 1.

¹⁵ Task Group 52.17 Report, 9.

the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, and the 24th Marines, was executing its feint. The diversion was afforded realism by supporting naval gunfire from Fire Support Unit Four (TU 52.-17.4) as landing craft approached the beach to within 5,000 yards, circled for a few minutes, wheeled about, and returned to their ships. Troops were not embarked in boats for the feint, although personnel of the 2d Marines' regimental intelligence section went along as observers.¹⁶ Boats were hoisted in at about 0920, and an hour later the transports arrived in their assigned area off the Charan Kanoa beaches. Intelligence reports later indicated that the Demonstration Group, by remaining a constant threat from before H-Hour until sometime thereafter, effectively contained at least one Japanese regiment—the 135th Infantry—in the northern area. Landing craft drew no fire during the feint, and no activity was observed on the shore. There is no indication that the 135th Infantry suffered more than

¹⁶ The 24th Marines used its regimental intelligence section in a different manner. One lieutenant and three scouts accompanied each of the assault regiments (23d and 25th). The lieutenant remained with regiment in each case, while the scouts were portioned one per battalion. By this means, the 24th Marines received timely enemy information prior to actually landing. Interview with Maj A. B. Hanson, 16Feb49.

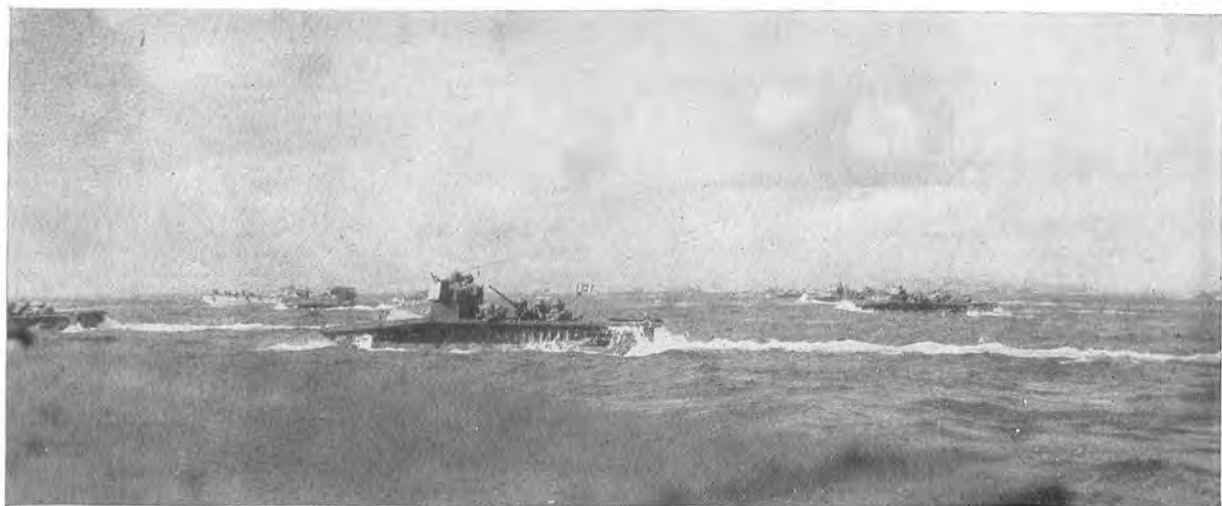
light casualties from the naval gunfire in support of the demonstration.¹⁷

THE LANDING

Soon after the first wave of the real landing started for the beach, a few rounds of enemy artillery fell in the area of the line of departure. Any hope that the Japanese defenders would be reduced to the status of shell-shocked ineffectives was hastily dispelled. As leading LVT's approached shore, the volume of naval gunfire decreased—main battery fires lifted when landing vehicles were 1,000 yards off the beach, 5-inch fire at 300 yards. At Afetna Point, between the two divisions, however, 6- and 8-inch fire of *Birmingham* and *Indianapolis* continued until the last possible moment.

From the time the leading wave approached to within 800 yards from the shore and lasting until the first craft landed, beach areas

¹⁷ *TF 56 G-3 Report*, Encl B, 4. 2d Marines Report, Encl A, 1, hereinafter cited as *2d Mar Report*. 24th Marines Report, Section II, 18, hereinafter cited as *24th Mar Report*. In an interrogation after the operation, Major Kiyoshi Yoshida, intelligence officer of the 43d Division, stated that the Japanese did not think that our forces would actually land in the Tanapag area but that they were not sufficiently sure and, therefore, retained the 135th Infantry Regiment in that area.



TROOP-CARRYING LVT's, here churning toward the shore. Ability of these vehicles to climb over the reef and move directly to the beach obviated the necessity of troops wading ashore from the reef.

were subjected to intense, almost constant, strafing attacks. For this mission, Carrier Support Groups One and Two each furnished 24 fighter aircraft (VF) and 12 torpedo bombers (VT), those of the former group flying against 2d Division beaches (Red and Green) and those of the latter against 4th Division beaches (Blue and Yellow). Direction of these attacks was west to east, perpendicular to the beaches, available planes being organized into divisions of eight fighters and four torpedo bombers each. The latter, each carrying a full 5-inch rocket load, followed the fighters on the first pass at the beach, firing all rockets at that time. In addition to rocket loads, torpedo bombers of Carrier Support Group One each carried ten 100-pound bombs. As landing craft approached to within 100 yards of the beaches, strafers moved their points of aim inland, so as to maintain a minimum safety interval of 100 yards at all times.¹⁸

Little difficulty was experienced by the as-

¹⁸ TF 51 Operation Plan A10-44, Addenda to Annex F. Turner.

sault waves proceeding as far as the reef. But, beginning there, the enemy commenced placing automatic weapons, antiboat, artillery and mortar fire on the approaching LVT's. These fires increased in intensity with the 2d, 3d, and 4th waves.¹⁹ Terrifying, indeed, was the sound of enemy shells bursting around the amtracs, particularly the high-angle shells which whistled ominously at the bobbing targets. And the Marines, clustered in these "sitting ducks," hoped or prayed that none of the shells would find its intended mark. Some, however, did.

Those few curious individuals who felt impelled to peer over the ramps of the LVT's on the way to the beach were greeted with the uninviting spectacle of parched sand clutching partially uprooted shrubs and small trees. Through occasional holes in the dirty blanket of smoke and dust, the battered escarpment backing the beaches could be seen. Most of the Marines were content to crouch low in the amtracs, preferring to contemplate Saipan in

¹⁹ 2d Mar Div Report, Section V, 2. 4th Mar Div Report, Section VI, 14.



8,000 TROOPS AND 700 LVT's beached in the first 20 minutes at Saipan. Resulting congestion on certain beaches provided excellent targets for those enemy mortars and artillery pieces not silenced by United States naval gunfire and air strikes.

terms of brightly colored maps, transparent overlays, and bold blue arrows.

The first wave, comprised of the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion and the Army's 708th Amphibian Tank Battalion began firing their weapons about 300 yards from the beach. Some troop-carrying tractors, because of their superior speed, crossed in front of the armored amphibians between the reef and the beach, masking their fire. Of the 68 armored amphibians which preceded the 2d Division, three were disabled before reaching the beach, and 28 more were disabled between the beach and the tractor control line,²⁰ 200-500 yards inland.²¹

Though some of the LVT's were hit in the water, the majority churned slowly onward. At about 0843, men of the 6th and 8th Marines of the 2d Division and the 23d and 25th Marines of the 4th Division hit the beach and immediately came under intense mortar and artillery fire. All units suffered heavily. There was no hesitation, however; the Marines were well oriented, and the attack moved forward. Within 20 minutes, 700 LVT's and 8,000 troops were ashore. Many leaders were hit, but their responsibilities were rapidly assumed by their immediate subordinates. Shells showered on the beach.²²

On the left, the 2d Marine Division's landing tended north of its assigned beaches (see Map 8). This error was partially the fault of the Navy boat guide officers responsible for guiding craft to correct beaches.²³ Much of the

²⁰ Not to be confused with the *transfer* control line which was used as a coordinating point for the transfer of troops from LCVP's to LVT's for the final movement to the beach. The *tractor* control line is an easily distinguishable terrain feature (in this case a railroad track) where LVT's stop to debark troops.

²¹ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section V, 2. Armored Amphibian Battalion, Operation Order No. 2.

²² *NTLF Report*, 11. In an undated Japanese battle plan for the Saipan Artillery Units, standard expenditure of ammunition (expressed in percentage of total amounts on hand) was established as follows: Destruction of enemy landing craft—15%; Engagement at beach—15%; Engagements following development of situation—20%; Reserve—50%. CINCPAC-CINC-POA Item #9604.

²³ Although Marine officers and men consulted on this point unanimously agree that the Navy boat guide

difficulty, however, occurred between reef (where guide boats were forced to stop) and beach. Extremely heavy fire, registering on the southern approaches to the Green Beaches, caused landing vehicles to veer to the north to escape it. Another reason for the shift in landing was the northern drift of the current within the lagoon, which markedly affected the course of the amphibian vehicles. Troop passengers aboard LVT's did their best to correct the situation by encouraging the drivers to bear to the right, but their efforts were unsuccessful.

The fact that this northerly current was unexpected is worthy of closer examination. At first glance it would appear that this condition should have been noted by the underwater demolition teams in their 14 June reconnaissance. That they did not is explained by the fact that their observations had been made under different tidal conditions, at a different time of day, and with a smooth sea.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry P. Crowe's 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, scheduled to land on Green 2, landed instead on Green 1. The 3d Battalion, 8th Marines (Lieutenant Colonel John C. Miller, Jr.) also landed on Green 1, with resultant dangerous and unfortunate massing of troops. The two assault battalions of the 6th Marines (the 2d, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray, and the 3d, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John W. Easley), scheduled to land on Beaches Red 2 and 3, landed about 400 yards north of their assigned beaches—more nearly on Red 1 and 2. All four assault battalion commanders of the 2d Marine Division became casualties during

officers were at least partially responsible, the Commander Expeditionary Force, Admiral Turner, does not agree: "The naval boat guide officers, on both flanks of each regimental assault wave, were embarked in LCV(P)'s . . . the first assault wave of each regiment was guided on each flank by an LCC [landing craft control]. All these boats were in excellent communication with Transport Group and Transport Division Control Vessels, in which staff officers of Division (troop) and Regiments were respectively embarked. The LCC's and LCV(P)'s necessarily had to turn back at the edge of the reef . . . and thereafter the LVT's, manned by troops, were on their own." *Turner*.

the early hours of the battle. Despite loss of leaders, confusion, and mixing of units, Marines moved out on their assigned missions.²⁴

The 4th Division, on the right, landed on its assigned beaches. From right to left, the assault battalions were: 1st Battalion, 25th Marines (Lieutenant Colonel Hollis U. Mustain), 2d Battalion, 25th Marines (Lieutenant Colonel Lewis C. Hudson), on the Yellow Beaches; 2d Battalion, 23d Marines (Lieutenant Colonel Edward J. Dillon), 3d Battalion, 23d Marines (Lieutenant Colonel John J. Cosgrove), on the Blue Beaches. (See Map 8.) It had been planned, and hoped, that Marines in the first waves might stay aboard their LVT's and continue inland to the O-1 line, where they would debark and form a beachhead perimeter. Several troop-carrying LVT's, acting independently or in small groups, carried out this assigned mission.

On the left of the 4th Division, in the 3d Battalion, 23d Marines' zone, the armored LVT's, in some cases, did not proceed inland but, rather, committed themselves to unnecessary fire fights in the streets of Charan Kanoa. This situation caused troop-carrying LVT's of the 2d and 3d waves some delay, until several detoured the engaged LVT(A)'s and moved inland.

The problem was altogether different on the division right. In the zone of the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, troops were forced by a prohibitory fusillade of frontal and enfilade fire to debark at the water's edge.

The division's two center battalions experienced similarly-varied situations. While nearly half the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, was carried 500 to 700 yards inland prior to debarkation, most of the 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, was stopped and forced to debark only 100 to 200 yards inland.

All along the shallow beachhead, enemy artillery fire took a heavy toll. Although impossible to locate the source of this fire or to judge accurately its caliber, it now appears that it issued from the guns of Lieutenant Colonel Nakashima's 3d Independent Artillery Regiment, firing from positions in the vicinity of

Tsutsuuran (behind Hill 500 and some 5,000 yards east of Charan Kanoa). In the words of the 4th Division action report: "... its intensity never varied in the slightest amount."²⁵

Even as late as arrival of the 6th wave, a persistent Japanese light machine gun emplaced on the left center of Beach Blue 2 chattered at the men of the 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, as they landed. The reason that this weapon remained in action after so many Marines were ashore is that the gunners became silent and hid when troops actually hit the beach and remained so until the next wave came into range. Lieutenant Colonel Dillon, commanding the 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, finally observed this weapon firing on one of his waves and ordered an LVT(A) of the Army's 708th Amphibian Tank Battalion to destroy it. The LVT(A) proved equal to the task, and no more difficulty was experienced from that particular source.²⁶

RED BEACH ACTION

On the Red Beaches, the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 6th Marines encountered stiff resistance and suffered heavy losses in personnel and equipment. Debarkation at or near the shore was necessitated by heavy resistance and unavailability, in some cases, of routes of egress from the beach. Those few LVT's successful in running the gantlet of fire and finding a route from the beaches were soon stopped by rocks or swamps beyond. As a matter of fact, the 2d Division had never contemplated movement to O-1 aboard LVT's (as had the 4th Division), so this represented no variation between plan and execution.²⁷

²⁵ *4th Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 13-14. 3d Battalion, 23d Marines Report, 1, hereinafter cited as *3d Bn, 23d Mar Report*.

²⁶ Interviews with Col E. J. Dillon, 17Feb49 and 5Jul49, hereinafter cited as *Dillon*.

²⁷ The 2d Marine Division, from the outset, had been unconvinced of the tactical soundness of the plan to move aboard LVT's to O-1. On several occasions, General Watson had expressed his opinion on this subject to General Holland Smith. Watson was against the plan for the following reasons: first, the terrain would not permit it; second, it would mean loss of control while troops were embarked in LVT's; and

²⁴ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section V, 2-3.



ON THE DOUBLE this Marine crosses an open, fire-swept area to join his comrades in expanding the shallow beachhead during early hours of the battle. Lying in foreground is one United States naval shell which did no good at Saipan.

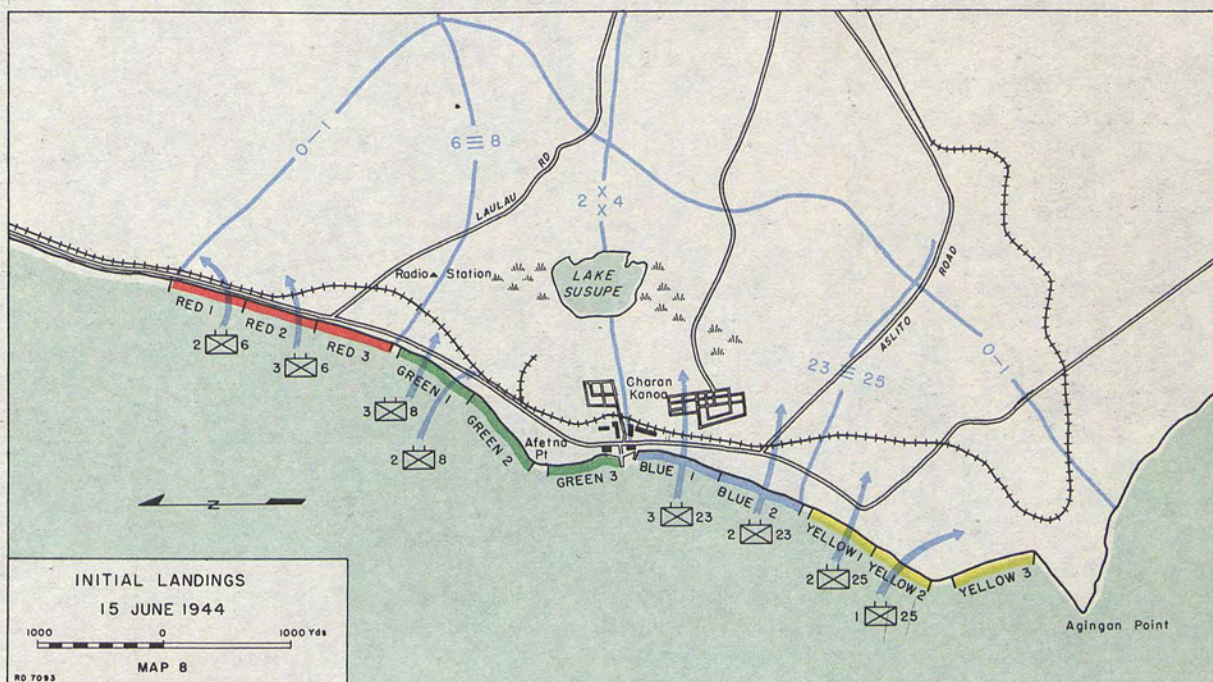
After landing, the 6th Regiment could force only a shallow, 75 to 100 yard beachhead across the coastal road. Company F of the 2d Battalion already had elements on the O-1 line, however, because this unit had landed north

third, it would needlessly expose congested groups of men to enemy fire. General Watson finally secured General Smith's permission to change the concept within the 2d Division's zone to the extent that the armored LVT's would clear the *immediate* beach areas and cover the landing by fire. The first wave of troop-carrying LVT's would follow them and discharge troops beyond the beach. All succeeding waves were to debark *on the beaches*, and LVT's carrying them were to retract and return to their rendezvous area off the reef as rapidly as possible. The tractor control line was the *maximum* distance any LVT's were to move inland under any circumstances. *Watson.*

of its assigned beach at a point that coincided with O-1. Between Company F (along the beach) and Company E existed a gap which was subsequently filled by Company I of the 3d Battalion.

The normal difficulties attendant to the establishment of a beachhead were multiplied in the 6th Marines' area by shell explosions from several burning LVT(A)'s nearby. These crippled vehicles, hit as they crawled onto the beach, were particularly troublesome to the 2d Battalion on the left flank and to the wounded men lying on the beach awaiting evacuation. Many of the latter were hit again by the exploding shells.

At 1000, Colonel James P. Riseley, com-



manding the 6th Marines, landed and commenced establishment of his command post near the center of Beach Red 2. Entrenching tools were no more than poised for serious digging when 15 to 25 Japanese charged down the beach, from the north, striking into the congested beach area occupied by the regimental command post, rear installations of the 2d Battalion, and the wounded. This enemy force represented either a group that had been by-passed or, more likely, a group that had filtered through the gap between Companies E and F. The Marines quickly rallied to the somewhat unexpected outbreak, established a firing line, and annihilated the Japanese force.

Coincidental with this thrust, an enemy tank near the water's edge, previously considered abandoned, suddenly came to life and opened devastatingly upon the LVT's carrying the 6th Marines' reserve, Lieutenant Colonel William K. Jones' 1st Battalion. With unerring accuracy the tank gunner scored 37mm hits upon several LVT's, including one carrying members of the battalion staff. The Japanese gunner could enjoy his choice targets only briefly, however; Marines ashore quickly converged bazooka and antitank grenade fire upon the vehicle and permanently silenced it. Jones' battalion, weathering its warm reception after losing many key personnel, landed on Beach Red 2 at about 1040.²⁸

Amid the shells and confusion at Red Beach, it was difficult for Colonel Riseley to determine the battle's progress. From reports, it appeared that his right assault battalion (the 3d) was having difficulty maintaining momentum. Staff casualties were high; the 3d Battalion commander (Lieutenant Colonel Easley), Bn-2, Bn-3, Bn-4 and Assistant 81mm Mortar Platoon Leader were all hit early. Colonel Easley, though wounded, retained command of the battalion until the following morning, when he was evacuated. These critical losses, plus many additional ones incurred from grazing machine-gun fire as the unit moved inland, caused Colonel Riseley to order the 1st Battalion to pass through Easley's lines and continue the attack toward the first

high ground inland (designated as O-1).

Staff casualties were not reserved for the 3d Battalion alone. At 1400, the 2d Battalion command post received a direct hit from a Japanese mortar shell, injuring Major Howard J. Rice, who had taken over the unit when Lieutenant Colonel Murray was wounded. An observer, Lieutenant Colonel William A. Kengla, took command pending the arrival of Major Leroy P. Hunt, Jr., at 1600.

The enemy machine guns, so troublesome to the 3d Battalion, could not be located. The terrain, flat or gently rolling, was ideal for long-range grazing fire—and the smoke and confusion made it difficult to discern the fire's origin. The enemy's frequent changes of position further complicated the task. Probably nothing was so frustrating as receiving fire from an "invisible" foe—yet that was the normal situation throughout the operation.

When passed through by the 1st Battalion, the 3d would become regimental reserve. No sooner had the passage been accomplished, however, than a potentially dangerous gap was reported between the 6th Marines' right and the 8th Marines' left—caused by the incorrect landing—and Companies K and L of the 3d Battalion were ordered to fill it. Even with the advent of these two companies, however, the gap was not filled, although it was possible to cover the area by fire. Fortunately, the Japanese had not located this vulnerable point. By late afternoon, all companies of all three battalions of the 6th Marines were in the lines.

The regiment's advance up the gently-rising ground towards O-1 could not proceed at a rapid pace without presenting contact difficulties with the 8th Marines, since the two regiments were necessarily diverging in their directions of attack.²⁹ Fighting an enemy adept in infiltration tactics, emphasis constantly had to be given to the maintenance of contact. A weak spot located by the enemy might well have been a weak spot exploited.

²⁸ 6th Marines Report, Encl A, 1-2, hereinafter cited as *6th Mar Report*. Interview with LtCol J. E. Rentsch, 12Jan49, hereinafter cited as *Rentsch*. Ltr from Maj T. H. Fisher to author, 31Jan49, hereinafter cited as *Fisher*. Ltr from Maj R. E. North to author, 17Jan49, hereinafter cited as *North*.

²⁹ Ltr from LtCol L. E. Haffner to CMC, 9Dec49.

GREEN BEACH AND AFETNA POINT

The landing of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 8th Marines, on the same beach (Green 1) demanded that the 2d Battalion spend the greater portion of D-Day fighting to secure the beach on which it should have landed. The 2d Battalion's difficult scheme of maneuver required Company G to attack south along the beach toward Afetna Point and the other two companies (E and F) to fan out to the southeast. This caused a wide dispersion as each company set out for its assigned objective from the point of landing.

Company G, moving through the sand dunes along the beach, met strong resistance in the form of a series of mutually supporting pillboxes (normally housing 37 or 47mm guns) covered by riflemen in open trenches. Individual Japanese actually charged from foxholes with bayonet or sword to contest Company G's advance. For its task of seizing Afetna Point, this company had been supplied with weapons unusual to combat: shotguns. The reason for this becomes apparent when it is realized that the unit was attacking straight towards the 4th Marine Division's left flank, making a short-range weapon (and one with a wide dispersion pattern) desirable. (See Map 9.) The entire 8th Marines' supply of shotguns was allotted to Company G, making available about one shotgun per two Marines. Men thus armed also carried their normal weapons for later use. The shotguns, generally, worked well; particularly against sword-wielding opponents, but some difficulty was experienced because most of the cartridge jackets were made of cardboard rather than metal. The cardboard-jacketed cartridges often became misshapen in the sea air, and would not enter shotgun chambers.³⁰

Every yard of Company G's advance toward Afetna Point was hotly contested. Since it was moving with its left flank along the small

Charan Kanoa airstrip, Japanese riflemen assumed positions on the eastern side of the strip and fired into that flank, making the most of the flat, open terrain. These remained in position until knocked out by the Marines' 60mm mortars or machine guns.

Attached combat engineers, with their flame-throwers, bazookas and demolitions, were invaluable in destroying enemy pillboxes. In several instances, Marines of Company G came upon Japanese in pillboxes firing to seaward at boats carrying in reserves and supporting weapons. Despite imminent danger to themselves, the Japanese often continued these fires rather than turn their weapons upon the Marines. This Japanese devotion to their assigned mission made it possible for Company G to work around to the rear or blind side of the pillbox, move in, and destroy. But progress was slow and costly. Almost every sand dune on the point turned out to be an enemy installation, with very-much-alive Japanese inside, this in spite of the tremendous tonnage of shells thrown into the area by naval supporting vessels.

Seizure of Afetna Point was important for another reason than denying the enemy excellent positions for enfilading our landing craft; possession of the point would make Beach Green 3 available for landing of the tanks of both divisions. Because of an open channel off Green 3, LCM's carrying tanks could proceed directly to the beach without crossing the troublesome reef that fenced all other beaches. Once through the channel the craft could either move straight in to Green 3 or fan out to the north or south and put the tanks ashore wherever it was desired. The same channel could also be used for logistical purposes after tanks were ashore. As will be seen, however, Afetna Point proved more of a headache than expected, and the tanks had to land by a much more difficult method.

While Company G struggled southward through the sand dunes, Companies E and F, 8th Marines, pushed inland, the latter unit roving across Susupe swamp. Upon discovering that no friendly forces were anywhere near, however, Company F pulled back to the western side of the swamp. An interesting in-

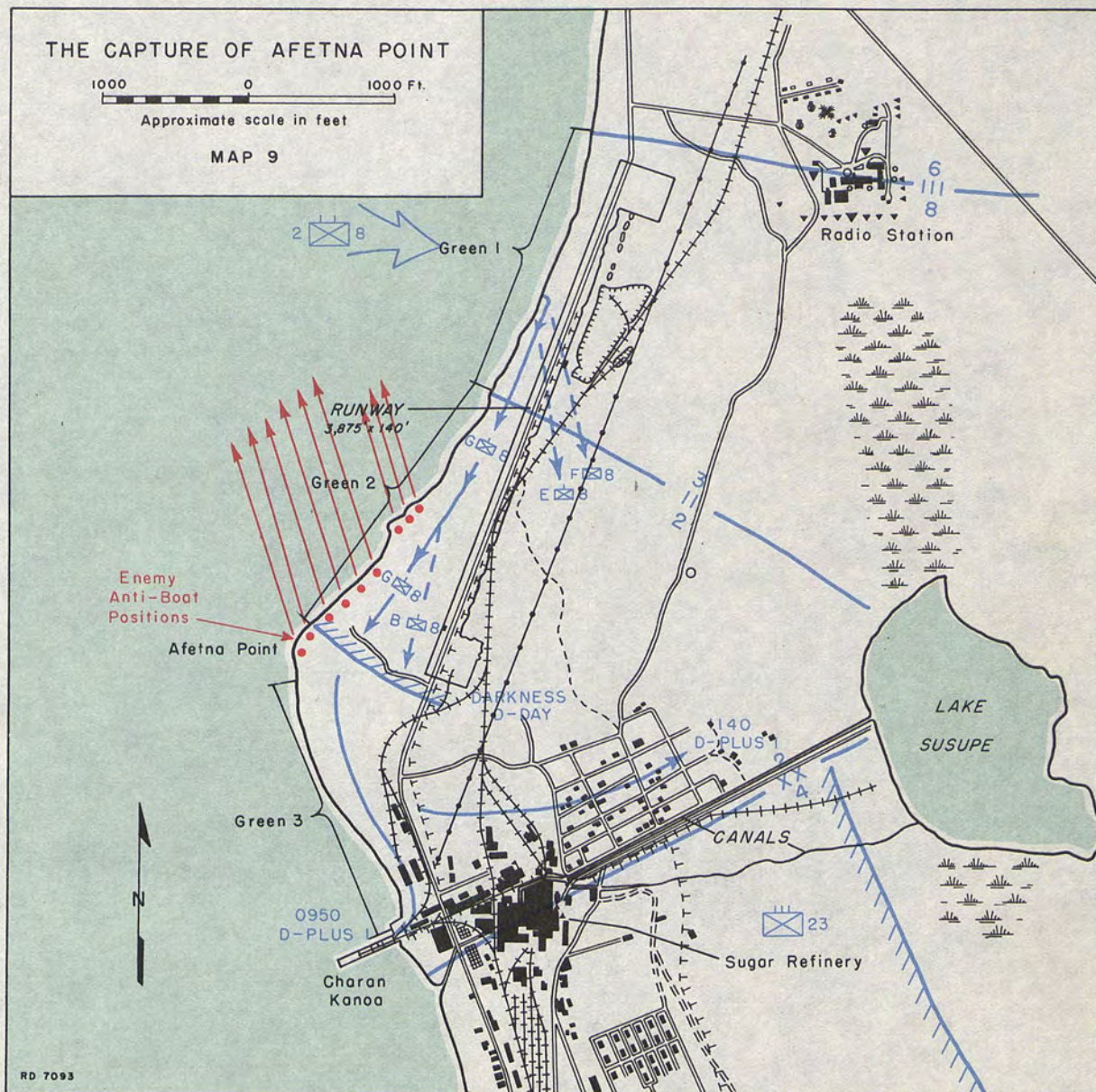
³⁰ Of interest in this connection: the 6th Marines had been issued shotguns for the Guadalcanal campaign and had had poor results from the cardboard-jacketed shells. It had been recommended at that time that only brass-jacketed cartridges be issued and used in the future. Comment by LtCol R. M. Tompkins on rough manuscript, 6Jun49.

THE CAPTURE OF AFETNA POINT

1000 0 1000 Ft.

Approximate scale in feet

MAP 9



cident arose from this minor excursion: an enterprising Japanese soldier somehow correctly identified the Marine company and its location; but, after plotting his information on a rough but readable sketch, he robbed himself of almost-earned glory by losing the sketch (and probably his life). The sketch was picked up, or off, by an equally-enterprising Marine from Company F and turned in for intelligence processing.³¹

Since the 3d Battalion landed on its correct beach, no change in the unit's attack plans was necessitated, and its objective was reached on time. Colonel Clarence R. Wallace, commanding the 8th Marines, landed between Beaches Green 1 and 2 at about 0945. This placed him and his regimental command post in the front lines for a period of a few minutes as Company G struggled southward toward Afetna Point.

At 0950, the 1st Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence C. Hays, Jr.), in regimental reserve, was ordered to land. Once ashore, Company B was attached to the 2d Battalion and immediately committed on Company G's left flank, relieving that unit of further flank worries as it battled toward Afetna Point. The other two companies (A and C), committed between the 2d and 3d Battalions, attacked to the eastward into the swamp which ran from Lake Susupe to the vicinity of the radio station. Before they were halfway through the thigh-deep muck, lengthening shadows of late afternoon forced an abandonment of the swamp crossing. Colonel Hays then pulled his battalion back to better defensive (and more comfortable) terrain on the west edge of the swamp.³²

Early in the afternoon, the division reserve, 1st Battalion, 29th Marines³³ (Lieutenant Colonel Guy E. Tannyhill), which had participated in the Tanapag demonstration, landed

and was attached to the 8th Marines. Company B of this battalion was ordered to fill a gap which had developed in the zone of the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines. Owing to lack of knowledge of the terrain and the absence of guides, however, Company B ended up in the wrong area.

It remained, then, for Company A, 29th Marines, to fill the gap. Darkness was falling by the time the unit got started, and the Marines experienced difficulty maintaining direction. About halfway to its assigned sector, Company A was immobilized by a thundering barrage of Japanese artillery fire. By this time, however, Company B had located its originally-assigned position, and it was discovered that Company A would not be needed. The latter, therefore, holed up for the night as a reserve, along with other uncommitted units of the battalion.

That units could sustain casualties without actually participating in more than "gap-filling" operations is evidenced by the fact that the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, suffered about 30—mainly from Japanese artillery fire—during the day.³⁴

YELLOW BEACH AND AGINGAN POINT

In the meanwhile, the 4th Marine Division had its own share of trouble. The situation on both flanks was causing great concern. At the end of the first hour, the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, on the right flank, had clawed but 12 yards of beach depth in a situation differing little from Tarawa. Because many LVT's of the 773d Amphibian Tractor Battalion left the beach before the unloading of anything but personnel could be accomplished, the battalion was desperately short of communication equipment for three days. The dependable SCR 300's, however, filled the bill until replacement gear arrived. The hasty departure of the LVT's was apparently occasioned by enemy artillery and mortar fire which hammered the congested beach areas. This was no comfort to the fighting men on the beach. Not only was the shortage of communications gear felt, but some

³¹ Interview with Maj W. C. Chamberlin, 17Jan50, hereinafter cited as *Chamberlin*.

³² Interview with Maj H. G. Gunter on 4Feb49, hereinafter cited as *Gunter*. 8th Marines Report, 1, hereinafter cited as *8th Mar Report*. 1st Battalion, 8th Marines Report, 1, hereinafter cited as *1st Bn, 8th Mar Report*. Wallace.

³³ See footnote 78, page 27, Chapter I.

³⁴ *8th Mar Report*, 1. 1st Battalion, 29th Marines Report, 1, hereinafter cited as *1st Bn, 29th Mar Report*.

mortars and machine guns, together with ammunition for them, were still aboard when the LVT's pulled out.

Heavy flank resistance from Agingan Point and the sparsely-wooded beach area to the south, coupled with frontal fighting, produced extremely heavy casualties on the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines. Agingan Point was a honeycomb of Japanese installations, originally constructed to fire to sea but capable of bringing flanking fire to bear against troops on shore. At 0930, the enemy attempted a counterattack from the direction of Agingan Point, and small groups of Japanese were observed moving over the ridge on the right flank of the O-1 line. Lieutenant Colonel Mustain, the 1st Battalion's commander, immediately called for an air strike on these targets. Within five minutes, a bombing and strafing attack was delivered, achieving good coverage of the area although it was impossible to judge results. Fires of the battleship *Tennessee* were invaluable in keeping the Japanese off balance in their efforts to push the 1st Battalion into the water. Mustain requested that tank support be provided his battalion as soon as possible, as well as an additional rifle company from the reserve battalion (the 3d).

Playing havoc with the 1st Battalion efforts to get reorganized into an effective fighting body were at least four direct fire artillery pieces (about 75mm) emplaced on the high ground 800 yards inland. For these Japanese gunners a movement by three or four Marines was a sufficient target; and they made the most of their excellent observation. It was apparent to all hands that the situation would not be relieved until the high ground had been seized, although naval gunfire and air were proving helpful.³⁵

On Mustain's left, the 2d Battalion fared somewhat better, although mortar and artillery fire rained mercilessly upon them. The terrain in the 2d Battalion's sector afforded very little cover or concealment, and the unit sought the best solution to the problem by moving inland

as rapidly as possible. About half the assault Marines of this battalion were carried to a railroad embankment (500-700 yards inland) prior to debarkation from LVT's. Until it reached there, the battalion was subjected to frontal small-arms fire from Japanese behind the embankment. There the small-arms fire ceased, but mortar and artillery fire continued. From the direction of Nafutan Point came shells which burst overhead, apparently from anti-aircraft guns depressed to fire at ground targets. And, as if troubles to the front and flanks were not enough, two enemy mortars began firing on the Marines from positions 500 yards to the rear. Before a request for assistance could be made, friendly planes spotted the mortars, attacked, and silenced them.³⁶

Much credit for the 2d Battalion's success in pushing inland goes to the LVT(A)'s of the Army's 708th Amphibian Tank Battalion, which, according to the Marine battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Hudson, took "more than their share of punishment" and "diverted enemy attention from the amphibious tractors carrying troops... I shall always remember the excellent support given to my battalion by the Army LVT(A)'s."³⁷

Shortly after Lieutenant Colonel Justice M. Chambers' 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, crossed the line of departure on its way to the beach, an order from regiment directed that one company be attached to the 1st Battalion upon landing. Chambers selected Company K, his battalion reserve, for this mission. Upon arrival at the beach, however, Chambers learned that guides from the 1st Battalion had met his leading units, including two platoons from Company I, and one platoon from Company L, and had led them to the 1st Battalion's zone where they were immediately committed to action. Chief disadvantage of this rearrangement was that a complete tactical unit was not provided, but in the normal confusion of an amphibious landing, miscarriages of this type were neither unusual nor inordinately serious.

³⁵ 25th Marines Report, 3, hereinafter cited as *25th Mar Report*. 1st Battalion, 25th Marines Report, 2-7, hereinafter cited as *1st Bn, 25th Mar Report*. Interview with Maj F. J. Mee, 15Feb49, hereinafter cited as *Mee*.

³⁶ Interview (undated) with Maj V. J. Barringer, hereinafter cited as *Barringer*. Interview with Maj H. V. Joslin, 15Feb49, hereinafter cited as *Joslin*.

³⁷ Ltr from Col L. C. Hudson to CMC, 12Jan50.



BARELY ON THE BEACH, these 4th Division Marines lie flat and try to spot the source of the fire which has them immobilized.

With the remainder of his unit, Chambers moved about 700 yards inland to the scanty protection afforded by the railroad embankment. Here the battalion halted, dug in, and awaited orders.

At 1300, Company K was detached from the 3d Battalion and attached to the 1st Battalion. Later in the afternoon, with the right flank situation still dangerous, the remainder of Company I was sent to assist Mustain's busy unit in cleaning out the Agingan Point pocket of resistance. Company I subsequently reported killing approximately 150 Japanese on Agingan Point. Locating the enemy there was a difficult job; the usual Japanese tactic was to remain concealed in their "spider holes"³⁸ until the

Marines had passed by them; then the lids of the holes would be opened and rifle or light machine-gun fire directed at the Marines' rear.

Colonel Merton J. Batchelder, commanding the 25th Marines, came ashore about noon and established his command post against the west side of the railroad fill. This choice was a fortunate one; the embankment provided a shield against flat trajectory fire and the installation functioned without excessive trouble from the Japanese. All personnel, including supporting elements of the combat team, were ashore by 1800.³⁹

the ground and consonant with surrounding vegetation.

³⁸ This type of position is a hole dug into the ground with a camouflaged lid fitting snugly over it. A carefully constructed spider hole is next to impossible to locate as long as the lid is down, since it is flush with

³⁹ *25th Mar Report*, 3. 3d Battalion, 25th Marines Report, 3-4, hereinafter cited as *3d Bn, 25th Mar Report*. Ltr from Col J. M. Chambers to CMC, 1Dec49, hereinafter cited as *Chambers*.



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH of Charan Kanoa area had led 4th Division planners to believe that Mt. Fina Susu could be reached without debarking troops from LVT's. Difficult terrain, including a swamp extending south from Lake Susupe, foiled the plan.

BLUE BEACH AND CHARAN KANOA

The 23d Marines' advance through Charan Kanoa was hindered only by sporadic rifle fire, and the 3d Battalion, on the left flank, pushed through the town without encountering serious difficulty. Eight troop-carrying and three armored LVT's actually travelled to O-1 as called for in the plans. These LVT's, restricted by the terrain from moving abreast, were forced to proceed in column along the road south of Lake Susupe until Mt. Fina Susu (O-1) was reached. Minor opposition en route was offered by Japanese riflemen lying in drainage ditches perpendicular to the road. Fire from the LVT machine guns (manned by personnel of the 3d Battalion, 23d Marines) accounted for most of these trouble-makers.

Once the Marines reached O-1, however, the

situation changed for the worse. Direct Japanese artillery fire (probably fired by the 3d Mountain Artillery Regiment), coming from positions 500 to 700 yards to the north and east, plus mortar and machine-gun fire, kept the unit constantly pinned down. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the armored amphibians refused to move to the top of Mt. Fina Susu and provide the necessary support and by the absence of any friendly forces on either flank.

A short 100 yards east of the high ground of the O-1 line, small groups (squads or smaller) of Japanese darted about a coconut palm grove. Throughout the day these made periodic attempts to infiltrate the left of the 3d Battalion's slender salient. Alert to these movements, the Marines discouraged the Japanese

with well-aimed small-arms fire.⁴⁰

Lieutenant Colonel Dillon's 2d Battalion experienced some difficulty after landing owing to the fact that some tractors stopped after advancing a short distance while others continued somewhat farther. The reasons for these variations were not only the intense mortar and artillery fire hammering the beach (and finding the LVT's a favorite target), or the action of individual Japanese riflemen and machine gunners, but also the nature of the terrain. Tractors landing in the center of Blue 2, for example, found themselves confronted with an incline rising almost vertically to a height of four to five feet—sufficient obstacle to stop movement from the beach. Farther inland, near the southeastern edge of Charan Kanoa, was a swampy area, which canalized vehicles to the one good route in the area—Aslito Road.

In view of the terrain difficulties and the character of enemy resistance, the 4th Division's plan to move aboard LVT's to the high ground (O-1) some 1,200 to 1,500 yards inland was impractical from the outset. It is not surprising that planners had been too optimistic in this respect, when it is remembered that the aerial photograph coverage of Saipan had left much to be desired. From available information, it had appeared feasible; in actual practice, it was not.

Only three LVT's and five LVT(A)'s operating with the 2d Battalion reached O-1 as planned. Because of the difference in debarkation points, the battle developed into a series of actions by separated tractor groups. Confusion was at a minimum, however, as good training paid off; leaders organized whatever men were nearby, regardless of unit affiliation, and pressed the attack. By the middle of the afternoon, control had been regained.

Shortly after noon, the battalion commander requested tanks in his zone. The type of enemy resistance encountered—rifle and machine-gun fire—was well suited to the employment of tanks, even though they would have to remain

on the road until the swamp was passed. Relief from the almost constant shelling would be obtained only by destruction of the Japanese weapons. Dillon requested that aircraft try to spot the enemy guns, but the pall of smoke over the island hindered the planes and helped the Japanese. The latter knew where they wanted to fire, the Americans could not be sure.

Only two tanks (M-4's from Company C, 4th Tank Battalion) had been landed on Blue Beach at this time, but the 23d's commander, Colonel Louis R. Jones, acting on Dillon's request, ordered them to report to the 2d Battalion.⁴¹

Since the 2d Marine Division had not planned to use Beach Green 3 in its initial landings, it was apparent that a gap between the two divisions would exist for some time. (The 2d Division's shift in landing further delayed the juncture.) This situation, which would leave the 4th Division's left flank exposed, indicated the desirability of landing the reserve battalion of the 23d Marines at an early hour. Also, the plan of moving to the O-1 line prior to debarkation from LVT's demanded that by-passed rear areas be mopped up by a reserve unit. Accordingly, the 1st Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Haas) landed at 1055 and moved to an assembly area about 300 yards inland of Beach Blue 1. This move, hampered only by the ubiquitous artillery and mortar fire and an occasional exchange with Japanese riflemen in the ruins of Charan Kanoa, placed the battalion in position to protect the left flank. Until later in the day when it was committed into the front, this unit spent its time mopping up by-passed Japanese and stopping minor infiltration thrusts.

The advance command group of the 23d Marines, under the executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel John R. Lanigan, landed about noon, followed at mid-afternoon by the regimental commander, Colonel Jones. Established in a small depression, between Beaches Blue 1 and 2 and, subsequently, between two artillery battalions, the command post received almost con-

⁴⁰ 23d Marines Report, 30-33, hereinafter cited as *23d Mar Report*. 3d Bn, *23d Mar Report*, 1. Ltrs from Maj P. S. Treitel to author, 21Feb49 and to CMC, 30Dec49, hereinafter cited as *Treitel*.

⁴¹ Dillon. *23d Mar Report*, 33. 2d Battalion, 23d Marines Report, 1-2, hereinafter cited as *2d Bn, 23d Mar Report*.

stant pounding from Japanese mortars and artillery.⁴²

A great portion of the 4th Division's difficulties on D-Day (and, subsequently, on D-plus 1) originated from a capably-prepared series of positions in the vicinity of the O-1 ridgeline. About these, Lieutenant Colonel Gooderham L. McCormick, the division intelligence officer (D-2), has written:

On the forward and reverse slopes of the edge of the saucer which followed our O-1 line the enemy had placed batteries of 75mm and 105mm field pieces. They were all well placed, with excellent fields of fire and artful concealment. Crew's quarters and ammunition were all below ground. . . . Entrances were invariably well back on the reverse slope.

Wall diagrams in observation posts marked registration points on the reefs, the channels, the beach lines, roads and intersections adjacent to the beach. These points were interdicted long after the O.P.'s had been rendered inoperative.⁴³

4TH DIVISION TANKS LAND

The tank situation in the 4th Division was not good. Based on the early morning reports of the underwater demolition teams, two methods of getting tanks ashore were planned. First, and most desirable, was by means of the channel off Beach Blue 1, through which LCM's could proceed directly to the beach and debark tanks. The other was by beaching LCM's on the reef and allowing tanks to move ashore under their power.

Two complicating details which UDT personnel could not foresee, however, made the landing of tanks a serious problem. First, the channel was intermittently interdicted by heavy mortar and artillery fire, making movement through it hazardous. And second, in regard to the reef landings, heavy swells had built up by early afternoon, making it difficult to beach LCM's. Yellow Beach, with the best reef surface for tank landings, was the scene of the heaviest swells.

Difficulties notwithstanding, the 4th Tank Battalion endeavored to land throughout the afternoon. It was a costly operation.

⁴² 23 Mar Report, 33. 4th Mar Div Report, Annex C, 4-5. L. R. Jones.

⁴³ Ltr from LtCol G. H. McCormick to CMC, 21Feb50, hereinafter cited as *McCormick*.

Company A, which advanced 600 to 700 yards across the coral reef to land on Beach Blue 2, lost two medium tanks in the movement to the beach when salt water drowned out their electrical systems. A third was damaged while attempting to tow a tank from another company ashore. After landing, Company A, immediately moved out to assist the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, in the fight around Agingan Point.

Of Company B's 14 medium tanks, only four reached the beach in working condition. While departing from the LSD upon which the company was embarked, one LCM (with its medium tank loaded on board) sank. Another tank had its fording equipment smashed in an unexpected shift of weight on board the LCM upon which it was embarked. As chance would have it, this LCM later received a direct hit from a Japanese artillery shell, setting it afire.⁴⁴ Three tanks were sent through the Charan Kanoa channel, arriving ashore safely, but under so much artillery fire that the control vessel ordered the next three tanks to move across the reef to Blue 1. Of these three, one nosed into a "pot-hole" (a large depression in the reef), and another was temporarily out of commission because of the effect of water on the electrical system.

Six of the company's tanks had yet to make the trip to the beach. These received orders at the control vessel to land on Beach Green 2, a 2d Division beach some 1,100 yards away from their parent division. The cause for this radical misdirection, which was made in spite of the tanks platoon leader's protests, its not indicated; and, in view of the subsequent fate of these tanks, no one can be expected to assume the blame voluntarily. Perhaps this was ordered in the hope that a Green Beach landing would be less costly or, perhaps, it was a matter of misunderstanding. The order was issued, however, and the six tanks made the effort. Only one of the six reached the beach, the rest falling into a span of quite deep water about halfway in. The one tank that did get ashore was immediately pressed into service by the 2d

⁴⁴ The tank, oddly enough, was retrieved on D-plus 1 and moved ashore.



AMMUNITION, dumped on the beach by the leading waves of LVT's is readily available to Marines clustered behind a medium tank nearby. Though uneven, this method solved many early supply problems.

Tank Battalion and did not return to the 4th Division until several days later. So, for all intents and purposes, Company B had only four tanks of its original 14 available for the support of the 4th Marine Division.⁴⁵

Company C fared much better. Landing on Beach Yellow 2 after an 800 yard trip across the reef, the unit moved, intact, to an assembly area just inland from Beach Blue 2. Shortly after arrival there, orders were received from the commander, 2d Battalion, 23d Marines (to which the unit was attached), to attack to the high ground designated O-1. The tanks of Company C immediately moved out. It was soon discovered, however, that those machines not actually on the road bogged down and had

to be abandoned. After these experiences, the tanks stayed on the road, attacking in a column towards O-1.

Spraying their machine guns at enemy riflemen and machine gunners and directing their 75's against specific enemy strong points, the tanks lumbered to the east towards the high ground. With their advent, the men of the 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, felt some of the pressure lift, and the advance resumed. Aside from the fact that the tanks knocked out pockets of enemy resistance, their arrival had a heartening effect upon the infantrymen.

Company D, the light (flame-thrower) tank company of the 4th Tank Battalion, landed 10 of its 18 tanks safely on the Blue Beaches throughout the afternoon of D-Day. Those landed were not employed in the D-Day fight, however, but instead were ordered into an assembly area 150 yards inland from Beach Blue 2 for the night. The remaining eight light tanks of the company, unable to get sufficient LCM's for a D-Day landing, came ashore on the

⁴⁵ Later, however, most of the disabled vehicles of Company B were retrieved and restored to parent control. The unit, thereafter, rendered effective support to the 4th Division's operations. It is important to note that, since Company B had not been assigned to support an assault regiment after landing, its shortage of vehicles did not have critical implications.

afternoon of D-plus 1 and joined the fight.⁴⁶

The most decisive action executed by any unit of the 4th Tank Battalion on D-Day was that of the 1st Platoon, Company A (later joined by the 3d Platoon and one tank of the 2d Platoon). Following its landing on Beach Blue 2, the 1st Platoon, Company A, moved off to the support of Mustain's 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, on the extreme right flank. The platoon arrived just as two companies of Japanese attacked from Agangan Point. This was the strongest effort of the day, following a series of smaller actions which had harrassed the battalion since the landing. The Japanese counter-attack, designed to push Mustain's right flank into the water, was an ideal target for the newly-landed medium tanks. With the aid of the 1st Battalion, the tanks vigorously drove against the enemy attackers. Nearly the entire Japanese force was massacred in the short-lived melee.

After checking the hostile surge, the tanks ranged out upon the point, crushing and destroying Japanese installations. All this was accomplished without the loss of a single tank. In the withdrawal, however, one tank lost a track in a shell hole and had to be abandoned until the next day, when it was retrieved. The tank action improved the situation of the 1st Battalion, enabling it to resume the infantry advance.⁴⁷

14TH MARINES LAND

As a result of Colonel Jones' noon recommendation that artillery be landed, the 14th Marines (Colonel Louis G. DeHaven) commenced landing at 1315 and the entire regiment was ashore by dark. The 3d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. MacFarlane), after losing one of its 105mm howitzers during the ship-to-shore movement (due to a mechanical

failure and subsequent sinking of the DUKW transporting the howitzer), landed on Beach Yellow 2 and went into a firing position about 50 yards inland, on the east side of the coast road. The battalion fired its first rounds (in support of the 25th Marines) about an hour and a half after landing.

For the 5th Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Douglas E. Reeve), the ship-to-shore movement was made without loss of any of its 105mm howitzers. One "A" frame DUKW, not carrying a howitzer but moving with the 5th Battalion, was hit by a shell from a dual-purpose 5- or 6-inch Japanese gun during the trip into Blue 2. Although this did not entail a loss to the battalion, it did have the effect of slowing up the unloading: by congesting the beach area and making one less "A" frame DUKW available to lift 105's from DUKW's in which they were embarked. The 5th Battalion went into a position area about 40 yards inland from Beach Blue 2 at about 1400. After registration, the battalion undertook the destruction of the previously-mentioned 5- or 6-inch gun, which was firing from the high ground 1,500 yards inland. Although the weapon was silenced for the night—and everyone hoped permanently—it was quite intact and firing the following morning.

Lieutenant Colonel Carl A. Youngdale's 4th Battalion landed on Beach Blue 2 at approximately 1700. One 105mm howitzer was lost prior to landing when the DUKW upon which it was embarked sank. The DUKW had run out of fuel and was in the process of moving aboard an LST for refueling when it slipped off the ramp and sank. Once ashore on Blue 2, four howitzers were knocked out by Japanese artillery and mortar fire. All were subsequently returned to action, however. Youngdale's battalion moved inland about 350 yards and set up along the coast road. In spite of continuous enemy artillery fire which complicated its work, the battalion was laid and ready to fire at 1812, about one hour and 12 minutes after landing.

The 1st Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Harry J. Zimmer), scheduled to land in the returning DUKW's of the 4th Battalion, was landed instead in LVT's when the DUKW's failed to become available. This involved disassembling

⁴⁶ The foregoing account of the landing of the 4th Tank Battalion is a synthesis of the following sources: 4th Tank Battalion Report, 3; Company A, 4th Tk Bn Report, 1-2; Company B, 4th Tk Bn Report, 1-2; Company C, 4th Tk Bn Report, 1; Company D, 4th Tk Bn Report, 1; *Dillon*; Ltr from LtCol R. K. Schmidt to CMC, 5Dec49, hereinafter cited as *R. K. Schmidt*.

⁴⁷ *Mee*, Company A, 4th Tk Bn Report, 1-2.

the 75mm pack howitzers and transferring them from LCVP's to LVT's by hand. After landing on Yellow 1 at about 1700 (the battery commanders had been ashore on reconnaissance since 1430), the battalion moved to a position about 100 yards off the beach. This placed the unit only about 50 yards forward of the 3d Battalion, not a desirable arrangement but necessitated by the shallow beachhead and the congestion in the area.

For the 2d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel George B. Wilson, Jr., the difficulties of landing and getting established ashore were a magnification of those of the other battalions. During the transfer operations, in which LVT's became available singly and at irregular intervals, some sections of the battalion became separated from the others and landed on different beaches. Part of the battalion, still in LCVP's, was

ordered to move through the channel and land on Blue 1, but heavy fire chased the craft back to sea. Later, in a second attempt, the channel route was successfully used. Another group landed on Blue 1 in LVT's, another on Blue 2, still another on Yellow 1. Two pack howitzers of the latter group were not unloaded, as the LVT's carrying them were ordered out to sea by the shore party commander who claimed that the vehicles were drawing fire to the beach. Later, when these LVT's attempted to negotiate the Yellow 1 reef, the two howitzers were pitched overboard by an especially vicious surf.⁴⁸ Two more howitzers were hit by Japanese shelling of the beach areas, although it was

⁴⁸ This did not constitute a permanent loss, however; pieces were retrieved and the howitzers were back in action by D-plus 2.



75MM PACK HOWITZER blasts away during the early hours of the battle. The 1st and 2d Battalions of the 10th and 14th Marines were armed with these versatile pieces. Tapotchau massif may be seen in background as this crew trains its weapon toward the east coast.

possible, by exchanging parts, to salvage one howitzer out of the two. Losses in personnel and equipment necessitated reducing the firing batteries from three to two. The battalion went into firing position just inland of Beach Blue 2 and was firing by about 1700.

The executive officer of the 14th Marines, Colonel Randall M. Victory, landed with the regimental command group at 1300 on Beach Blue 2. From there the command post moved about 500 yards inland into a grove of trees containing a series of abandoned Japanese trenchworks. The choice proved a wise one; the 14th Marines' command post endured only an occasional artillery round and the harrassing activities of few snipers located to the rear. During the afternoon two of these were killed within 40 yards of the command post, and a Japanese machine-gun nest in a clump of bushes only 50 yards to the left rear was destroyed.⁴⁹

GENERAL SCHMIDT'S COMMAND POST

The 4th Marine Division advance command post was established ashore on Yellow 2 at 1630 by Colonel Walter W. Wensinger, the D-3 (operations officer of the division). General Schmidt arrived there and opened the division command post at about 1930. The location had little to commend it, but there was no alternative on the shallow beachhead. The palm grove which looked somewhat inviting on the map had been shattered into a group of skeleton trunks and stumps; the terrain was like a pool table—flat and open; there were no abandoned Japanese installations to occupy, although digging was easy in the dirty sand; a stockpile of partially buried gasoline drums was located nearby, providing a constant source of worry. In addition to the command post's other weakness, there was the matter of the 14th Marines' firing batteries nearby. These not only drew Japanese counterbattery fire

into the area, but their presence greatly limited dispersal room; and the command post was congested into a small space (about 50 yards wide and 100 yards deep). A search for a better location, undertaken by the division intelligence officer (D-2), Lieutenant Colonel Gooderham L. McCormick, proved unfruitful, and it was decided that nothing would be gained by moving.

With all of the command post's bad features, however, the 4th Division headquarters carried on all its functions. Later, when assault troops progressed farther inland and it was possible to move about more easily, the command post was spread out and the congested condition relieved. Brigadier General Samuel C. Cumming, Assistant Division Commander, remained on board ship on D-Day. He and his staff, reported ashore shortly before noon on D-plus 1.⁵⁰

2D DIVISION TANKS

Shortly after 0900 on D-Day, the 2d Marine Division commenced efforts to land tanks. A pilot tank made the trip from the reef to Beach Green 1 under extremely heavy fire, marking a route as it moved. On reaching the beach, it was disabled by direct 37mm and 47mm fire from Afetna Point, and the crew was forced to abandon it. The route had been marked, however, and beginning at 1300 tanks started crossing the reef in groups of two and three under almost continuous Japanese artillery fire. Here, again, it was impossible to determine the exact source or caliber of the enemy fire, except the antiboat-antitank fire which came from Afetna Point. It is assumed that the long-range, high-angle fire emanated from the eastern slopes of the island's spiny backbone, where the guns of Lieutenant Colonel Nakashima's 3d Independent Mountain Artillery Regiment as well as numerous heavy mortars were emplaced.

By 1530, all LSD-embarked tanks of the division had groped their tortuous way to the beach. Tank liaison teams had been furnished

⁴⁹ 14th Marines Report, 1, hereinafter cited as *14th Mar Report*. Maj J. F. Ryan, Observer from 5th Marine Division, Report of Saipan Operation (Arty), 7-8, hereinafter cited as *J. F. Ryan. Karch. Reeve*. Ltr from Maj W. McReynolds to CMC, 14Jan50, hereinafter cited as *McReynolds*. Ltr from LtCol G. B. Wilson to CMC, 8Feb50, hereinafter cited as *Wilson*.

⁵⁰ *4th Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 15-16. Interview with Col O. H. Wheeler, 21Feb49, hereinafter cited as *Wheeler. McCormick*.

each combat team headquarters; tanks were met by a guide at the beach, commanders briefed, and tanks tactically employed at once. Barging into the fight with all the confidence that a few inches of armor plate can instill, the tanks injected a fresh drive into the late afternoon attack. With these machines ashore, infantry commanders could breathe a little easier; another powerful weapon was available to meet the expected enemy counterattack. Eight tanks of the 2d Tank Battalion were damaged on D-Day, but of this number only one was permanently lost. Others were repaired and later played an important part in the operation.⁵¹

MINOR ENEMY TANK THRUSTS

Some of the enemy tanks were also moving on the early afternoon of D-Day. These were from the 4th Company of Colonel Goto's 9th Tank Regiment. The 4th Company's 14 tanks (11 mediums, three lights) had been ordered to defend the western beaches on either side of Charan Kanoa. To do this, they had taken position on the beach itself, with plans to execute an antiboat mission during the landing phase. The sheer weight of naval shelling and the momentum of the assault drove the company inland before it could perform its planned function, however. Had this unit remained on the beaches, it might have had the satisfaction of achieving considerable destruction of U. S. landing craft. From its withdrawn positions, the enemy tank company lashed out in a series of prods against the Marines' beachhead.

About noon, two Japanese tanks moved from covered positions to the north, along the beach road, and through the lines of Company F, 6th Marines. Apparently not realizing where they were, they stopped to have a look around, the leading tank even "unbuttoning" its turret. At this point, bazookas and AT grenades from Company F converged on the surprised visitors and destroyed them.⁵²

⁵¹ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section V, 3.

⁵² An amusing anecdote in connection with the incident: Lieutenant James R. Ray, leader of the 1st Platoon, Company F, had carefully briefed his unit prior to the landing on the fact that the Japanese

At 1300, in another of their uncoordinated thrusts, three tanks of the 4th Company struck Companies A and G, 6th Marines (adjacent flank companies of the 1st and 2d Battalions), and caused a flurry of excitement. The terrain in the area was open and flat enough for tank movement, but occasional low, marshy spots somewhat restricted maneuver. The bazookamen of the two Marine companies went to work: two tanks were destroyed before they could penetrate the front lines; the remaining one penetrated to within 75 yards of the 6th Marines' command post where it, too, was destroyed.⁵³

In the zone of the 8th Marines, the situation on the left was still progressing satisfactorily, and good contact existed with the 6th Marines. On the right, however, the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, was still encountering tough resistance in its move toward Afetna Point. By late afternoon, 14 medium tanks of Company A, 2d Tank Battalion, had added their bulk and firepower to the push toward Afetna Point. The area was a maze of pillboxes, open trenches, and antiboat-antitank installations which had to be systematically neutralized—and at a great cost in personnel. Slow as the movement was, it was all forward.⁵⁴

Brigadier General Merritt A. Edson,⁵⁵ as-

would likely throw everything—"including the kitchen sink"—at the Marines. Ray stressed the importance of establishing a good defensive position after seizure of the 0-1 line so that an enemy thrust from Garapan could be stopped. When the peculiarly-designed Japanese tanks actually appeared—looking, indeed, like an overgrown piece of plumbing—PFC Nestor Sotelo of the 1st Platoon raised his head and shouted: "Pass the word to Mr. Ray that the Japs have arrived from Garapan with the kitchen sink." Fisher.

⁵³ *6th Mar Report*, 2. *Marine Corps Gazette*, Oct44, "Saipan Tank Battle," Maj J. A. Donovan, Jr., hereinafter cited as *Saipan Tank Battle*. Interview with Maj Donovan on 11Jan49. Fisher.

⁵⁴ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section V, 4.

⁵⁵ General Edson, Congressional Medal of Honor winner at Guadalcanal and one of the most eminent Marines in World War II, established a pattern on D-Day which he faithfully followed throughout the operation: get to that part of the division front where the action was most critical and offer advice, inspiration or even active leadership as required.

sistant commander of the 2d Division, came ashore in the early afternoon and established the advance command post on the right of Beach Green 1. This site, nothing more than an abandoned Japanese trenchwork, had been occupied by the 8th Marines' headquarters, which moved farther forward after the arrival of Edson's group. General Watson followed at about 1800 with a detachment from division headquarters, landing on Beach Red 2. The command post was then established on the extreme south flank of Beach Red 2 with local security provided by the Division Reconnaissance Company.

Soon after the staff settled in this installation, however, heavy mortar and artillery fire rained down, interfering with efficient functioning. General Watson then decided to move northward and inland across the coastal road into a grove of trees behind the juncture of Beaches Red 1 and 2. In General Watson's words:

"When I had arrived at the decision to move, the sun had already set; the distant night was alive with fires, and shelling from enemy artillery and mortars was unrelenting. I directed Brigadier General Edson and his small control group to remain behind until our new command post could be established. The rest of our headquarters group moved northward along the beach, then struck inland across the open beach road and, moving in the shadows of the road, finally reached the wooded area which had been selected for the new command post. My staff immediately set about establishing our command post. We were delighted to find trenches and shelters already dug in the woods by the Japanese. Our joy was soon dispelled, however, when we discovered these trenches and shelters not only contained dead Japanese who had to be moved, but dynamite and other high explosives. The dangerous materials were moved out during the night and early morning and the area served as an excellent divisional command post for several days thereafter, although, initially, it was located only a few yards behind our own front lines.⁵⁶

One other minor disadvantage of the installation, initially, was the presence of the firing batteries of the 10th Marines nearby. This was a disadvantage which could not be avoided on the shallow beachhead of D-Day, but, nevertheless, one which did not lend to the comfort of the division staff.

⁵⁶ *Watson*.

10TH MARINES' 75MM PACK HOWITZERS LAND

The 1st and 2d Battalions, 10th Marines (75mm pack howitzers), landed late in the day and assumed positions prior to darkness: Lieutenant Colonel Presley M. Rixey's 1st Battalion on the eastern edge of a small wood 50 to 150 yards inland from Beach Red 2, and Lieutenant Colonel George R. E. Shell's 2d Battalion about 400 yards inland from Green 1 near the northern end of the Charan Kanoa airstrip. After executing the ship-to-shore movement without loss of weapons and few casualties (2 killed, 5 wounded), Rixey's battalion moved on foot through a small wooded area, apparently unobserved. No Japanese artillery fire was received while going into position or immediately thereafter. The battalion had its 75's firing in support of the 6th Marines at about dark and maintained this support throughout the night.

Shell's battalion crossed the naked Charan Kanoa airstrip enroute to firing position, and, unfortunately, the movement did not go unnoticed. A Japanese observer, located on one of the heights which backed all western beaches, carefully chartered the position. After dark, soon after the unit fired its first rounds in support of the 8th Marines, Japanese counterbattery fire thundered down, Battery F bearing the brunt. Despite the excellent coverage achieved by the Japanese, however, no howitzers were destroyed.

Colonel Raphael Griffin, regimental commander of the 10th Marines, landed with the 2d Division command group at 1730 and established his command post just inland from Beach Red 2, in proximity to the 2d Division command post. No other elements of the 10th Marines were landed during D-Day.⁵⁷

2D AND 24TH MARINES LAND

After participating in the Tanapag demonstration, the 2d and 24th Marines awaited the word to land. Orders came at 1104 for Colonel Franklin A. Hart's 24th Marines, and by late afternoon the regiment had completed landing and proceeded to assembly areas. The 1st and 2d Battalions beached on Blue 1 after coming through Charan Kanoa channel in LCVP's;

⁵⁷ *10th Marines Report*, 2-3. Interview with Col P. M. Rixey, 23Feb49, hereinafter cited as *Rixey*.

the 3d Battalion used LVT's to cross the reef and land on Yellow 1.

On reaching shore, Lieutenant Colonel Maynard C. Schultz' 1st Battalion moved to an assembly area about 400 yards south of Charan Kanoa. Some cover from flat trajectory fire was afforded by the railroad embankment, but otherwise the open terrain was devoid of cover or concealment. Companies A and B were committed on the right of the 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, to strengthen the tenuous connection between that unit and the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, rapid progress of which had carried it from 600 to 800 yards ahead.

Lieutenant Colonel Richard Rothwell's 2d Battalion, 24th Marines, moved from its point of landing on Beach Blue 1 to an assembly area southwest of Charan Kanoa. During the move along the beach and after arrival in the partly-concealed assembly area, the battalion suffered 75 casualties from Japanese artillery fire. Intermittent harassing fires continued upon the unit throughout the night.

Two of the LVT's carrying the 3d Battalion overturned in the heavy surf, causing heavy casualties. Orders to the battalion had directed that it move to an assembly area in LVT's prior to debarkation. Once the unit reached the beach, however, the deluge of hostile artillery fire made the scheme unfeasible. Lieutenant Colonel Alexander A. Vandergrift, Jr., therefore, deployed his battalion and moved it on foot to an assembly area some 700 yards inland from Yellow 1, near a fork in the railroad tracks. The men had no more than taken entrenching tools in hand when a barrage of well-directed Japanese artillery fire engulfed them. After the day's casualties were totalled, it was discovered that the unit had suffered heavily, though it had yet to enter the front line fighting: 25 killed, 72 wounded, 39 missing (mostly those lost on board the overturned LVT's). Other battalions had suffered more heavily, but the real significance of these figures lies in the fact that the 3d Battalion did not arrive on the beach until 1727.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ The foregoing account of the 24th Marines' landing is a synthesis of the following sources: *24th Mar Report*, 18; Reports of 1st, 2d and 3d Battalions, 24th Marines (page 1 of all reports).

Colonel Walter J. Stuart's 2d Marines boated and proceeded to the control vessel at about 1400; two hours later came orders to land in column of battalions on Beach Red 2. Lieutenant Colonel Arnold F. Johnston's 3d Battalion, and a portion of Lieutenant Colonel Richard C. Nutting's 2d Battalion (Company F and a headquarters echelon) were ashore by 1900, when orders were issued that no more LCVP-LVT transfers would be made and no more troops landed that night. Men of the 2d Marines ashore were attached to the 6th Marines, with Johnston's 3d Battalion taking positions on the division left flank in support of the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, and Nutting's 2d Battalion elements digging-in just north of Charan Kanoa airstrip.⁵⁹

It had been planned to land troops and supplies throughout the night, but this became impossible due to the heavy seas in the transfer area. As early as 1730, one of the LVT's carrying part of the 2d Division headquarters almost swamped in the huge waves which had commenced to run inland across the reef.⁶⁰

DARKNESS D-DAY

Because of the concentrated mortar and artillery fire which had struck his troops throughout the day, the commander of the 23d Marines (Colonel Jones) estimated that the light forces on the O-1 line (consisting of about one-half of Companies K and L of the 3d Battalion and only about one composite platoon from the 2d Battalion) would be incapable of holding there for the night without being virtually annihilated. In addition, the regimental commander felt that "pulling back would allow our artillery and air to bring fire on the Jap batteries a short distance inland, better contact could be obtained on the right, and the exposed left flank could be better protected."

Dillon's 2d Battalion and Cosgrove's 3d Battalion were therefore ordered to establish a defense line generally 800 yards west of O-1 for the night. This involved a withdrawal under cover of darkness of the meager forces on O-1.

⁵⁹ *2d Mar Report*, 1-2. Interview with Maj M. P. Ryan, 3Mar49, hereinafter cited as *M. P. Ryan*.

⁶⁰ *Watson*.



2D MARINES, after returning from a demonstration at Tanapag, wait in LCVP's for transfer to amphibian tractors in which to move ashore. Only about one-half of the regiment got ashore on D-Day, the rest being held up by heavy seas which developed in the late afternoon.

The decision to pull back after nightfall, rather than in the daytime, was a wise one; no casualties were incurred during this phase of the operation. The 81mm mortar platoon of the 3d Battalion, 23d Marines, undergoing a particularly severe shelling at the time of withdrawal, abandoned its mortars near Mt. Fina Susu. Peculiarly enough, these mortars were found intact and undamaged when the 23d Marines returned to the area several days later.

Terrain for the 23d Marines' night defense was flat, open and possessing few features which would hide infiltrating Japanese. "The fields of fire were excellent," the 2d Battalion commander later pointed out, "but there was nothing to fire at."

Haas' 1st Battalion was ordered to relieve the 3d Battalion, the latter reverting to reserve with the mission of protecting the exposed left flank. The 2d Battalion patrolled Charan

Kanoa throughout the night to protect against Japanese attack or infiltration from the left (north) rear. Concern about the 23d Marines' left flank was natural enough, since it was apparent that the "no man's land" between divisions could easily become a direct, nonstop chute to the beach for the Japanese.⁶¹

Colonel Batchelder's 25th Marines, after a discouraging start, inched forward. By 1400, some elements of the 2d Battalion had reached the O-1 line; but it was not until 1700 that the entire regiment was on the objective. The extreme right flank of the O-1 line, which included a portion of Agingan Point, remained in Japanese hands and was not secured until the following morning, but in the remainder of the sector the objective had been seized. At this point, units were ordered to prepare defenses

⁶¹ 23d Mar Report, 34. 2d Bn, 23 Mar Report, 1-2. 3d Bn, 23d Mar Report, 1. Treitel. Dillon. L. R. Jones.

and gird themselves for whatever might come.⁶²

D-Day had been expensive, both in personnel and in materiel. Scores of minor wounds were never reported (and, therefore, escape the statistics); however, deaths and wounds serious enough to warrant more than "on-the-spot" attention brought the total casualties to over 2,000.⁶³ Of these, the bulk had resulted from Japanese artillery and mortar fire, the remainder from machine-gun and rifle fire or close-in bayonet and saber fighting on the beaches.

Evacuation of casualties on D-Day was by means of LVT's as far as the reef's edge, where wounded were transferred to LCVP's or LCM's; thereafter, about 60 per cent were taken directly to transports and about 40 per cent to the three hospital LST's. This latter method proved very unsatisfactory, inasmuch as the LST's, after receiving casualties, had to transfer them to transports. This proved a hardship on the injured.⁶⁴ Considerable difficulty was experienced on D-Day and D-plus 1 owing to a moderate ground swell. Casualties could not be loaded or unloaded at the ramp of LST's as planned but had to be hoisted over the side. On one LST, Seabees (Naval Construction Battalion personnel) rendered valuable service by hoisting stretchers with "cherry pickers"⁶⁵ loaded on the deck. The first casualties were received on board the LST's about 1040; and, in less than two hours, two LST's had over 200 casualties on board, and the third

was filled with its maximum load soon after.⁶⁶

Initial supply was accomplished by LVT's and ducks moving over the reef. Requests for these deliveries came from commanders on the beach directly to their representatives on board control vessels. Helpful in solving the critical problems of early supply was the preloading of LVT's of the second, third, and fourth waves with standard loads of water, grenades, mortar and small arms ammunition. These "pre-loads" were dumped at convenient points inland. Further, two LVT's per battalion were carried on transports or cargo ships, loaded with water, food, ammunition and critical medical items to assist in solving supply problems.⁶⁷

In the early afternoon of D-Day, shore party teams began to function ashore and initial supplies began flowing over the beaches. Throughout the planning and execution of the operation, close coordination was maintained between Beach and Shore Parties. This excellent spirit of cooperation paid dividends.

During D-Day and D-plus 1, very little cargo-handling equipment was landed owing to the nature of the beaches and the character of the resistance. The Shore Party was handicapped during the early stages by the heavy mortar and artillery fire on the beaches and, later, by the need for transporting supplies relatively long distances inland to Marines at the front.⁶⁸

As on D-minus 1, when *California* and *Braine* were hit, fire support ships were receiving occasional answering rounds from the enemy ashore. Battleship *Tennessee* was hit by four 4.7-inch projectiles from a battery located on Tinian, which killed six and wounded 26 men. *Tennessee*, in addition to minor structural damage, had a 5-inch 38 mount disabled by the rounds.⁶⁹

At dusk, while retiring to the westward of Saipan for the night, Carrier Support Group One (TG 52.14) was unsuccessfully attacked

⁶² 25th Mar Report, 3.

⁶³ The exact number is as elusive to the historian as it was to personnel officers at the time. Units busy fighting for their lives had no opportunity to keep accurate casualty statistics. Keeping records in the early stages of an amphibious attack was rendered even more difficult by the fact that many men, because of the confusion and excitement, found themselves fighting with organizations other than their own. Also, there was the added problem of determining how many men were wounded on D-Day but who remained in the fight for a day, or several days, before turning in for treatment or hospitalization.

⁶⁴ TF 56 G-4 Report, 26.

⁶⁵ The "cherry-picker," often used to lift heavy objects from the ground onto a truck, is a tractor equipped with an overhead crane.

⁶⁶ COMINCH P-007, 5-19.

⁶⁷ 2d Mar Div Report, Section II, 2; Section V, 4. NTLF G-4 Report, Part II, 1.

⁶⁸ COMINCH P-007, 4-24.

⁶⁹ TF 51 Report, 5. Task Unit 52.17.1 Report, 24.



DEBRIS ON THE BEACH. Picture shows several LVT(A)'s knocked out in the early stages of the battle, testifying to the strength of enemy defense even after naval bombardment.

by a "large formation" of Japanese aircraft. While the U. S. task group suffered no damage, carrier-based U. S. fighters accounted for three sure kills and one probable (types not known), while ships' gunfire knocked down two light bombers.⁷⁰

Serving as eyes for the Northern Troops and Landing Force and both Marine divisions were air observers, operating in carrier-based planes (TBM's). On station from dawn to dusk, these planes constantly performed missions of observation and, on at least one occasion, participated in a ground strike against a critical target. Air observers assisted the Commander Support Aircraft by reporting front line positions,

⁷⁰ *TF 51 Report*, 6 and Annex 1.

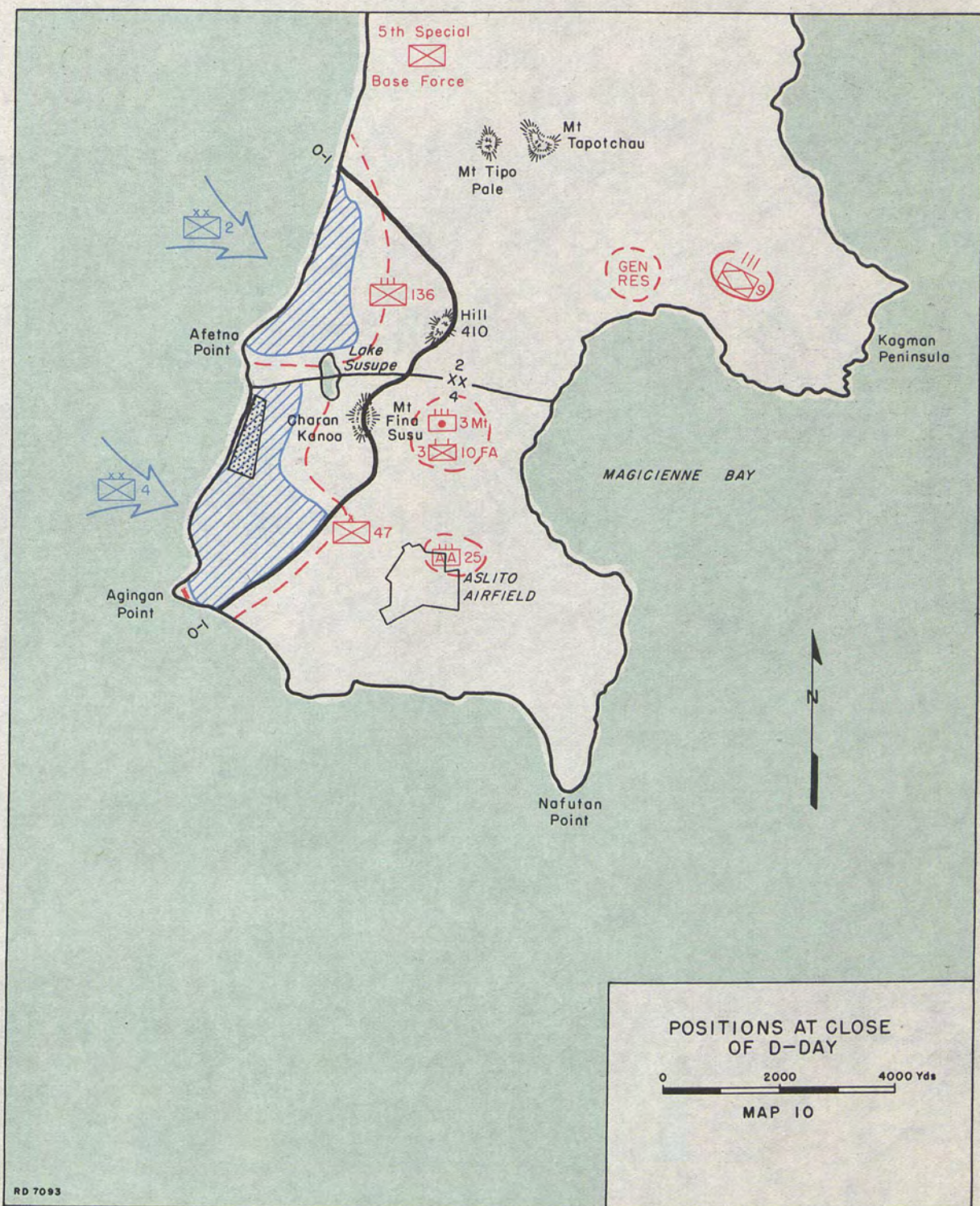
discovery of new targets and evaluation of air strikes.⁷¹

By darkness of D-Day, two facts were clear: first, the landing had been successful; and second, a long hard fight was in prospect.

The two divisions were established ashore on a 10,000 yard front about 1,500 yards deep, with almost half of the planned beachhead secured. Everywhere the main problem was to organize scattered units, tie in flanks, and await the expected counterattacks. Since contact had not been established between divisions, it was necessary for both to give careful attention to their respective flanks.

The 2d Division anchored both flanks on the

⁷¹ *COMINCH P-007*, 2-4.



beach itself, left near a coral excavation pit about one mile south of Garapan, right near the middle of Afetna Point. The 4th Division had tied its right into the beach just south of Agingan Point (although a portion of the point remained in Japanese hands) and disposed the 3d Battalion, 23d Marines, to protect the exposed left flank. The southern half of Afetna Point, between the two divisions, remained unconquered. (See Map 10.)

The Marines' positions were—all things considered—quite good, but the enemy's were much better. The dominating ridgeline, which ran parallel to the western beaches, allowed the Japanese to observe the Marines digging in and to place fires where they pleased. That these fires did not exact even heavier casualties than they did is directly attributable to the inability of the enemy to mass artillery fires. Further, the Marines, convinced of the need for deep foxholes, lost no time burrowing into the sandy loam or occupying empty Japanese positions and antitank ditches.⁷²

A NOISY AND RESTLESS NIGHT

As expected, the enemy launched a number of counterattacks at various points throughout the night. In the center of the 8th Marines' zone, several small attacks were repulsed with no great difficulty. These enemy thrusts, occurring at about hourly intervals, came from the swamp and struck the 1st and 3d Battalions, 8th Marines. These two battalions, enjoying excellent fields of fire from their positions on the west edge of the swamp, stopped each Japanese incursion with small-arms and mortar fire. Also helpful were the 75mm pack howitzer fires of the 2d Battalion, 10th Marines. At no time was there more than a platoon of Japanese infantry committed to a single counterattack, and at no time was there a question of the outcome. These Japanese swamp inhabitants, probably members of Colonel Ogawa's 136th Infantry Regiment, were not in the swamp by choice; the impetus of the Marine landings had driven them there from their beach positions. Theirs was an attempt to comply with General Saito's policy to counter-

attack during the night and "demolish the enemy landing units at the water's edge."⁷³

Shortly before dusk, men of Companies F and I, along the left of the 6th Marines' lines, observed large groups of Japanese streaming down from the hills onto the coastal flats well to the north of the regiment's lines. This activity, portending a sleepless night, was an ideal target for artillery or naval gunfire. Here, however, complicating factors were presented; the 1st Battalion, 10th Marines (assigned to support the 6th Marines), was firing another mission;⁷⁴ the two naval gunfire spotters who should have been situated in the area were both casualties, and no replacements were present; the unit's organic mortars, though available, were not well suited to firing on an area target of this nature. Eventually, after the Marines relayed the request through the 2d Battalion command post and after the Japanese had completed their descent to the coastal plain, the *California* fired several salvos along the beach in front of the left flank. The ominous significance of the movement from the hills had prompted this fire.

A precaution, taken by the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, later proved wise: a strongpoint was established on a small hummock about 75 yards forward of the lines, covering an area masked to front line fires and, therefore, a favorable route of approach for the enemy. When the Japanese did, in fact, attempt to use this area, they met withering fire from the Marine strongpoint.

The first attack against the left flank took place at about 2200. Striking along the coast road against Companies F and I, this effort was in the nature of a probing, or "feeler," attack—designed to locate a weak spot for future exploitation. None was located, however, and the Japanese withdrew. Probably no more than a company was committed to this initial thrust. The action for the remainder of the night was almost continuous, with only occasional and

⁷³ Gunter.

⁷⁴ It is pertinent to note that all of the missions fired by the 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, during the first four days were classified by the calling observers as "urgent." Best.

⁷² NTLF Report, 14.

welcome lulls in the fighting; all hands were aware that Japanese lurked in the shadows, preparing for further attempts. A small wood, north of the Marine lines, became the enemy assembly area and "nerve center" for the night's activities. Unfortunately, this fact was not known by the Marines until later. It is regrettable that fires of the 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, were not directed into this point.

At 0300, after a series of reconnaissance-in-force actions by the enemy, the final sustained effort of the night began. A Japanese bugler⁷⁵ sounded a loud, clear call on the tense night air, and with a waving of flags, loud screams, and a brandishing of swords, the attack was launched. Added to the din were the shouts of the 6th Marines for "flares." Illumination shells, fired by the three destroyers, *Halsey Powell*, *Coghlan* and *Monssen* of Task Unit 52.17.3 began to burst over the area, clearly revealing the Japanese attackers. Men of Companies F and I opened with accurate, devastating fire. *California* joined with a tornado of salvos in front of the Marine lines. The Japanese, stripped by the illumination of the advantage afforded by their superior knowledge of the terrain (so helpful in night fighting), dropped before the Marines' fusillade. As Japanese fell, others replaced them in the determined onslaught.

At one point in the fighting (shortly after 0300), it was feared that the enemy had effected a penetration of Company I, along the coastal road. To contain this Japanese prong, Colonel Riseley shifted one company of the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines (Company L), into the area. The light of morning, however, revealed that no penetration had been made and that Company L had, in effect, formed a secondary line.

By 0545, the Japanese pressure reached a peak; two Marine 37mm guns near the beach were knocked out and their crews forced back. Although the main positions held, a false report reached the 6th Marines' command post to the effect that Company F's lines along the beach had been forced back about 50 yards. This erroneous report, probably fostered by the withdrawal of the two 37mm crews and the

infiltration of small enemy groups to the regimental command post, had no basis in fact. Five medium tanks from Company B, 2d Tank Battalion, proved decisive at this juncture. These machines announced their arrival by concentrating their cannon and machine guns against the Japanese. Under the fusillade, the enemy effort withered and died. As remnants of the battered force fell back, a blanket of fires from battleship *California*, destroyers *Phelps* and *Monssen*, and Lieutenant Colonel Rixey's 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, covered them.

Welcome daylight of 16 June revealed a battlefield littered with about 700 enemy dead. Total Japanese troops committed to the night's action was approximately one battalion. Although unit identification of these dead is not indicated in existing records, elements of Colonel Suzuki's 135th Infantry were located on the 6th Marines' front on the following day, and it is therefore deduced that the battalion in question was from this regiment.

The drain on the supply of ships' star shells had been considerable; yet the Marines desired even more. As long as the enemy could be seen, he could be stopped. Captain Harry B. Jarrett, USN, the commander of the task unit which supplied the night's illumination, later commented on the situation:

Definitely, destroyers were not originally supplied with enough star shells. The first counterattack below Garapan found the Marines asking for star shells rather steadily, and it was depressing to hear them begging for more stars when there were none available.

The Japanese counterattack had failed, and most of the evidence of that failure lay crumpled on the plain north of the Marines' lines. Not all, however; with the coming of daylight, it was discovered that several small harassing and infiltrating groups had penetrated to rear areas. Here the intruders set about a program of causing as much trouble as possible. Mopping-up patrols from the 6th Marines' scout-sniper platoon immediately set about the task of finding and eliminating the enemy groups.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ The bugle, riddled with bullet holes, was found by Marines the following day.

⁷⁶ Fisher. *North. 2d Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 1. Task Unit 52.17.3 Report, 3. *6th Mar Report*, 3-4.

The pattern was similar in the 4th Marine Division zone. Local attacks were unsuccessfully launched against the 25th Marines' center at 0330 and again at 0430, the latter attack more determined than the first and preceded by an artillery and mortar preparation. Whether by coincidence or plan, the 0430 thrust followed on the heels of the last round of preparatory fires. This was the principal hint that the attack was coordinated and not merely the result of aggressive resourcefulness on the part of subordinate Japanese commanders. In addition, however, an old—yet effective—ruse was employed in the second attack: Japanese soldiers used a large body of civilians, including women and children, to shield their approach to the Marine lines. Because of this trick, Marines held their fire until an almost critically-late moment.

From this episode emerged an interesting story regarding the use of artillery. A forward observer, 1st Lieutenant James V. Walker, of the 1st Battalion, 14th Marines, was with Company C, 25th Marines, at the time of the action. Like other Marines in the vicinity, Walker thought that the people advancing towards the lines were only civilians who desired to surrender. When the true status of the advancing body was determined, Walker called in the 75mm fires of the 1st Battalion, 14th Marines. At the very crisis of the battle, as the enemy pressed virtually into the Marine lines, the 1st Battalion, 14th Marines, notified Walker that it was out of ammunition and that it was turning the mission over to the 3d Battalion, 14th Marines. The latter unit had tracked every shift of the 1st Battalion and, without adjustment, hesitation or lull, brought its fire crashing into the heart of the enemy force. The extra punch of the 3d Battalion's 105mm howitzers, as compared to the 1st Battalion's 75mm pack howitzers, broke the Japanese attack, and the fight was won.⁷⁷

Another circumstance complicating the situation: just before the 0430 attack, an enemy artillery shell hit one of the 75mm half-tracks (in position near Company C, 25th Marines), causing the vehicle to burst into flames. The

brightness of the fire silhouetted the Marines to Japanese observers who quickly directed artillery fire into the area. To escape this situation and also to dodge the burning half-track's exploding shells, Company C withdrew about 200 yards. At dawn of 16 June, the original positions were regained.

In addition to the support rendered by artillery, 37mm guns and 75mm half-tracks of the 25th Marines' Regimental Weapons Company figured prominently in the repulse. Captain Thomas E. Clarke, commander of Company C, gave the opinion that, had the half-tracks not been present, the Japanese would have penetrated the lines.⁷⁸

Throughout the night, Japanese artillery fire swept and raked the beach from one end to the other. The 23d Marines, while not experiencing a concentrated counterattack until early morning, had to contend with unceasing infiltration attempts by the Japanese. Utilizing the unoccupied slot between divisions, small enemy groups prodded unsuccessfully at the left flank throughout the night. Patrols sent out by the 23d Marines failed to establish contact with the 8th Marines to the north. Scattered individual Japanese who did pierce the tight security of the left flank were mopped up by units in the rear, principally Company K, and elements of the Beach and Shore Parties.

In regard to the latter's activities, the 23d Marines' commander has written: "The left side of these [Blue] beaches was a hot bed, but these troops fought and worked and did a good job. Credit must be given here to the colored Army units forming part of the Shore Party. . . ." ⁷⁹

At approximately 0530, about 200 Japanese moved from Lake Susupe through the "no-man's land" between divisions and struck for the Charan Kanoa pier. Lieutenant Colonel Cosgrove's 3d Battalion, 23d Marines, charged with the mission of preventing just such a move, proved equal to its assignment by stop-

⁷⁷ Karch.

⁷⁸ 1st Battalion, 25th Marines Report, 7, hereinafter cited as *1st Bn, 25th Mar Report*. Mee.

⁷⁹ L. R. Jones.

ping and destroying nearly the entire enemy force. Again, personnel of the Beach and Shore Parties in the vicinity of Beach Blue 1 joined in the defense of the pier and beach. Those Japanese successful in infiltrating the flank were mopped up in the morning by the same units that had dealt with them during the night.⁸⁰

It was not a night of rest and relaxation.

REPORTS—IMPENDING NAVAL ACTION

Throughout the day, higher echelons—including the staffs of General Holland Smith and Admiral Turner—had kept abreast of the situation ashore. Their conception of the attack's progress was necessarily drawn from reports of the divisions on the ground and the air observers overhead. From a ship thousands of yards offshore, it was impossible to get more than a remote picture of what was taking place—like attempting to judge the temperature of a wintry day from inside a heated house.

Shining through the miasma of early, incomplete reports, however, was the indisputable fact that both Marine divisions had carved out shallow beachheads which, in each case, bulged in the center and receded on either flank. A difficult ship-to-shore problem had been solved, causing Admiral Turner later to observe: "The Saipan landing . . . was much the most difficult of any I personally witnessed during the war. The men who made it, Navy or Marines, were, on the whole, better organized and better trained than for any other landing. They did magnificently."⁸¹

By the close of D-Day, all three infantry regiments of the 4th Division were ashore, as well as the artillery and a large portion of the division's tanks. The 2d Division had about two and a half infantry regiments, two of its five artillery battalions, and the majority of its tanks ashore. A disconcerting gap between the two divisions existed, but both had taken positive action to cover it. The flow of supplies ashore was somewhat less than normal owing to a moderate ground swell which arose in the afternoon and later prevented night unloading.

In addition, handling of supplies on the beaches was materially hampered by enemy mortar and artillery fire. While the advance had not proceeded as rapidly as hoped, sufficient space had been seized for the efficient employment of supporting weapons. In short, there was no cause to doubt the eventual outcome.

Many important gains had been made which were not visible at the moment. For example, the Marines, as yet, could not fully appreciate how much damage had been done to the enemy's communications (principally by naval shelling) and how much difficulty Japanese commanders were experiencing in controlling their troops.

On the night of D-Day, Admiral Spruance received two submarine reports which added up to the disturbing indication that the Japanese Fleet, for the first time since Guadalcanal, was coming out to do battle. Spruance's eyes-under-the-sea had obtained two fixes on a large force of enemy carriers, battleships, cruisers and destroyers moving from their anchorage at Tawi Tawi (Southern Philippines) in the direction of the Marianas and at such speed that they could attack by D-plus 2. Startling news, pregnant with possibilities. Should the attack on Guam, which had been scheduled for 18 June (D-plus 3), be delayed on the basis of these reports? Spruance would "sleep" on the situation (loose term—he would be awake all night) and hold a conference with principal commanders the following morning.⁸²

Actually, this development was no surprise. Since the initiation of planning, the possibility—even probability—of the Japanese Fleet coming out to do battle had been frequently discussed. So, while the situation was serious, it in no sense caught the U. S. Navy unprepared. In regard to this, Admiral Turner has written:

Before Spruance and I left Pearl Harbor, we had thoroughly canvassed the possible situations that might occur in case the Japanese Fleet should attack. It was, of course, impracticable and unwise to try to provide for all of the various situations by many separate plans. Therefore, both of us issued schematic, flexible general plans that could be implemented as

⁸⁰ 23d Mar Report, 35. Treitel.

⁸¹ Turner.

⁸² 5th Fleet Initial Report, 3.

desired by a few simple dispatches. We were in full agreement as to what to do. Fortunately, when the time came, the easiest situation of all developed (early attack from one direction while we were still committed to a single landing).⁸³

Characteristically, Japanese commanders at Saipan were sending optimistic reports to Tokyo. They had observed the activities on Dominus 1 and judged correctly that the Americans would land on the Charan Kanoa beaches. At 2030 on 14 June, an unidentified Japanese commander sent a message to "all units concerned" which said:

The units are prepared for the enemy landing; morale is high and we are in complete readiness. Although losses, etc. (from American bombardment), are being investigated, it is expected that they are very slight.

At 0430 the morning of D-Day, Major General Keiji Iketa (chief of staff, 31st Japanese Army) reported that over 100 enemy ships could be observed in the area west of Saipan, but "Morale is high. We are waiting." Later, in a document titled "Lessons derived from the situation before and after opening of enemy landings," he indicated a low regard for our H-Hour preparation:

They did not carry out a large scale shelling and bombing against the positions on the landing beach just prior to landing. When they came to the landing . . . our basic positions were completely sound.⁸⁴

General Iketa's evaluation of U. S. preparatory fires is of interest principally because it was contradicted time and again by the testimony of other Japanese on Saipan (see page 248).

Even though Japanese commanders may have been peering through rose-colored glasses, the defenders' morale was high, and they were far from giving up their original plans to "demolish the enemy during the night at the waters' edge."

Prior to 12 June, wishful thinking had caused the Japanese to prophesy that the next U. S. move would be against the Palaus or an objective farther south, an area well suited to defense by the coordinated efforts of the Combined Fleet. Even Mitscher's Task Force 58 strike against the Marianas on 11 June shed

little light on U. S. intentions; the move could conceivably have been nothing more than a diversion for another operation. At any rate, until the fog of mystery had lifted, there was no cause to alter dispositions. Continuing raids by Mitscher's force, plus the 14 June advent of mine sweepers and underwater demolition teams, finally convinced the Japanese of the true U. S. intentions.

News of the Saipan landing was stunning, indeed. But, then, it was thought to be only a matter of time until powerful Japanese forces would destroy the intruders by coordinated activities of the base air forces (from Iwo Jima, Guam, Palau, Yap and Woleai) and the fleet (moving from Tawi Tawi anchorage). Admiral Toyoda, commander in chief of the Combined Fleet, had no illusions about the effect that U. S. seizure of the Marianas would produce on the home islands. His was the responsibility of decisively defeating the U. S. Task Force; and, if he had doubts as to the eventual outcome, these were not revealed by the strenuous line of action which he pursued.⁸⁵

Chafing at the bit on Guam was Second Lieutenant Rai Imanishi, who said in his diary of 15 June:

The Combined Fleet is about to engage the enemy in decisive combat . . . in the Marianas sector. The enemy has already begun landing on Saipan. Truly, we are on the threshold of momentous occurrences. Now is the time for me to offer my life for the great cause and be a barrier against the enemy advancing in the Pacific Ocean.⁸⁶

The lieutenant would have to wait awhile, but the opportunity was not to be denied him.

Elsewhere on Guam, an unidentified Japanese soldier of lesser rank, but equal perception, wrote:

15 June, 1944—. . . the enemy landed on Saipan and a heavy battle is in progress. The situation of our forces does not look favorable.⁸⁷

On Tinian, individual Japanese recognized that momentous happenings were in the offing. Disgust and disappointment at the poor showing of their aircraft is evidenced in most of the diaries. This resentment extended beyond the

⁸³ Turner.

⁸⁴ CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #9983-85, 1-4.

⁸⁵ *Campaigns*, 210-213.

⁸⁶ CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #10,410.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

fact that naval aviators were not fighting the U. S. planes to the satisfaction of the ground personnel. An unidentified Japanese noncommissioned officer wrote:

15 June—The naval aviators are robbers. . . . When they ran off to the mountains, they stole Army provisions, robbed people of their fruits and took cars.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #11,405.

To a noncommissioned officer (Tokuzo Matsuya) of the 9th Tank Regiment—still in an assembly area in the Chacha-Laulau area on Saipan—things were not so grim:

15 June— . . . one enemy division landed . . . but was surrounded by our troops. Our plan would seem to be to annihilate the enemy by morning.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #10,238.



SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

CHAPTER III

Expansion of the Beachhead

D-PLUS 1—16 JUNE

Dawn of 16 June produced mixed reactions, depending upon which camp one was in. The Japanese were sorry to see it because it would mean that observed air, naval gunfire and artillery would again spread havoc among them; the Marines were glad to see it—and for precisely the same reason.

The golden opportunity to counterattack the beachhead in sufficient strength to drive the Marines into the water had not materialized. Several efforts had been made, but in all cases they had been foiled with heavy losses to the enemy. The night of D-Day was not to see the last of the Japanese counterattacks, but certainly no more favorable opportunity normally accrues to the defender than on the first night, when the attacker is still somewhat disorganized.

Persistent enemy movements along the coast road from the north throughout the night had indicated convincingly that Garapan was being used as an assembly area for further counterattacks against our positions. The town had remained unmolested because of a desire to conserve the buildings and other facilities for our later use. Since such a policy was obviously very helpful to the Japanese, General Watson, commanding the 2d Division, requested that the town be bombed, shelled and burned by our naval forces. This, as will be seen, was later accomplished.¹

Spruance's Decisions

The previous night had brought Admiral Spruance news of a movement of the Japanese Fleet from Philippine waters. On the morning of 16 June, after conferences and careful consideration of the problem, he reached the following decisions:

(a) The tentative date for the Guam landing (18 June) would be cancelled, and the designation of a new date would await a clarification of the situation. Transports of the Southern Attack Force would oscillate well to the eastward of Guam.

(b) Certain previously warned cruiser and destroyer units attached to Admiral Turner's Joint Expeditionary Force would replenish ammunition and fuel and join the Fast Carrier Forces on the 17th.

(c) Unloading at Saipan would continue through daylight of the 17th, and at dark all transports and LST's not required for immediate unloading would withdraw to the eastward of Saipan and not return the next day.

(d) Transports and LST's needed for immediate unloading, plus small craft and screen, would remain at Saipan. As required, other transports and LST's from the group which retired to the eastward would be returned.

(e) The old battleships, part of the cruisers and some destroyers of the Joint Expeditionary Force would cover Saipan from about 25 miles to the westward during darkness to guard against the possibility that hostile surface ves-

¹ 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 1.



"MARINER" SEAPLANES afloat off Saipan's west coast. Searches by these planes, to provide warning of Japanese naval incursions, commenced on 17 June and continued throughout the operation.

sels might evade our fleet. In addition, ships from this covering group would provide troop gunfire support as required.

(f) Escort carriers nearby to the eastward of Saipan would continue to provide air cover for all ships in the vicinity and to furnish troop support aircraft; but no support or cover could be expected from Fast Carrier Task Forces after 16 June.

(g) Six patrol seaplanes (PBM—"Mariner") would be ordered to arrive at Saipan on 17 June, prepared to make night radar searches to 600 miles west of the island. This six-plane squadron (VP-16) would fly out from Eniwetok and be mothered by the seaplane tender *Ballard*.²

Admiral Spruance announced these far-reaching decisions at a conference aboard Ad-

miral Turner's flagship *Rocky Mount*. As Spruance prepared to leave the ship to return to his own flagship *Indianapolis*, General Holland Smith, who was also embarked in *Rocky Mount*, asked him: "Do you think the Japs will turn tail and run?" "No," Spruance replied, "not now. They are out after big game. If they had wanted an easy victory, they would have disposed of the relatively small force covering MacArthur's operation at Biak (New Guinea). But the attack on the Marianas is too great a challenge for the Japanese Navy to ignore."³

It is interesting to note that the approach of the Japanese Fleet did not seriously affect the supply situation on Saipan, since even the transports and LST's that retired eastward were close enough so that they could be sent back to Saipan as required. Some shortages did develop, however, as will be seen.⁴

² Later, this number of seaplanes was gradually increased until five squadrons, based on six seaplane tenders, were present. The night of 17 June marked the beginning of such searches from Saipan. *TF 51 Report*, Encl A, 6.

³ *Coral and Brass*, 165.

⁴ *TF 51 Report*, 6. Interview with Adm H. W. Hill, 20Sep49.

One disappointing result of the transports' withdrawal was that few cargo vehicles came ashore during the period. This caused inland supply and evacuation to be performed primarily by LVT's, which did a good job but, in the process, chopped the existing roads into nearly impassable condition. In addition, the LVT's themselves suffered considerable deterioration, thereby reducing the combat effectiveness of LVT battalions.⁵

Though the amount of air support for the landing force was drastically reduced from 17 to 22 June because of the necessity for redistributing available forces, naval gunfire support was reduced very little. Nearly the full number of fire support vessels requested by the landing force were supplied day or night.⁶

It is not the purpose of this narrative to recount the numerous small naval actions in the waters surrounding Saipan. Suffice it to say that the surprise thrust into Marianas' waters had trapped many vulnerable Japanese cargo ships. Many of these got underway as soon as the truth was known, hoping to reach a safe port. Few were successful; U. S. submarines, aircraft and surface vessels were alert and intercepted and sank most of them. This happy state of affairs caused Rear Admiral Charles A. Pownall, USN, Commander Air Pacific, to comment: "The Marianas operation flushed more shipping than it had been our fortune to contact for a number of months."⁷

Even as Spruance implemented his monumental decisions, Marines of the two divisions were engaged in cementing their toehold. For the entire landing force this meant pouring more troops and weapons ashore and pressing the attack inland. The principal thrust would be made on the landing force right, in the 4th Marine Division's zone, while the left of the 2d Division would hold the pivot and wait for the outer arc to swing abreast. Further, the 2d Division left, during its wait, could gird itself for expected Japanese attacks from the north.

Before the 4th Division could throw its round-house hook in earnest, it would have to push farther inland, toward the east coast.

Enemy artillery and mortars, emplaced on or behind the spiny ridge line which divides the island, continued destructive fires throughout the day, particularly in the congested beach areas. Even though numerous artillery and naval gunfire concentrations and air strikes were directed against their suspected positions, the Japanese clung persistently to favorable terrain which overlooked the entire beach-head. Time and time again after being "silenced," enemy shelling would begin anew.⁸

In both Marine divisions, shore party activities continued. On Beach Red 2, the shore party team which had landed there on D-Day had received so many casualties that it was necessary to send in another team to supplement it. Generally, however, the supply situation was quite good.⁹

6th Marines Consolidate; 8th Captures Afetna Point

During 16 June, the 6th Marines (on the left, pivot flank) held the same general position, consolidating and reorganizing front lines. In the afternoon, remaining elements of the regimental weapons company (75mm half-tracks and 37mm guns) came ashore and were incorporated into defensive plans. Only sporadic activity (mostly mopping-up of Japanese infiltrators and by-passed groups) occurred in the 6th Marines' zone during the day and early evening.

Major LeRoy P. Hunt, Jr., now commanded the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, having replaced Lieutenant Colonel Murray, who, along with the executive officer, Major Howard L. Rice, had been wounded. The 3d Battalion had changed commanders too: Lieutenant Colonel Easley, wounded on D-Day, was finally evacuated on the morning of 16 June and replaced by his executive officer, Major John E. Rentsch.¹⁰

⁵ Ltr from Col R. J. Straub to CMC, 13Jan50.

⁶ Turner.

⁷ ComAirPac Ser 00888, 27Jul44, Analysis of Pacific Air Operations, Jun44, 12.

⁸ 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 1-2.

⁹ Ibid. 4th Mar Div Report, Section VI, 16.

¹⁰ 6th Mar Report, 4. Rentsch.

Colonel Wallace's 8th Marines, meanwhile, continued its original mission of clearing Afetna Point, Beach Green 3, and the area west of Lake Susupe. This task fell principally to the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, and, to a lesser extent, the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines (attached to the 8th Marines). The 1st and 3d Battalions held their positions of the previous day and made minor adjustments in their lines.

Afetna Point, the D-Day headache, proved much easier on 16 June; most of the point's defenders had either retired from the area during the night or had expended themselves in the unsuccessful attack against the 23d Marines' left flank. The few scattered die hards who remained were mopped up by the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, or flushed into the flank of the 23d Marines, where they met with a quick end. By 0950, men of Company G, 8th Marines, had advanced to the Charan Kanoa pier, marking the boundary between divisions. The unit then pushed inland, caught up and established contact with the 4th Division at about 1140. By early afternoon the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, had secured its area as far inland as Lake Susupe. (See Map 11.)

Mopping-up of rear areas continued throughout the day, mainly hampered by well-directed Japanese mortar and artillery fire. Company G, ordered into 2d Battalion reserve after completion of its Afetna Point mission, became a popular enemy target despite several moves to avoid the shelling. Since the rounds seemed to emanate from positions east of Lake Susupe and since Company G was well concealed from enemy observers located in that direction, the conclusion was drawn that the observer must be behind, and close by, the company. He could not be found, however. Many days later a Japanese, proud of his accomplishments, was dragged from one of the Charan Kanoa sugar mill smokestacks where he had remained to direct fire long after Marines had secured the area.

Suffering the same ratio of losses in battalion commanders as the 6th Marines, the 8th Marines had effected two changes: Major William C. Chamberlin now commanded the 2d Battalion, Major Stanley E. Larsen the 3d Bat-

talion. These two former executive officers had replaced Lieutenant Colonels Crowe and Miller, both casualties early on D-Day.¹¹

Remainder of 2d Marines Lands

On D-Day, slightly less than half the elements of the 2d Marines (the 3d Battalion, a 2d Battalion headquarters detachment, and Company F) had arrived ashore. These had been attached to the 6th Marines. The remainder of the 2d Battalion and the 2d Marines' headquarters group commenced transferring to LVT's at daylight of D-plus 1 and were completely landed by 1000. Colonel Walter J. Stuart, commanding the 2d Marines, assumed command—on General Watson's order—of a composite group including the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, and the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines. These two units were located along the beach on the division left: the former on the front lines, the latter just behind in reserve. After taking over command at 1400, Colonel Stuart ordered the two battalions to switch positions (because of the fact that the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, had endured the brunt of the previous night's counterattacks). This exchange was accomplished prior to dark.¹²

Lieutenant Colonel Wood B. Kyle's 1st Battalion, 2d Marines (still under Northern Troops and Landing Force control even though plans to land the unit at Magicienne Bay had been abandoned), was ordered about noon to land and report to the 2d Marine Division. While Kyle was en route to the control vessel, a message was sent changing his orders to the effect that he was to land his battalion in the 4th Division zone and pass to the command of that division. This change had been ordered because the 4th Division's beaches were receiving less fire and, also, because there was more room for commitment in that zone of action. Kyle, however, had no inkling of this change until he reported to the control vessel. There he learned of the change regarding beaches but not of that relative to attachment. (It is likely that the control vessel received only that

¹¹ *8th Mar Report*, 1-2.

¹² *2d Mar Report*, Encl A, 2.

part of the message dealing with the place of landing.)

Once ashore, Colonel Kyle reported to General Schmidt, the 4th Division's commander. The general, also unaware of the NTLF change, directed Kyle to move his unit to the north and report to the 2d Division. About 1600, the battalion arrived at the 2d Division command post and was placed in division reserve. It was not until the 2d Division conveyed the report of Kyle's arrival that the NTLF staff realized that its change had not been accomplished. It was decided, however, that any further movement would be undesirable, and the battalion remained with the 2d Division.

Kyle immediately set about the task of reorganizing and reequipping the unit. The provisional organization of five companies for the Magicienne Bay landings was no longer justified, and the battalion resumed its conventional entity.¹³ As the unit's heavy weapons (81mm mortars and .30-caliber heavy machine guns) were still loaded aboard CVE's in accordance with the original plans, it remained for these weapons to be parachuted from carrier torpedo planes (TBF's). The drop, made on the small strip just inland from the 2d Division beaches, proved very unsatisfactory because of the low altitude from which it was made. The result: almost 100 per cent damage to the equipment.¹⁴

Kyle's unit was placed under a definite handicap by this turn of events but, in spite of the difficulties attendant to changing its organization and obtaining heavy weapons, comported itself like the well-trained battalion that it was.

Artillery Build Up

Since coming ashore on D-Day, the two pack howitzer battalions of the 10th Marines (1st and 2d Battalions) had performed excellently in support of the 6th and 8th Marines. At

about noon on 16 June, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth A. Jorgensen, commanding the 4th Battalion, 10th Marines, landed with his advance party to reconnoiter position areas. Because of heavy surf on the reef, Jorgensen decided to have the DUKW's (carrying 105mm howitzers) use the Charan Kanoa channel, even though it was under intermittent artillery and mortar fire. At about 1600, the 4th Battalion successfully made the transit of the channel, moved laterally to the north within the lagoon, and landed on Beach Green 3.

This move was followed closely by the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines (Major William L. Crouch), which used the same route at 1700.

The 4th Battalion went into position in the vicinity of the radio station, about 600 yards inland from the northern end of Green 1, while the 3d Battalion established itself about 200 yards inland from the southern end of Green 2. By 1800 all the artillery of both the Marine divisions, with the exception of the 2d 155mm Howitzer Battalion (a corps battalion attached to the 10th Marines), was ashore.¹⁵

Brigadier General Arthur M. Harper, USA, Commanding General of the XXIV Corps Artillery, landed at 1515. He had issued orders before leaving the ship to advance parties of artillery groups and battalions to meet him on shore. A tentative command post was established about 100 yards inland from the southern edge of Beach Blue 2. Advance parties of the Army's 419th and 420th Field Artillery Groups, the 225th and 531st Field Artillery Battalions, and elements of the Corps Artillery staff reported there before dark.¹⁶

The Push to O-1

In the 4th Marine Division zone, General Schmidt prepared to push the attack inland with the main effort in the center. The division reserve, Colonel Hart's 24th Marines, was ordered to detach one battalion (the 3d) to reinforce the 25th Marines, on the right, and another battalion (the 2d) to assemble in rear of the 23d Marines to protect the division left

¹³ Three rifle companies and a headquarters company.

¹⁴ *Kyle*. MajGen T. E. Watson's endorsement on ltr from LtCol W. B. Kyle to DirPubInfo, 20Nov48. Interview with Col R. E. Hogaboom, LtCol J. L. Stewart and LtCol E. W. Durant, Jr., 3Dec48.

¹⁵ *TF 56 G-3 Report*, 6. *10th Mar Report*, 3.

¹⁶ NTLF XXIV Corps Artillery, S-3 Report, 5, hereinafter cited as *Corps Arty S-3 Report*.

flank. The remainder of Colonel Hart's regiment was committed in the center between the 23d and 25th Marines. This shifting about would take time, so the attack hour was set for 1230.

The 24th Marines suffered a serious loss before it could get committed to action; Lieutenant Colonel Maynard C. Schultz, commanding the 1st Battalion, was killed by a fragment from a Japanese shell while at the regimental command post receiving instructions for the day's attack. Major Robert N. Fricke, the battalion executive officer, took over.¹⁷

For the 16 June attack, the 1st, 2d and 3d Battalions, 14th Marines, were in direct support of the 25th, 23d and 24th Marines respectively; the 4th and 5th Battalions furnished general support. This assignment was altered many times throughout the campaign so that each of the five battalions of the 14th Marines, at one time or another or in one combination or another, was in direct support of each of the infantry regiments.

While no unit on the beach completely escaped the Japanese artillery and mortar shelling, it appears that in point of concentrated, sustained pounding, the 5th Battalion, 14th Marines, suffered the most. The box score, provided by the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Douglas E. Reeve, tells the story:

By 0430 [16 June] all of Baker Battery's guns had been knocked out—0500: two guns in Able Battery knocked out—0545: one gun Charlie Battery knocked out—0630: other two guns Able Battery knocked out—0730: one more gun Charlie Battery knocked out. This left us two guns operative. We fired them.

When I say "knocked out" I mean just that—trails blown off, sights blown off, recoil mechanism damaged, etc. By 1000, with the help of division ordnance and by completely replacing one or two weapons, we were back in business—full strength—12 guns.

Personnel losses to the battalion during this period included eight killed and over 50 wounded. No one in the battalion had time or inclination to count the Japanese shells bursting around him, but the battalion commander estimated "300 rounds in a 21 hour period (1200 D-day to 0930 D-plus 1)." ¹⁸

¹⁷ *24th Mar Report*, 18.

¹⁸ *Reeve*.

When word of the 5th Battalion's heavy losses reached the regimental commander, Colonel Louis G. DeHaven, he informed Reeve that his unit would not be called upon for fires until a reorganization could be effected. As noted before, the unit was back to full weapons strength by 1000.¹⁹

Meanwhile, the 4th Battalion, 14th Marines, had had an unique experience. Shortly after dawn, personnel of this unit observed a Japanese patrol, numbering about 30 men, moving toward the beach in route column. Sitting on top of the 4th Battalion Fire Direction Center, 1st Lieutenant Russell F. Schoenbeck, the assistant operations officer, adjusted fire on the enemy group, shouting his corrections after observing the fall of each volley. The "fire for effect," delivered at a range of 1800 yards, caught the enemy patrol squarely. This incident provided one of very few examples throughout the Pacific war in which artillery personnel, except forward observers, witnessed a "fire for effect" on other than direct fire targets.

The boost to morale this incident created was short-lived; the Japanese quickly retaliated with counterbattery fire, which scored a direct hit on the fourth gun section of Battery M, killing or wounding all the crew except one man.²⁰

The 23rd Regiment's 16 June attack would place the 1st and 2d Battalions in the assault and the 3d Battalion in reserve. Concern about the left flank was somewhat relieved by the presence of Lieutenant Colonel Rothwell's 2d Battalion, 24th Marines, which had moved in behind the 23d Marines.²¹

After reporting to the 25th Marines, Lieutenant Colonel Vandegrift's 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, was ordered to relieve Mustain's battalion (on the division right), which had endured tough fighting on D-Day and was in need of reorganization. The relief was accomplished at 1130, Mustain's 1st Battalion reverting to 25th Marines' reserve. Since all

¹⁹ *14th Mar Report*, Encl A, 2.

²⁰ Ltr from LtCol C. A. Youngdale to CMC, 12Jan50.

²¹ *23d Mar Report*, 36.



GUNNERY SERGEANT ROBERT H. McCARD, 4th Tank Battalion, posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for remaining alone at his disabled tank on 16 June 1944 and firing upon the enemy in order that men of his crew might make good their withdrawal.

three companies of the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, were needed to cover its broad sector, one company (B) of the 25th Marines was attached to Vandegrift's unit at 1600.²²

It will be recalled that a large portion of the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, (all of Companies K and I and a platoon of L) had been attached to Mustain's unit on D-Day. With the shift of Mustain's battalion into reserve, 3d Battalion units were returned to parent control. With his battalion intact once again, Lieutenant Colonel Chambers moved it to an assembly area just in rear of the O-1 line, near the 25th Marines' left flank. This area proved something less than quiet. From the left and rear, enemy riflemen and two mountain guns announced themselves with telling bursts. Further harassment was felt from the front—just over the O-1 ridge line—where four dual-purpose antiaircraft guns were located. These weapons had originally been emplaced as antiaircraft protection for Aslito Airfield, but the more per-

sonal danger occasioned by the Marines close at hand caused the Japanese gunners to shift their weapons for ground firing.

Chambers assigned first priority to the enemy groups to his rear, Company L and six medium tanks from Company A, 4th Tank Battalion, assuming the task of elimination. Their efforts paid off: five machine guns, two mountain guns and approximately 60 enemy soldiers were destroyed.

After completing its mop-up task to the rear, Company L joined with the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, which was bending every effort to dislodge the four antiaircraft guns on the eastern slopes of the O-1 ridge line. In addition to the previously-heard-from antiaircraft weapons, three machine guns in bunkers opened on the Marines as they attempted to move. Despite a series of well-coordinated tank-infantry thrusts and the commitment of another company (K) from the 3d Battalion, the lines could not advance. The Japanese held. (See Map 11.)

Principal complication in fighting these particular enemy positions was their location, just over the crest of the ridge, making deliverance of supporting fires extremely risky. During the night, however, mortars of the 2d and 3d Battalions maintained steady fires, with the result that most of the enemy positions were permanently silenced.²³

Against rifle and machine-gun fire, originating principally from the Mt. Fina Susu area, the left and center regiments (23d and 24th) moved up generally abreast of the stymied 25th Marines. Some contact difficulties were experienced during the day, necessitating the commitment of a company from the reserve 2d Battalion, 24th Marines; but, by 1730, the lines were well tied-in generally along the ridge line designated O-1. It had not been an afternoon of spectacular happenings, merely a costly, tiresome struggle against a determined foe. Aslito road, the best artery to O-1, was almost a solid column of tanks, supply vehicles and ambulances. Despite the congestion, however, Japanese artillery did not interdict this

²² 1st Bn, 25th Mar Report, 7. 3d Bn, 24 Mar Report, 1-2.

²³ Chambers.



TOWARD O-1 RIDGELINE move Marines of the 23d Regiment. The 4th Division G-2 described the ridgeline area as the "one defensive line worthy of note" in the 4th Division zone of action.

route. As darkness fell, the division dug in for the night; right flank about 1,000 yards southeast of Agingan Point, anchored on the beach; left flank bent back towards Lake Susupe. The right center of the division front bulged to within a half mile of Aslito Airfield.²⁴ (See Map 11.)

The Northern Troops and Landing Force staff was already giving thought to a command post displacement from ship to shore. The advance party and security detachment landed at 2030, 16 June, and the following day established an advance command post at

²⁴ 4th Mar Div Report, Section VI, 18. NTLF G-3 Report, Periodic Report No. 2. Dillon.

the battered town of Charan Kanoa.²⁵

27th Division Begins to Land

As noted before, the approach of the Japanese Fleet had forced Admiral Spruance to his decision to withdraw those transports not needed for immediate unloading. This demanded a decision from the landing force commander: should the 27th Division remain with the retiring transports, or should it be landed? General Holland Smith's decision to land the unit was governed by two factors: First, a long, vicious fight was in prospect, and it was already apparent that more troops

²⁵ NTLF G-1 Report, 7.



O-1 RIDGELINE (Fina Susu) looking back toward Charan Kanoa and the transport area. Until Marines seized this first dominating ground, the Japanese enjoyed this excellent view.

would be required. Second, was the general's stated policy regarding reserves: "... it is always better to get them on the beach rather than have them sitting out at sea on ships. That is why I put in all the Marine reserves as soon as possible and then ordered the Twenty-seventh ashore." As the first step, the 27th Division was released from Expeditionary Troops reserve to Northern Troops and Landing Force. Orders to land came soon after.²⁶

Since ships carrying the 27th Division were cruising some distance from Saipan, it remained for these to move to the anchorage and commence debarkation. Shortly after noon, Major General Ralph C. Smith, USA, commanding the 27th Division, received a warning order from NTLF: "Be prepared to land your unit (less RCT 106) on order upon arrival. Report on board USS *Cambria* for conference."²⁷

Upon reaching the anchorage (about 1630), Ralph Smith and his key staff members boarded the *Cambria* where they conferred with Rear Admiral Harry W. Hill and Brigadier General Graves B. Erskine (second-in-command, respectively, for Turner and Holland Smith). At the meeting, Ralph Smith was informed that 27th Division artillery battalions were to land as soon as possible to support Marine divisions already ashore. The leading regiment (the 165th) would land immediately and move to the 4th Division's right flank so that it could join the Marines in the next day's attack. Remaining 27th Division troops were to land as rapidly as possible with the exception of the 106th Infantry, which was to remain afloat in Joint Expeditionary Troops Reserve.²⁸

²⁶ *Coral and Brass*, 164. *TF 56 G-3 Report*, 6.

²⁷ 27th Infantry Division G-3 Journal, 16Jun44.

²⁸ Notes on Operations of the 27th Infantry Division at Saipan, 15-24 June 1944, MajGen R. C. Smith, hereinafter cited as *R. C. Smith*.

The 165th Infantry (Colonel Gerard W. Kelley, USA)²⁹ debarked at dusk and, after a greatly confused (because of the darkness) ship-to-shore movement, finally reached the beach. Here its difficulties did not end; because of the extreme dispersion of boats carrying in troops, a severe challenge to leadership and discipline was presented. Passing this test, the 165th's leading battalions (1st and 2d) assembled their separated boatloads and moved to an area in rear of the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines (on the extreme right flank), with orders to pass through that unit and extend the Marines' flank the following morning.

Brigadier General Ogden J. Ross, USA, assistant division commander, landed with the 165th Infantry and proceeded to the command post of the 4th Marine Division. In General Ross' words:

... I met the Chief of Staff, Colonel Rogers, and he explained that it would be necessary for the 165th Infantry to attack at 7:30 that same morning. By this time it was 3:30. Elements of the 165th Infantry were coming ashore. They were being collected on the beaches, from red to yellow a distance of three miles. After a discussion with the Chief of Staff, 4th Marine Division, as to the Line of Departure, I instructed the regimental commander of the 165th Infantry to assemble the troops as fast as possible and take them to the extreme right of the line where they were to extend the flank of the 4th Marine Division.

Due to the shortness of time, the darkness, the unfamiliarity with the ground, and the fact that the units of the regiment were being unloaded on various beaches, without regard to organizational integrity, this was an exceedingly difficult task. ...³⁰

Also landed during the night (in accordance with the landing force's expressed priorities) were three battalions of the 27th Division's artillery: the 105th, 106th and 249th Field Artillery Battalions. These were placed under operational control of the Corps Artillery.³¹ The remaining battalion, the 104th, did not

land at Saipan until 19 June (D-plus 4).³²

Night of 16-17 June—Tank Counterattack

The night was reasonably quiet in the 4th Marine Division zone with the exception of several unsuccessful infiltration attempts by the enemy along the 23rd Marines' front and the now-familiar Japanese artillery and mortar fire which continued unabated.³³

The relative quiet enjoyed by the 4th Division was not the rule, however. In the 2d Division zone, the night produced a fight of no mean dimensions, the result of an operation order issued by Lieutenant General Saito, commanding general of the Japanese 43d Division.

This order was a masterpiece of confusion, although, admittedly, translation from Japanese to English has not enhanced its clarity. Saito based his plan on the reasonable premise that U.S. troops should be attacked before a firm beachhead could be established. It is apparent, however, that the beachhead was stronger on the 16th than it had been on the 15th; and, therefore, the attack was already one day late for maximum effectiveness. In other words, nothing had developed, from the Japanese point of view, which would make a D-plus 1 attack more successful than one on D-Day. On the contrary, Marine positions were much better organized by 16 June, more supporting weapons, supplies, and ammunition were ashore, and generally the Marine situation had improved. The Japanese, although probably aware of this fact, had been unable to mount an offensive—because of extensive damage to communications—on D-Day.

The objective of the Japanese attack was modest enough: the Saipan radio station, a short 400 yards behind the 6th Marines' lines. This objective, in itself, represented a revision in Saito's pre-D-Day policy to "destroy the enemy, during the night, at the water's edge." Seizure of the radio station area would still leave 500-600 yards distance to the water. On the other hand, the general was being completely realistic in his selection, for the objec-

²⁹ Throughout this monograph, all Army officers are designated "USA."

³⁰ Summary of Operations by 27th Infantry Division from 16 June to 10 July 1944, BrigGen O. J. Ross, 13Jul44, hereinafter cited as *Ross*. 165th Infantry Operation Report, 2, hereinafter cited as *165th Inf Report*.

³¹ 27th Infantry Division, G-3 Reports, 16-17 June, hereinafter cited as *27th Div G-3 Reports*.

³² 27th Infantry Division Field Order 43, 19 June.

³³ *23d Mar Report*, 36.

tive was easily recognizable and was possible of attainment by the troops and means available.

Principal units involved in the attack were Colonel Ogawa's 136th Infantry Regiment (which had borne the brunt of the 2d Division's assault), Lieutenant Commander Karashima's 1st Yokosuka Special Naval Landing Force, and Colonel Goto's 9th Tank Regiment. Karashima's Special Naval Landing Force would move down the coast road from the Garapan area and "cooperate with the tanks to annihilate the enemy's front line and advance towards Oreai (Charan Kanoa) Airfield." Vice Admiral Nagumo, Commander Central Pacific Fleet and 5th Base Force, was ordered to command the attack personally.³⁴ The vagueness of the mission set forth in this order would seem to indicate that Saito had some doubts that the Navy was capable of accomplishing much and, therefore, assigned this unit a nebulous task in the hope that some good would be done—and surely no harm. The ambiguity is further emphasized by this sentence: "The attack will be made whenever possible."

To Colonel Ogawa and Colonel Goto the order was much more specific and much more confusing:

The center force [136th Infantry Regiment] will attack the enemy in the direction of Oreai with its full force. The tank unit [9th Tank Regiment] will advance SW of Hill 164.6³⁵ after the attack unit . . . has commenced the attack. The Tank Unit will charge the transmitting station and throw the enemy into disorder just before the penetration of the attack unit into this sector.

If the two colonels read this order with furrowed brows, it is no wonder.

Available to Colonel Goto for the attack were the 3d, 4th, 5th, and one-half of the 6th Com-

panies of the 9th Tank Regiment. (Goto's 1st and 2d Companies, plus the remaining half of the 6th, were on Guam.) The 4th Company had been virtually eliminated as a fighting body on D-Day in its close defense of the beaches, and only three of its 14 tanks remained operative. Fourteen tanks from the 3d Company, 14 from the 5th, seven from the 6th, six from headquarters, and three survivors from the 4th, brings the total to 44 committed to the attack.³⁶

It is interesting to note that General Saito planned the attack to take place at 1700, possibly with the hope of catching the Marines in the process of digging in for the night. Sunset was not until 1849 and darkness at 2009, so it is obvious that a night attack was not the original scheme. Good reconnaissance, however, would have told him that men of the 6th Marines had moved but little during the day and in most cases were well dug in by 1700. Moreover, the estimate of time required to move the 9th Tank Regiment into attack position was grossly inaccurate.³⁷

In addition to the other weaknesses of the plan, that powerful ally—surprise—was not present; Marines, alerted to the possibility of a counterattack supported by tanks, addressed much attention to the repulse of such an attack. G-2 estimates, prior to the landings, had emphasized this enemy capability.

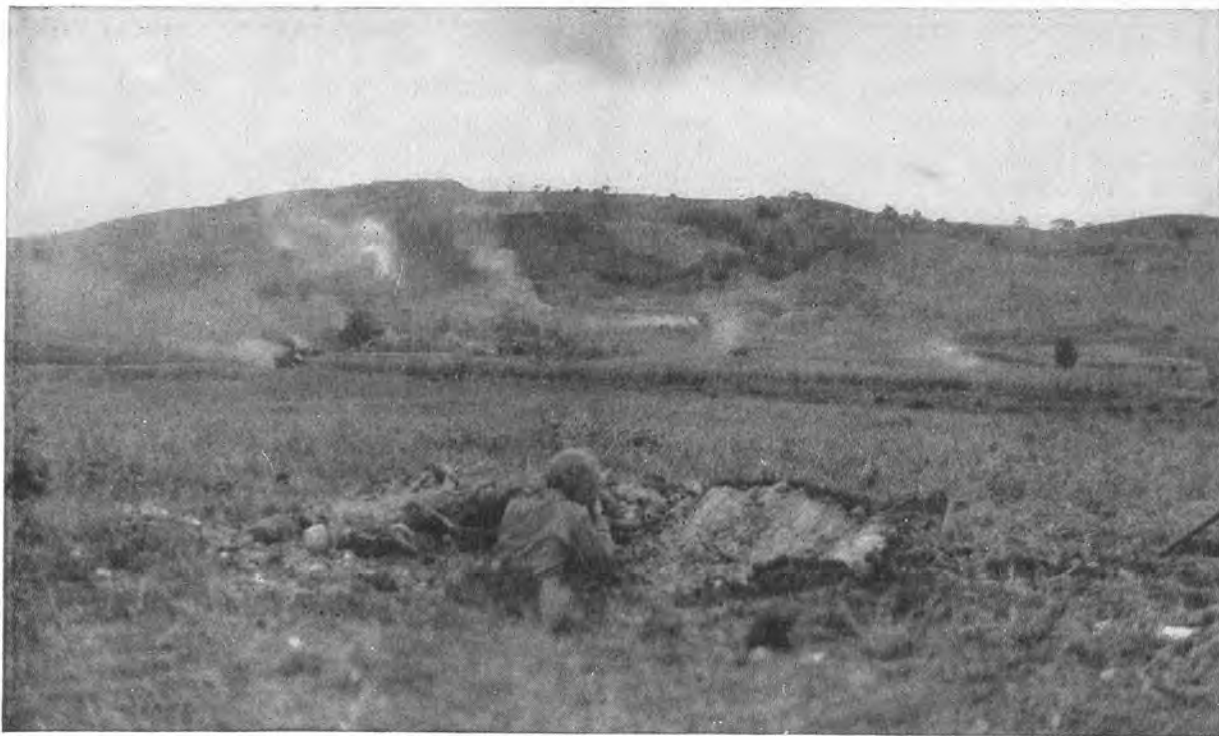
The attack began at about 0330, and the brunt struck Lieutenant Colonel Jones' 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, (principally Company B) and to a lesser extent the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, (principally the 1st Platoon, Com-

³⁶ This figure, however, does not count the possibility that at least a few of the tanks were not operative or broke down while en route to attack position. It is likely, also, that some tanks were retained to the rear, out of the fight, as mobile command posts. In a table of organization for the 9th Tank Regiment, dated 15 May 1944, the 3d, 4th and 5th Companies were organized into 11 medium and three light tanks per company; Headquarters into three medium and three light tanks. The 6th Company was not shown in this table, and is assumed to have been organized after 15 May and before 15 June; the exact date is not indicated in documents consulted. CINCPAC-CINCPAC Item #9304.

³⁷ CINCPAC-CINCPAC Item #10,531.

³⁴ There is no indication that he did, however. In view of the animosity between the Japanese Army and Navy, Nagumo might very well have ignored Saito's order. Little is known of this officer's activities after D-Day; he is conspicuous by his absence. It is safe to say, however, that the Admiral, still basking in the warmth of his Pearl Harbor fame, was not pleased with Saito's order.

³⁵ Hill 164.6 (meters) is a small peak that rises above the north-south ridgeline. A road cuts across the island to the east coast at this point.



JAPANESE TANK-INFANTRY COUNTERATTACK on the night of 16-17 June was stopped cold by the 6th Marines. The next morning, Marines finished off enemy survivors around the burning tanks.

pany F). The tanks advanced in groups of four or five with Japanese soldiers clinging to them. Poor and ineffective tactics reflected the inadequacy of Saito's order; some tanks cruised about in an aimless fashion, some bogged down in the swampy ground, some made an effort to break through the lines, still others stopped to let off their pugnacious passengers.

From a psychological point of view, a daylight attack would have been more frightening to the Marines. For here, in the dark (even with the supporting destroyers' 5-inch starshells, called in to light the area), it was impossible to estimate the number of tanks employed. No one had reason to suspect the presence of more than a dozen. But, one dozen or three, the Marines did not budge from their foxholes.

The task became one of systematic destruction. Several of Goto's tanks penetrated the front lines, but the Marines merely shifted around in their positions and continued their

fires. Japanese of Colonel Ogawa's 136th Infantry riding on, or surrounding, the tanks were slaughtered by the Marines' machine guns, mortars, bazookas and rifles. The 75mm pack howitzer fires of the 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, were also important in stopping the thrust. The battalion's defensive preparation #1, located in the precise area of the enemy's advance, made adjustment unnecessary; it was simply a matter of pouring in volley after volley. Between 0300 and 0415, 800 rounds were fired; 140 more pounded the same area from 0430 to 0620.

Augmenting the pack howitzers were the 105mm howitzers of Battery M, 10th Marines. This was the only battery of the 4th Battalion in condition to fire; the others had been immobilized by Japanese counterbattery fire (see page 91). Battery M expended all its available ammunition in front of the 6th Marines during the enemy attack.

The Japanese attack continued until about 0700, when daylight revealed between 24



JAPANESE MEDIUM TANK of Colonel Goto's 9th Tank Regiment which participated in the night thrust against the 6th Marines. Many enemy vehicles, like this one, were slowed down by muddy terrain. All were vulnerable to infantry-carried bazookas.

and 31 smoldering or burning enemy tanks.³⁸

Since this action represented the first major tank attack received by a Marine unit in the Pacific War, it is of particular interest to read the narrative account of Major James A. Donovan, Jr., executive officer of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines:

At 0330 on the 17th, Captain C. G. Rollen, commanding B Company, called the battalion CP to notify Colonel Jones that enemy tanks and troops could be heard approaching from the hill and valley to their direct

front. Rollen requested more illumination. All hands were alerted, regiment was notified, a nearby medium tank company was told to man their guns, and Naval gunfire was directed to keep the sector constantly illuminated and to get a reserve ship on station.

All prepared concentrations were called down in front of the forward companies, including 75mm pack howitzer, 81mm mortar and the companies' own weapons. At 0345, the first wave of tanks began to enter the B Company sector. Their squeak and rattle could be distinguished above the shell fire and long bursts of machine gun fire as far back as the regimental command post. . . . The battle evolved itself into a madhouse of noise, tracers and flashing lights. As tanks were hit and set afire, they silhouetted other tanks coming out of the flickering shadows to the front or already on top of the squads.

Many of the tanks were 'unbuttoned', [turrets open] the crew chief directing from the top of his open turret. Some were being led by a crew member afoot. They seemed to come in two waves, carrying foot troops on the long engine compartment or clustered around the turret, holding on to the hand rail. Some even had machine guns or grenade throwers set up on the tank. The bulk of the infantry followed what appeared to be the second wave of tanks, but as they came under the fire of B Company's heavy machine guns, four of which were in the line of forward combat groups, the infantry tried to mount the tanks. Those following afoot were badly cut up.

³⁸ Reports on the number of Japanese tanks destroyed in this action vary from a low of 24 in the 6th Marines report to a high of 31 in the TF 56 report. Since some tanks were hit by several weapons, it is difficult to establish an exact number. The Marine attack continued shortly after the enemy effort was repulsed, and it was not possible for any of the participants to make a detailed count. Observers from higher echelons naturally counted all tanks destroyed in the area (including those destroyed on D-Day) and arrived at the figure 31. The account of the tank battle is derived from a synthesis of: *6th Mar Report*, 4; Ltrs from LtCol W. K. Jones (the first undated, the second 24Jan49) Ltrs from Maj Warren Morris (5Jan49 and 17Jan49); *Saipan Tank Battle*; Interview with Maj J. A. Donovan, Jr., 31Dec48.

The Japanese tanks . . . appeared confused. As their guides and crew chiefs were hit by Marine rifle and machine gun fire, what little control they had was lost. They ambled on in the general direction of the beach, getting hit again and again until each one burst into flame or turned in aimless circles only to stop dead, stalled in its own ruts or the marshes of the low ground. Some kept their turrets in action, doing damage until dawn when the Weapons Company's 75 mm half tracks entered the fray and quickly silenced any signs of life.

Fortunately, B Company's 'bazooka' teams had been put in the main line of resistance with the forward platoons for that night. These teams, with one team that came over from A Company, did outstanding work and verified the 'bazooka' as a superior 'tank buster.' The 37mm section attached to B Company had positions on each side of the road that entered the center of the company sector. In addition to the two guns, this section had one light machine gun, two 'bazookas,' and two anti-tank grenade dischargers. The right gun jammed but the squad held its position with the 'bazooka' and other weapons.

Both I and K Companies of the Third Battalion [K Company had been attached to the 1st Battalion, 6th] had been alerted and by 0400 Captain Bruce Coburn had been ordered to take his K Company forward and pass through B Company in order that the latter might reorganize. K Company eventually came into position between B Company and F Company, Second Marines, under Captain W. Morris, whose left units were also involved in hitting several tanks. There they took part in the last stages of the battle. Men from K Company hit and helped destroy at least seven tanks. By 0600 they were actually able to effect the relief of B Company.

Regiment had alerted the Special Weapons Company's half tracks at the first warning and by 0415 they were underway from their position near the regimental CP. They had rough, slow going over soft ground and several lines of irrigation ditches. As dawn broke and the tanks that were not already burning were disclosed, the 75mm guns made short work of them.

By 0700 the field was quiet except for the small arms fire of a few Nip snipers and the answers of the Marines who mopped them up. . . . The last Jap tank was spotted as it climbed the winding road to Hill 790. Its turret could be seen among a small group of buildings on top of the hill. The Naval Gunfire officer quickly adjusted and fired twenty salvos on this target. The tank sent up an oily smoke and burned the rest of the day.³⁹

As already indicated, the Japanese attack principally struck Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, and the left flank platoon (1st, under Lieutenant Raymond Marion) of Company F, 2d Marines. One of the machine guns

of the latter company fired 40 belts of .30-caliber ammunition (10,000 rounds) during the melee. Also contributing much to the eventual success were two 37mm guns and 'bazookas' of the 2d Marines' Regimental Weapons Company. In regard to their work, Major Warren Morris, commanding Company F, writes:

I have nothing but the highest praise for the two 37 crews. They went so far as to turn their guns around and fire, practically point blank, at tanks that broke through the lines.⁴⁰

In numerous instances the fires of many weapons converged upon a single enemy tank, and more than one Marine, from more than one unit, often claimed its destruction. Just how many were knocked out by bazookamen and how many by 37's, 75mm half-tracks and tanks cannot be accurately determined. The important thing is that the means available were adequate for the task. The Japanese effort was a dismal failure; the enemy had lost a great number of tanks—and these losses were irreplaceable. Also, the attack had convinced the Marines that they could stop a concentrated enemy tank attack with weapons organic to the infantry battalion. While this had been emphasized in training and was no startling revelation, tangible proof in the form of smoldering, shattered Japanese tanks had considerable morale value.

The 2d Division command post and the bulk of the division's artillery were only about 500 yards in rear of this action, and an enemy penetration would perhaps have been disastrous. The reader must not get the impression that the Marines got off scot-free during this critical attack; the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines (reinforced), suffered 78 casualties and Company F, 2d Marines, 19 (principally in the left flank platoon).⁴¹

On the night of 16–17 June, as on numerous occasions throughout the operation, naval illumination fires spelled the difference between success for U.S. forces and defeat for the enemy. In describing the reasons for the fail-

⁴⁰ Ltr from Maj W. Morris to author, 5Jan49, hereinafter cited as *Morris*.

⁴¹ Ltr from LtCol W. K. Jones (undated to DivPub Info. *Marine Corps Gazette*, Oct. 44, "Battalion on Saipan," Robert Sherrod. *Morris*.

³⁹ *Saipan Tank Battle*.

ure of the counterattacks, Colonel Takuji Suzuki, chief of staff of the 43d Division, commented:

... as soon as the night attack units go forward, the enemy points out targets by using the large star shells which practically turn night into day. Thus the maneuvering of units is extremely difficult.⁴²

The supply of star shells was limited, however, and after the first night it was necessary to ration their expenditure to six per hour except in cases of emergency. Certain errors in the employment of undeniably important night illumination are worthy of note. First, instead of conserving the ammunition for times of urgent need, troops used it for periodic checks. Second, there were instances of uncontrolled illumination in which, during the course of the night, ships wandered off the target and were not corrected. And third, the failure to observe safety precautions caused needless casualties among our troops. The empty star shell case weighs approximately 35 pounds and these often fell within our own lines. The ominous "whir" of these cylinders was nearly as terrifying as Japanese artillery.⁴³

The shortage of star shells available at Saipan was largely explained by the fact that neither the Marines nor the fleet was accustomed to using them in large quantities and, accordingly, had not fully anticipated the requirements.⁴⁴

Although no record exists of the Japanese sending a detailed report to higher echelons of the abortive venture of 16-17 June, Colonel Eisuke Suzuki,⁴⁵ commanding the 135th Infantry Regiment, mentioned it in his field order of 17 June:

1. The main strength of the Marianas force carried out a night attack against the enemy that landed at Oreai [Red and Green Beach area] during the night of 16 June. Despite the heavy blow we dealt the enemy,

he is reinforcing his rear forces in the vicinity of Oreai, although the process is not yet complete.⁴⁶

Also sleepless on the night of 16-17 June were men of the 10th Marines (and anyone else located near them), who received mortar and artillery counterbattery fire throughout the night. This resulted in heavy personnel and matériel casualties, particularly in the regimental headquarters area and in the position areas of the 2d and 4th Battalions. Since Japanese observers had carefully charted the location of Marine artillery throughout the day, their fire data was unusually accurate. With less than 24 hours ashore, Lieutenant Colonel Jorgensen's 4th Battalion had five of its 105mm howitzers put out of action; the 2d Battalion (now commanded by Major Kenneth C. Houston, who replaced the wounded Lieutenant Colonel Shell) lost three of its 12 75mm pack howitzers.⁴⁷

In connection with the operations of artillery units, it may be said that they faced and mastered, during the first days at Saipan, one of the most difficult problems posed by any campaign in the Pacific war. Here was a contradictory situation in which, on the one hand, artillery was urgently needed ashore and yet, on the other, one in which the shallowness of the beachhead made the employment of artillery a dangerous venture. Probably no one would question the decisions which sent the artillery into the midst of the "tooth-and-nail" struggle, even in light of the savage pounding endured and the losses suffered; support was needed, even though it forced the artillery into the center of a bull's-eye.

At the close of the first two days, U. S. forces had suffered about 3,500 casualties, or approximately 20 percent of the total for the operation.⁴⁸

⁴² CINCPAC-CINCPMA Item #9983-85, 7.

⁴³ NTLF, Naval Gunfire Officer's Report, 8-10, hereinafter cited as *NTLF NGF Report*. *FORAGER NGF Report*, 13-14.

⁴⁴ *Hill*.

⁴⁵ Not to be confused with Colonel Takuji Suzuki, the 43d Division chief of staff.

⁴⁶ *NTLF G-2 Report*, 13.

⁴⁷ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 3. *10th Mar Report*, 3. Ltr from M/Sgt F. A. Hancock to author, 15Jan50. By exchanging parts, four of the 4th Battalion's five damaged pieces were back in action by afternoon of 17 June.

⁴⁸ *NTLF Report*, 11.



UNITED STATES MEDIUM TANK, closely supported by infantry (right foreground), mops up survivors of Japanese counterattack. Note destroyed enemy tank in foreground. Ridgeline in background was objective O-2, seized by the 6th Marines soon after this mop-up.

D-PLUS 2—17 JUNE

Through Susupe's Marshes

The 2d Marine Division had planned to attack at 0730, 17 June, with the 2d and 6th Marines moving northeast to O-2 and the 8th Marines east to O-1. At 0715, with troops poised to launch their attack, an order came from NTLF directing that the move be delayed until 0930. General Watson recognized that there was insufficient time for this modification to be circulated to all front line units and the division attacked as originally scheduled.

It is a tribute to the excellent training of the 6th Marines (plus the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, still attached) that an attack could be launched

on schedule, less than an hour after the *coup de grace* had been administered the last Japanese attackers. A 90-minute preparation, fired by naval gunfire, air and artillery, preceded the jump-off.

The 8th Marines' advance was uneven. In the zones of the 1st and 3d Battalions, the advance to O-1 was quite rapid; but, on the right, the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines (attached to the 8th Marines), found the going much more difficult owing to difficult terrain. In the marshy land surrounding Lake Susupe, men carrying machine guns, mortars and ammunition found themselves sinking waist deep into the muck. The swamp—extending 1,000 yards north and south of Lake Susupe, much

larger than it had appeared on the map—was infested with snipers.

East of the swamp, directly to the Marines' front, was a hill (coincident with O-1) containing a series of enemy positions. South of the hill, directly on the Marines' right flank, was a Japanese-infested coconut grove. From both these areas, small-arms fire contested any forward movement by the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines.

By mid-afternoon, no advance had been made, and in addition, the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Tannyhill, had been wounded. By about 1600, a new commander, Lieutenant Colonel Rathvon M. Tompkins (formerly assistant division operations officer), arrived on the scene. Almost simultaneous with his arrival, Tompkins spotted four Marine tanks (of Company A, 2d Tank Battalion) moving along Laulau Road toward him. Immediately these were hailed, turned about, and employed against the enemy on the hill to the front. With this powerful base of fire, the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, regained the offensive and pushed rapidly to the hill's crest. After a quick mop-up, the unit dug in for the night. The tanks, which had so effectively turned the tide, drove upon the hill also. There, at point-blank range, they poured round after round into a large enemy-occupied cave. From the coconut grove to the south, meanwhile, Japanese fires continued. Each time the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, fired its mortars into the grove, a deluge of small-arms fire answered back.

Though the coconut grove remained to be seized the next day, an important objective had been captured which made the beachhead more secure. As insurance against Japanese night recapture, the 8th Marines emplaced three 75mm half-tracks from the regimental weapons company on the hill.

The 8th Regiment was in contact with the 6th Marines on the left, but physical contact did not exist with 4th Division on the right. It was necessary, therefore, to commit the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, to refuse the regiment's right.⁴⁹ (See Map 11.)

⁴⁹ *8th Mar Report*, 2. 1st Battalion, 29th Marines Report, 2-3, hereinafter cited as *1st Bn, 29th Mar Re-*

Colonel Riseley's 6th Marines attacked at 0730 and made satisfactory progress against light resistance. Since the direction of attack was to the northeast and up into the foothills of Mount Tipo Pale, the regiment's lines tended to become over-extended as contact with the 8th Marines became progressively more difficult. Upon reaching O-2, the unit held up its attack; lines were reorganized and consolidated in anticipation of continuing the advance when progress of the 8th Marines permitted. All units of the regiment except the Regimental Scout Sniper Platoon (reserve) had been committed to the line. To augment this meager reserve, Company 3 of the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines,⁵⁰ was attached to the 6th Marines.⁵¹

Colonel Stuart's 2d Marines advanced in a column of battalions, regulating its rate on the 6th Marines, to its right. By 1800, the 3d Battalion, the leading unit, reached O-2, coincident at that point with the Force Beachhead Line and but a thousand yards from Garapan's outskirts. There, with the left flank anchored on the beach and the right in contact with the 6th Marines, the battalion dug in.⁵² (See Map 11.)

During the day's operations, the 1st, 2d and 4th Battalions, 10th Marines, were in direct support of the 6th, 8th and 2d Marines respectively, and the 3d Battalion was in general support.⁵³

Lieutenant Colonel Marvin H. Floom's 2d 155mm Howitzer Battalion commenced landing at 1700 with orders to support the 4th Marine Division. Thus detached from 2d Divi-

port. "1st Battalion, 29th Marines, at Saipan," narrative account by LtCol R. M. Tompkins, 2-4, hereinafter cited as *Tompkins*.

⁵⁰ The 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, originally used a numerical system of designating its companies at Saipan. See Appendix V.

⁵¹ *6th Mar Report*, 5.

⁵² *2d Mar Report*, 2. The 2d Regiment was composed of two battalions at this time: its own 3d Battalion and the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines. Its 2d Battalion was still attached to the 6th Marines and the 1st Battalion was still under 2d Division control. One company of the 1st Battalion was returned to 2d Marines' control at 1620.

⁵³ *10th Mar Report*, 3.

sion control, Floom's battalion was assigned position areas about 1500 yards south of Charan Kanoa. Prior to darkness, reconnaissance was completed and communications were established with the 14th Marines. Traffic congestion at Beach Blue 1 delayed into the night the emplacement of the battalion's howitzers, but by shortly after daylight the next morning an air observer was assigned the unit, registration accomplished, and eight guns were ready to fire. By noon, the battalion as a complete, 12-gun unit was delivering concentrations on enemy targets.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ 2d 155mm Arty Bn, V Amphibious Corps Report, 2, hereinafter cited as *2d 155mm Bn Report*. Ltr from LtCol M. H. Floom to CMC, 16Jan49, hereinafter cited as *Floom*. Though personnel of this battalion had been in combat previously, their 155mm howitzers had not. Prior to March 1944, the unit had been the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines (armed with 75mm pack howitzers), and had participated in the Guadalcanal and Tarawa operations. The unit's designation was changed to 2d 155mm Artillery Battalion, V Amphibious Corps, in March 1944 when the old 75's were exchanged for new 155mm Howitzers. Interview with Maj E. J. Rowse, 6Jan49.

The Move to Aslito Airfield

In the 4th Marine Division's zone, the 165th Infantry Regiment, attached on the previous night, moved through the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, and right flank elements of the 25th Marines and attacked toward Aslito Airfield. Upon passage of its lines, the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, reverted to division reserve. Colonel Kelley, commanding the 165th Infantry, requested that the Marine battalion remain in the area until his 3d Battalion had arrived. General Schmidt concurred.⁵⁵

Attacking with battalions abreast, 1st on the right, 2d on the left, the 165th advanced from 800 to 1,200 yards on 17 June against relatively light opposition. By 1400, the 2d Battalion had moved to the southwest edge of Aslito Airfield, while the 1st Battalion had become involved in a fight for a dominating ridge line extending from the airfield's southwest corner to the vicin-

⁵⁵ *4th Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 17. Report of Action Saipan Island, 16-27 June, Col Gerard W. Kelley, hereinafter cited as *Kelley*.



SOLDIERS OF 165TH INFANTRY move along south coast on 17 June. The following day the zone along the south coast was assumed by the 105th Infantry. Tinian may be seen in background as destroyers patrol the stretch of water between the two islands.

ity of Cape Obiam. Infantrymen of the 1st Battalion (Major James H. Mahoney, USA) inched slowly up the steep and open slope, so that, by 1700, a toehold had been gained at the crest. At this point, however, the Japanese launched a counterattack and drove the soldiers back off the hill. Reorganizing and reforming the lines at the base of the ridge, the battalion dug in for the night.

As previously noted, the 3d Battalion, 165th Infantry (Major Dennis D. Claire, USA), had not landed during the night of 16–17 June with the other two battalions. This unit came ashore on the morning of 17 June, first elements arriving on the beach at 0805. By 0945 the entire battalion was ashore and placed in regimental reserve. In the late afternoon, after the 1st Battalion had been driven off the ridge, the 3d Battalion was ordered to move to the vicinity of the ridge and prepare to attack with the other two battalions on the following morning.⁵⁶ (See Map 11.)

On 165th's left, the 25th Marines attacked in a column of battalions, Lieutenant Colonel Hudson's 2d Battalion leading. This unit advanced approximately 1,500 yards, securing the favorable, dominating terrain along the O-2 line. A gap developed between the Marines and the Army—caused by the Marines' faster movement—necessitating the employment of Companies I and L, 25th Marines, to fill the gap. Company I searched the building area just north of the airfield and Company L patrolled the airfield itself, thoroughly checking all installations and dismantling all serviceable Japanese weapons. Lieutenant Maurice W. Savage led his platoon from Company L to contact the Army's left unit, the 2d Battalion, 165th Infantry. There Savage informed Lieutenant Colonel John F. McDonough, USA, the battalion commander, that all installations in the airfield area were clear of enemy and requested that the unit move forward and seize the airfield (and, incidentally, relieve the contact problem). Savage's recommendation, made during the late afternoon, was not translated

into action, however, and the 165th Infantry remained on the high ground west of the field.

When it was apparent to the 25th's commander (Colonel Batchelder) that the Army unit contemplated no further movement for the day, the 3d Battalion was ordered to shift to a position on the north side of the airfield, facing south, denying and protecting the right flank. Physical contact did not exist between the 25th Marines and the 165th Infantry as they dug in for the night.⁵⁷ (See Map 11.)

In regard to this situation, the 165th Infantry's commander, Colonel Kelley, has written:

... it is probable that the 2d Battalion could have taken the Air Field on the 17th. However, due to the difficulty encountered by the 1st Battalion on their right flank any advance would extend the 2d too far for good defense, plus the fact that from their present positions they had an excellent field of fire against any possible enemy counterattack. I decided it wise to maintain position ... on the night of the 17th and to take the Air Field in daylight. This also permitted the 2d Battalion to support progress of the other two battalions from the high ground on which the Air Field was located.⁵⁸

Left of the 4th Division center, the 24th Marines fought over broken terrain towards the second ridge line, designated O-2. The 1st Battalion, hampered by persistent antiaircraft guns (muzzles depressed from their usual vertical position) firing from positions east of Aslito Airfield (probably on Nafutan Point), moved rapidly toward its objective. About noon, following a 15-minute artillery preparation fired by the 1st Battalion, 14th Marines, the 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, began the ascent of the precipitous ridge line. By 1630, Major Fricke, the commanding officer, reported the battalion digging in on O-2.

Lieutenant Colonel Rothwell's 2d Battalion, moving to the left of the 1st Battalion, was destined for a difficult day. Starting off rapidly, though weathering fire from a 3-inch dual-purpose gun in position 300 yards to the left front, the battalion soon discovered that it was not in contact with the 23d Marines, and, therefore, delayed the attack until this detail could be resolved.

⁵⁶ 165 Inf Report, 3. *Infantry Journal*, Sep46, "The 27th's Battle For Saipan," Capt E. G. Love, hereinafter cited as *The 27th's Battle For Saipan*.

⁵⁷ 25th Mar Report, 4. 3d Bn, 25th Mar Report, 5.

⁵⁸ Kelley.

Additional discouragement in the form of friendly rocket fire falling within the lines slowed the advance and caused 20 casualties.

Despite these difficulties, however, the battalion had reached the approaches to the O-2 ridge line by late afternoon, when from the cliff face a short 300 yards ahead came a vicious hail of Japanese machine-gun, rifle, and knee mortar⁵⁹ fire. This fire, completely stopping forward movement, caused the battalion commander to order a 400 yard withdrawal to dig in for the night. The new position had little to commend it. Enemy fire continued almost as before, and the ground, a hard shell of coral rock, was very unsatisfactory for digging. Several rounds of mortar fire (of uncertain origin—but thought to be friendly) fell in the area, making it even less desirable. To escape the bad terrain and the fire, Rothwell ordered his unit to pull back another 200 yards for the night's defense. With the 2d Battalion in its withdrawn position and the 1st Battalion on O-2, the 24th Marines dug in for the night. (See Map 11.)

The 24th Marines' executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Austin R. Brunelli, who had been with the 1st Battalion during the day, received orders from the regimental commander to remain with the 1st Battalion for the night and to coordinate defenses in that area. The following day the orders were expanded to the extent that Brunelli would assume command of the 1st Battalion, Major Fricke reverting to battalion executive officer.⁶⁰

The 23rd Marines, on the division left, made but little progress during the day. The big, partly bald hill southeast of Lake Susupe was

occupied in considerable strength by the enemy and fire from there played havoc with the regiment's left flank as it tried to negotiate the swampy ground southeast of the lake. Just how many Japanese were on the hill is not known. There were enough, however, to stop the forward movement of Haas' 1st Battalion. Existing records make no mention of this particular force, but it is assumed to have been elements of Colonel Oka's 47th Mixed Brigade.

The 23d Marines had no contact with the 2d Marine Division, owing to the latter's previously described difficulties north of the lake. The 23d's right unit, the 2d Battalion, made substantial gains while the 1st Battalion could make virtually none, and a gap between the two was created. Into this went the reserve battalion (the 3d), with orders to tie in the flanks. Later, Vandegrift's 3d Battalion, 24th Marines (passed through by the 165th Infantry earlier in the day), arrived as an attachment to the 23d Marines. Under cover of darkness, Vandegrift's unit moved into position to relieve the 3d Battalion, 23d Marines.⁶¹

As the 4th Division dug in for the night, its center rested on the dominating terrain along O-2, but both flanks bent back somewhat. (See Map 11.)

More Corps Troops Ashore

As the beachhead expanded, more Corps elements landed. At 1350, 17 June, General Holland Smith debarked from the USS *Rocky Mount* and proceeded ashore; the Northern Troops and Landing Force (NTLF) command post opened in Charan Kanoa at 1530.⁶²

The site was a good one, affording reasonable protection from the torrential downpours and sufficient room for posting maps and charts. Holland Smith has written of his Charan Kanoa command post:

. . . This village was laid out in rectangular blocks with small, bungalow-type houses built of plaster, wooden slats and concrete, with roofs of corrugated iron. Except for the broken windows, some of these houses were habitable. In backyard quadrangles stood large concrete cisterns for catching rainwater, fed by pipes from the roofs. Each house had its air raid

⁵⁹ The knee mortar, in reality a grenade discharger, is not actually fired from the knee as its small size and curved base plate would suggest. But since U. S. soldiers and Marines habitually referred to it by that name, knee mortar will be used throughout this narrative.

⁶⁰ *24th Mar Report*, 19. 1st Battalion, 24th Marines Report, 1, hereinafter cited as *1st Bn, 24 Mar Report*. 2d Battalion, 24th Marines Report, 2, hereinafter cited as *2d Bn, 24 Mar Report*. Ltr. from Col A. R. Brunelli to CMC, 12Jan50, hereinafter cited as *Brunelli*. Interview with Maj J. F. Ross, Jr., 28Mar50, hereinafter cited as *Ross*.

⁶¹ *23d Mar Report*, 36-37.

⁶² *NTLF Report*, 12.



LOOKING EAST FROM MT. FINA SUSU. High ground 2,000 yards to the front is objective O-2. Picture shows zone of 23d Marines on 17 June.

shelter.⁶³

Although this area was subjected to occasional ineffective Japanese bombing, enemy artillery never directly shelled the command post itself. This was peculiar; though on more than one occasion the installation was bracketed with overs and shorts, final adjustment onto the bull's-eye was never accomplished. The command post remained at this sanctuary throughout the entire operation.

Brigadier General Harper and his advance parties from Corps Artillery reconnoitered for positions and established his command post in an unfinished Japanese concrete blockhouse about 200 yards inland from Beach Yellow 2. Shortly after dawn, advance parties from the 532d Field Artillery Battalion joined General Harper and parties that had landed the previous night. Late in the afternoon, a dispatch was sent to NTLF with a request to commence

landing the Corps Artillery as soon as practicable. No firing elements of the XXIV Corps Artillery were landed on the 17th, but on the following day the unit's howitzers and personnel began arriving ashore in a steady flow.⁶⁴

Following the 3d Battalion, 165th Infantry, ashore on the morning of 17 June was the 105th Infantry (Colonel Leonard A. Bishop, USA) and Major General Ralph C. Smith with 27th Division headquarters. Once ashore, General Ralph Smith took command of 27th Division units, with the exception of the 165th Infantry which remained under 4th Marine Division control. By dusk, all three battalions of the 105th were ashore but very little of the regimental headquarters personnel and communication equipment. Colonel Bishop's regiment thus operated under a distinct handicap inasmuch as the *Cavalier*, the ship in which the

⁶³ *Coral and Brass*, 183.

⁶⁴ *Corps Arty, S-3 Report*, 5-6.



CHARAN KANOA AIRSTRIP (looking north) was captured on D-Day. Laid out perpendicular to the prevailing east-west wind, it was unsatisfactory for anything but light observation planes. LVT at left has lowered ramp to unload supplies.

absent equipment and personnel were embarked, was not completely unloaded until nearly a week later.⁶⁵

Though official records do not indicate whether this unfortunate situation resulted from poor execution or from poor planning, Admiral Hill, who assumed command of ships at Saipan after Admiral Turner's departure on the late afternoon of 17 June, significantly comments:

Embarked with me on the *Cambria* were members of the Corps G-4, who had loading plans for all ships. Each day they told me what ships they wanted at the anchorage for unloading. . . . The Navy was merely the operating agency for bringing into port any ship which the Corps said they wanted.

Elsewhere, the Admiral sheds further light:

I do not remember the exact cause of the mixup in the *Cavalier*. Cargo unloaded on the day of her arrival was dictated by the responsible authorities of the 27th Division. . . . I remember that when they complained that this equipment was not ashore, no one was able to find out where it was so that we could call in the necessary ship and unload it for them. . . .⁶⁶

After the 105th Infantry had landed, NTLF ordered Colonel Bishop to designate one bat-

talion as a separate reserve. This unit would assume positions behind the 4th Marine Division so as to provide greater depth in case a strong counterattack developed there. Bishop selected the 2d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Leslie Jensen, USA) for this mission.

The 864th Antiaircraft Artillery Group, commanded by Colonel Kenneth M. Barager, USA, was ordered to commence unloading but experienced extreme difficulty in getting across the reef, and another day passed before it was completely unloaded.⁶⁷

While it is doubtful that individuals lying in front line foxholes had felt the change, it is safe to say that there was a great improvement in our situation on the evening of 17 June. True, the bulk of supporting ships and planes had departed to counter the Japanese Fleet movements, but that was more than balanced by the numbers of troops and the amount of equipment now ashore. The Japanese had lost their best opportunity to throw us back into the sea. As the NTLF Periodic Report for 17 June comments: "This period showed the first signs of weakening enemy resistance."⁶⁸

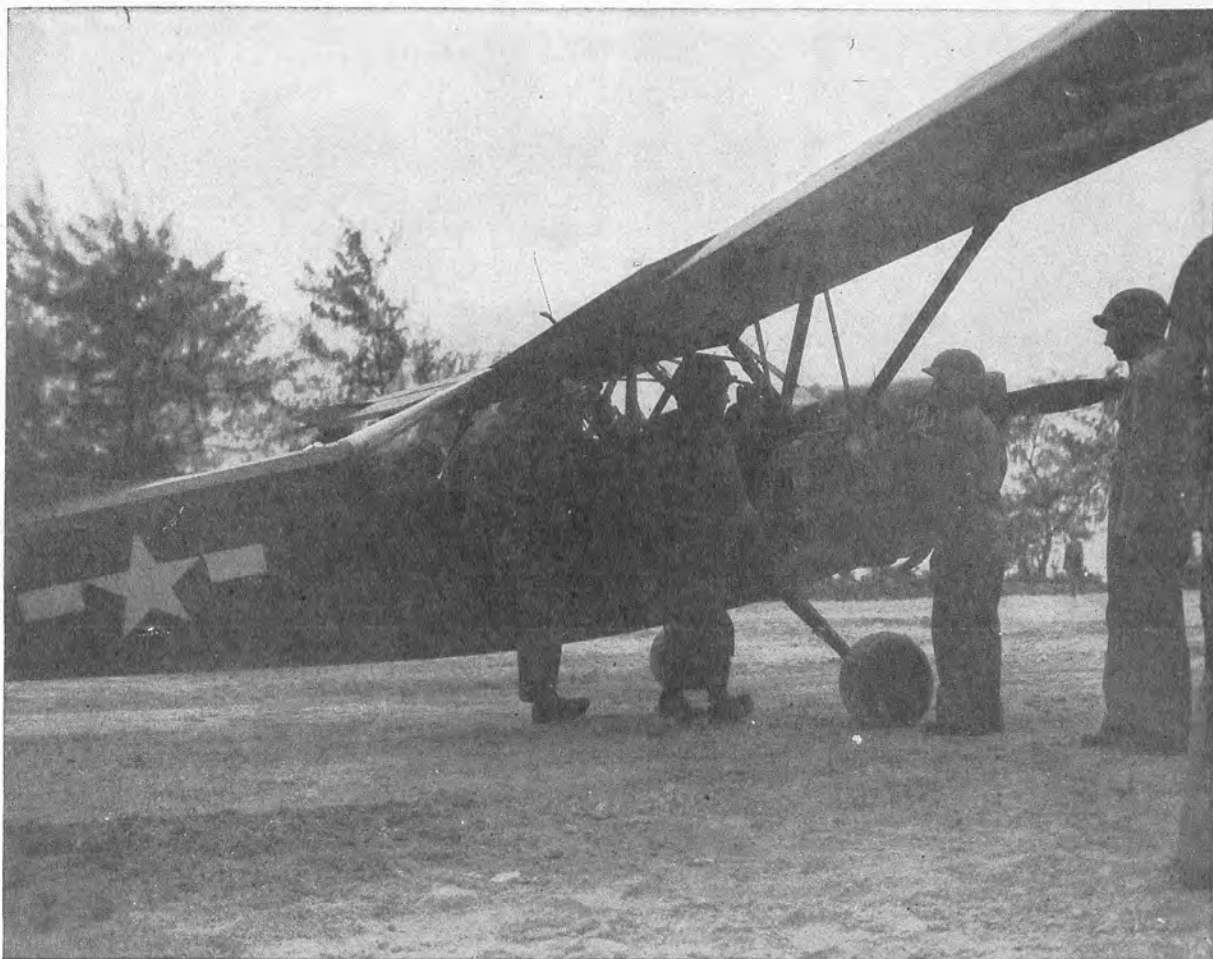
Until now, the enemy's retreat had been

⁶⁵ Lemp, 10-11. R. C. Smith. 105th Infantry Regiment Report, 4-5, hereinafter cited as *105th Inf Report*.

⁶⁶ Hill.

⁶⁷ NTLF G-3 Report, Periodic Reports 3 and 4.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 3, 2.



OY OBSERVATION PLANE readies for the take-off on Charan Kanoa airstrip. The first of these planes landed on this strip on the evening of 17 June and thereafter performed invaluable reconnaissance and fire direction assistance.

orderly and had followed a definite pattern. They had carried away their dead and wounded so that our troops were unable to see how great was the damage of our fires. After 17 June, dead and wounded Japanese would often be found where they were hit, indicating a deterioration in their system of evacuation. The divisions now held better ground, although the summit of Mount Tapotchau still afforded the Japanese complete observation of the beachhead and continued to do so for several days to come. On the beaches, shore parties operated with efficiency, though still weathering occasional shellings.

Just before dark, several carrier-embarked observation planes (OY-1's) landed ashore,

four at the recently repaired Charan Kanoa strip and one on the road opposite Beach Yellow 1. From then on, these planes extensively used the Charan Kanoa strip.⁶⁹

Night of 17-18 June

Only the 2d Marine Division had noteworthy action on the night of 17-18 June. Intermittently throughout the rainy night, small groups of Japanese (usually not more than one or two squads) attempted to penetrate the lines, looking for a weak point through which substantial forces could be poured. At about midnight, an attack was directed at the boundary between

⁶⁹ *4th Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 18. *2d Mar Report*, Section VI, 5.

the 6th and 8th Marines. In the latter's zone, 15 or 20 Japanese overran two machine guns of Company K, but the attack was repulsed and the original line restored.⁷⁰

The line of Lieutenant Colonel Nutting's 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, occupying the right of the 6th Marines' sector, was breached at about the same time, and contact with the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, temporarily lost. Nutting committed a portion of Company F (3d Platoon and a machine-gun section) to fill the gap; the Japanese were expelled from the area, and contact reestablished.

The diary of Misao Naito (rank and unit unknown) mentions this activity as follows: "Two squads, 15 men, went out for a night attack below Regimental Headquarters at Oreai equipped with antitank grenades." The return of these two squads—or the success or failure which they experienced—is not indicated in the diary.⁷¹ It should not be assumed from this account that two squads represented the total night attack force, but rather that the Japanese were following a faulty technique (of which they were often guilty) of sending a few troops from one unit and a few from another, without any attempt to preserve tactical unity or to achieve coordination.

Having landed from the sea, the Marines were well aware that the enemy could do likewise, using the same beaches. A night thrust against the landing force rear, if successful, could create untold confusion among logistical and command installations and, if executed in strength, could jeopardize the entire Saipan venture. To protect against any such activity, beach defense was coordinated between the shore party, 2d Marines, and available amphibian vehicles.

The beach defense system almost got an early test. At about 0430, 18 June, approximately 35 barges, apparently loaded with Japanese soldiers, were spotted off Flores Point, north of Garapan. The 4th Battalion, 10th Marines, opened on the vulnerable target, as did U. S. vessels in the vicinity. The latter were in the

best position and inflicted the most damage; 13 barges were destroyed, the remainder turned back. The threat was over.⁷²

Japanese Air Strikes

Owing to Admiral Spruance's order that transports not required for immediate unloading be withdrawn from the Saipan area, Headquarters, Expeditionary Troops (TF 56), was removed from the area for several days. Shortly after the convoy got underway on the early evening of 17 June, it was subjected to an attack by a "formation"⁷³ of enemy aircraft. LST 84 was set afire by a Japanese bomb; but, after raging furiously for a time, the blaze was brought under control and extinguished. The damage was not vital, and the ship remained operative. Gunfire from ships of the Northern Attack Force shot down three of the attacker's dive bombers.

At about the same time (1800-1830), Carrier Support Group One (TG 52.14), operating to the west of Saipan, was attacked by another enemy formation. A 250-pound bomb, which hit the escort carrier *Fanshaw Bay* on the after elevator, put her out of action for the remainder of the Marianas operation. The ship retired to Eniwetok for repairs. Because of the lateness of the attack, interceptor planes had to land on the carriers after dark, with resultant operational losses of 19 planes. U. S. fighters claimed they shot down eight Japanese planes and ships' gunfire accounted for "several" more.

Carrier Support Group Two (TG 52.11) was next to receive an attack. Here, however, enemy planes failed to achieve a single hit and suffered losses in the process. Ships' gunfire accounted for five planes, while U. S. fighters destroyed "considerable."

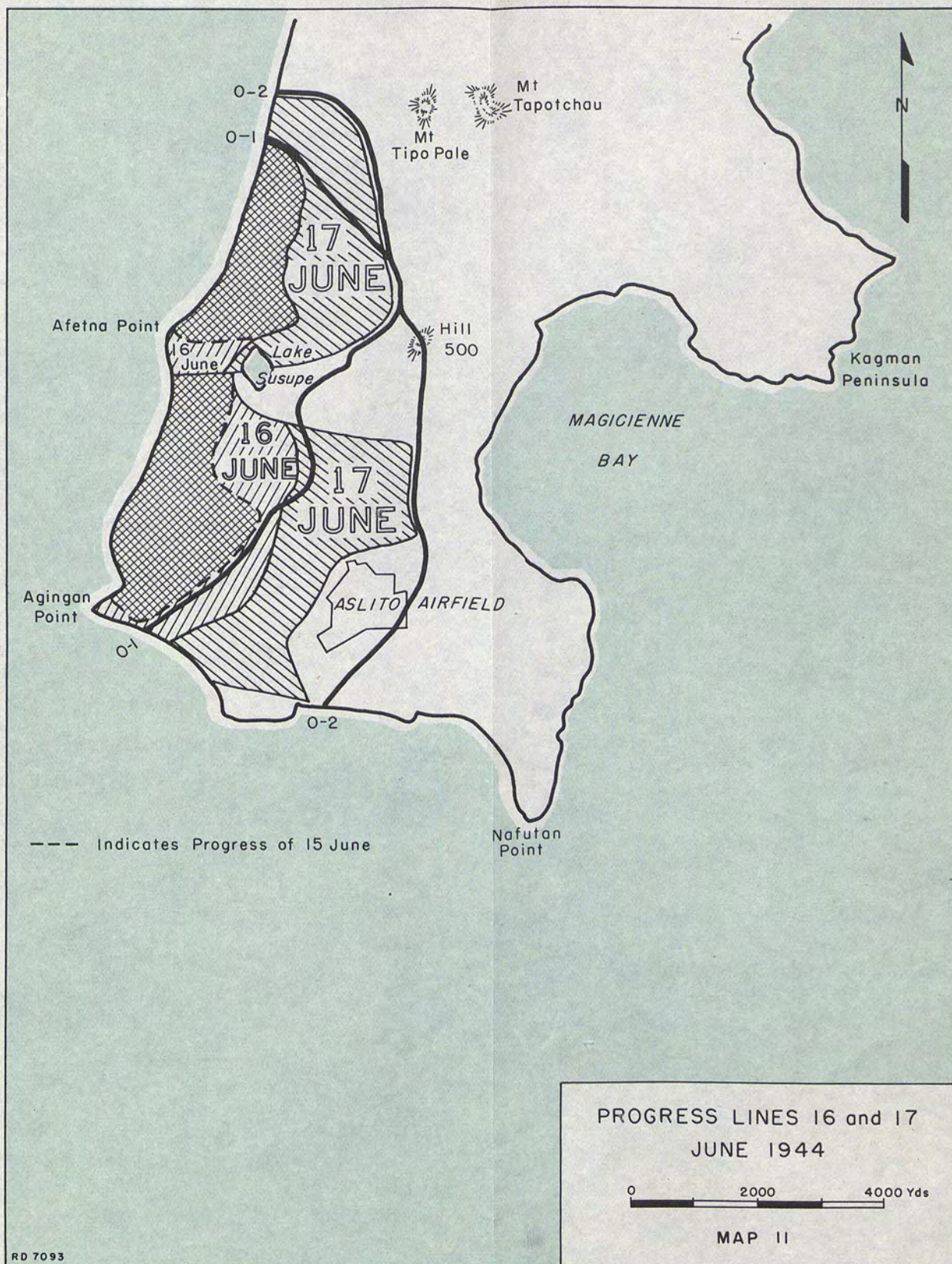
For Fire Support Unit 52.17.6 (part of Fire Support Group One), ploughing through waters 12 miles west of Saipan, the air alarm sounded at 1900. The subsequent Japanese at-

⁷⁰ 1st Bn, 8th Mar Report, 3.

⁷¹ CINCPAC-CINCPMA Item #10,053.

⁷² NTLF G-2 Report, 14. TF 56 G-2 Report, 14.

⁷³ In some instances it was impossible to make an accurate count of participating enemy aircraft. On these occasions, reports mention "several," "considerable," or a "formation," instead of a definite total.



tack, however, resulted in no hits by either side. A busy evening came to an end.⁷⁴

Enemy air attacks were as consistently ineffective as they were annoyingly frequent.

In a recurrence of what happened to the *California* and *Braine* on 14 June and to the *Tennessee* on the 15th, the destroyers *Philip* and *Phelps* were fired upon at 0544, 18 June, by shore batteries on Saipan, one located just north of Garapan and the other southeast of that town. The *Philip* was not hit, but the *Phelps* was struck by two 8-inch shells, one exploding in the wardroom with extensive but not serious damage, the other in Number 3 fire-room, putting Number 3 boiler out of commission and causing minor damage to steam lines and Number 4 boiler. The two destroyers delivered counterbattery fire and silenced the enemy guns.⁷⁵

It is doubtful that the message of inspiration received that night from the Chief of Staff (Hideki Tojo) in Japan was accorded complete circulation to the hard-pressed front line defenders of Saipan:

Because the fate of the Japanese Empire depends on the result of your operation, inspire the spirit of the officers and men and to the very end continue to destroy the enemy gallantly and persistently; thus alleviate the anxiety of our Emperor.

The reply from the chief of staff of the beleaguered 43d Division (Colonel Takuji Suzuki) showed that he, at least, had been inspired:

Have received your honorable Imperial words and we are grateful for boundless magnanimity of Imperial favor. By becoming the bulwark of the Pacific with 10,000 deaths we hope to requite the Imperial favor.⁷⁶

D-PLUS 3—18 JUNE

The chief of staff of the 31st Japanese Army, Major General Keiji Iketa, drafted a message on the morning of 18 June to the commanding general at Yap Island and the chief of staff in Tokyo. In it he summarized the situation as he saw it and, in the process, revealed how very little he knew of what was taking place about

him. Not that the general was caught in the bog of apathy, nor was he too frightened or lazy to find out what was going on; it was simply impossible for him to penetrate the shroud of obscurity resulting from ruptured communications in the vast area over which the action was taking place. Moreover, even the meager information that he did possess proved in at least one instance (paragraph four) to be false:

1. The *Homare* Unit [43d Division] Headquarters is about 2,500 meters southeast of Oreai [Charan Kanoa]. The forces at its disposal are not over three companies.

2. The situation of the other units is completely unknown.

3. The enemy is gradually advancing under cover of fierce naval gunfire and bombing and strafing and the southern half of this island is generally under the subjugation of the enemy.

4. *Homare* Unit Headquarters underwent an enemy attack this a.m. and the division CO died along with his staff officers.

5. Army Field Headquarters is in the mountains 1,800 meters east of Garapan pier. The enemy in force is advancing from the south of Garapan and is closing in on the field headquarters.

In another dispatch later in the day, General Iketa corrected his error in regard to the division commander's death, reporting that General Saito was "all right," but that his "staff officers were wounded." Also, in this second message of 18 June, Iketa gave a more specific disposition of Japanese forces:

The army is consolidating its battle lines and has decided to prepare for a showdown fight. It is concentrating the *Homare* Group in the area east of Tapotchau. The remaining units (two infantry battalions of 135th Infantry, about one composite battalion, one naval unit), are concentrating in the area east of Garapan. This is the beginning of our showdown fight.

The high command in Tokyo received a tangible clue of the hopelessness of the Japanese situation at Saipan when General Iketa reported that "the secret documents in custody of the 31st Army Headquarters . . . were completely burned at 1830 of 18 June. . . ." ⁷⁷

The NTLF Operation Order for 18 June (D-plus 3) called for an attack by all three divisions; the two Marine divisions at 1000 and the Army at 1200 (to allow the 27th Division time to move the 105th Infantry into position

⁷⁴ *TF 51 Report*, 6, Annex 1, and Encl L. *TF 56 G-3 Report*, Periodic Report No. 4.

⁷⁵ *TF 51 Report*, Encl L, 2.

⁷⁶ CINCPAC-CINCPA Item #9983-85, 8 and 30.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

on the right flank along the south coast).⁷⁸

Into the Coconut Grove

The 2d Marine Division's lines advanced very little on 18 June because the pivot to the north had already begun; and, since the division's left was the anchor of the pivot, its movements had to be restricted to prevent overextending lines. Colonel Wallace's 8th Marines, however, did attack on the right. The previous day had found the regiment in possession of the O-1 ridge line but receiving heavy fire from a coconut grove to the south.

Because of the proximity of 4th Division troops to this grove, it was necessary that supporting fires be delivered with a great deal of caution and finesse, lest errant shells claim Marine casualties. Well equal to this exacting task were the industrious 75mm pack howitzers of the 2d Battalion, 10th Marines. Following a diligent 15-minute preparation, Major Chamberlin's 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, attacked and carried the grove. As this move progressed, the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, kept pace by swinging its right flank abreast of Chamberlin's unit.

Here, for the first time, large numbers of dead Japanese were found (although no actual count was made), giving further indication that the enemy system of evacuation was deteriorating. With the advance to the coconut grove, contact with the 4th Division was established. As will be seen, however, 4th Division elements pulled back at dusk and a lateral gap was again created. This was not serious, however, inasmuch as Lake Susupe was within a stone's throw of the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines' right flank. The other two regiments of the 2d Division did not advance their lines but patrolled areas to their front in preparation for later moves.⁷⁹

Drive to the East

The 4th Marine Division attacked toward the east coast with three regiments abreast: 25th Marines on the right, 24th Marines in the center, and 23d Marines on the left. The 3d

Battalion, 24th Marines, remained attached to the 23d Regiment.

Good progress was made by the 24th and 25th Marines, although the former sustained an attack at 1615 by two Japanese tanks which surged to within 350 yards of the front lines. The situation for awhile was alarming: U. S. tanks had departed for rear areas to refuel and re-arm so that only bazookas were immediately available for antitank defense. Though the 24th Marines' Weapons Company was immediately alerted, it arrived too late to participate in the fight. The enemy tanks were finally chased by bazookas and artillery, but not before they had sprayed the area (causing 15 casualties) with machine-gun and small cannon fire.

A portion of the O-3 line (see Map 13) was reached by the 24th and 25th Marines during the day, placing the latter along the coast of Magicienne Bay. This healthy gain severed the island's southern portion, including Nafutan Point, from the remainder of the island. The NTLF Staff expected no serious trouble from the foe in the isolated southern area.

To maintain the momentum of the attack and avoid the long delay of a mopping-up process, the 24th Marines by-passed the southern extremity of a heavily defended cliff line running north and south through its zone of action. However, since the direction of attack for the division would soon swing north through the by-passed area, it was necessary to secure the cliff line. This mission was assigned to the division reserve, 1st Battalion, 25th Marines.

This, the unit's first experience with cleaning cave positions, proved a slow, unpleasant and dangerous task. There was no simple method of cleaning caves. It was a matter of working into a position from which a demolition charge or flame thrower could either destroy the caves' inhabitants or trap them inside by sealing the entrances. Getting to such a position usually demanded "mountain goat" tactics. Rather than a coordinated move, the task took the form of a series of small, separated actions, each employing groups of four or five men. The unpleasantness of crawling over rough,

⁷⁸ NTLF Operation Order 6-44.

⁷⁹ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 5. *8th Mar Report*, 3.



FLOWED FIELD, devoid of cover and concealment, was in striking contrast to rugged terrain in many other parts of the island. Here men of the 4th Division are utilizing armored LVT's in assault gun fashion. Although lightly armored, these vehicles were effectively employed during the first days of the battle in missions normally assigned to tanks.

jagged rocks plus the peril of receiving a burst of enemy fire at point-blank range, totalled "cave-cleaning."⁸⁰

Preliminary operations and reorganization were necessary in the 23d Marines' zone of action prior to the 1000 attack. At 0730, the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines (attached to the 23d), relieved Haas' 1st Battalion on the division's left wing and commenced the move on O-2, which would serve as the line of departure. As will be seen, however, events of the day prevented the regiment from reaching this line. Organizational readjustments within the 23d Marines included the attachment of the 3d Battalion's rifle companies and 81mm mortar pla-

toon to Dillon's 2d Battalion and formation of a composite battalion from the 1st Battalion and the 3d Battalion Headquarters (under the command of the 3d Battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Cosgrove). The latter unit would support the attack of the other two battalions from positions on Mt. Fina Susu.

Machine-gun fire stopped the 23d Marines' left elements after an advance of 200 to 250 yards. Most of this fire came from a clump of trees to their front, but a definite location of enemy weapons was impossible. Frequent barrages of Japanese mortar fire hampered efforts to spot the enemy, and the attack faltered. At this juncture, Cosgrove's composite battalion was committed on the left of the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, in an attempt to retain the impetus, and the attack again moved forward.

⁸⁰ *4th Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 18-19. *25th Mar Report*, 5. Ltr from LtCol R. Rothwell to CMC, 14Jan50, hereinafter cited as *Rothwell. Ross*.

But the advance was slow. By 1715, the 23d Marines had moved to a line about 400 yards short of O-2.

Prior to darkness, 23d Marines' patrols were dispatched to the east. On the right, these patrols reached O-2, but on the left machine-gun fire denied movement as far as O-2. Colonel Jones, the 23d Marines' commander, requested permission from General Schmidt to withdraw to more favorable ground for the night. General Schmidt approved, and the 23d pulled back to a position about 400 yards east of Lake Susupe, breaking contact with the 2d Division.⁸¹

During the afternoon a report from the 23d Marines reached the 4th Division Headquarters, then Corps, that the enemy was using gas. The alarm was sounded. Gas; the possibility that the Japanese would at some time resort to this dread weapon had lurked in the background of every operation. But, as quickly as it began, the flurry subsided. An investigation by the 23d Marines, immediately instituted, revealed that a half-track, operating in the 2d Battalion zone, had fired into a cave which housed a picric acid plant. A rolling yellow cloud, containing pungent fumes, emitted from the cave aperture, causing two casualties (from extreme nausea) and much excitement.⁸²

This episode illustrated a long-recognized fact: gas masks were the most useless things in the world, until (and here was the big "until") there was a gas attack or threat of gas attack, at which point they became the most valued of all items of equipment. The scramble for masks that followed the gas alarm gave convincing proof, if any were needed, that gas was indeed a frightening weapon. It appeared to many officers and men that the moment of retribution was near for all the bad care they had given their masks. And, for at least a short time after this scare, the masks were faithfully carried and cared for.

This gas scare temporarily relieved one in-

dividual of either his inhibitions or his eyesight: General Schmidt, 4th Division commander, reports that, without pausing for any formalities, "a young lieutenant came rushing into my dugout and asked me if I had a spare gas mask."⁸³

Seizure of Aslito Airfield

For the attack of 18 June, the commanding officer of the 165th Infantry was somewhat confused as to his regiment's status. Was it still under 4th Division control? Or had it reverted to the 27th Division? Of this situation the 165th's commander, Colonel Kelley, has written:

I was unable to determine (by telephone conversation with Hq 4th Marine Division) whether I was still attached to the 4th Marine Division or had passed to the Command of CG 27th Div. I had my S-3 call D-3 4th Marine Division to inform that office of the progress of the attack and what I planned to do. This in view of the absence of formal orders from 4th Marine Division Headquarters. As I remember the report of my S-3, the D-3 (or assistant) had stated that I was to do as I had been ordered (in connection with my proposed action). He later tempered his remarks when advised that I had received no orders and indicated that we might be under the direction of CG 27th Division. Shortly after this Major General Ralph Smith visited my CP and advised me that I should receive notice of my release from the Marines and reversion [sic] to the 27th Division. I did receive notice from the 27th Division but never received such orders from 4th Marine Division Headquarters.⁸⁴

Attacking ahead of schedule, the 165th Infantry captured Aslito Airfield without opposition at about 1000.⁸⁵ The field, found in relatively good condition, contained the largest cache of airplane parts and damaged airplanes captured from the Japanese up to this time. Also discovered and put to good use: an oxygen plant, a power plant, a million-gallon reservoir, and a number of shelters and warehouses with steel-reinforced concrete walls. The runway had a four degree incline, compared with a

⁸¹ *4th Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 18-19. *23d Mar Report*, 37-38.

⁸² *Ibid.*, *Marine Corps Gazette*, "Observations on Saipan," Jan45, LtCol B. A. Hochmuth. Interview with LtCol Hochmuth, 4Jan49. *L. R. Jones*.

⁸³ Ltr from Gen H. Schmidt to CMC, 8Jan50.

⁸⁴ *Kelley*.

⁸⁵ The 27th Division renamed Aslito Airfield Gardiner Conroy Field. Later, NTLF changed the name to Isely Airfield, in honor of Commander Robert H. Isely, a naval aviator, who lost his life while attacking the field prior to its capture.

grade limit for United States fields of half a degree. The field became operational for fighters on 22 June, for Liberator bombers on 9 August, and for B-29's on 15 October.⁸⁶

Apparently, Japanese troops had moved out in such haste that no demolition or destruction was accomplished. The outer defenses were in excellent condition, and a safe containing some confidential documents was found.

The Seabees (personnel of the 18th and 121st Naval Construction Battalions) soon arrived at the airfield and commenced repairing it for our own use. They were joined on 2 July by the first of five aviation engineer battalions of the VII Air Service Command.

Southeast of the field the ridge that had troubled the 1st Battalion, 165th Infantry, on the previous afternoon was regained without special difficulty. At this point the formation was altered. This came as a result of an order from General Ralph Smith, narrowing the

165th Infantry's broad zone and inserting the 105th Infantry into the right of the division's front. With its zone compressed, the 165th Infantry adopted a formation of 1st and 2d Battalions abreast, 1st on the left, 3d in reserve, for the push to the east coast.

The 105th Infantry, meanwhile, had moved in on the 165th's right and launched its attack along the south coast. Available to this regiment were but two of its battalions, since the 2d was still under NTLF control. Progress was slow; the right battalion (3d, Lieutenant Colonel Edward T. Bradt, USA) found the coast line pitted with caves, all of which had to be investigated. As noted earlier, cave-cleaning is a tedious process, requiring deliberate, painstaking effort. The left battalion (1st, Lieutenant Colonel William J. O'Brien, USA) found itself confronted with vast canefields. In these, the intense heat retarded the rate of advance. Because of the 105th Infantry's slowness, the 165th could not reach the east coast without severing contact with its sister regi-

⁸⁶ *The AAF Against Japan, 189-191.*



165TH INFANTRY moving across the flat near Aslito Airfield on the morning of 18 June.

ment.⁸⁷ (See Map 13 for 18 June front lines.)

At about noon of 18 June, General Holland Smith and his chief of staff, General Erskine, arrived for a visit at the 27th Division command post, then located about 1,000 yards inland from Yellow Beach. According to Major General Ralph Smith, "both these Marine officers again expressed satisfaction over the progress of operations of the 27th Division and the capture of the airfield."⁸⁸

General Harper, Corps Artillery commander, and his advance parties continued their reconnaissance, being joined at dawn of the 18th by reconnaissance details from the 145th Field Artillery Battalion. By late afternoon the 225th Field Artillery Battalion, with eight 155mm howitzers in position southeast of Charan Kanoa, began firing. Two Corps Artillery liaison planes also landed during the day on Charan Kanoa strip and were pressed

⁸⁷ Lemp, 11. R. C. Smith, 3. 165th Inf Report, 3. 27th Inf Div, G-3 Periodic Report 1800, 17 June to 1800, 18 June 1944.

⁸⁸ R. C. Smith, 4.

into the immediate task of locating targets.⁸⁹

General Holland Smith, concerned that certain supplies were running short, requested from Admiral Turner that the ships which had departed on the evening of the 17th be returned for unloading.⁹⁰ Rather than returning all ships as requested, however, Turner held to the original plan of returning only those vessels needed for immediate unloading.

The evacuation picture improved greatly on 18 June with the arrival of the two hospital ships *Solace* and *Bountiful*. These ships took aboard 1,099 casualties, which, together with the gradual decrease of the casualty rate to 500 per day, helped relieve the overload on medical facilities of the transports.⁹¹

Japanese Air Activity

During the afternoon, the enemy attempted limited air interference over Saipan, and two Japanese planes were shot down. One of the

⁸⁹ Corps Arty S-3 Report, 6.

⁹⁰ TF 56 G-3 Report, Periodic Reports, 18-19 June.

⁹¹ COMINCH P-007, 5-19.



PLANES FROM ESCORT CARRIERS, like the *Kalinin Bay*, operated at Saipan on combat air patrol missions and in close support of ground troops.

pilots, captured by the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, near Aslito Airfield, stated that he had been one of the two remaining pilots on Guam.⁹²

Against our ships, Japanese aircraft had been more active and somewhat more successful. Early in the morning (0540) of 18 June, "several" enemy aircraft attacked Task Unit 52.17.6, then steaming about 12 miles west of Saipan anchorage. The raiders achieved no hits, although the *Maryland* reported near misses off her starboard quarter. Ships' gunfire succeeded in downing one Japanese fighter. In the afternoon, at 1650, three tankers of Task Unit 16.7.1 were damaged in an attack by 10 enemy planes. The results of this attack were entirely favorable to the Japanese, since none of their planes were lost. Two of the damaged oilers (*Neshanic* and *Saugatuck*) were able to remain at Saipan while the third (*Saranac*) was more seriously hit, losing all power. After temporary repairs the latter ship returned to Eniwetok.

Carrier Support Unit Two (TU 52.11) was attacked near Saipan by a "formation" of Japanese aircraft. While achieving no hits, the Japanese lost five fighters as a result of ships' gunfire and aircraft from the carriers. The real naval tragedy of the day occurred when U. S. planes were forced to land on their carriers after dark. This difficult feat resulted in the loss of 31 planes. Following these losses, the CVE (escort carrier) *Kalinin Bay* was sent to Eniwetok for replacements.⁹³

The Japanese air attacks that struck Saipan on 18 June were made by scattered remnants of a large conglomerate force of 120-130 naval planes which was to hit the landing beaches and landing ships. To assemble this force, the Japanese had been obliged to scrape the bottom of the barrel in both planes and men. The planes were of various types, ranging from medium bombers to fighters; two-thirds of the pilots were experienced, the remainder were students. En route from Yokosuka to Saipan, the force was intercepted by U. S. carrier air-

craft with the result that most of the enemy force was knocked down.⁹⁴

Night of 18-19 June

The night was relatively quiet. All divisions reported only sporadic sniping and minor infiltrations.

Some of the optimism which had characterized previous Japanese reports was absent from the operation order of Colonel Suzuki, commanding officer of the 135th Infantry Regiment, issued on the night of 18 June:

1. Since Red landings there are . . . about 100 tanks . . . north of the airfield [undoubtedly referring to our tanks]. Our forces will reorganize their lines and prepare for decisive battle.⁹⁵

On Tinian, meanwhile, Japanese were attempting to piece together the jigsaw puzzle of vague details and to figure out what was occurring under the smoke and noise on Saipan and in the seas around them. Such radio messages as had been received were obscure in meaning and only served to heighten the curiosity. Typical of the wonderment is an entry in the diary of an unidentified noncommissioned officer stationed on Tinian: "18 June—At 0800, Admiral Toyoda, CinC Combined Fleet, reported 'We have the enemy just where we want him.' Where is the fleet? The enemy continues to land on Saipan."⁹⁶

D-PLUS 4—19 JUNE

The Approach to Nafutan Point

The NTLF Operation Order for 19 June instructed the three divisions to "complete missions assigned" in the previous day's order. Successful execution of this would place the landing force lines along Objective line O-3 (See Map 13).⁹⁷

The 27th Infantry Division continued its attack at 0730, 19 June, and in the zone of the 165th Infantry reached Magicienne Bay to the

⁹² TF 56 G-2 Report, 14. NTLF G-2 Report, 14.

⁹³ TF 51 Report, Encl L, 2 and Annex 1 to Encl A.

⁹⁴ USSBS No. 434, Interrogation of Captain Akira Sasaki, IJN, a member of the Yokosuka Air Corps from March to July 1944.

⁹⁵ NTLF G-2 Report, 15.

⁹⁶ CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #11,405.

⁹⁷ NTLF Operation Order 7-44.

north of Nafutan Point.⁹⁸ Contact existed with the 4th Marine Division on the left. Slower movement by the 105th Infantry along the south coast caused a break between the flanks of the two regiments, and it was necessary for the 165th to patrol this interval.

In the southern part of the division zone the advance led straight onto Nafutan Point. Dominating the approaches to the point itself is a sheer hill mass, the jagged western face of which is almost as precipitous as a cliff. It was against this formidable obstacle that the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry, made several unsuccessful ventures. The terrain virtually defied movement from the west. The 3d Battalion, 105th, still investigating caves along the south coast and urging cave occupants to surrender, lagged behind. Large numbers of civilians were taken from the caves by this unit. But by late afternoon, a gap had developed between it and the 1st Battalion, and it was necessary to commit the 1st Battalion, 165th Infantry, in order to tie them in.⁹⁹

The 4th Division Left Progresses

In the 4th Marine Division zone, only local successes were achieved, but these all added up to an improvement of the situation and an integration of forces for the continuation of the attack. At 0700, a large assemblage of Japanese troops and tanks, apparently forming for a counterattack, was observed near Tsu-

⁹⁸ It is interesting to note that while 27th Division-Marine controversies were agitated following the operation, none were brewing on 19 June when Major General Ralph Smith, the 27th Division commander, said in a radio recording at Aslito Airfield: "... this is an appropriate point to emphasize the perfect teamwork that has existed between the Navy, Marines, and the Army. It irritates me a little to read these stories back home because a soldier and a Marine get in a fight in a saloon that the relations between services are at cross purposes. Nothing could be farther from the truth out here in the field. ... I want to stress the very cordial feeling that exists between the outfits. One of the 165th's officers remarked to me this morning that Saipan has sealed the blood brotherhood between the services." Recording made by Radio Recording Unit, V Amphibious Corps, Public Relations Section on 19 June 1944.

⁹⁹ Lemp, 12. R. C. Smith, 4-5. 105th Inf Report, 5. 165th Inf Report, 4.

tsuuran. Immediately, all battalions of the 14th Marines registered on this area and poured in massed fires. The Japanese quickly dispersed, and no more was seen of them.

The 24th and 25th Marines continued mopping-up operations and readjustment of the lines throughout the day. The 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, designated as division reserve, moved to an assembly area in rear of the 23d Marines as protection for the left flank.

The 23d Marines, with Vandegrift's 3d Battalion, 24th, still attached, attacked following a preparation fired on O-2 and the western slopes of troublesome Hill 500 by the 1st Provisional Rocket Detachment (4.5-inch rockets mounted on trucks) and the 2d and 4th Battalions, 14th Marines. As the attack progressed, the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines—the center battalion—was pinched out, Cosgrove's composite battalion and Dillon's 2d Battalion (reinforced with the 3d Battalion's rifle companies) taking over the assigned regimental frontage.

The day's gains were considerable, a line 400 yards west of O-3 being reached. Here again, however, concern about the area between divisions caused the 23d Marines to pull back about 400 yards where the terrain was more favorable to the protection of the left flank. Patrol contact was established with the 8th Marines (2d Marine Division) on the left. Both regiments exchanged patrols throughout the night. (See Map 13.)

The 23d Marines suffered a critical loss during the day: Lieutenant Colonel Cosgrove, one of the division's ablest officers and leader of the composite battalion, was wounded by an enemy rifle bullet.¹⁰⁰

Active Patrolling

Aggressive patrolling was the principal activity in the 2d Marine Division zone of action. Patrols from the 2d Marines encountered three Japanese tanks near the beach road to Garapan and destroyed two of them. At noon the 2d Regiment was strengthened by arrival of its 1st Battalion, which reverted from division

¹⁰⁰ 4th Mar Div Report, Section VI, 20. 23d Mar Report, 38.

reserve to parent control. Another shift took one company (F) of the attached 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, from 2d Marines' control and returned it to its own regiment.¹⁰¹

Attachments and detachments of companies and battalions had been demanded by the normal confusion of the amphibious assault. As units arrived at the beach, it was often necessary to feed them into the lines where they were needed, rather than adhering rigidly to principles of tactical unity. To well-trained tactical units these shifts were accomplished with very little difficulty; loyalty was extended from subordinate to senior and from senior to subordinate, regardless of the composition of the command.

Patrols from the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, discovered that a dominating hill (790) to the front, strongly defended previously, was now abandoned, and the battalion moved forward to occupy it.¹⁰² Why the Japanese chose to evacuate so powerful and thoroughly prepared a position remains a mystery.

Patrols from the 8th Marines sought, in addition to enemy information, routes of supply and evacuation for projected moves to the north and northeast. The 8th Marines' zone, including the summit of Mt. Tapotchau, presented logistical problems of great magnitude. No roads ran through the area, and such trails as existed were impossible of negotiation by trucks. Along the right flank ran a valley, ending abruptly in a deep gorge. To the front there was no apparent break in the cliffs. To the left was a tortuous nightmare of dead-end gulleys and blind-alley ravines. There was no single, simple solution to this problem.¹⁰³

Artillery Situation

General Harper's Corps Artillery had by now assumed an important role in the fight. Twenty-one of its 24 155mm howitzers and 11 of its 24 155mm guns were in position and firing. Long-range destruction, night harassing, and interdiction fires were begun in general

support and reinforcement of the 10th and 14th Marines and, subsequently, of the 27th Division Artillery. Observers in liaison planes made possible registration deep in enemy territory, to prevent movement and assembly of troops during daylight hours, to place destruction fires on permanent enemy installations, to seek and search for targets developed and reported by intelligence agencies, and to keep units informed of the trace of front lines.¹⁰⁴

Cooperation between artillery units at Saipan left little to be desired throughout the campaign. Instances of faulty coordination later in the campaign were failures of organization and technique—not of cooperation. As a case in point, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick J. Karch, R-3 of the 14th Marines, described a series of conferences between General Harper and operations officers of the three divisions' artillery units. The purpose of these meetings was to insure coordination and maximum effective employment of artillery resources.

After looking over the fire plans presented by the various operations officers, the general would coordinate these, designate corps artillery units that would reinforce the fires of the divisions' artillery, and explain how and why it would be done. His manner instilled a feeling of confidence and good will and left no doubt that his only concern was to bring the greatest amount of artillery fire where it would be needed most.¹⁰⁵

Unfortunately, these conferences were discontinued as the operation progressed; thereafter, detailed coordination of field artillery fires was lacking. Coordination of supporting arms continued to be exercised at Northern Troops and Landing Force command post.¹⁰⁶

An artillery fire mission, delivered on 19 June under somewhat makeshift circumstances, exhibited both cooperation and ingenuity. A 1st Battalion, 14th Marines, forward observer noted a Japanese field artillery battery in position near Magicienne Bay. Sitting in an aban-

¹⁰¹ *2d Mar Report*, 3.

¹⁰² *6th Mar Report*, 6.

¹⁰³ *8th Mar Report*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Corps Arty S-3 Report*, 6-7.

¹⁰⁵ In his book, Holland Smith is loud in praise of General Harper. *Coral and Brass*, 167.

¹⁰⁶ *Karch*.

doned Japanese observation post, using captured Japanese 15-power field glasses, the observer communicated his fire mission to his battalion Fire Direction Center (FDC) by means of an SCR 300 Radio. It was necessary to relay this request through another forward observer's radio, since the first set would not reach the FDC. The 1st Battalion already had a direct support assignment which precluded its firing the task, so the mission was further relayed to the regimental FDC by telephone. As none of the 14th Marines' organic battalions were unemployed, the mission was sent by radio to the XXIV Corps Artillery, whose 155mm howitzers fired the mission with very good effect.¹⁰⁷

Rear Installations

The ever-mounting number of captives demanded establishment, on 19 June, of a prisoner of war stockade at the southern edge of Charan Kanoa. Seriously ill or wounded prisoners of war were hospitalized under guard in a nearby unit of the hospital maintained by the Medical Battalion, V Amphibious Corps. Interpreters on duty at the enclosure facilitated the handling of prisoners, and use was made of enemy noncommissioned officers to supervise and control them. Japanese and Koreans were kept in separate enclosure because of their characteristic hate for one another. The Chamorros, while technically, not prisoners of war, required handling by civil affairs personnel and added to an already great problem. Captured matériel fulfilled the greater part of the requirements for food, clothing and shelter.¹⁰⁸

At Aslito Airfield, construction and repair work continued. To provide some measure of protection from raids by enemy aircraft, one gun battery and one automatic weapons battery from the 864th Antiaircraft Artillery Group were installed at the field during the day.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ J. F. Ryan, 10.

¹⁰⁸ NTLF G-1 Report, 9.

¹⁰⁹ TF 56 G-3 Report, Periodic Reports, 19-20 June.



CHAMORRO being questioned by Spanish-speaking Marine. Since the Chamorros were able to speak Japanese in addition to their native tongue, they were helpful in relaying questions to Japanese prisoners and back to United States Spanish-speaking interrogators. Chamorros hated the Japanese soldiers.

Night of 19-20 June

The most vicious action of the night occurred in the sector occupied by the 2d Battalion, 24th Marines. Starting at about 0350 and lasting until daylight, an enemy force of approximately 75 attacked the Marines with grenades and bayonets. In the close-in fighting that ensued, 11 Marines were wounded, but, in the process, the enemy attack was broken. By daylight, many of the attackers were sprawled forward of the Marines' foxholes, the rest had taken to their heels.¹¹⁰

Elsewhere there was little activity, though the 6th Marines experienced a brief flurry when 15 Japanese attempted to infiltrate the lines. In most sectors, it was almost a restful night.¹¹¹

It is of interest to note that the Japanese were still worried about a landing at Magicienne Bay. At 1300 on 19 June, General Saito issued an "order of the Southern Marianas Force," which said, in part, as follows:

¹¹⁰ Rothwell.

¹¹¹ 2d Mar Div Reports, Section VI, 7.



BABY SITTERS were available at Saipan. Civilians were at first afraid of United States troops but grew to trust them as time went on. Many civilians, saturated with Japanese propaganda to the effect that the Americans would torture them; committed suicide rather than surrender.

2. The Division will hold the areas shown on this map [Map 13] and together with reorganizing its units will interrupt the plan of the enemy which has previously landed.

3. The 118th Infantry Regiment will hold the area shown on the map and *particularly it will prevent the enemy's plan of landing on Magicienne Bay.* [Author's italics.]

6. The main strength of the tank unit will assemble in the area of their maintenance unit [believed to have been Chacha Village]. It will cooperate with the 118th Regiment and together prevent the advance of the enemy from the beach and *prepare a counterattack plan against enemy landing in Magicienne Bay area.* [Author's italics.]

Why the possibility of a Magicienne Bay

landing should have so captured the Japanese attention that they actually deployed their forces in anticipation of it, is one of the unanswered questions relative to the campaign. It perhaps indicates that their intelligence officer was over-emphasizing this one capability, or, perhaps, General Saito had projected himself into the attacker's position and was countering a move which he would have favored.¹¹²

By perusing the estimate of combat strength made by General Iketa, chief of staff, 31st

¹¹² NTLF G-2 Report, 16.

Army, on 19 June, we may better appreciate the effectiveness of the offensive to date:

Division—about 4½ infantry battalions (3½ already destroyed) ; 1 battalion artillery (2 battalions already destroyed).

Mixed Brigade—infantry unknown; no artillery (2 battalions already destroyed).

Other Infantry—about 1 composite battalion (2½ battalions destroyed).

Tanks—about 2 companies (3 companies destroyed).

Army Artillery (under Army command—none (2 battalions destroyed).

Anti-Aircraft Artillery—about 1 battery (4 batteries destroyed).

Independent Engineers—none (3 companies destroyed).

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Eager to notice any diminution in the vigor of the U. S. effort, General Iketa wrote on the evening of 19 June:

The enemy bombing and shelling is relatively scattered compared to yesterday. . . . Targets were area east of Aslito Airfield and gun positions east of Garampan.

Enemy troops have apparently infiltrated into Aslito Airport. . . . It is planned to carry out a concentrated shelling of the three places where the Navy has stored 250 800-kilogram bombs at the airfield.¹¹⁴

Though the airfield was subjected to Japanese shelling from time to time, the cache of bombs was never hit.

BATTLE OF THE PHILIPPINE SEA

On 19 June, while conducting survey operations off Tanapag Harbor, a mine sweeper (YMS 323) received direct hits from a 4.7-inch battery on Mutcho Point. The ship was holed in two places below the waterline and a fire started forward near the magazine. Fortunately, the Japanese projectiles were armor piercing and did not explode. With the assistance of salvage tubs, the fire and flooding were brought under control.

"Several" Japanese aircraft attacked shipping in Saipan anchorage at 1900 with negative results on both sides; no U. S. ships hit, no Japanese aircraft down.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #9983-85, 10. A later report corrected this estimate in one respect: "Our previous message that there is no more artillery is a mistake. We have nine type 95 field pieces." It should also be noted that this estimate does not include navy troops on the island.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹¹⁵ *TF 51 Report*, Annex 1 to Encl A and Encl L, 2.

Farther at sea, meanwhile, Admiral Spruance's forces sought the Japanese Fleet (report of whose movement toward Saipan on 15 June had occasioned withdrawal of the bulk of the shipping from nearby waters). In point of air and surface striking power, the American naval force was the strongest armada ever assembled up to that time.¹¹⁶ On 19 June began the engagement later called the Battle of the Philippine Sea. (See Map 12.)

The action of the 19th consisted of a large-scale, lengthy attack by enemy aircraft on Spruance's ships and two air battles over Guam. The results of the day's action were extremely favorable to us: of 545 Japanese planes seen by U. S. pilots, 402 were destroyed,¹¹⁷ as against 26 American planes lost and minor damage to five U. S. ships. This massacre of enemy planes has frequently been referred to as the "Saipan Turkey Shoot." The *South Dakota* was the only ship to receive a direct hit (250 kg. bomb), while near misses were scored on the *Minneapolis*, *Wasp* and *Bunker Hill*. One Japanese plane crashed against the side of the *Indiana* at the water line but caused only superficial damage. Fighting efficiency was promptly restored to all ships.

With decisive air attacks against Saipan unlikely because of heavy carrier plane losses, Spruance's fleet headed to the westward at 23 knots, hoping to bring the Japanese fleet to action. Operating in a related action, U. S. submarines accounted for two 30,000-ton enemy aircraft carriers.

June 19th had, indeed, been devastating to the Japanese. The 402 planes, had they not been destroyed, might have delivered telling

¹¹⁶ Task Force 58 had been reinforced with units from TF 51 (Joint Expeditionary Force) to counter the Japanese threat. On 19 June, the force contained seven large carriers (*Hornet*, *Yorktown*, *Bunker Hill*, *Wasp*, *Enterprise*, *Lexington* and *Essex*), eight light carriers (*Bataan*, *Belleau Wood*, *Monterey*, *Cabot*, *San Jacinto*, *Princeton*, *Cowpens* and *Langley*), seven fast battleships (*Alabama*, *South Dakota*, *Indiana*, *New Jersey*, *Iowa*, *Washington* and *North Carolina*), 21 cruisers and 67 destroyers.

¹¹⁷ Numbers of planes seen and destroyed probably includes some duplication.

blows on U. S. shipping and granted a brief reprieve to the faltering Japanese war machine.

Throughout most of the following day (20 June) the U. S. fleet sought the retreating enemy. It was not until late afternoon, however, that search planes finally made contact with enemy ships; and, by the time heavy strikes (216 planes) were sent out, it was nearly sunset. The Japanese force was so far to westward that the attacks had to be made at extreme range. Despite the heavy barrage of anti-aircraft fire and interception by small groups of fighters (totaling about 35 planes), the Japanese Fleet was kept under continuous attack from 1820 to 1900.

Precarious shortage of gasoline and the coming of darkness cut the attacks short. On the return our pilots had difficulty in locating their carriers, and many landed in darkness. The scene became a nightmare of feverish confusion as carriers turned on searchlights, white truck lights, and fired star shells in a desperate effort to home their planes. This part of the operation was to be slow and costly; the battle against darkness and distance was to claim many more casualties than the enemy. Of the 216 planes that had taken off on the afternoon strike, only 116 landed safely; of the 100 that failed, 20 were shot down in combat or unaccounted for, the remaining 80 lost in water landings because of fuel shortages or in deck crashes. Over 75 percent of those personnel in the planes making water landings were picked up in the dark by destroyers and cruisers. The damage inflicted on the Japanese ships and prevention of enemy interference of operations at Saipan, however, made our losses a fair, if tragic, price to pay in return. One enemy carrier and two tankers were sunk; four carriers, a battleship, a large cruiser and a tanker were severely damaged. In addition, 22 Japanese planes were shot down.

Because of the disorganization of U. S. carrier task group screens and the shortage of fuel in the destroyers, pursuit of the enemy fleet during the night could not be pressed, and a speed of 16 knots was maintained as the ships ploughed on to westward.

Following its crushing defeats on 19-20 June, the Japanese Fleet retreated full speed

toward Okinawa. U. S. search planes located the enemy ships on the 21st, but planes sent out to attack failed to gain contact. Admiral Spruance's primary mission precluded getting out of range of the Marianas, and, by evening of 21 June, he abandoned the chase. The Battle of the Philippine Sea had broken Japanese efforts to reinforce the Marianas; thereafter, the capture went forward without serious outside interference.¹¹⁸ (See Map 12.)

The death blow had thus been dealt to Japanese carrier-based air power. In attempting again to rebuild his carrier groups, the enemy had to start from scratch. This handicap, heightened by short fuel supply, was too great. With their retirement from the Marianas, the Japanese carriers virtually retired from the war.¹¹⁹

The reaction of Japanese Corporal Tai Suzuki, stationed on Guam, to the activities which were exploding about him is indicated in his diary entry of 19 June:

Heard that a powerful air unit took part in a battle out here. Today, I saw the much hoped for air battle. Our planes shot down some enemy planes in a short time. I heaved a sigh of relief. Since our planes had attacked enemy ships, fuel was running low and ammunition was exhausted after eleven hours of continual flight. Just before they landed, enemy planes attacked them and they made forced landings. I wonder how they felt. I hear that there are a number of pilots who are only 17 or 18!!! . . . I heard that the enemy has 500 ships and 7,500 planes in the Central Pacific Area and that the climax of this battle will come in about a week. I am worried as no word has been received since the landings were made on Saipan.¹²⁰

D-PLUS 5—20 JUNE

The attack on 20 June was again a pivoting movement to the north. The two Marine divisions would attack toward Objective line O-4, and the 27th Division would "complete the seizure of objective O-3" (which included all of

¹¹⁸ *Campaigns*, 214-215. *5th Fleet Initial Report*, S-13. *JANAC. The Navy's Air War*, 208-213. King, 110.

¹¹⁹ The United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific), Naval Analysis Division, *The Air Effort Against Japan*, 50-51.

¹²⁰ CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #10,802.

Nafutan Point, the southernmost extremity).¹²¹

Surge to O-4

In the 2d Division, the 2d and 6th Marines confined their activities principally to patrolling, since they were the hinges of the swinging-gate movement. Combat-reconnaissance patrols from Lieutenant Colonel Johnston's 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, moved almost to the southern outskirts of Garapan. In the foothills, a short distance southeast of the town, the Marines found an abandoned Japanese tank in operating condition with full fuel tanks. They destroyed the machine with demolitions and returned to their lines.¹²²

Patrols sent out by the 6th Marines discovered no defensive positions of consequence within 500 yards to the front. Orders to maintain contact with the 8th Marines, however, precluded any forward movement of the regiment's lines.¹²³

The 8th Marines, meanwhile, continued the attack, making its main (and only) effort on the right, in the 2d Battalion zone. This battalion, after 4th Marine Division units came abreast, was required to swing northward along the front of the O-1 ridge line. An unusual feature of this action was that other battalions of the 8th Marines, from their positions on top of the ridge line, could watch the entire attack of the 2d Battalion (like a military school demonstration) as it passed below them.

Progress was rapid; by 1300, the 2d Battalion had pushed the 8th Marines' front to objective O-4, having met virtually no resistance. This advance and swinging movement so reduced the regiment's frontage that it was possible to withdraw two of its four battalions from the lines. As the regiment dug in for the night, the 1st and 2d Battalions were along the front, while the 3d Battalion and the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, were in reserve.¹²⁴

¹²¹ NTLF Operation Order 8-44.

¹²² *2d Mar Report*, 3.

¹²³ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 5-6. *6th Mar Report*, 6.

¹²⁴ *8th Mar Report*, 3.

The Capture of Hill 500

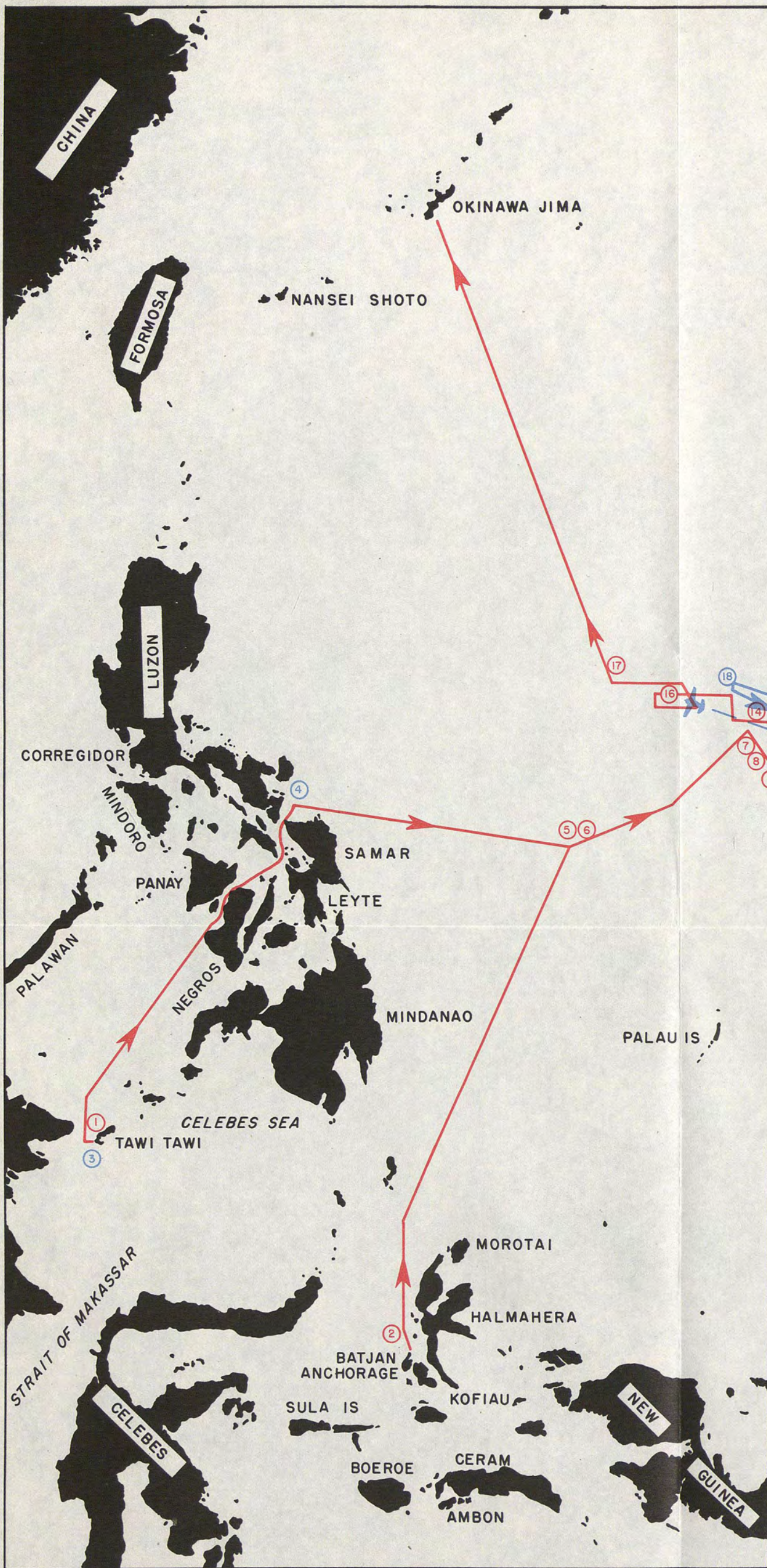
The 4th Marine Division, on the right of the swinging gate, completed its change of direction and achieved long gains. General Holland Smith had ordered the 27th Division to extend its front and take over the 25th Marines' zone along the coast of Magicienne Bay. Since the 25th Marines' combat efficiency was considered less impaired than the 23d Marines' however, General Schmidt immediately ordered it to assume the 23d's frontage on the division left and continue the attack.

The original jumping-off hour had been 0900, but a delay was necessitated in order that the 25th might move the entire width of the division's front to its newly assigned zone. At 1030, the attack was launched, 25th Marines on the left, 24th on right, and 23d in reserve.

The zone of the 25th Marines, formerly assigned to the 23d Marines, was sufficiently narrow to permit it to attack in a column of battalions, with Lieutenant Colonel Chambers' 3d Battalion leading. The day's objective was an important one: Hill 500. This dominating feature had provided the Japanese with excellent observation-post sites, caves for command posts, as well as a natural defensive position. Colonel Oka, commander of the 47th Mixed Brigade, had at one time used the hill for his command post, although he had decided prior to 20 June that other localities (farther to the rear) were more suitable to his needs.

Colonel Chambers' plan for the attack of Hill 500 was conventional in most respects. The formation was two companies forward (I and L) and one in reserve (K). Preparatory fires were to be furnished by rockets (1st Provisional Rocket Detachment), artillery (1st and 3d Battalions, 14th Marines), 37mm guns (from the 25th Marines' Regimental Weapons Company) and the 3d Battalion's own 81mm mortars. The one unusual feature of the attack plan was that the movement over the flat, open terrain just south of Hill 500 was to be screened by smoke. All too often at Saipan (as elsewhere throughout the Pacific War), this valuable weapon was neglected.

Because smoke would complicate the 3d Battalion's problems of control, coordination and



TRACK CHART OF OPPOSING FORCES BATTLE OF THE PHILIPPINE SEA

0 60 120 180

NAUTICAL MILES

MAP 12

SCHEDULE OF PRINCIPAL EVENTS — BATTLE OF THE PHILIPPINE SEA			
EVENT	TIME	JAPANESE ACTIONS	U.S. ACTIONS
1.	0900, 13 June	Group One, 3 battleships, 9 cruisers, 9 carriers, and 27 destroyers, departs Tawi Tawi.	Bombarding Saipan.
2.	2100, 13 June	Group Two, 2 battleships, 2 cruisers, and 4 destroyers, departs Batjan anchorage.	
3.	14 June		Submarine reports that large Japanese naval forces, present two days earlier, had sortied from Tawi Tawi.
4.	15 June		Submarines report the passage through San Bernardino Strait of large Japanese naval forces.
5.	Morning, 16 June	Groups One and Two rendezvous and refuel.	Admiral Spruance announces plan of action.
6.	1700, 17 June	Fleet departs rendezvous area enroute Southern Marianas.	
7.	Noon, 18 June	Fleet 600 miles west of Saipan. Carrier planes search for U. S. Fleet.	Task Force 58 rendezvous.
8.	Afternoon, 18 June	Fleet changes course to southeast, continues search.	Tender-based patrol planes search 500 miles west from Saipan. Negative results.
9.	Night, 18-19 June	Fleet continues to southeast.	Patrol planes execute radar search 600 miles west from Saipan. Negative results.
10.	0720, 19 June	Naval aircraft rise from Guam fields to engage U. S. carrier aircraft.	Combat air patrol from TF 58 sights enemy planes taking off from Guam fields.
	0800, 19 June	Large number of carrier aircraft arrive at Guam, expecting to refuel.	TF 58 rushes additional fighters into the air battle over Guam and inflicts heavy losses on Japanese.
11.	1004, 19 June	Carrier planes launch all-out attacks on ships of TF 58, continue throughout day, inflict minor damage on SOUTH DAKOTA and INDIANA.	Fighters over Guam recalled, additional fighters take off from carriers to intercept enemy planes. Ships' AA exacts heavy toll from Japanese attackers.
12.	Afternoon, 19 June	Carriers TAIHO and SHOKAKU sink as a result of morning torpedoing by U. S. submarines.	
13.	Night, 19-20 June	Fleet withdraws to westward, planning to refuel and return towards Marianas.	TF 58 heads to westward at 23 knots, hoping to catch the Japanese Fleet. Radar searches by patrol planes from Saipan give negative results.
14.	0625, 20 June	Fleet unable to pause for refueling because of proximity of U. S. scouting planes, continues westward all day.	TF 58 launches planes to try to locate enemy fleet, results negative until about 1515, when enemy fleet contacted about 250 miles west of U. S. Fleet.
15.	0630, 20 June		216 planes take off from TF 58 carriers to attack enemy ships.
16.	Night, 20-21 June	Carrier HIYO and two tankers sunk and seven ships damaged by U. S. air attacks.	U. S. planes return and land on carriers in darkness, suffer heavy losses.
17.	21 June	Fleet retires toward Okinawa.	Carrier planes search for Japanese cripples, negative results.
18.	Evening, 21 June		TF 58 retires toward Saipan to protect Attack Force.

maintenance of direction, a road which crossed the unit's zone of action (Laulau Road) about 500 yards south of Hill 500 was designated as a phase line. At this road, a quick reorganization was to be effected, the direction of advance reoriented (if necessary), and the assault on Hill 500 begun.

The 3d Battalion's attack was as well-executed as it was well-planned. The principal resistance (rifles and machine guns) was encountered by Company I, on the right, and this from a wood southeast of the hill. After pausing briefly at the road for a quick reorganization, the assault of Hill 500 was launched. By this time, the objective had been subjected to a severe, thundering beating administered by the 4.5-inch rockets. As the Marines charged up the hill through the thinning smoke, artillery shells walked ahead in sturdy escort. Shortly before noon the hill was seized, and mopping up of the cave network began. Compartments at different levels and angles made it possible for the Japanese occupants to retreat from one cave-room to another, and the cleaning out process was a slow one.

The price for Hill 500 was not light. Chambers' battalion suffered 49 casualties, nine of whom were killed. Counted Japanese dead numbered 44. Upon examination, it was found that Hill 500 had been well organized for defense but that the positions were not strongly manned. As darkness approached, the Marines dug in to defend their newly won possession.¹²⁵ (See Map 13.)

To Chambers' right, meanwhile, the 24th Marines set the pace for the 20 June surge. Located as it was, on the end of the landing force swinging-gate, the 24th Regiment was required to move the greatest distances in order to reach the day's objective—O-4. Attacking with two battalions abreast, 1st along the east coast and 2d in contact with the 25th Marines, it made excellent progress.

The delay in attack hour, occasioned by the 25th Marines' passage of the 23rd Marines' lines, allowed time for unusually thorough planning of the day's attack. All commanders

made good use of available time, and results achieved speak well for the adequacy of their preparations. This was particularly true in the 2d Battalion zone where, because of exceptionally good tank terrain, the regimental commander assigned 12 medium and three flame-thrower tanks, as well as four LVT(A)'s. The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Rothwell, spent considerable time orienting subordinate commanders and readying for the jump-off. The day's 2,700 yard advance provided a lift to the morale and, according to the battalion's action report, "proved to be the best coordinated tank and infantry attack of the operation."

By late afternoon, the 24th Marines dug in on objective O-4.¹²⁶ (See Map 13.)

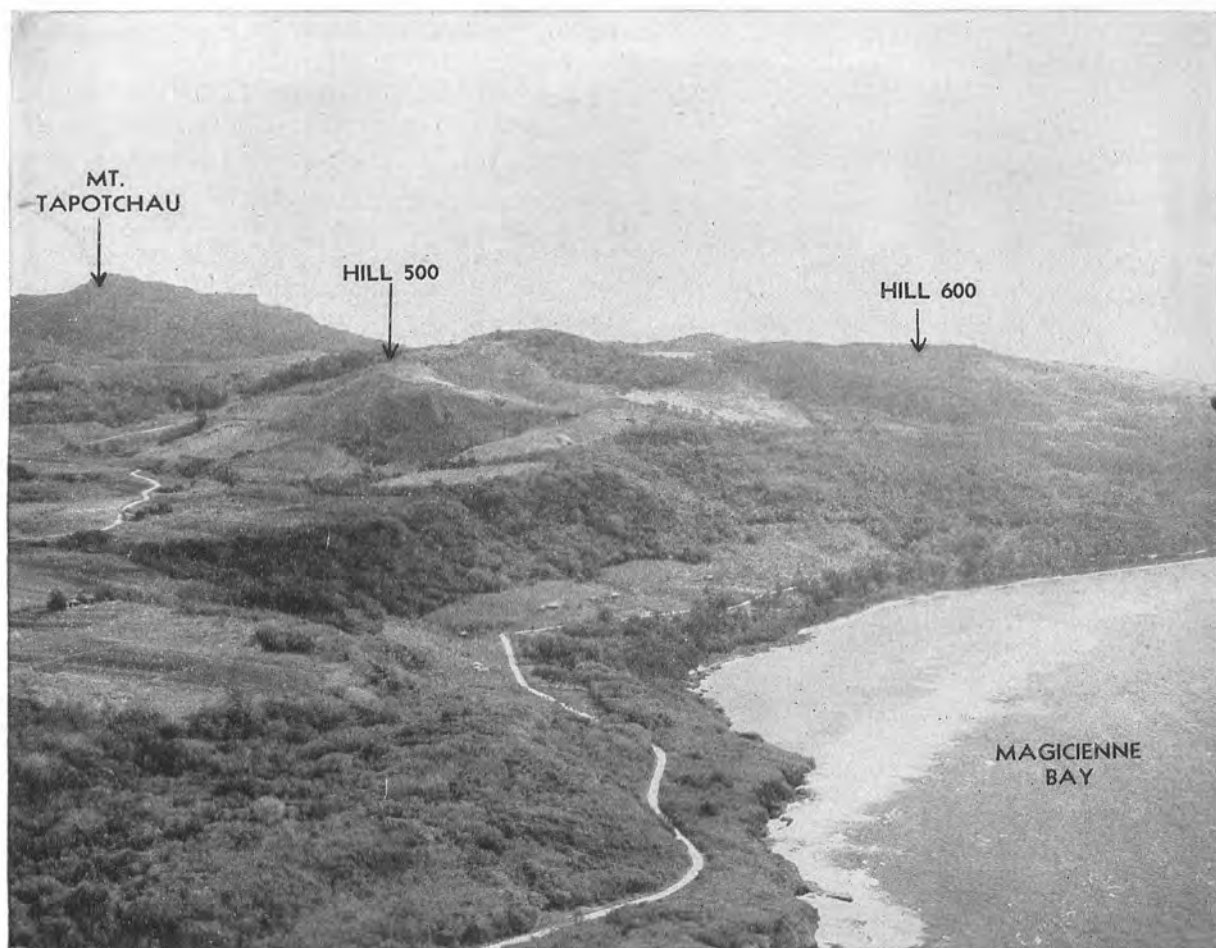
Securing the Cliff

Two days before, the 24th Marines, in order to maintain the momentum of its attack toward the east coast, had by-passed a cliff-like ridge line. Since it would be unwise to leave behind such a potential source of trouble, Mustain's 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, had been assigned to clear it. The assignment was not an easy one. On the 19th, Mustain's attack had struck the cliff from the west, directly into its face. This attack, involving a cross-compartment move, was unsuccessful, since Japanese riflemen, peering from the shelter of caves, could bring accurate fire to bear on anyone approaching them. Mustain's battalion made practically no gains on the 19th, and on the debit side of the ledger suffered 26 casualties.

With the coming of darkness, Mustain went to the division command post (the battalion was operating under division control at this time) to get approval of his plan for 20 June: to attack the cliff line from the south. The plan approved, and subsequently executed, called for the tanks of Company A, 4th Tank Battalion, to move from the south along the lowland at the west edge of the cliff, destroying any enemy positions located. This move was to be repeated three times, with the 1st Battalion's company commanders riding along on

¹²⁵ 3d Bn, 25th Mar Report, 6-7.

¹²⁶ 1st Bn, 24th Mar Report, 3. 2d Bn, 24 Mar Report, 4. Rothwell.



RUGGED COASTAL AREA, zone of the 24th Marines, frequently slowed the advance as much as did the enemy. Hill 500 was the scene of the 25th Marines' bitter 20 June action. On 23 June the Japanese contested hotly the 23d Marines' seizure of Hill 600.

the first trip to get a good view of the terrain. On the third trip, men of the 1st Battalion would move with the tanks and the cliff would be cleaned out and secured.

Generally, the scheme worked out as planned. The first two runs by the tanks, however, were unremunerative, inasmuch as the wily Japanese held their fire and did not reveal their positions. When the infantry moved out with the tanks, it was another story: plunging fire rained down upon the Marines as they made their way along the base of the cliff. But all in all, the attack from the south, which restricted Japanese observation, was infinitely more successful than another one from the west would have been. As with a person looking from a window of a tall building: it is easier to observe some-

one approaching from some distance off than someone moving along the sidewalk at the base of the building.

Slowly—but surely—the caves were cauterized with flame-throwers and sealed with demolitions. Some caves, because of their location on the sheer cliffside, were inaccessible to the infantrymen and became the destruction-responsibility of the tanks. Around noon the proceedings were delayed when a Japanese bomb-dump exploded in the midst of Company A. The explosion, caused either by the detonation of a Japanese mortar shell or by a creeping canefield fire set by tracer bullets, disorganized the company. Three of its four remaining officers became casualties, and the lone officer unscathed could count but 45 men left in Com-



NAFUTAN POINT as it appeared from Hill 500. At such distance, the terrain appears more gentle than it did to the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, who fought on the point until 3 July.

pany A.

While Company A struggled along at the base of the cliff, Company B worked from the top down, burning and blowing up caves higher on the cliff. Some Japanese, flushed by Company B's cleaning methods, were found to be armed with U. S. M-1 rifles and in possession of type "C" rations and American five-gallon water cans. How and where the Japanese had obtained these items was never revealed.

Following Company A's disastrous experience with the exploding bomb-dump, Company C took over the zone at the base of the cliff, came abreast of Company B, and the reduction of the troublesome cliff line continued. After reducing this by-passed defensive point in the division rear, the 1st Battalion was released from division control and returned to the 25th Marines. It then occupied an assembly area in regimental reserve.¹²⁷

Darkness of 20 June found both Marine divisions facing north. The wheeling movement had been completed. (See Map 13.)

Punches at the Point

The 27th Division, meanwhile, continued its attack to seize Nafutan Point. Because further attacks from the west might be extremely costly, the division selected a scheme of maneuver involving attack from the north and northwest. The 165th Infantry Regiment, from its sector along Magicienne Bay, would execute the main effort, using its 2d and 3d Battalions and the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry, attached for this maneuver. The 1st Battalion, 165th, was to remain on the shore of Magicienne Bay and maintain contact with the 4th Marine Division.

With the assistance of artillery, 4.2-inch mortars, tanks, self-propelled mounts,¹²⁸ naval gunfire and air support, the attack was launched. The terrain was rugged and the advance slow, but by nightfall a foothold on the high ground at the northwestern end of the point was seized and the entire line moved

¹²⁸ Designated M16, the self-propelled mount has a turret enclosing four .50-caliber machine guns mounted on a half-track chassis.

¹²⁷ 1st Bn, 25th Mar Report, 8-12.

about 1,000 yards. During the advance, units were subjected to artillery fire from across Magicienne Bay. Naval gunfire and air strikes knocked out these enemy guns later in the day.

The 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry, continued its movement along the south coast, clearing caves of Japanese soldiers and civilians as it went. This type of work was extremely time-consuming and progress was slow.

In regard to its cave-cleaning task the 105th Infantry reported:

The enemy action in this area consisted of individuals and small groups, not only of service personnel, but also of civilians, taking positions in the crevices, holes and caves along the seacoast and along the cliff dividing the coastal plain from the Aslito Plateau from which they would fire at our units as they advanced. There seemed to be no coordination of the enemy positions or their fires but they did evidence the utmost stubbornness in the defense of their individual positions. Because of the presence of an appreciable number of civilians, it was attempted to convince them, through the use of loudspeakers mounted on tanks, and interpreters, to come out from the caves and surrender. In a few cases this technique was successful, three hundred thirty five civilians—men, women and children—being rescued in this manner. In the majority of cases, however, because of the presence of enemy soldiers, the civilian element ignored our pleas and continued to fire at our soldiers.¹²⁹

Colonel Russell G. Ayres' 106th Infantry Regiment, which had remained afloat in Joint Expeditionary Troops Reserve, landed on 20 June on Yellow Beaches and assumed the status of NTLF reserve, 1st Battalion in rear of the 2d Marine Division and the remainder of the regiment behind the 4th Marine Division. With the arrival of this unit, the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, was released from NTLF reserve and moved to an area near Aslito Airfield in 27th Division reserve.¹³⁰

The decision to land the 106th Infantry was not made without a great deal of thought and consideration. This move had been first recommended on 16 June by the advance headquarters of the landing force. Admiral Turner, however, took no action on the request, holding it in abeyance because it would have a delaying

effect on the Guam operation, which at that time was scheduled for 18 June. The latter landing would require a reserve and it was hoped that this would be the 106th Infantry.

On the evening of 18 June, General Holland Smith formally recommended to Turner that the regiment be landed "in order to maintain the continuity of the offensive." The next morning (0810, 19 June) Turner requested that Smith give further consideration to the recommendation, since landing the 106th at Saipan would postpone the Guam attack. In the same message, Turner also requested advice as to whether the Guam landing force (Task Force 53) would any longer be required in the area as a floating reserve for Saipan.

Shortly after noon, Holland Smith sent another message to Turner stating that there was, indeed, urgent need for the 106th Infantry ashore and renewing his recommendation that it be landed. In regard to Task Force 53, Smith recommended that it return to Eniwetok, since Guam could not be attacked without sufficient reserves. He also expressed the opinion that, after the decisive terrain on Saipan had been captured, it might be possible to spare one regiment to act as the reserve for Guam.

This time Turner concurred, and the 106th started coming ashore the following day (20 June). He directed, however, that the regiment land as little material and equipment as possible in order that it could be reembarked on short notice. Task Force 53 was retained in the area for the time being, but on 25 June the ships carrying the 3d Marine Division were ordered to Eniwetok, followed on the 30th by those transporting the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade.¹³¹

Late in the evening of 20 June the first American plane landed on Aslito Airfield. Many were to follow, and the sanctity of the Japanese home islands would soon be violated.

This date also marked the first time the island of Tinian, some six miles to the south, would feel the impact of artillery fire originating on Saipan. One battery of 155mm guns of

¹²⁹ 105th Inf Report, 6.

¹³⁰ R. C. Smith, 5-6. 106th Infantry Report, 2, hereinafter cited as 106th Inf Report. 165th Inf Report, 4.

¹³¹ Enclosure (A) to Commander Amphibious Forces Top Secret Letter Serial 000156 of 4Sep44.



FIRST AMERICAN PLANE (Navy torpedo bomber) to land at Aslito Airfield brought a wounded gunner in for medical attention on 20 June.

the Corps Artillery (Battery B, 531st Field Artillery Battalion) emplaced its guns to bear on this new target. Lateral observation posts were established along Saipan's southern coast, and counterbattery and destructive fires were commenced. This single unit provided only a subtle introduction to the crescendo of fire which would later shatter the island.¹³²

Reports of the enemy's use of mines and booby traps were being received by the NTLF G-2 (Lieutenant Colonel Thomas R. Yancey, USA). Prior to the 25th Marines' capture of Hill 500, a Japanese effort to sow a controlled mine field on the slopes of that hill had been spotted and dispersed by artillery fire. This

plan thwarted, the enemy liberally sprinkled the area with booby traps, using pull-type friction igniters attached to four pounds of picric acid. Thirty of this type of booby trap were later found thereabouts. On White Beach, on the southern coast, antiboat or antitank mines were discovered, along with at least five horned mines. Numerous land mines and booby traps were found around Aslito Airfield, and one road in the southern part of the island was found to be sown with crude booby traps consisting of hand grenades with strings attached so that a disturbance of the string would pull the pin and detonate the grenade.¹³³

In regard to the Japanese antitank mine

¹³² *Corps Arty S-3 Report*, 7.

¹³³ *NTLF G-2 Report*, 17.

supply, Major General Iketa wrote on 19 June:

A quantity of usable explosive power material (usable against tanks) was not distributed because of lack of time and is now being manufactured. The effect of adhesive mines is great. Furthermore Molotov cocktails¹³⁴ (liquid flame bottles) are effective.¹³⁵

Night of 20–21 June

Principal activity during the night of 20–21 June took place on Hill 500, seized during the afternoon by the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines. From caves on all sides of the hill, small groups of Japanese armed with grenades and bayonets or knives lashed to the ends of bamboo poles (“idiot sticks”), crept out to cause as much trouble as possible. These Japanese, although uncoordinated in their efforts, succeeded to the extent that Marines on the hill spent a tense and anxious night. When morning came, 31 dead Japanese were found within the 3d Battalion’s lines.¹³⁶

Elsewhere along the fronts of all three divisions the night was quiet, with only minor enemy activity, an occasional round of Japanese artillery fire, or a star shell fired by our supporting naval vessels to disturb the silence. On a quiet night, uncertainty and tension could sometimes be as insomnia-provoking as a night full of sound and fury.

Like a broken phonograph record, individual Japanese repeated their expressions of determined patriotism with unfaltering vehemence. Tokuzo Matsuya, a member of the 9th Tank Regiment (rank unknown, presumably a junior officer), echoed the usual phrases:

20 June—The remaining tanks in our regiment now consist of six Type CHI and six Type 95, making a total of 12. . . . Even if there are no tanks, we will fight hand to hand. . . . I have resolved that, if I see the enemy, I will take out my sword and slash, slash, slash at him as long as I last, thus ending my life of twenty-four years.¹³⁷

In his summary of the evening of 20 June, General Iketa showed uncanny prescience in regard to the 2d Marines at Garapan’s outskirts: “The enemy is doing construction work

south of Garapan and at present *it does not look as if he will advance. . . .*” [author’s italics.]¹³⁸ The general’s estimate was correct. The 2d Marines did not undertake a sustained drive into Garapan until 2 July, 12 days later.

D-PLUS 6—21 JUNE

The Pause before the Northern Push

With the important pivoting movement to the north accomplished, General Holland Smith ordered that 21 June be spent in reorganization, resupply, mopping up and patrolling, and that the attack should continue the following day (22 June). Patrols from the 24th and 25th Marines moved as far as 1,000–1,500 yards to their front without discovering any sizeable enemy force. In the vicinity of Chacha Village on Kagman Peninsula, however, enemy activity was noted, causing patrol leaders to predict later difficulties.

On Hill 500, men of the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, continued their task of cleaning the caves and surrounding area. Two Japanese soldiers, taken prisoner, were questioned by an interpreter and identified as privates first class and gunners of the 25th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment. They had been stationed at Aslito Airfield, but after the D-Day air strike had fled to Hill 500. At the suggestion of the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Chambers, the Japanese agreed to go into the caves and try to persuade their comrades to surrender. Supervised by personnel from the battalion intelligence section and some riflemen from Company I, the endeavor resulted in the capture of two badly-wounded Japanese. Four others came out of the caves but were killed when they tried to resist.¹³⁹

For the first day since the landing, the 4th Marine Division had had an opportunity to catch its breath. General Schmidt displaced his command post from the beach area to the high ground along O-1. The division artillery regiment (14th Marines) busied itself firing on targets of opportunity and suspected Japanese

¹³⁴ Molotov cocktails, only distantly related to Martinis, are bottles of combustible liquid, which when thrown against a tank burst into flame.

¹³⁵ CINCPAC-CINCPHA Item #9983-85, 11.

¹³⁶ 3d Bn, 25th Mar Report, 7.

¹³⁷ CINCPAC-CINCPHA Item #10,238.

¹³⁸ CINCPAC-CINCPHA Item #9983-85, 13. The “construction work” here referred to was the preparation of defenses by the 2d Marines.

¹³⁹ 3d Bn, 25th Mar Report, 7-8.

positions. Though levels of artillery ammunition were never critically low, some shortages developed from time to time. Colonel Louis G. DeHaven, commanding the 14th Marines, later wrote:

... My worst head-ache during the operation was the shortage of artillery ammunition from about the fifth day until the final arrival of a much delayed replacement, and had it not been that the Army did not seem to need their reserves, which they left near the beach, our situation may have been different.¹⁴⁰

Patrolling to the 2d Division's front produced only one instance of positive information. A 25-man patrol from the 2d Marines discovered and thoroughly reconnoitered an enemy outpost on the rising ground which overlooks Garapan from the southeast. Since it was apparent that the Japanese position was too strongly-manned for the Marine patrol to attack, the latter returned without casualties.¹⁴¹

During the afternoon, the 8th Marines juggled its lines in preparation for the next day's attack. The 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, relieved the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, on the right flank, the latter reverting to regimental reserve, along with the 3d Battalion.

Patrolling of the rugged terrain forward of the 6th and 8th Marines failed to reveal any enemy positions, but no one could feel that this promised easy going in the future. A suspicion existed that perhaps the Japanese had recognized Marine patrols as such and had withheld fire in expectation of more profitable targets.¹⁴²

Searching the Swamp

Around Lake Susupe, in the swampy areas, a large number of Japanese were still in hiding. Some had been by-passed in the movement around the lake, others had infiltrated the front lines and had selected the swamp as their base of operations. The nuisance effect of these infiltrators was considerable; rear installations were harassed and the movement of supply and evacuation vehicles greatly complicated. A patrol from Headquarters and Service Battery, 4th Battalion, 10th Marines, entered the swamp on 19 June with a mission of annihi-

lating the Japanese concealed there. After several skirmishes in which about seven Japanese were killed and two machine guns captured, the patrol withdrew with the report that more substantial mopping-up forces would be required.

On 20 June, two platoons of the 2d Division Reconnaissance Company were ordered to undertake the task of eliminating the Japanese from Susupe swamp. Later, when it became apparent that the two platoons were insufficient for the job, 20 artillerymen from the 4th Battalion, 10th Marines, were ordered to form a secondary skirmish line and follow Reconnaissance Company personnel through the swamp. Again, the forces were inadequate; and, after killing seven Japanese and losing two of their own men, the units withdrew.

From the progress and reports it was apparent that a much larger force would be needed to complete the mop-up. Accordingly, NTLF attached the 1st Battalion, 106th Infantry (Lieutenant Colonel Winslow Cornett, USA), to the 2d Marine Division for the job of sweeping the area from the old radio station to the high ground east of Lake Susupe.

Throughout the day, the 10th Marines continued furnishing fires on enemy artillery, troops, tanks and dumps with excellent results. The 2d 155mm Howitzer Battalion, which had operated with the 4th Division since coming ashore on 17 June, reverted to 2d Division control at noon of the 21st and displaced to new positions northeast of Lake Susupe.¹⁴³

"... Hold Present Front Lines ..."

On Nafutan Point the 27th Division made small gains, proceeding slowly because of numerous enemy positions in caves.¹⁴⁴ One bat-

¹⁴³ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 8. *4th Bn, 10th Mar Report*, 3. *Floom*. An indication of the relative inactivity of the Marine divisions on 21 June is the fact that action reports of the six infantry regiments for this date averaged but four and a half sentences per report.

¹⁴⁴ Lieutenant Colonel John Lemp, USA, an Army observer, writing of the actions of 21 June, felt that a "certain amount of inertia" was manifested by the 105th Infantry. "In this particular instance the division might be censured for its lack of offensive spirit in moving forward particularly in view of the fact that

¹⁴⁰ Ltr from Col L. G. DeHaven to CMC, 9Jan50.

¹⁴¹ *2d Mar Report*, 4.

¹⁴² *8th Mar Report*, 4. *6th Mar Report*, 6.



WITH FIXED BAYONETS soldiers of the 105th Infantry move in a skirmish line over an open area unusual for Nafutan Point. Note bazookaman at extreme right. Picture taken on 21 June.

tery of 105mm howitzers (B, 104th Field Artillery Battalion) went into a position from which it could support the attack with direct fire onto these caves.

At 1215, while engaged in the Nafutan Point attack, the 27th Division received a change of mission and disposition. NTLF Operation Order 9-44 (a document that was to assume great importance later) directed the 27th Division, less one battalion and one light tank platoon, to assemble northwest of Aslito Airfield in NTLF reserve. Control of the division artillery would pass to the XXIV Corps Artillery. The designated infantry battalion was ordered in paragraph 3. e. to "operate in the Garrison Area." It would "mop up remaining enemy detachments, maintain antisniper patrols within the Garrison Area and along the coast line to protect installations within its zone of action with particular attention to Aslito Airfield."¹⁴⁵

this was a continuation of the attack started by the 165th on the preceding day." *Lemp*, 14.

¹⁴⁵ Since the "designated infantry battalion" had been assigned a specific mission in a separate, lettered subparagraph of paragraph 3 (the subordinate units paragraph), the NTLF Staff considered it clear that

At 1700, after consideration of the NTLF order, Ralph Smith telephoned Holland Smith and urged that a complete regiment be used to clean up Nafutan Point, rather than one battalion. He said that he planned to use the 105th Infantry for the job and that he believed they could finish in a couple of days. Holland Smith agreed to this but specified that one battalion of the 105th must be retained in reserve for possible use elsewhere. This modification was later confirmed in a mailbrief from NTLF which arrived at the 27th Division command post at 0830, 22 June. It read as follows:

Instructions contained in Opn O #9-44 are modified as follows: (a) 1 RCT will continue mission in Garrison Area of cleaning up remaining resistance and patrolling area. (b) 106-1 will be in Corps Res in assembly area in zone of 2d Mar Div. (c) 27th Div (less 1 RCT and 1 Bn) await orders in NTLF Res in area assigned.¹⁴⁶

At 2000, 21 June, following his telephonic conversation with Holland Smith but before

the unit would execute its mop-up task as an immediate subordinate of NTLF. Unfortunately, as will be seen, this same interpretation was not made by the 27th Division Staff.

¹⁴⁶ 27th Infantry Division G-3 Journal, 22Jun44.

receiving the mailbrief, Ralph Smith issued an order to his division, paragraph 3. a. of which follows:

RCT 105 (Reinf) will hold present front line facing Nafutan Point, with two battalions on the line and one battalion in regimental reserve. It will relieve elements of RCT 165 now on the front line by [0630 22 June]. The battalion in reserve will not be committed to action without authority of the division commander. Reorganization of the present front line to be effected not later than [1100, 22 June] and offensive operations against the enemy continued. Reserve battalion will maintain anti-sniper patrols in the vicinity of Aslito Airfield.¹⁴⁷

This single paragraph was to have gigantic repercussions. General Holland Smith considered it clear that the 105th Infantry had been removed from 27th Division control and that orders to it should come from NTLF only. In this connection Holland Smith has written:

... NT&LF Operation Order No. 9-44 placed the 27th Infantry Division in a reserve status, and removed the 105th Infantry from tactical control of the 27th Infantry Division for independent operations directly under control of NT&LF. NT&LF order directed the 105th Infantry to conduct offensive operations to mop up enemy units in the NAFUTAN POINT area. The 27th Infantry Division Field Order No. 45 contravened the NT&LF Operation Order No. 9-44 by ordering the 105th Infantry to hold its present positions, although the 105th Infantry had been removed from the tactical control of the Division Commander.¹⁴⁸

From this it may be seen that Holland Smith was disturbed by two considerations: he believed, first, that the 27th Division should not have issued an order to the 105th Infantry, and, second, having issued it, that the instructions to "hold present positions" countermanded the NTLF order. This counter-order was to be one of the main reasons later advanced by Holland Smith in support of his action in relieving Ralph Smith of command of the 27th Division.

Ralph Smith's stated view on this matter was that, during the telephone conversation between himself and the Corps Commander, "nothing was mentioned . . . about having the regiment operate under NTLF control. His written message confirming this change did not arrive at the CP 27th Division until 0830, 22

June, much too late to have permitted any instructions for the day's operations."¹⁴⁹

From Holland Smith's point of view, however, Ralph Smith overlooked the fact that Operation Order 9-44 had established the status of a "designated infantry battalion" (by giving it a mission in paragraph 3) and that merely changing the size of the unit to a regiment did not remove it from control.

Night of 21-22 June

Enemy activity on the night of 21-22 June took on varied forms. Just after dark, the Japanese succeeded in blowing up a 2d Division ammunition dump on Beach Green 1. Whether this was accomplished by an infiltrator armed with a demolition pack or by a rifleman with an incendiary bullet or by some other more devious means, no one will ever be sure.

The evidence seems to indicate that an incendiary bullet was responsible. Persons in the vicinity of the dump heard a 2d Battalion, 10th Marines, sentry shout a challenge, then a single shot, then the first of two explosions. Immediately, personnel of the artillery battalion's supply section moved close to the fire and attempted to extinguish it. The plan at this time was to isolate the fire where it was then burning (small arms ammunition) and prevent its spread to other sections containing mortar and artillery shells.

At this point, as the Marines fought the dangerous blaze, a second explosion occurred. Results were devastating. The officer-in-command of the fire-fighting detail, Captain Carl A. Nielsen, later wrote: "To the best of my knowledge, this explosion killed, or was the cause of the death of, my entire detail, with the exception of myself and one other. . . ."

The fireworks continued throughout the night, many more men being hit by fragments from mortar and artillery shells which caught fire in the second explosion. Fortunately, the 2d Division had not had all of its eggs in one basket; a large percentage of ammunition had already been parceled out to subordinate units,

¹⁴⁷ R. C. Smith, 8. 27th Division Field Order No. 45A.

¹⁴⁸ Ltr from CTF 56 to CTF 51, 24Jun44.

¹⁴⁹ R. C. Smith, 7.

so that, while the losses were serious, the ammunition supply situation could not be described as critical.¹⁵⁰

To prevent any further Japanese infiltration of beach areas, construction units of the 18th Marines established a defense line between Lake Susupe and the 2d Division supply dump area.¹⁵¹

Elsewhere in the 2d Marine Division, the night was quiet. Patrols from the 8th Marines made no contacts; 6th Marines' patrols encountered a five-man Japanese patrol; the 2d Marines located an eight-man outpost and a two-man patrol. One small infiltration attempt in the 2d Marines' sector was repulsed without difficulty.¹⁵²

In the anchorage off Saipan the night was disturbed by 12 Japanese bombers at about 0112. Bombs dropped by these planes failed to achieve a single hit, although the transport *Olay* was straddled by explosions. Only passive defense was taken against this particular attack, with ships finding refuge under a smoke screen. As part of the same attack, a few bombs were dropped on Saipan itself. No damage was caused, however, all bombs falling harmlessly west of the 4th Marine Division command post.¹⁵³

On Hill 500 the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, had occasional flurries of excitement, though nothing to compare with the previous night. Individual Japanese again emerged from caves bent on the destruction of as many Marines as possible. None of these efforts were successful, and in the process four Japanese were killed.¹⁵⁴

The summary of the 31st Army chief of staff for 21 June admits that at least two important tactical localities had fallen to U. S. forces:

The enemy is constructing positions in the area south of Garapan to vicinity of Hill 230 and is cognizant of

the barbed wire on Hill 230.¹⁵⁵

The enemy, occupying Hill 163,¹⁵⁶ . . . is gradually approaching the southern foot of Tapotchau.

Only fleeting mention was made of U. S. supporting arms:

One destroyer is in Laulau Bay [Magicienne Bay] and is shelling Nafutan Mountain and the north of Kagman Point. . . . Attacking planes are relatively scattered today. . . .

On 21 June, the first flurries of an eventual blizzard of Japanese messages pertaining to reinforcement from other islands of the Marianas fell. To the commanding general at Yap, the Saipan chief of staff sent the following:

I would like reports concerning the following items on Rota and Guam:

1. Large motor launches. Collapsible boats.
2. Situation regarding enemy sea and air patrols.
3. Exact count of small boat activity at Guam, Rota, Tinian and Saipan.

To the commanding officer at Tinian went the dispatch: "I wish to be informed of number of large motor craft in your area." A great deal more would later be heard on this subject.¹⁵⁷

Summary of Medical Activities to Date

The medical battalions of the divisions had begun their outstanding work several days previous and were in full operation by the night of D-plus 6.

Company A of the 4th Medical Battalion had arrived ashore on 16 June (D-plus 1), and by the next afternoon the entire battalion, except Company D, was ashore. The latter unit joined the others on D-plus 5. All companies brought in equipment to set up field hospitals.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ This reference is to Hill 790, occupied without opposition by the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, on 19 June. Heights of hills from Japanese sources are in meters, whereas U. S. forces figured them in feet. Thus, Hill 230 in the Japanese report is Hill 790 in U. S. reports. This apparent variation (230 meters equals 754 feet) is explained by the fact that the Japanese determined heights on the ground, while the U. S. had to rely upon estimates from aerial photographs. In most instances these estimates were remarkably close.

¹⁵⁶ Here the reference is to Hill 500, seized after a vigorous assault on 20 June by the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines.

¹⁵⁷ CINCPAC-CINCPMA Item #9983-85, 14.

¹⁵⁸ 4th Marine Division Medical Report, 2.

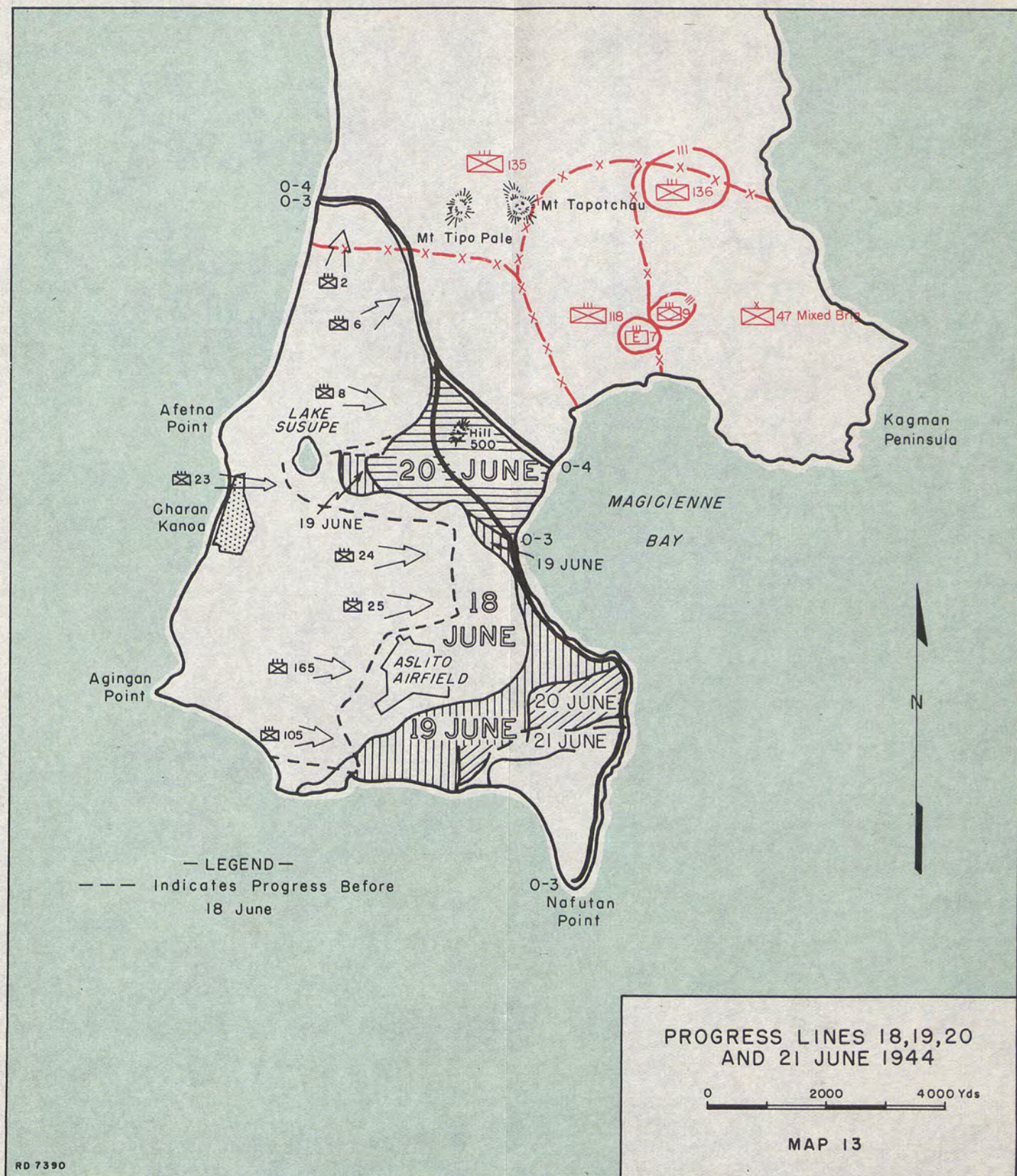
¹⁵⁰ Ltr from Maj C. A. Nielsen to CMC, 13Jan50.

¹⁵¹ Ltr from LtCol A. L. Vogt to CMC, 13Jan50.

¹⁵² 2d Mar Div Report, 8.

¹⁵³ TF 51 Report, Annex 1 to Encl A. 4th Mar Div Report, 22.

¹⁵⁴ 4th Mar Div Report, 22. 3d Bn, 25th Mar Report, 8.



Company E of the 2d Medical Battalion landed in the late afternoon of D-plus 1 and together with Company C, which came ashore the following morning, was fully equipped to do definitive surgery by 1800 on D-plus 2. Initially, this was the only medical establishment on the island so equipped, and a number of operations were performed. These two companies established themselves in a captured Japanese hospital in Charan Kanoa. The remainder of the 2d Medical Battalion, on board the ships withdrawn from the anchorage, did not arrive back on the scene until the evening of 21 June, coming ashore early the next morning. Company C remained in the location for some time, but Company E was moved on D-plus 4 to the north end of the Charan Kanoa airstrip to act as a casualty clearing station.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Second Marine Division Medical Report, 7.

The Army's 102d Medical Battalion had portions of the unit ashore on D-plus 2 and the following day established a medical section headquarters at Yellow Beach. Company D (Clearing Company) set up a station on 20 June in a small village about 1,000 yards southeast of Charan Kanoa.¹⁶⁰

At all medical installations the rule was the same: care for the individual regardless of where he came from or to what unit he belonged. Red tape in the handling of casualties was non-existent; the tape was all white.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Report of 27th Division Medical Inspector, Saipan Operation, 1-2.

¹⁶¹ Division Surgeons of the 2d, 4th and 27th Divisions, respectively, were: Commander E. R. Hering, (MC) USN; Commander W. C. Baty, Jr., (MC), USN; Lieutenant Colonel Abraham Norman, (MC), USA.



SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

CHAPTER IV

Drive To The North

D-PLUS 7—22 JUNE

Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith's operation order for 22 June directed the continuation of the attack to the north, with O-5 as the day's objective. (See Map 14.) Objective line O-5 included the village of Laulau (southwestern base of Kagman Peninsula) on the right, Mt. Tapotchau in the center, and extended over to the western coast about 1,000 yards south of Garapan—an optimistic bite to be sure. Possession of this line would guarantee observation over the bulk of the island. But it would also bring up the problem of covering a wider frontage, for Kagman Peninsula, jutting from the east coast for a distance of 4,000-odd yards, expands the island at that point to its maximum breadth.

In addition to the greater yardage to be covered, the northward drive presented terrain difficulties; Mt. Tapotchau's aquiline peaks and Kagman Peninsula's craggy expanses defied normal attack patterns. Frontages would have to be reduced and, to effect this, more troops committed to the attack. With this in mind, General Holland Smith ordered the 27th Infantry Division (in NTLF reserve) to reconnoiter routes to the zones of the two Marine Divisions for possible commitment. The 105th Infantry would remain on its assigned mission—directly under NTLF control—of clearing Nafutan Point of Japanese.

The attack hour was set for 0600, following

a 10 minute preparation fired by the two Marine artillery regiments (10th and 14th), plus reinforcing fires from the 27th Division Artillery and the XXIV Corps Artillery: a total of 18 battalions.¹

Intermediate Objective O-4A

General Schmidt determined that an intermediate objective would be desirable for his 4th Marine Division. Objective O-5 was 4,000 yards away across difficult terrain—a long, hard drive without pausing for reorganization. Accordingly, objective O-4A, approximately 2,000 yards to the front (see Map 14), was designated. From this point, the attack to O-5 would be launched. Formation for the attack was: 24th Marines on the right (along the coast of Magicienne Bay), 25th Marines on the left, and 23d Marines in reserve.²

Following the preparatory fires, Colonel Franklin A. Hart's 24th Marines moved out at the specified hour (0600). Attacking along the coast of Magicienne Bay with the 1st and 3d Battalions abreast, 2d in reserve, the regiment made steady progress. But soon the broken terrain presented special problems. Local detours, necessitated by small cavities or declivities which dipped to the jagged rocks of the coast line, slowed the regiment's movements

¹ NTLF Operation Order 9-44. NTLF G-3 Periodic Report No. 8.

² 4th Mar Div Report, 22-23.

and greatly complicated the task of maintaining contact. At one moment adjacent units would be firmly tied in. At the next, one flanking unit would disappear from view and a gap would be created. In spite of these digressions, however, the 24th Marines reached O-4A at 1330.³

The 25th Marines' zone of action was sufficiently narrow, initially, to allow for an attack in a column of battalions, with Chambers' 3d Battalion leading, followed to the left and right rear, respectively, by the 1st and 2d Battalions. Four easily recognizable ridges to the 25th Marines' front were prescribed as intermediate objectives and labeled O-A, O-B, O-C and O-D. These were invaluable throughout the day's action as reference points, plus affording points for checking control and coordination.

Jumping off in the attack at 0600, the battalion forged ahead to O-A by 0630. While it paused for a quick reorganization, a force of Japanese attacked, particularly on the battalion left in the zone of Company K. During the course of the close-in fight, 90 Japanese were killed and a Japanese tank destroyed. Company K lost three company commanders, the first killed, two successors wounded. When the skirmish subsided, a new company commander was sent from battalion, reorganization was effected, and the attack resumed.

Jumping off from O-A at 0740, the battalion met only light scattered resistance in its move to O-B. As a gap had begun to develop between the 3d Battalion's right and the 24th Marines' left, the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, was committed between the two. In the face of tightening opposition, provided principally by Japanese machine guns and rifles, the regiment reached O-C by 1400.

As the 3d Battalion moved for O-D (coincident with division objective O-4A), an intra-battalion contact problem developed. Company K, on the left, was tied in with the adjacent battalion of the 2d Marine Division (1st Battalion, 29th Marines), while Company I clung to elements of the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, on the right. The strain on the center was too

great. The reserve Company (L), therefore, moved into the middle of the 3d Battalion zone to strengthen the line. Thus left without a reserve company, Lieutenant Colonel Chambers requested that an additional company be attached to his unit. In compliance, Company B was moved up at about 1515 and at 1600 was ordered into the line on the right flank.

Just south of O-4A the 25th Marines encountered severe Japanese machine-gun fire, emanating from a thick wood just south of the objective and from caves in the slopes of the ridge itself. Company L, in the center of the 3d Battalion zone, found itself caught in a deluge of fire converging from two directions. Forward movement was temporarily impossible, and the company withdrew.⁴

At 1515 a Japanese ammunition dump exploded near the 3d Battalion's observation post and claimed, among others, Lieutenant Colonel Chambers as a concussion casualty. The executive officer, Major James Taul, then took over the unit and, following a reorganization, ordered a resumption of the attack on O-4A. Again, however, well-located enemy positions in the slopes of the hill stopped the attack as soon as it began. Lengthening shadows of late afternoon indicated the advisability of digging in for the night. Although the day's objective had not been reached, approximately 2,000 yards had been gained in the 25th Marines' zone.⁵

Shortly before noon contact between the 24th and 25th Marines had become increasingly tenuous, and General Schmidt ordered the division reserve (23d Marines) to move into the front between the two assault regiments. After marching about 2,500 yards to get into posi-

⁴ During the withdrawal an unusual incident occurred: dragging its wounded, Company L pulled back, only to discover that a wounded radio operator had been left behind. This casualty, lying in a flat, open, fire-swept area which defied rescue by stretcher bearers, was in a pitiable plight. But, at this juncture, Lieutenant Robert E. Stevenson, from Company A, 4th Tank Battalion, ran a medium tank into the area, straddled the wounded radio operator, and pulled him safely into the tank through the escape hatch in the tank's deck.

⁵ *25th Mar Report*, 6. *3d Bn, 25th Mar Report* 8-9. The 4th Division planning officer, Lieutenant Colonel Evans F. Carlson, was wounded while observing action of the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, during the day.

³ *24th Mar Report*, 20.

tion, the regiment attacked at 1500 in column of battalions on an 800-yard frontage: Lieutenant Colonel Haas' 1st Battalion leading, followed at 800-yards by the 2d Battalion.

The 3d Battalion, 23d Marines, designated division reserve, was required to move to three different assembly areas during the course of the day. At each area, the unit prepared itself for the night, digging foxholes, planning all-around defense and clearing fields of fire. And each time, just as the men finished their positions and started to relax, an order arrived to move to a new area. Although this was normal for reserve units, it invariably brought forth grumbles. To personnel unfamiliar with the over-all situation (the "big picture"), the frequent moves appeared useless and annoying.

Fighting especially troublesome terrain, the 23d Marines made slow progress. Only light enemy resistance from riflemen and machine gunners was encountered, but contact difficulties and time lost trudging up, down, around and through the rugged ground formations, limited the speed of advance. Progress ceased at a point about 200 yards south of objective O-4A, where the unit dug in.⁶

But stopping for the night brought no end to the 4th Marine Division's problems of contact and coordination. In the 24th Marines' sector it was necessary to move the reserve 2d Battalion into a separation between the other two battalions. Even with the advent of this unit, however, a gap existed throughout the night. Fortunately, the Japanese did not exploit the weak point.

In a move designed to facilitate internal contact, the left company of the division (K, 25th Marines) shifted to its right rear to tighten front lines. This shift broke physical contact with the right of the 2d Marine Division (1st Battalion, 29th Marines). Into this hiatus, Company C, 25th Marines, was moved, and by dark the two divisions were firmly tied in again. Company A, 25th Marines, occupied a position in rear of Company C to strengthen the junction further. In the words of the 4th Division action report: "Contact [was] well established and defenses coordinated for the

night."⁷ (See Map 14 for progress lines.)

To Tipo Pale's Summit

Meanwhile, General Watson's 2d Marine Division also made important gains. Attacking in conjunction with the 4th Division, its main effort was made on the right, in the 8th Marines' zone. All three infantry regiments were in the lines, from left to right: 2d, 6th and 8th. Owing to the 2d Marines' advanced position along the beach, however, it was not possible for that regiment to move farther to the north without stretching the division's lines to the breaking point.

Looking to the north of the 6th and 8th Marines' lines, a nightmare of sheer cliffs and precipitous hills could be observed, separated in criss-cross fashion by deep gashes. Excellent defensive positions were afforded the Japanese by these ground formations, but more important, since the Japanese did not fully exploit the defensive potential of this area, was the challenge to contact and coordination. Dense foliage which cloaked the region often limited visibility to a few feet.

The 8th Marines attacked with two battalions abreast: 1st Battalion on the left and the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, on the right. Initially the movement was reasonably rapid; but, as the advance reached rougher terrain on the lower approaches to Mt. Tapotchau, both battalions were forced to commit reserve companies to maintain contact. About noon it was necessary to move the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, into the center, between the two assault battalions. Persistent Japanese mortar fire, showing no favoritism, hopped from unit to unit, constantly keeping pace with the advance.

By 1300 the 8th Marines reached a ridge on Mt. Topatchau's mid-slopes, about 1,200 yards from the peak. (This yardage was measured in map-distance—as the crow flies—not as the Marines would be forced to move.) At this point enfilading machine-gun fire from a hill on the right flank (in the 4th Marine Division zone of action) stopped the forward movement. Late in the afternoon a company of the 4th

⁶ 23d Mar Report, 40. 3d Bn, 23 Mar Report, 3.

⁷ 4th Mar Div Report, 23. 3d Bn, 25th Mar Report, 9. 3d Bn, 24th Mar Report, 4.



SUPPLY in the rugged inland portions of the island was often accomplished by man-handling. Here Marines of the 8th Regiment commence the long carry from truck-head to front lines around Mt. Tapotchau.

Division (K, 25th Marines) captured the hill, and Company B, 29th Marines, made contact with it there.

Because of the previously-described tightening of the 25th Marines' lines, however, Company K pulled to its right rear, leaving Company B, 29th Marines, alone on the hill. Getting supplies to the latter was very difficult, involving hand-carry over a perilous route. In addition, the company received almost constant small-arms fire, principally from the open flank. After about two hours Lieutenant Colonel Tompkins, commanding the battalion, ordered Company B to withdraw and secure contact with the 4th Division flank. This was done when Company C, 25th Marines, moved into the lines in the manner previously related.

As the 8th Marines dug in for the night, three of its four battalions, with a total of eight companies forward, were committed to the line. The 2d Battalion remained in regi-

mental reserve near the division right flank.

The 8th Marines' operations around the Tapotchau massif presented a logistical challenge of no mean proportions. As well as observers and patrols could determine, no road or trail for supply and evacuation existed within the regiment's zone of action. Reconnaissance by the regimental-4 Section, however, located a break in the cliff which, after expansion by a bulldozer, served as a main (though makeshift) supply route for several days. Since ground reconnaissance revealed nothing in the way of a better road leading into the Mt. Tapotchau area, Colonel Wallace, commanding the 8th Marines, requested that an observation plane be made available so that his executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Jack P. Juhan, could be flown over the area in question, attempting to locate a suitable supply route as well as to get a closer look at the terrain. The flight was scheduled for the next day

(23 June).⁸

The 6th Marines' advance was governed by the necessity of maintaining contact with—and thus regulating its speed on—the 8th Marines. Lieutenant Colonel Nutting's 2d Battalion, 2d Marines (still attached to the 6th Marines), was in position on the right of the regimental line, in contact with the 8th Marines. By 0700, advances by the latter unit permitted Nutting's battalion to move forward, but after a short time it became apparent that further advances would overextend the 6th Marines' lines. Colonel Riseley, therefore, ordered the movement held up until the 8th Regiment came abreast. By 1230 this had been accomplished, and the 6th Marines moved forward again. During the morning several isolated, by-passed pockets of resistance within the regiment's zone were mopped up by the Scout-Sniper Platoon.

The day's first resistance developed as the 6th Marines' advance moved upward on Mt. Tipo Pale's eastern slopes. Tipo Pale, a wooded eminence of about 1,100 feet, overlooked the island's western beaches. From its topmost pinnacle, the mountain slopes gradually to the west and south, but to the north and east it dips precipitously to heavily-wooded ravines. There had been some cause for optimism on the previous day when patrols had climbed to the crest without encountering any Japanese. But now, when the coordinated attack moved into the area, the hill suddenly came alive and bristled with defenses. Whether the hill had been deserted of Japanese when U. S. patrols moved thereon or whether the enemy had lain doggo awaiting more choice targets is not indicated in documents consulted.

Company K, 6th Marines, moving along the road with plans to climb Tipo Pale's south-eastern slopes, ran unexpectedly into trouble when that route entered a small finger ravine—infested with enemy riflemen and machine-guns—on the hill's lower approaches. Veering to the left, Company K found the going much easier and swept unopposed to the top.

The Regimental Scout-Sniper Platoon, continuing its mopping-up tasks, endeavored to clear the cantankerous trouble-spot developed by Company K. It found more than it could handle. A series of narrow ravines hemmed by steep bluffs housed a number of automatic weapons, making movement into this area suicidal. Under the fusillade directed at them, the Scout-Snipers withdrew.

The remainder of the 3d Battalion (including Company F of the 2d Marines and Company F of the 6th Marines) moved to the summit of Tipo Pale, using the route blazed by Company K, and by 1400 had commenced consolidation and readjustment of the lines. From the newly-won positions atop the hill, the Marines could observe a company of the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, as it attempted to clear the same trouble-point that had denied movement to Company K and the Scout Snipers. As before, the enemy positions were well protected and so located as to afford covering fire one to another. After destroying several Japanese emplacements and making slight progress, the company was forced to retire under a hail of cross-fire. Enemy in this area remained active for another two days, finally pulling out before being surrounded.

Meanwhile, the 3d Battalion's lines on Tipo Pale had been consolidated, proper frontage assumed, and the advances to the north continued. At first, progress was moderately fast, but when Marines attempted to move down from Tipo Pale they discovered an almost vertical drop. Using the one trail which existed within the zone, Company K attempted the descent but, thus canalized, was stopped by automatic weapons and rifle fire from its front. A few further probes into this area revealed that the Marines were facing an unusually well-defended strongpoint. By 1800, when the order to dig in was issued, little progress on the reduction of this trouble-spot had been made. To establish contact with the 8th Marines, it was necessary to bend the 6th Marines' lines back along the eastern slopes of Tipo Pale. This expansion demanded commitment of all three companies of the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, facing it more nearly to the east than to

⁸ 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 9. 8th Mar Report, 4. 1st Bn, 29th Mar Report, 4-5. Ltr from Col J. P. Juhan to CMC, 12Jan50.

the north. There the unit prepared defenses.⁹

The 2d Marines, as mentioned before, already had occupied O-5 for several days. Since the whole maneuver pivoted on this regiment, no movement forward other than patrolling could be initiated. In preparation for the unit's eventual advance into Garapan, the systematic levelling of the town by artillery, air and naval gunfire continued. As a defensive measure, the 2d Marines laid a mine field along the beach road leading into the left flank. This precaution was taken in respect for the enemy capability of launching a full-scale counterattack along the coastal road. The value of this obstacle was never tested by a Japanese thrust, however.¹⁰

The 1st Battalion, 106th Infantry (attached to the 2d Marine Division), swept the Susupe swamp area from north to south. Beginning at 0830 and finishing at 1345, the battalion moved through the marsh, killing 15 Japanese and taking two wounded prisoners. Losses to the battalion itself amounted to two killed and four wounded. After completing its task, this unit was released from 2d Division control and reverted to NTLF reserve.¹¹ Though the sweep was well conducted, it neither cleaned out all of the swamp-dwellers nor prevented other Japanese from moving to the swamp following successful infiltration of the front lines. More was to be heard from the enemy in Susupe swamp.

Commitment in the Center

Major General Ralph Smith's 27th Division accomplished the shifts of position ordered by NTLF, the 165th Infantry pulling off Nafutan Point and moving into the division assembly area northwest of Aslito Airfield. Colonel Bishop commenced adjusting the lines of his 105th Infantry preparatory to seizing the point. In the afternoon of the 22d, however, General Holland Smith returned to his origi-

nal plan of leaving one battalion and one light tank platoon for cleaning out the Nafutan area. The unit designated for this mission was the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, and the mop-up was to begin at dawn on 23 June.¹²

The remainder of the 27th Division would pass "through elements of the 4th Marine Division within its zone of action," and:

attack at *King* hour [1000, 23 June], making its main effort initially on its right. Seize Objective O-5 and, on Division order, advance and seize Objective O-6. It will assist the 2d Mar Div by rapid advance and by fire and maneuver, on call, in the vicinity of the boundary between these divisions. RCT 106 reverts to control of the 27th Inf Div at 0600, 23 June.

The prescribed zone of action of the 27th Division would place it in the center, between the two Marine divisions, in the process reducing the 4th Marine Division's frontage by passing through the left regiment (25th Marines).¹³

The 27th Division's attack plan placed the 165th Infantry on the right of the division front and the 106th Infantry on the left. In reserve would be the 105th Infantry (less its 2d Battalion, operating under Northern Troops and Landing Force control in the Nafutan Point area). That General Ralph Smith misunderstood the status of the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, is indicated by the inclusion of a mission for it in paragraph 3, d. of his field order for the day. Holland Smith considered that, inasmuch as the battalion had been placed under NTLF control at this time, there was neither cause nor justification for the 27th Division to assign it a mission.

In this connection, however, it is important to point out that the mission thus assigned was not at variance with the order from NTLF. Both instructed the 2d Battalion to "continue

⁹ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 9-10. *6th Mar Report*, 7. Fisher. M. P. Ryan.

¹⁰ *2d Mar Div Report*, 10. *2d Mar Report*, 4.

¹¹ *2d Mar Div Report*, 10. *106th Inf Report*, 4. At 0600, 23 June, the 106th Infantry, which had operated under NTLF control since coming ashore on 20 June, returned to the 27th Division.

¹² General Ralph Smith was disappointed by this change of decision, as he felt that one battalion was insufficient for the job. On 23 June he wrote Holland Smith on the subject, recommending that personnel in the vicinity of Aslito Airfield be warned of the possibility of Japanese on Nafutan Point infiltrating the lines of the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, and attacking the field. Ralph Smith asked that Seabees and air force personnel take steps to provide security against any such occurrence. *The 27th Infantry Division In World War II*, 194.

¹³ NTLF Operation Order 10-44.

operations to mop up remaining enemy detachments in Nafutan Point area." As to the time the "operations" were to begin, the NTLF order specified "at daylight," while the 27th Division order failed to mention the time.¹⁴ This may have been an inadvertent omission rather than an intentional change. The fact that gave the NTLF staff and, particularly, General Holland Smith the greatest concern was that a subordinate unit was receiving orders from two sources. And, where those orders varied in even the slightest detail, there was a possibility of confusion.

To forestall any further misunderstanding on the exact status of the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, the Corps Commander sent a message to the 27th Division Commander at 1411, 23 June: "2d Battalion, 105th by my op order 10-44 not under your tactical control and should not be included in your tactical orders. Please take steps to rectify."¹⁵

Owing to the lateness of the afternoon and unfamiliar nature of the road network, General Ralph Smith decided to undertake the movement to the line of departure at dawn of 23 June rather than during darkness. In the meanwhile, he ordered the commanding officers of the 165th and 106th Infantry Regiments to reconnoiter their zones and positions. The 106th, which had been in an assembly area a day longer, made a complete reconnaissance, but the 165th, freshly withdrawn from Nafutan Point, was frustrated by the coming of darkness.¹⁶

Night of 22-23 June

Along the entire front, the sentence from the 8th Marines' report applied: "The night was unusually quiet." By D-plus 7, a night disturbed by only a few rounds of Japanese mortar fire or an infrequent blast from an enemy rifleman, could indeed be classified as "unusually quiet." And yet, on closer inspection, men got killed and wounded that night. And for them, there was never a noisier night.

¹⁴ 27th Inf Div F. O. #46. NTLF Operation Order #10-44.

¹⁵ NTLF G-3 Journal, 23 June 44.

¹⁶ Lemp, 14-15. 106 Inf Report, 4.

Four pugnacious Japanese leaped into the foxhole of Sergeant Major Gilbert L. Morton, acting platoon leader in Company K, 25th Marines. Rather than endanger friendly troops by firing, Morton used his carbine as a bludgeon. Marines from nearby foxholes joined the spirited brawl and killed all of the intruders in a matter of minutes. During the fracas, one of the enemy struck the sergeant major over the head with a rifle butt, but the blow was not fatal.¹⁷

Japanese artillery became suddenly active during the night. Commencing shortly after midnight, enemy pieces (estimated as 75mm, 5- and 6-inch) in the vicinity of Mt. Tapotchau, opened up on the assembly area of the 106th Infantry and firing positions of the 14th Marines. The latter retaliated with fires on areas suspected of concealing the enemy guns, but the regiments' flash teams failed to spot the enemy firing positions.¹⁸

Just before midnight Japanese artillery firing from Tinian shelled Green Beach. This fire ceased when Battery B, 531st Field Artillery Battalion, opened with a vehement rebuttal. (This battery was the only one laid for firing at Tinian at the time.) Although damage to beach installations was negligible, LST 119, which was beached and unloading supplies, was holed at the waterline. One compartment of the LST was flooded by the shell hole, and steering gear and electrical wiring were damaged.

Just after the shelling from Tinian had subsided, Japanese aircraft appeared over Saipan anchorage. Three raids by three to five planes each developed within the next two and one-half hours. The only loss was sleep; inaccuracy of Japanese bombing, as well as of ships' anti-aircraft gunfire, made it a bloodless performance.¹⁹

Japanese Situation

On the morning of 22 June, Major General Iketa, chief of staff of the Japanese 31st Army, sent a situation report to headquarters of the 29th Division located on Yap:

¹⁷ 3d Bn, 25th Mar Report, 9.

¹⁸ 14th Mar Report, 7. 106th Inf Report, 4.

¹⁹ TF 51 Report, Annex 1 to Encl A.

1. About two companies of enemy have advanced into valley west of Hill 285²⁰ south of foot of Mt. Tapotchau. In the Laulau Bay area about four or five enemy tanks have appeared in front of our positions. In the enemy positions south of Garapan there are three lines of barbed wire. Naval gunfire is as insistent as before.

2. We have finally completed consolidation of all units. A part of the *Homare* [43d Division] staged a night attack on Hill 163²¹ west of Tsutsuuran last night but results are not known. [See page 124.]

In a message addressed to his assistant chief of staff, to the vice minister of war, and to the 29th Division's commanding general, Iketa summarized the situation regarding unit commanders:

Colonel Oka (CO Mixed Brigade) is believed to have died in breakthrough at Charan Kanoa, dawn of the 18th. Colonel Arima (CO 9th Expeditionary Unit) wounded in battle, hospitalized. Colonel Goto (CO 9th Tank Regiment), whereabouts unknown since night of 16th. Believed to have died in battle. Colonel Koganezawa (CO 7th Engineers) missing since morning of 19th, believed to have died in battle. Lieutenant Colonel Nakajima (CO 3d Independent Mountain Artillery) wounded, hospitalized.

In a later message, the voluble general estimated Japanese combat strength as follows:

Homare units [43d Division]—four battalions infantry (two battalions have not yet participated in the battle); 13 field artillery pieces; Mixed Brigade—no combat strength; Former Expeditionary Force—one-half infantry battalion; other infantry units—organized strength about one battalion; tanks—two companies; Army Artillery—none; Anti-Aircraft—about one battery; Machine Guns—about one company; Army Engineers—organized strength about one company. The personnel is comparatively strong and the Division (including attached units) numbers about 9,000. For other units although they number about 6,000 in personnel, their fighting ability is reduced by lack of weapons.

To the 50th Infantry Regiment located on Tinian, General Iketa issued instructions to shell Aslito Airfield "at a time when the enemy planes are concentrated there." Plans to rein-

²⁰ Hill 285 (unnamed and unnumbered on U. S. maps) was located about one mile southwest of Tapotchau's crest and less than one-half mile southeast of Tipo Pale. The "enemy here referred to was elements of the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines (right unit of the 6th Regiment), and the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines (left unit of the 8th Regiment).

²¹ Hill 163 was designated Hill 500 on U. S. maps. It had been seized on 20 June by the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines.

force the beleaguered Saipan garrison are indicated in his message to the 29th Division:

Until we break the enemy air and sea superiority which he has completely at the moment, transportation of troops from Guam is extremely difficult. Furthermore we are investigating the possibilities of transport of small units from Tinian under cover of darkness.

Keeping other units informed of the Saipan activities consumed a great portion of Iketa's time. His report on the evening of 22 June revealed determination and hope while at the same time admitting that the enemy had made substantial advances:

The enemy [6th Marines] in vicinity of Hill 230²² has attacked our positions on the east side of the same hill. This has been repulsed. The enemy [8th Marines] south of Hill 343²² is infiltrating through our positions accompanied by tanks and it is not known at present whether we can hold this hill. Division contemplates smashing the aforesaid enemy tonight.²³

But the "aforesaid enemy" had other plans.

Air Activity

The 19th Army Fighter Squadron (P-47's) landed on Aslito Airfield during the day and assumed responsibility for the combat air patrol. This squadron, part of the 318th Fighter Group of the Seventh Air Force, was joined on 23 June by the 73d Squadron, bringing the total of rocket-firing P-47's at Saipan to 111. These squadrons were launched from the CVE's *Natoma Bay* and *Manila Bay*, respectively, 60 miles off Saipan. Admiral Turner elaborates on the work of the Army P-47's as follows:

... the P-47's were very extensively used for troop support ... they could make many more flights per day from the field than could planes from a carrier; they were available for extensive personal briefing by troops; and they could carry more bombs and more rockets than could carrier planes.²⁴

In addition to the P-47's, two flights of P-61 "Black Widows" of the 6th Night Fighter Squadron flew to Saipan from Oahu, arriving in time to take part in an air defense mission

²² Hills 230 and 343 were unnamed and unnumbered on U. S. maps. The former was the first high ground west of Tipo Pale and the latter about 1,200 yards south of Tapotchau's crest.

²³ CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #9983-85, 15-16. All foregoing Japanese quotes from this source.

²⁴ Turner.



MOVING UP on the morning of 23 June are men of the 27th Division. Later in the day these soldiers encountered a stubborn foe in Death Valley.

on 24 June. This was the first appearance of these planes in the Central Pacific.²⁵

During daylight of 22 June, combat air patrols from the escort carriers shot down three Japanese bombers within a 45-mile radius of Saipan. In the late afternoon, a single Japanese torpedo plane sneaked undetected over Saipan anchorage at a very low altitude and launched a torpedo into the *Maryland*. The projectile exploded on the port side, causing serious damage and reducing the battleship's speed to 10 knots. The next day, she proceeded to Pearl Harbor for repairs.²⁶

D-PLUS 8—23 JUNE

The Introduction to Death Valley

The NTLF operation order for 23 June set 1000 as the attack hour. With the arrival of the 27th Division in the center of the Corps front, the 4th Division's zone of action would be narrowed. This would allow the latter to pull the left regiment (25th Marines) into reserve and to swing the attack out on Kagman Peninsula.

²⁵ *TF 51 Report*, Encl A, S. *The AAF Against Japan*, 189–191. *One Damned Island After Another*, C. Howard and J. Whitley, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1946, 223–224. These were U. S. Army Air Force night fighters. The first U. S. Marine night fighter squadron (VMF(N)-532) did not arrive at Saipan until 12 July 1944.

²⁶ *TF 51 Report*, Encl A, S; Annex 1 to Encl A; Encl L.

The 27th Division's movement to the line of departure, an uphill hike of about four miles, commenced at daylight. The march was complicated, however, by the 165th Infantry's taking the wrong road and ending up on the same road as the 106th Infantry.²⁷ This situation caused delay and some confusion; but, after a conference between Colonels Kelley and Ayres, commanders of the 165th and 106th, respectively, the difficulty was ironed out and the 165th moved cross country to its assigned route.

The 165th Regiment proceeded to the front and accomplished the relief of the Marines in its assigned area at about 1000.²⁸ Lieutenant Colonel McDonough, commanding the 2d Battalion, recommended to Colonel Kelley that his unit wait for the 106th to come abreast before moving out in the attack. Colonel Kelley concurred in this recommendation, directing McDonough to "await the arrival of the 106th and to push his attack when contact with the 106th had been made."²⁹

Finally, at about 1055, the 106th Infantry jumped off, joined by the 165th when the two units were abreast. The first-named regiment complained that the line of departure was held by the enemy and that the 4th Marine Division lines (through which it was to pass) were located approximately 400 to 500 yards short of the line shown on the NTLF Operation Overlay.³⁰ One Company (K, 25th Marines) had, in fact, been pulled back to its right rear on the previous evening to tie in the night defense; but, otherwise, 4th Division troops remained on the most forward ground taken on 22 June.

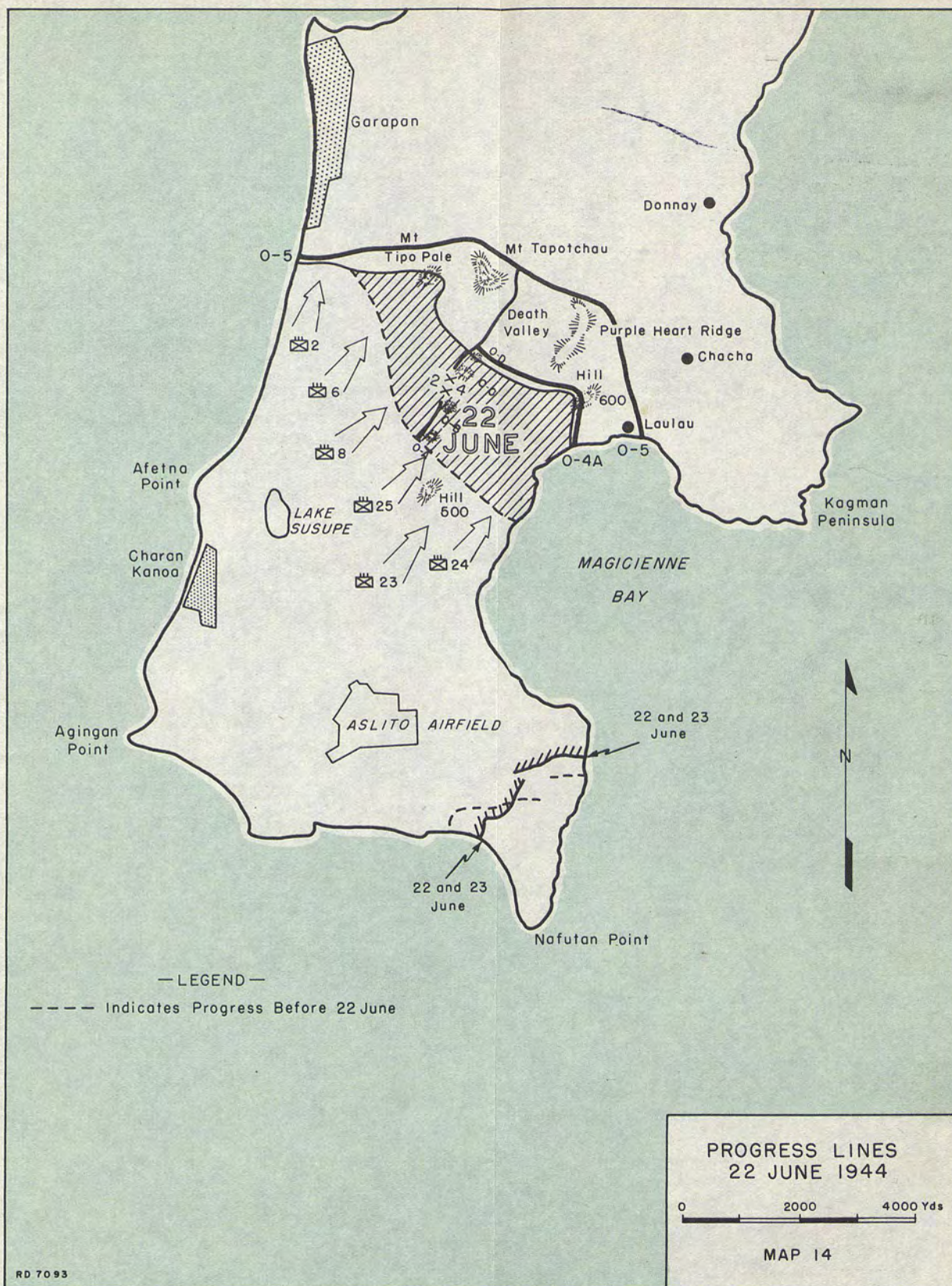
The nature of the terrain facing the 27th Infantry Division was to have an unusually vital

²⁷ The 106th Infantry Report blames this situation on an error by guides furnished from the 4th Marine Division.

²⁸ Colonel Kelley felt that it was "...of interest to note here that the Marines we relieved expressed their happiness at being relieved from this zone of action, as they considered it the strongest position they had run up against."

²⁹ *165 Inf Report*, 5. Kelley. Lemp.

³⁰ *106 Inf Report*, 4.



bearing on the unit's operations for many days to come. This terrain is well described by the historian attached to the division at Saipan:

The whole mountain [Tapotchau] was stoutly defended by the enemy, but the situation on the two flanks of it was somewhat unusual. On the west side of the peak, the ground sloped sharply to the sea. On the east, Kagman Point side, it dropped in sheer cliffs to a bench or plateau, some six hundred feet below the summit. This plateau, a saddle-shaped piece of land, was some twelve hundred yards across and bordered on the east by a low chain of hills covered with heavy foliage. Beyond them the ground sloped down to Kagman Point on the east or dropped off abruptly to Magicienne Bay on the southeast. The cliffs of Mt. Tapotchau and the chain of hills made a corridor out of the plateau. In the fighting which ensued this corridor was named Death Valley by the men who fought there and the chain of hills came to be known as Purple Heart Ridge.³¹

The 165th Infantry, attacked with two battalions in assault, one in reserve. The 1st Battalion, in contact with the 23d Marines on the right, moved forward without serious trouble, but the 2d Battalion met frontal fire from Death Valley, and, more seriously, from the high ground to the left within the 106th Infantry's zone. Because of this, the 165th's 23 June advances averaged only about 400 yards.³²

The 106th Infantry, attacking with battalions in column, 3d (Lieutenant Colonel Harold I. Mizony, USA) leading, experienced considerable trouble. From the cliff line on the left flank, Japanese riflemen and machine gunners, hidden in caves, delivered accurate fire on the soldiers moving below them. A further slowing factor was a Japanese ammunition dump which was exploded by weapons of the 3d Battalion's Antitank platoon. The spray of shell fragmentation continued for about two hours, completely immobilizing the left assault unit (Company L).

Following a sound pummeling of the cliff positions by medium tanks at 1315, the attack moved out, only to be reversed by the enemy "cavemen." A second effort on the heels of a thundering artillery preparation fired by the 105mm howitzers of the 104th Field Artillery Battalion resulted in similar failure, and at the

end of the day the 106th Infantry's front remained on the line of departure. No physical contact existed with the 2d Marine Division, moving atop the cliff line on the left. Late in the afternoon, Company F, 106th Infantry, was dispatched on a mission of gaining physical contact with the Marines; but, though this unit successfully tied itself to the 2d Division flank, the situation was not materially improved, inasmuch as by then the company was out of contact with the remainder of the 27th Division. More detail on this commitment is contained in the narrative of the 8th Marines on 23 June.

At 1715, the 2d Battalion, 106th Infantry (Major Almerin C. O'Hara, USA), was ordered into the lines on the left of the 3d Battalion, and in this formation the 106th Infantry dug in for the night. The day's gains were negligible.³³

The 27th Division's 23 June activities were extremely disappointing to General Holland Smith, who, following a mid-afternoon staff conference, summoned Major General Sanderford Jarman, USA, Saipan Garrison Force commander, to discuss the situation. Of this meeting, Jarman writes:

...He [Holland Smith] outlined to me the many things that had happened with respect to the failure of the 27th Div to advance. He indicated that this division had suffered scarcely no casualties and in his opinion he didn't think they would fight. He asked my advice. I could give him none because I didn't feel it was up to me to make any recommendation or make any decisions for him. He stated that if it was not an Army division and there would be a great cry set up more or less of a political nature, he would immediately relieve the division commander and assign someone else. After discussing the matter with me he asked me to go see General Ralph Smith, the Div Commander and see what I could do in helping this division to move forward. I immediately proceeded to the Hq. 27th Div and waited until General Smith returned at about 1845. I found that General Smith had been up to the front lines all afternoon and was thoroughly familiar with the situation. I talked to General Smith and explained the situation as I saw it and that I felt from reports from the Corps Commander that his division was not carrying its full share. He immediately replied that such was true; that he was in no way satisfied with what his regimental commanders had done during

³¹ *The 27th's Battle For Saipan*, 12.

³² *165th Inf Report*, 5.

³³ *106th Inf Report*, 5.

the day and that he had been with them and had pointed out to them the situation. He further indicated to me that he was going to be present tomorrow, 24 June with this division when it made its jump-off and he would personally see to it that the division went forward. I explained my interest in the matter was that I was senior Army commander present and was anxious to see that the Army did its job as it should be done. He appreciated the situation and thanked me for coming to see him and stated that if he didn't take his division forward tomorrow he should be relieved.³⁴

Operations at Hill 600

The 4th Division's 23 June plan provided for an attack with two regiments abreast, 24th Marines on the right along the beach and 23d Marines on the left; the 1st Battalion, 23d Marines, would constitute the division reserve. Objective O-5A would be seized initially, followed by the move to O-6 (including all of Kagman Peninsula).

The division launched its assault at 1000 as scheduled.

The 23d Marines, attacking with battalions in column, Dillon's 2d Battalion leading, advanced rapidly over rough terrain against machine-gun and rifle fire from Hill 600. Approached from the south, Hill 600 presented an extremely steep slope; and, in the words of the battalion commander, "It was all you could do to climb it, let alone fight up it." The number of Japanese defending the height was not great, but the area was admirably suited for defense and, for about 30 minutes, the fight was close and vicious. Hand grenades passed back and forth as in an overgrown, uncontrolled game of "hot potato."

Despite their struggle against gravity and an obstinate foe, Dillon's Marines seized the peak and set up a hasty defense against counterattack. Atop the hill were the bodies of several men identified as belonging to the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines. These were probably casualties from a patrol which had moved well forward of the front lines on the previous day. Among them was a radio operator, who had managed to destroy his SCR 300 before succumbing.

From its newly-won position, Dillon's battalion had an unimpaired view of the whole

of Kagman Peninsula. This surge had been executed without benefit of contact with the 27th Division on the left; and, when it was apparent that the latter was still some distance to the rear, General Schmidt ordered the 23d to hold up its advance until Army elements had tied in.

Though the peak of the hill was securely in the hands of the 2d Battalion, the battle continued. The hill's northern slope, cloaked in thick vegetation, was alive with Japanese soldiers. Dillon endeavored to strip them of their concealment by burning the area with flame-throwers, but the efforts were largely unsuccessful. Throughout the remainder of the day and during the night the grenade pitching continued.³⁵

While the 23d Regiment worried about its open left flank and tried to achieve contact with the 27th Division, Colonel Hart's 24th Marines drove along the coast of Magicienne Bay. Rothwell's 2d Battalion, on the right, made fast progress, hampered only by flanking fire from the southeastern slopes of Hill 600. By midafternoon it had pushed a salient to objective O-5. The left assault battalion (3d), however, was retarded by the necessity of dragging its inland flank to maintain contact with the 23d Regiment. The 1st Battalion followed the echeloned assault units as regimental reserve. Results of the day's activities in the 24th Marines' zone were good on the right, perforce retarded on the left.

All in all, the speed of the 4th Division's 23 June advance was considerably delayed by the Army unit's late arrival. Contact was finally established with the right element of the 27th Division (1st Battalion, 165th Infantry) by bending the 3d Battalion, 23d Marines, back along the western slopes of Hill 600.³⁶

Colonel Batchelder's 25th Marines, when passed through by the 27th Division, reverted to NTLF reserve. The regiment moved to Hill 500, 3,000-odd yards to the rear, and established a perimeter defense around it. This was

³⁴ Memo for Record, MajGen S. Jarman, 23Jun44.

³⁵ Dillon, *23d Mar Report*, 40-42. *2d Bn, 23d Mar Report*, 3-4.

³⁶ *24th Mar Report*, 20. *1st, 2d and 3d Bn, 24th Mar Reports*, 5 of all reports.

the first day of several to follow during which the depleted 25th would remain in general reserve. Lieutenant Colonel Chambers, a concussion casualty on the previous afternoon, returned to resume command of the 3d Battalion.³⁷

"... Focal Points of Combat."

The 2d Division's 23 June operation order called for a continuation of the pivoting movement on the 2d Marines, with the 6th and 8th Marines seizing O-5.

The 8th Marines began its advance at 1000 except on the right, where the 106th Infantry's late arrival made forward movement impractical. In response to Colonel Wallace's request of 22 June, the 8th Regiment was provided with an observation plane from VMO-2 to search for routes of supply and evacuation in the Tapotchau area. The observer, Lieutenant Colonel Juhan, regimental executive officer, discovered a road along the mountain's lower slopes which had not been visible to ground reconnaissance. News of this was gratefully received, as the route would be helpful in solving the critical logistical problems that faced the regiment. Other points disclosed by the flight were: the only approach to the top of Mt. Tapotchau appeared to be the ridge along the division right boundary, and advance along this ridge would be possible only after seizure of a high, rocky cliff formation dominating it from the northwest.

The 8th Marines' left and center (in the zones of the 1st and 3d Battalions) advanced slowly against light resistance but difficult up-and-down terrain. By 1130, because of the inability of the right flank to move, the advance was held up. The 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, on the right of the 8th Marines' front, bent every effort to locate and contact the 106th Infantry; but at 1345, when there was still no sign of that regiment, General Watson ordered the 8th Marines to continue the attack without relation to the 106th. Colonel Wallace in turn ordered the attack forward and moved Chamberlin's 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, into position behind the 1st Battalion, 29th, to protect the

right flank. Major Chamberlin immediately dispatched a Marine patrol into the 27th Division's zone in yet another attempt to establish physical contact between the two divisions. And, again, the patrol returned without being able to locate units in that zone.

After resumption of the attack, the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, moved rapidly and seized the cliff that dominated the route to Mt. Tapotchau. On the left, however, Hays' 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, ran into a strong point of about 30 Japanese riflemen and six heavy machine guns. The Japanese, dug into the walls of a ravine overlooking the 1st Battalion's zone, were well prepared to present a formidable challenge to any advance through the area. With admirable understatement, the battalion action report described the reduction of the strong point as "difficult going." Throughout the remainder of the day, all available weapons were concentrated on the strong point, but the area was still in enemy hands as darkness fell.

In the late afternoon, Major Chamberlin led a squad-sized patrol into the 27th Division's zone in an effort to gain contact. This time at last he was able to locate the command post of the 2d Battalion, 106th Infantry, where he discussed the situation with the battalion commander (Major O'Hara). Pointing out that it would be desirable for one Army company to return with him in order to tie in with his battalion, Chamberlin further reasoned that it would then be easier for two companies of the same battalion to establish contact than it had been for the two divisions. The Army officer agreed in principle but felt that a smaller unit would do as well. At this juncture Major General Ralph Smith, then in the process of touring his front lines, appeared on the scene. After listening to Chamberlin's suggestion, General Smith concurred and ordered that a company return to the Marine lines with Chamberlin.

At about dusk Chamberlin came trudging back with a long file of soldiers—Company F, 106th Infantry. Although this company was inserted in the line on the right flank to assist in protecting this exposed area, the situation otherwise was not materially improved, since

³⁷ 25th Mar Report, 6.

the company was then out of contact with the rest of the 27th Division. Company F remained atop the cliff with the Marines for several days, performing all assigned missions in an excellent manner. Because of separation from its parent command, the company drew upon the Marine unit for supplies.

As the 8th Marines dug in for the night, the right boundary rested on the ridge line which fell abruptly to a deep gorge (called "Death Valley" by men of the 27th Division). In tying in the night's defenses, it was necessary to commit all four battalions of the 8th Marines to the lines; the three assault battalions faced generally north, while the 2d Battalion bent back along the ridge, facing toward the exposed eastern flank. To assist further in the task of refusing and protecting this wing, a 37mm gun platoon of the Regimental Weapons Company was used in the ridge line-gorge area with guns pointed east.

The most practicable route for Japanese tanks into the 8th Marines' area was a narrow road entering from the right rear. To prevent enemy use of this road, a bulldozer was parked, blade down, at the narrowest point. In this position, it blocked tank advance down the road, while the terrain on either side denied movement around it. A vital (unidentified) part of the motor was removed to prevent the Japanese from driving the bulldozer clear of the area, and the machine remained an effective road block throughout the night. In the morning it was a simple matter to replace the motor part and use the bulldozer for its normal tasks. This ingenious employment was continued during the several days that the 8th Marines remained in the immediate area.

Regimental patrols operating north and northeast of the lines destroyed one small enemy patrol and observed two others. From this Japanese activity, it was feared that the enemy was aware of the gap that existed between the 8th Marines and the 106th Infantry. All hands were alerted to the possibility of Japanese moves through this area, and preparations were made to stop any thrust.

Late in the day, two platoons of the 2d Division Reconnaissance Company were attached

to the 8th Marines. Colonel Wallace, in turn, sent them to join the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, with which they remained until 5 July.

The 8th Marines' logistical problems were temporarily lessened when a road, spotted by Lieutenant Colonel Juhan on his OY flight earlier in the day, was reached by assault units. Immediately, a bulldozer began carving a lane through a rugged ridge to connect with the newly found supply route. Even with the improvement, however, supply and evacuation would remain great problems in the Mt. Tapotchau region for days to come. The logistical situation would get worse before it got better.³⁸

Soon after the 6th Marines launched its 1000, 23 June, attack, elements of the right flank battalion (2d Battalion, 2d Marines) were pinched out by the reduced frontage. At 1100 all of the latter unit had been relieved from the lines except Company F, which remained attached to the 6th Marines and occupied the extreme right portion of that regiment's lines. The rest of the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, moved to an assembly area in division reserve and in the afternoon reverted to parent control for the first time since D-Day. In a related move, the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, which had operated as part of the 2d Regiment since 16 June, returned to the 6th Marines.

The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, on the regiment's left (pivot) flank, did not advance during the day. Like the 2d Marines (farther to the left), the positions were already forward to such a point that further movement would impose a severe contact strain. For this reason, the day was spent in patrolling the projected zone of advance. This paid dividends; one Japanese mountain gun and several machine guns, together with their crews, were destroyed in the foothills southeast of Garapan.

The only significant advance by the 6th Marines occurred in the zone of Major Rentsch's 3d Battalion. Here the main difficulty experienced was from the rough terrain which canalized forward movement to a single narrow

³⁸ 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 10-11. 8th Mar Report, 4-5. 1st Bn, 8th Mar Report, 6. Interview with Maj W. C. Chamberlin, 14Apr49, hereinafter cited as Chamberlin.

trail. This condition prohibited rapid travel or even a coordinated attack. The day's advances totalled but 300–400 yards, and the Japanese strong point north of Tipo Pale remained aggravatingly intact. But good contact existed on both flanks as the 6th Marines dug in for the night.³⁹

The constant pressure which the 6th and 8th Marines exerted against the dominating terrain in Saipan's center caused the Japanese 31st Army chief of staff to write that Tapotchau and the hills to the south and west were "gradually turning into focal points of combat."⁴⁰

In preparation for moves forward, the 2d Marines removed the minefield which it had placed along the beach road. Other activity consisted of replacing the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, with Kyle's 1st Battalion, 2d Marines. In the afternoon, when the 2d Battalion (less Company F) returned to regimental control, it was placed in reserve. Anticipating subsequent needs upon seizing Garapan, the 2d Division attached a small group of military police and an armored bulldozer to the 2d Marines.

During the afternoon of 23 June some of the 2d Division Shore Party personnel became available for other missions, as the unloading of ships neared completion. General Watson directed that initially a provisional battalion of two companies (each of five officers and 120 men) be formed from these personnel. As additional shore party troops became available, more of such companies would be formed and employed as division reserve units. Eventually, they would become a replacement pool to strengthen depleted units.⁴¹

General Holland Smith was greatly displeased with the failure of the 27th Division to attack on time. His disappointment with the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, was for a similar reason. This unit, removed from the 27th Division to operate directly under NTLF

control, was to attack Nafutan Point "at daylight" of 23 June. The battalion did not commence its attack until 1330, and then only minor actions were conducted. The day's progress was practically negligible.⁴²

Two unfortunate accidents occurred in this area during the day. At noon a Japanese ammunition dump located near the 2d Battalion's command post was blown by U. S. Army ordnance personnel, the blast resulting in five casualties. Then, soon after the attack began, friendly naval gunfire erroneously fired on the unit's command post, killing six and wounding 33 men. Among the casualties were several key headquarters and communications personnel, a loss acutely felt throughout the remainder of the operation.⁴³

Night of 23–24 June

At dusk a report was received by the three divisions that Japanese troops and tanks were massing in front of the 27th Infantry Division. The expected enemy attack materialized at about 1830, when Japanese tanks struck near the boundary between the 165th and 106th Infantry Regiments. The combined efforts of 37mm guns and bazookas in the areas of the 2d Battalion, 165th, and the 3d Battalion, 106th, destroyed five Japanese tanks, but a sixth escaped.

This was not enough for the intruders. At about 1930, in company with infantrymen, five more Japanese tanks struck the right center of the 106th Infantry. The 3d Battalion's Anti-tank Platoon and the 1st Platoon of the Regimental Cannon Company accounted for four of the tanks while the fifth, though suffering a hit, broke through the 3d Battalion's lines. Firing wildly, it sprayed the battalion aid station with machine-gun bullets and set fire to a large ammunition dump nearby. The resultant exploding shells forced the right of the 3d Battalion to withdraw about 100 yards, return-

³⁹ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 11. *6th Mar Report*, 7–8.

⁴⁰ CINCPAC-CINCPMA Item #9983–85, 17.

⁴¹ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 11–12.

⁴² It will be remembered that the 27th Division had also issued an order to this unit for 23 June, an order that was similar to the one from NTLF except that it omitted the time that the move was to begin.

⁴³ Narrative of Events, 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, June 22–July 3.

ing to its original positions after the fire had burned itself out.⁴⁴

Shortly after the attack on the 106th Infantry, the enemy lashed out in another tank thrust, this time against the left of the 23d Marines. The enemy machines attempted to climb Hill 600 by moving along the road on the western side but were met with bazooka and 37mm fire from the 23d Marines as well as the 1st Battalion, 165th Infantry. Of the five Japanese tanks engaged in the assault, three were destroyed and the other two retreated. Throughout the remainder of the night this area remained a beehive of activity with numerous but unsuccessful attempts at infiltration by small bands of Japanese.⁴⁵

There is indication that all three tank thrusts were intended as part of the same attack, with the Japanese tanks deploying in front of the lines and assaulting in a more or less uncoordinated, haphazard manner.

Although the infantry regiments of the 2d Marine Division experienced only sporadic local activity, units of the 10th Marines (division artillery regiment) were shelled by about one battery of Japanese artillery, firing from north and northeast of Mt. Tapotchau. While many of the rounds (estimated variously as 75mm, 105mm and 6-inch) fell harmlessly, many more found their intended mark. At least one round hit directly in the regimental fire direction center, located near the northern end of the Charan Kanoa airstrip, killing the 10th Marines' Executive Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ralph E. Forsyth and wounding the R-2 (Captain Robert W. Sullivan), R-3 (Major Richard Church)⁴⁶ and several key noncommissioned officers. In addition, many communication and control facilities were destroyed, making it necessary for the 1st Battalion to take over direction and coordination of the regiment's fire.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ 165th Inf Report, 5. 106th Inf Report, 5.

⁴⁵ 23d Mar Report, 41. L. R. Jones.

⁴⁶ Church had assumed the R-3 duties on D-plus 1 after Lieutenant Colonel Howard V. Hiatt was wounded.

⁴⁷ 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 12. 10th Mar Report, 3. Ltr from Maj R. W. Sullivan to CMC, 3Jan50.

Captain Russell C. White, R-1 of the 10th Marines, provides a description of the shelling, together with an estimate of the fire's density:

Approximately 39 rounds, fired in 13 three-gun salvos, covered the regimental headquarters positions in an area 35-45 feet wide and 100 feet long. The Japs may have been trying to hit four or five OY's which were parked just north of us. In addition to Colonel Forsyth, Captain Sullivan, and Major Church, we lost Sergeant Major Baker and Staff Sergeant Michalski (Operations Sergeant), both of whom died of wounds received in this shelling.⁴⁸

Japanese Plans and Actions

Japanese plans to reinforce Saipan by water had progressed by 23 June to a point where detailed instructions were transmitted. In a joint order from the 31st Army and the Central Pacific Fleet to Army and Navy Units on Rota and Tinian and the 29th Division on Yap, details of movement to Saipan were prescribed:

1. I would like to have this transmitted to small boat amphibious units.

a. Although enemy patrolling around Saipan is intense...it is comparatively light in the southeast, small boat operations are possible from Tinian in an easterly direction. Two or three destroyers are always patrolling Tinian channel and off Laulau Bay.

b. Landing points—1st plan: Coast east of Chacha, river entrance at Mt. Hanichiru....

c. As far as possible you should navigate deployed and land at night. Reply regarding expected time of arrival.

d. I wish to have the Army Navy Units here cooperate in the complete concealment of aforementioned units.

A peculiarity of this order is that no exact time for the move is mentioned, only the direction to "reply regarding expected time of arrival."

On the evening of 23 June, General Iketa summarized the situation as follows:

1. The enemy is moving the strong point of his attack to the east and is advancing gradually under cover of shelling and bombing. Hill east of Hill 230 [Tito Pale] and Hill 285 have fallen into enemy hands.⁴⁹ Even though Hill 343 is still in our hands the situation is *unknown*. Part of the enemy has infiltrated into area east of Hill 343.⁵⁰ There is a report of four tanks and about 200 infantry troops have advanced

⁴⁸ Interview with Capt R. C. White, 8Dec49.

⁴⁹ The "enemy" here referred to was the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, and the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines.

⁵⁰ The "enemy" here referred to was the 27th Division, and more specifically, the 106th Infantry.

into Laulau area.⁵¹ Details *unknown*. [Author's italics.]

2. The *Homare* [43d Division] Units with the firm decision to hold out until the last the hill line in previous paragraph expects to smash the enemy.

3. While there is no great change in the enemy tank situation, land artillery is increasing daily. Bombings against our rear supply areas is gradually increasing in intensity.

4. According to a captured document the enemy is the 4th Marine Division.

The uncertainty displayed in the first paragraph of the foregoing report indicates the extreme difficulties the Japanese experienced maintaining communications among themselves. That this situation existed is a tribute to the volume of artillery, naval gunfire and air support which battered the Japanese without respite.⁵²

During daylight of 23 June the Japanese made two feeble efforts at air interference. The "several" planes that attacked auxiliary ships (Task Unit 16.17.12) at 1205 failed to achieve any hits but escaped without loss to themselves. Later, two Japanese torpedo bombers were intercepted and destroyed near Saipan by a four-plane combat air patrol from the *Midway*.⁵³

At 2212 a lone Japanese plane (perhaps trying to duplicate the feat of the one that had hit the *Maryland* the day before) dropped three bombs 1,500 yards astern of the *Louisville* and hastened from the area.

After midnight (at 0052) "several" Japanese bombers made a reasonably successful attack on U. S. shipping. Dropped over Saipan from a very high altitude, bombs caused minor damage from fragmentation to LCT 988, PCS 1461, PCS 1402, LST 222, and the *Phaon* (ARB-3).⁵⁴ A total of 18 casualties was caused by bomb fragments. All of the raiders escaped untouched.⁵⁵

⁵¹ The "200 infantry troops" here referred to were from the 24th Marines.

⁵² CINCPAC-CINCPMA Item #9983-85, 17-18.

⁵³ This was the escort carrier *Midway*. On 10 October 1944 its name was changed to *Saint Lo*. A large carrier was later given the name *Midway*.

⁵⁴ This ship, a battle-damage repair vessel, was formerly LST 15.

⁵⁵ *TF 51 Report*, Annex 1 to Encl A and Encl L.

D-PLUS 9—24 JUNE

To Garapan's Outskirts

General Holland Smith's attack order for 24 June directed a continuation of the drive to objective O-6. (See Map 17.) Seizure of this would place Kagman Peninsula in U. S. hands and greatly narrow the landing force front. The scheme of maneuver involved a swing to the east for the 4th Marine Division and a drive to the north by the 2d and 27th Divisions. The time of attack was set for 0800. The 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, was ordered to continue operations at daylight of 24 June to mop up remaining detachments on Nafutan Point. The NTLF reserve, Colonel Batchelder's 25th Marines, would remain in the vicinity of Hill 500 prepared to defend that hill and to send out antisniper patrols in the area around and east of Lake Susupe.⁵⁶

For the 2d Marine Division the attack had at last progressed to a point which allowed the left flank regiment, the 2d Marines, to advance. Attacking with the 1st and 3d Battalions abreast, 1st on the right, the advance started rapidly, the 3d Battalion moving 500 yards along the beach in the first hour. The 1st Battalion, however, encountered heavy automatic weapons fire from a ridge southeast of Garapan, which held up its advance. After establishing fire superiority, mainly with organic mortars and 105mm howitzers of the 4th Battalion, 10th Marines, the battalion moved to the ridge's crest. This was at 1500.

Almost immediately after the seizure, peculiar activity was observed just forward of the hill: Japanese officers, brandishing sabers and shouting strident commands, were attempting to incite about one platoon of enemy soldiers to attack the well-positioned 1st Battalion atop the ridge. From the north, as the Japanese counterattackers were forced to approach, the ridge presented a formidable obstacle, being virtually a cliff. Difficulties notwithstanding, the Japanese made the effort; but, with two hands required to scale the slope and another to throw grenades or wave sabers, they were one hand short from the outset. The

⁵⁶ NTLF Operation Order 11-44.



INCHING FORWARD AT GARAPAN'S DESOLATE OUTSKIRTS, men of 2d Marines take advantage of the cover afforded by a small rise.

ridge's steepness is revealed in the fact that front line Marines were forced to lean forward to depress the muzzles of their rifles sufficiently to hit their attackers.

Following the repulse the 1st Battalion dug in on the ridge overlooking "Radio Road," which, running at right angles to the direction of advance, was a convenient stopping point. Not only did it practically coincide with objective O-6, but also it ran along the northern slopes of a dominating ridge, an important tactical locality for the defense of the right half of the regimental sector.

The day's excitement was not over for the 2d Marines, however. At about 1625, as the left assault battalion (3d) commenced preparations for its defense of the flatland along the beach, seven Japanese tanks suddenly moved from Garapan's southern ruins and attacked. Since no enemy infantry accompanied this thrust, it

is not clear what the tanks hoped to accomplish. "Johnny-on-the-spot" medium tanks from Company C, 2d Tank Battalion, and four 75mm half-tracks (hastily rushed to the scene) opened fire accurately on the advancing enemy machines, destroying six and routing the seventh. Thereafter, the day was uneventful with the 3d Battalion holding up its advance along Radio Road in contact with the 1st Battalion.

The 1st Provisional Battalion, composed of two companies formed from shore party personnel, was attached to the 2d Marines in the late afternoon. Colonel Stuart employed this unit with the reserve (2d Battalion), now dug in behind the front lines, thus providing greater depth to the regiment's defense. Men of the 2d Marines were destined to remain along Radio Road for several days.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ *2d Mar Report*, 4. Kyle. Interview with Maj H. K.



JAPANESE LIGHT TANKS were no match for United States medium tanks. This one was knocked out by a 75mm armor-piercing shell.

In the center of the 2d Division zone, the 6th Marines advanced about 900 yards on the left (1st Battalion zone) but very little on the right (3d Battalion zone). The difference in yardage gained was in direct proportion to terrain difficulties. On the right, thickly-wooded cliffs and ravines—all of which had to be investigated—retarded the advance. Company K continued for the third day its task of reducing the north Tipo Pale strong point. The outer fringes of the area had been whittled somewhat, but the core remained strong.

As the regiment stopped for the night, the 3d Battalion, covering a front of 1,500 yards, was overextended and having difficulty maintaining contact with adjacent units, this in spite of the fact that the 3d Battalion had five rifle companies: its own three, plus Company F, 2d Marines, and Company F, 6th Marines. Good contact was finally established, however, as the 6th Marines dug in for the night.⁵⁸

On the right of the 2d Marine Division, the 8th Marines continued the fight over night-marish terrain. As Lieutenant Colonel Hays' 1st Battalion moved into the attack, the

troublesome pocket, developed on the previous day, came alive again. Matted with undergrowth and trees, the irregular coral limestone formation was favorable for the type of defense the Japanese were employing. Improving the area's natural assets, they had developed a honeycomb of underground positions. The 1st Battalion, utilizing the most unspectacular of tactics, plodded at its unpleasant task of sealing the caves and killing the occupants. The former chore proved the easier, since in most cases the Japanese had not neglected to plan routes and methods of escape. When the "cavemen" had done as much damage as possible from one position, they would retire to another from which to resume the fight.

Shortly after midday, the coordinated efforts of combat engineers (armed with flame-throwers, bazookas and demolitions) and riflemen showed results; the pocket was eliminated and contact with the 6th Marines again established. (Contact had been temporarily broken during the morning while the 1st Battalion struggled through the labyrinth.) By late afternoon the battalion reached the edge of a vast cleared area, desirable from the defense-for-the-night point of view. Since the next satisfactory site was 700 yards farther to the north, the unit halted and dug in.

Major Larsen's 3d Battalion, advancing along the base of a cliff, made good progress, limited only by fairly difficult terrain (common to the entire Tapotchau region) and the necessity of maintaining contact with flank units.

Above the 3d Battalion, along the top of the cliff, moved Lieutenant Colonel Tompkins' 1st Battalion, 29th Marines. Here the cliff was broken into a rough plateau dotted with smaller plateaus of coral limestone which continued rising like irregular stair steps toward Mt. Tapotchau's crest. The undergrowth in this area was a tangle of fern trees, the roots of which spread out three to eight feet above ground like the ribs of an inverted umbrella, overgrown and interlaced with a strait-jacket of vines. On the battalion's right flank was a narrow flat ledge covered with grass five feet high and the usual tangle of trees. This ledge,

Throneson, 20Jul49, hereinafter cited as *Throneson*. Interview with Capt L. V. Brooks, 8Aug49, hereinafter cited as *Brooks*.

⁵⁸ 6th Mar Report, 8.

part of the north-south ridge leading to Mt. Tapotchau, was within machine-gun range of the summit.

Moving through this intricate snarl was like attempting to swim through a fishermen's net, and Tompkins' battalion became overextended. At this juncture Colonel Wallace, commanding the 8th Marines, ordered the 2d Battalion to move in behind Tompkins' right (as it had the previous night) to protect the open flank. As the 8th Marines dug in for the night after an advance of about 700 yards, it again became essential to commit the 37mm Platoon from the Regimental Weapons Company to extend south along the ridge facing the hiatus between the 2d and 27th Divisions.⁵⁹

The Troublesome Cliff

On the morning of 24 June, Lieutenant General Holland Smith sent a dispatch to Major General Ralph Smith indicating his displeasure over the previous day's actions of the 27th Infantry Division:

Commanding General is highly displeased with the failure of the 27th Division on June Twenty Third to launch its attack as ordered at King Hour and the lack of offensive action displayed by the division in its failure to advance and seize Objective O-5 when opposed only by small arms and mortar fire. The failure of the 27th Division to advance in its zone of action resulted in the halting of attacks by the 4th and 2d Marine Divisions on the flanks of the 27th in order to prevent dangerous exposure of their interior flanks. It is directed that immediate steps be taken to cause the 27th Division to advance and seize objectives as ordered.⁶⁰

As Major General Ralph Smith's 27th Division launched its attack down Death Valley on 24 June, Japanese mortar and machine-gun fire concentrated on open ground between the 106th Infantry's right flank and the 165th's left, denying movement through the area. The terrain was favorable to the enemy and he made the most of it.

To complicate matters of control, heavy concentrations of Japanese mortar fire struck the command posts of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 165th Infantry—the 2d Battalion's at 0800 just as the attack was launched, the 1st Battalion's at about 1500.

⁵⁹ 8th Mar Report, 5-6. Chamberlin.

⁶⁰ NTLF Operational Dispatches, Dispatch from CTG 56.1 to CG 27th Inf Div, 24Jun44.

Having noticed that the progress of his regiment was being delayed by fire from the enemy to his left in the 106th Infantry's zone of action, Colonel Kelley ordered the 1st and 2d Battalions, 165th Infantry, to maneuver to the right, by-passing local points of resistance. Soon after the move began, Colonel Kelley assigned the mission of mopping-up within the regiment's zone of action to the 1st Battalion. After carefully coordinating the move, he ordered his 3d Battalion to detour to the right through the area already cleared by the 23d Marines and close up on the latter's flank. By darkness of 24 June the move and subsequent establishment of contact had been accomplished. Whereas the gains within the 165th Infantry's zone of action had been relatively small, the over-all result improved the situation as it affected future action.⁶¹

All forward movements in the 106th Infantry's area, meanwhile, were stopped by Japanese occupying positions in the cliff face on the left flank. Advances of about 100 yards were made by the 3d Battalion, but these hard-won yards were relinquished when the positions became untenable, and the battalion returned to the line of departure. The 2d Battalion, peering constantly at the cliff line in search of enemy positions, made virtually no progress during the day. In the words of the 106th Infantry's action report:

These cliff positions were practically invulnerable to our Artillery and mortar fire. Each position had to be definitely located and brought under direct fire of self-propelled mounts or tanks before neutralization could be effected. In addition, it was necessary to occupy these positions with Infantry before their extermination was assured.

There was some indication that the 27th Division's commanding general was not pleased with the 106th Infantry's progress. This displeasure was voiced in two dispatches which arrived at the 106th Infantry during the morning of 24 June:

Advance of 50 yards in 1½ hours is most unsatisfactory. Start moving at once.

Your failure to maintain contact with unit on your left is most embarrassing. Advance on your left at once.

⁶¹ Kelley, 7. 165th Inf Report, 5.

At 1150, Colonel Ayres, the 106th's commander, ordered Lieutenant Colonel Cornett's 1st Battalion, which had been in regimental reserve, to relieve the 3d Battalion. The relief was effected by 1515, the 3d Battalion moving to an assembly area as the new reserve.⁶²

While losing two of its machines to enemy mines, the 762d Tank Battalion, supporting the 27th Division, knocked out four Japanese tanks on 24 June.

As the 27th Division dug in for the night, one company (F, 106th Infantry) was securely tied to the right of the 2d Marine Division. But, between that single company and the remainder of the Army division existed a vertical gap of several hundred yards.

After two days of fighting, Ralph Smith decided to contain the Japanese forces in the troublesome cliff with one battalion and to move the remainder of the division around the pocket: 165th leading, followed by the 106th until objective O-5 was reached. This move was slated for 25 June.⁶³

On Nafutan Point, meanwhile, the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, had again failed to make substantial headway. At 1000 a staff officer of the NTLF G-3 section visited the battalion command post, located approximately 1,500 yards from the battalion's lines. The battalion commander reported that he did not know what the situation was as he had not heard from his company commanders.⁶⁴

For the attack of 25 June Colonel Geoffrey M. O'Connell, USA, chief of staff of the Sai-

pan Garrison Force, was placed in command of the Nafutan Point effort, relieving Lieutenant Colonel Leslie Jensen. To support further attempts, Colonel O'Connell brought in antiaircraft artillery: two batteries of 90mm guns (A and B, 751st AAA Gun Battalion) would fire from their regularly assigned positions, while four 40mm guns would move forward where direct fire could be delivered against caves and located enemy strong points. Control of the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, passed to the commanding officer, Saipan Garrison Forces at 1800, 24 June, but the battalion's mission was unchanged.⁶⁵

To Chacha and Laulau

While the 2d Marine Division and the 27th Infantry Division attacked to the north, the 4th Marine Division would swing eastward on Kagman Peninsula. The attack was launched at 0800, but a pocket of resistance on the right of the 27th Division zone of action held up the 23d Marines' movement from Hill 600. The 24th Marines on the right, however, met little resistance and progressed rapidly.

About noon the 23d Marines detoured the pocket and resumed the advance. The 3d Battalion had moved up on the right of the 2d Battalion, and the two units attacked abreast. Against "moderate" resistance from enemy mortars and small groups of infantry and with its left flank exposed, the regiment swung around the arc toward Kagman Peninsula, pivoting on the 24th Marines. As its outer perimeter swing accelerated, the gap on the division left widened. By late afternoon, when the 23d reached objective O-5A (which included Chacha Village), the gap measured 800 to 1,000 yards.

Colonel Hart's 24th Marines met only scattered rifle fire from small isolated Japanese groups in its push along the coast to Kagman Peninsula. Contact difficulties, however, demanded commitment of all three battalions of the regiment before nightfall. Lieutenant Colo-

⁶² After the campaign, when appearing before a board of Army officers inquiring into the circumstances surrounding the relief of Major General Ralph Smith, Colonel Ayres was asked: "In your opinion, if your regiment had rapidly pressed its attack and advanced speedily across the open ground in your front, what would have been the result?" "My candid opinion," answered Ayres, "is that the regiment would have disappeared."

⁶³ *Lemp*, 16-17. *106th Inf Report*, 6. 27th Division G-3 Journal, 24 June 1944.

⁶⁴ Ltr from CG NTLF, Ser 0063-3, 27Jun44, Subject: Conduct of Operations by 2d Bn, 105th Inf in the Nafutan Point Area. This letter omitted designation of addressee who is assumed to have been Admiral Nimitz. Admirals Spruance and Turner received copies.

⁶⁵ *The 27th's Battle For Saipan*, 11. Memorandum For General Richardson from Col G. M. O'Connell, 12Jul44. NTLF General Order 2-44, 24Jun44, file 1990-5-10, 02/247.

nel Rothwell's 2d Battalion, moving along the coast, found an undefended Japanese road block on the road leading north from Laulau Village. The obstacle was so located that tanks and half-tracks were denied passage through the area, and support of the 24th Marines by these weapons was delayed for nearly four hours. Engineers from Company B, 20th Marines, eventually cleared the road block and traffic was restored.

Beyond the block, however, a turn in the road, so sharp that it almost constituted an obstacle in itself, further slowed movement of vehicles through the area. While Company E, 24th Marines, was advancing near the village of Laulau, a blockhouse exploded, causing 20 casualties. This was an all-too-familiar experience for Company E, which, with the rest of the 2d Battalion, 24th Marines, had been shattered by a similar but more serious explosion at Roi-Namur. Near the area of the blockhouse explosion, a flame-thrower tank⁶⁶ from Company D, 4th Tank Battalion, ran over a land mine and was disabled. When the 24th Marines dug in for the night, a gigantic stride had been taken, amounting to about 1,200 yards. Good contact existed with the 23d Marines on the left, and the right flank was anchored on the beach just east of Laulau village.

The 4th Marine Division reserve (1st Battalion, 23d Marines) moved to the crest of Hill 600 to afford protection to the exposed left flank.⁶⁷

General Ralph Smith Relieved

Because he felt that the 27th Division's rate of progress reflected poor leadership, General Holland Smith decided that a change of command was indicated. In his own words:

I took my map and went aboard the *Rocky Mount* to discuss the situation with Kelly Turner. We both went on board the *Indianapolis* to see Spruance, who was in overall command of the operation. I told him the

⁶⁶ These were M3A1 light tanks which had had their turret-mounted 37mm guns and ammunition racks removed and Ronson (Canadian) Flame-Throwers installed in lieu thereof. These improvised flame-throwers were unsatisfactory, particularly from a mechanical standpoint.

⁶⁷ 23d Mar Report, 42. 24th Mar Report, 20-21. 4th Mar Div Report, Section VI, 24-25. L. R. Jones.

facts and said that the situation demanded a change in command. He asked me what should be done.

"Ralph Smith has shown that he lacks aggressive spirit," I replied, "and his division is slowing our advance. He should be relieved." I suggested that Jarman take over the Twenty-seventh Division as a supplementary duty until another commanding officer was appointed. Turner supported me and Spruance agreed.

On June 24, the following message was dispatched from Spruance as Commander, Fifth Fleet, to me as Commander, Northern Troops and Landing Force, and circulated to others concerned for information:

"You are authorized and directed to relieve Major General Ralph Smith from command of the Twenty-seventh Division, United States Army, and place Major General Jarman in command of this division. This action is taken in order that the offensive on Saipan may proceed in accordance with the plans and orders of the Commander, Northern Troops and Landing Force."⁶⁸

At the same *Indianapolis* conference, General Holland Smith and the two admirals reached another vital decision: the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade (Reinforced) would be kept at sea in the Marianas area as additional reserve for possible use at Saipan. As noted previously, the 3d Marine Division returned to Eniwetok on 25 June while the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade remained in the area until 30 June.

About 1530, 24 June, Major General Ralph Smith received a message from Lieutenant General Holland Smith directing him to turn over command of the 27th Division to Major General Sanderford Jarman and report for transportation to Pearl Harbor. Later in the afternoon, General Jarman appeared at the 27th Division command post where the retiring commander informed him on the situation as it existed. General Jarman then summoned the regimental commanders to discuss future plans.

With the advice of General Ralph Smith and the recommendation of Colonel Ayres of the 106th Infantry, General Jarman approved the scheme of leaving one battalion to contain and mop up the cliff strong point while the remainder of the 106th Infantry detoured east 500 to 800 yards and then advanced north by a defiladed route. In this manner it was hoped that the regiment could get past the stumbling

⁶⁸ Coral and Brass, 172.

block, reestablish contact with the 2d Marine Division, and resume the advance to the north. Orders were issued to put the plan into effect.⁶⁹

The relief of Major General Ralph Smith was later the subject of a number of bitter articles and heated arguments and caused much bad feeling.⁷⁰ Headquarters, U. S. Army Forces Central Pacific Area was even moved to conduct an investigation, headed by Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner, USA, into the circumstances surrounding the relief. This inquiry concluded that "Lt. Gen. Holland M. Smith, USMC, had full authority to relieve Maj. Gen. Ralph C. Smith, USA, . . ." but, "in the light of information available to the board, the relief . . . was not justified by the facts."⁷¹ These findings, as General Holland Smith later pointed out, were based on incomplete information, the board having confined itself to examination of Army sources.

Night of 24–25 June

From 1925 to 2208 the transport area and the Charan Kanoa Beaches were under intermittent air attack. The first three Japanese planes approached Saipan undetected and dropped their bombs along the beaches causing minor damage. Immediately, the smoke plan was executed, screening the transports to the attacking planes. Total Japanese planes committed to the attacks was about 10, but no hits were scored on U. S. shipping anchored off Saipan. Ships' gunfire and "Black Widow" P-61 night fighters were equally ineffective, being unable to down any of the Japanese attackers.⁷²

Principal activity in the 2d Division sector during the night of 24-25 June occurred in the 2d Marines area. In addition to the efforts of

Japanese infiltrators to move through the lines into Marine rear areas, there were others who had been by-passed during the day's advance trying to get through the lines and back to their own units. This two-way traffic was not designed to soothe the nerves of the 2d Marines and resulted in an all night, 100 per cent alert. The Marines came off well ahead, however, suffering 10 casualties while killing 82 Japanese.⁷³

The only other night activity occurred in the zone of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines. Here enemy riflemen heckled the front line Marines, while Japanese mortar and artillery fire showered on the battalion command post, in a small ravine on the south slopes of Tipo Pale. First, the rounds crept up the draw, then back down. By the time the enemy fire had walked four times through the area, communications were destroyed and the installation was generally upset. Major Rentsch, commanding the 3d Battalion, felt that the Japanese observer who was directing this accurate enemy fire must be situated nearby, possibly behind the position. Further, he believed that the fire might have been directed by means of flash-light signals. To escape the bull's-eye, the 3d Battalion moved its command post about 50 yards to the south, after which no more fire was received. The shelling, however, put the command post out of operation until daylight when normal communications were reestablished.⁷⁴

The 27th Division, facing Death Valley, and the 4th Division on Kagman Peninsula, spent a reasonably quiet night, with only the 2d Battalion, 24th Marines, dug in near Laulau on the north coast of Magicienne Bay, reporting activity. There, single Japanese attempted—unsuccessfully—to infiltrate the Marine lines.⁷⁵

Japanese Thoughts

On Tinian, the Japanese spent most of their time in shelters to protect themselves from U. S. aircraft, artillery and ships' guns which maintained almost constant harassing fires on

⁶⁹ Memo For Record, 30Jun44, MajGen S. Jarman, hereinafter cited as *Jarman*.

⁷⁰ Though five Army generals were relieved in the Pacific Theater during the war, only in this one instance, in which a Marine officer was the initiating agent, were there any nonoperational consequences. *Infantry Journal*, Nov48, "Smith vs Smith," 3.

⁷¹ Proceedings of a Board of Officers convened pursuant to Letter Orders, AG 333/3, Headquarters U. S. Army Forces Central Pacific Area, 4Jul44.

⁷² *TF 51 Report*, Encl A, 9; Annex 1 to Encl A.

⁷³ *2d Mar Report*, 4.

⁷⁴ *Rentsch. 6th Mar Report*, 8.

⁷⁵ *2d Bn, 24th Mar Report*, 6.

them. Since 20 June, the 155mm guns of Battery B, 531st Field Artillery Battalion (XXIV Corps Artillery), had been emplaced for firing on Tinian. On 24 June, the other two batteries of the battalion also turned around to triple the volume of artillery fire against the island.⁷⁶ An unidentified Japanese NCO indicates in his diary entry of 24 June that the morale was lowering as a result of this persistent bombing and shelling:

I heard the Japanese radio news with stories of great victories. We haven't heard of any victories lately. What will we do until the day of our annihilation? I wish my mother could know about the life we are leading.⁷⁷

The situation was somewhat obscure on 24 June when Major General Iketa, chief of staff, 31st Army wrote:

Regarding the situation of the *Homare* [43d Division] Units, as we are not in wire communications with them, we do not know, but it is believed that they have undergone no great change. They are in the midst of disposing so as to hold Tapotchau firmly.

As wire communications have been cut off since yesterday by hostile bombardment, analysis of the situation has become extremely difficult.

Later, when the miasma of incomplete reports had cleared somewhat, he amplified and corrected his earlier message:

In the sector of the *Homare* Units, the enemy has infiltrated and broken through our positions, and one part of the enemy—about 300–400 troops⁷⁸ along with four or five tanks—have broken through Chacha in the area of the eastern foot of Tapotchau. The raging battle is pressing in the area of the CP. The fighting strength of the *Homare* Unit has fallen to less than two infantry battalions.

Though our forces have called on all kinds of methods to hinder the enemy advance, we are regretably reduced to the condition where we cannot carry out this plan with our present fighting strength.

It is recommended that plan [for reinforcements] be executed with all haste.

In another message, Iketa directed the commanding officer of the 50th Infantry Regiment (on Tinian) to “prepare to send one company of Infantry (with two machine guns and two rapid firing guns attached) by landing boats

to Saipan. Landing point will be on coast area east of Chacha if possible.” The message also requested that Iketa be notified when the Oku Unit coming from Guam arrived at Tinian.⁷⁹

From the messages originating with General Iketa at this time, it is apparent that the Japanese had no hope of defeating the Americans with the forces and resources at hand. Reinforcements were needed. But the reliance placed upon small boats as a means of transportation represented either wishful thinking or sublime confidence in their ability to achieve the utterly impossible. Saipan was virtually ringed with U. S. naval vessels whose alert personnel constantly scanned the waters for a sign of Japanese movement. Unprotected small boats or barges, crammed with Japanese troops, were hardly the craft to penetrate the U. S. blockade. The Japanese plan, therefore, must be viewed as a pipe dream born of desperation.

It was also on 24 June that General Saito evacuated his third command post above Chacha Village and set up a fourth in the sheer white cliffs northeast of Tapotchau's peak. After the battle, investigation clearly showed that this command post, an elaborate cave dug into the hard rock, was the best prepared of all his C.P.'s. The only weakness of the installation and the reason for Saito's subsequent evacuation of it (after three days), was its vulnerability to naval guns firing from off Saipan's eastern coast.⁸⁰

D-PLUS 10—25 JUNE

Kagman Peninsula

Two important objectives faced NTLF on 25 June: Mt. Tapotchau and Kagman Peninsula. Seizure of the heights would at last deny the enemy his excellent observation posts; capture of Kagman Peninsula would not only greatly reduce the NTLF frontage but would provide a vast, plain area suitable for construction of another airfield. Both objectives were

⁷⁶ *Corps Arty S-3 Report*, 7.

⁷⁷ CINCPAC-CINCPA Item #11,405.

⁷⁸ The “300–400 troops” here referred to were elements of the 23d Marines.

⁷⁹ CINCPAC-CINCPA Item #9983–85, 18–19. The Oku Unit was scheduled as a reinforcement for Saipan. The exact strength of this unit is not indicated in documents consulted.

⁸⁰ *NTLF G-2 Report*, 29.

now within reach and, if all went well, would be in U. S. possession by evening of 25 June.

The 4th Marine Division, scheduled to attack at 0730, jumped off 45 minutes late. This delay was caused by the difficulty of moving the supporting tanks from their assembly areas to the front lines. Routes forward were over extremely rough terrain with few roads or trails, most of which were in very poor condition for mechanized traffic. The 4th Marine Division, still composed of but two regiments (the 25th Regiment was in NTLF reserve), made its main effort in the center, with each regiment directed to push the attack along the boundary between them. The purpose of this single-pronged effort was to split the peninsula into two parts which could then be dealt with separately. The objective was Mount Kagman and the high ground in the vicinity of Rorogattan on the easternmost tip of Kagman Peninsula.

Attacking with all three battalions abreast, 2d along the coast, 1st in the center and 3d on the left, the 24th Marines advanced rapidly against virtually no resistance. At approximately 1015, Colonel Hart reported that his regiment was in possession of Kagman Hill on the east coast of the peninsula (Objective O-6). The balance of the day was spent in patrolling and in investigating numerous caves along the coast line.⁸¹

Colonel Jones' 23d Marines moved almost as rapidly as the 24th, being hampered in progress across the flat, low ground by a single Japanese field piece or antitank gun located on the ridge to the rear. This ridge (called "Purple Heart" ridge by men of the 27th Infantry Division) lay within the Army division's zone, and, since the latter's advance had not overrun the area, the Japanese gunner fired freely on the backs of the Marines—a typical, if unavoidable, consequence of the situation in the center. With the concurrence of the 27th Division, the 14th Marines massed the fires of several battalions on this area, temporarily silencing the gun. Later, however, this "dead" weapon came to life and caused more trouble. In addition, the 23d Regiment was

subjected to a small amount of rifle fire from by-passed Japanese in the vicinity of Chacha Village.

To support the regiment's advance, one battery of the 1st Battalion, 14th Marines, moved four 75mm pack howitzers to the northeastern slopes of Hill 600, a position admirably suited to the delivery of close, direct fire missions for either of the assault battalions.

About noon the 1st Battalion, 23d Marines, which had been operating in 4th Division reserve, returned to parent command. Colonel Jones then ordered it to the vicinity of Chacha Village to protect the left flank and rear of the regiment.

Objective O-6 fell to the 23d Marines at 1533. The 2d Battalion found the Brown Beaches (northwestern portion of Kagman Peninsula) well fortified against an amphibious landing, but extremely vulnerable to an attack from the landward side.⁸²

With the assigned objectives seized, General Schmidt ordered the 23d and 24th Marines to continue mopping up the peninsula and to maintain coastal observation within their sectors. The alacrity with which this phase of the operation was carried out had a healthy effect on the morale of the 4th Marine Division.

⁸² *23d Mar Report*, 42-43. *2d Bn, 23d Mar Report*, 4.



COMBINATION CAVE AND BLOCKHOUSE, housing a 20mm gun, overlooked Beach Brown 2 on the east coast. The 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, over-ran this position from the rear on 25 June. Like burrowing prairie dogs, the Japanese usually had under-ground routes of escape from such positions.

⁸¹ *24th Mar Report*, 21.

After days of slogging slowly and painfully ahead, it was encouraging to move in rapid strides. Kagman Peninsula could have been much more difficult had the Japanese chosen to make it so; but, as with a man putting off a dental appointment, the show-down would come later.⁸³

The morning and evening summaries of the Japanese 31st Army chief of staff for 25 June recognized the successes of the 4th Marine Division:

The enemy in the Chacha area is completing the seizure of that sector. . . . An enemy of unknown strength (estimated to be 10 tanks, about 300 infantry) is advancing towards Donnay. The sound of rifle fire is deafening. Around Laulau and Donnay some 10 tanks and about 700-800 infantry are to be seen advancing from Laulau.⁸⁴

Failure of a Plan

In the 27th Division sector (now under the command of Major General Sanderford Jarman), the plan of by-passing the cliffside strong point was placed in operation. One battalion (2d Battalion, 106th Infantry) would remain behind, contain the enemy in the area, and institute mopping-up activities. The remainder of the 106th would detour east, follow a covered route behind the 165th Infantry until the cliff strong point was passed, then swing back into its regularly assigned zone.

That part of the scheme which pertained to the 165th Infantry worked generally as planned, though its move was strongly contested on the left. The regiment's left assault unit, the 2d Battalion, encountered heavy flanking fire from the northwest which effectively stopped its efforts to move forward. One sudden blast of machine-gun and rifle fire wounded the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel McDonough, who fell in an area exposed to enemy fire. The problem of reaching and evacuating the colonel was solved when the 4.2-inch mortars of Company C, 88th Chemical Mortar Battalion, threw a thick smoke screen over the area. Major Gregory Brousseau became the new battalion commander. Recognizing the futility of further frontal pushes across the

exposed ground, the regimental commander ordered the 2d Battalion to assume the mopping-up mission (formerly assigned to the 1st Battalion).

The 165th Infantry's right assault unit (3d Battalion) made better progress and reached objective O-5 by the day's end. The 1st Battalion, relieved of its mopping-up task, followed through the zone cleared by the 3d Battalion and moved in on the latter's left flank for the night.⁸⁵

For the 106th Infantry, meanwhile, plans had gone awry. Instead of following behind the 165th as ordered, the 106th swung too wide, moving far into the 4th Marine Division zone. The result was much lost time, some confusion, and a general contribution to the failure of the plan. By 1130 one battalion (1st) of the 106th found itself north of Chacha Village. This unit took many casualties from a Japanese strong point on a hill to the west, part of Purple Heart Ridge (probably the same positions that harassed the 4th Marine Division's rear).⁸⁶

When the division commander realized that the unit was hopelessly astray, he ordered Colonel Ayres to bring the regiment back into position and carry out his original mission. During the afternoon the 106th moved to the approximate area that it should have occupied in the morning.

Late in the afternoon General Jarman ordered the 2d Battalion, 106th Infantry, supported by tanks, to attack down Death Valley past the cliffs. Two artillery batteries occupied positions from which to support the effort by direct fire. Moving out at 1630, the soldiers encountered little opposition and quickly seized their objective.⁸⁷

Considerable firing by the battalion along the route, however, resulted in its stopping for the night virtually out of ammunition with no resupply immediately available. Major O'Hara, commanding the 2d Battalion, stated that he arrived at the objective so late that he was un-

⁸³ *4th Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 26.

⁸⁴ CINCPAC-CINCPAC Item #9983-85, 20.

⁸⁵ Kelley, 7. Lemp, 17. *165th Inf Report*, 6.

⁸⁶ *The 27th's Battle For Saipan*, 13. Lemp, 17.

⁸⁷ Jarman.

able to set up a circular defense and added that battalions must have at least two hours of daylight to establish positions.⁸⁸ The ammunition shortage and the incomplete nature of the battalion's defense would have serious consequences.

When General Jarman observed the satisfactory progress of the 2d Battalion, 106th Infantry, he ordered Colonel Ayres to execute—on 26 June—the original plan of detouring to the right. To General Jarman's questions of why he had got his regiment lost, Colonel Ayres could give no answer but stated that he would carry out the mission the next day. General Jarman warned Ayres that this was, indeed, his last chance: that, if he again failed to handle his regiment properly, he would be relieved.⁸⁹

As noted before, O'Hara's 2d Battalion, 106th Infantry, had successfully passed the troublesome cliff area and was dug in on its assigned objective. The Japanese, operating as if they were well aware of the unit's ammunition shortage, counterattacked during the night, forcing O'Hara's men to withdraw down the valley to a line about 200 yards north of where the day's advance had begun.⁹⁰

That the 27th Division's pressure was having its effect on the Japanese is indicated by General Iketa's summary of the activities of 25 June:

The enemy in the Tapotchau area have moved in about 1,500 meters on the east of that high point. . . . The Division Field Command Post . . . is surrounded by fire from artillery and tanks which executed an enveloping attack.⁹¹

Seizure of Mt. Tapotchau

The most significant advance in the 2d Marine Division zone of action was that of the 8th Marines; for it was upon this date (25 June) that Mt. Tapotchau was captured. The zone of the regiment included the dominant height of the mountain, with the 1st and 3d Battalions on the western slopes, the 2d just east of the



FIGHTING UP-HILL was the normal condition during the first 10 days at Saipan. Here Marines struggle up Mt. Tapotchau's rugged slopes. Supplying troops in such terrain required a disproportionate percentage of the attacker's total effort.

peak, and the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, over the peak itself. The actual seizure of the crest was a joint undertaking, with the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, attacking frontally up a valley which led to the top and the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, striking along a ridge line on the right flank. Two routes—and, until the attack was launched, no one could be sure which would prove the better.

By 0930 there was no longer any doubt on this point. In the two hours since the attack had begun, Tompkins' unit had made little progress through the wooded valley because of rough terrain and well situated enemy riflemen, while Chamberlin's 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, had driven several hundred yards along the ridge line against practically no resistance. This advance placed the 2d Battalion's lines at the base of a sheer 50-foot cliff just beyond

⁸⁸ Lemp, 17.

⁸⁹ Jarman.

⁹⁰ Jarman. Lemp, 17.

⁹¹ CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #9983-85, 20.

Tapotchau's soaring peak. Marines of the 2d Battalion felt more than the discomfort of having someone reading over their shoulders as they glanced apprehensively toward the mountain top. Exposed as it was, with a precipitous drop on the two sides (north and east) and the crest of the mountains on a third, the battalion could enjoy little security.

To find out if the feeling of being watched was caused by imagination or reality, Major Chamberlin ordered one platoon (1st Platoon, Company E) to scale the cliff and investigate. The platoon, led by Lieutenant Walter E. Rimmer, moved to the top of the cliff and found no enemy there. Thus encouraged, Rimmer dispatched a smaller patrol which climbed nearly to the crest of the mountain and returned to report that the small tableland on the summit was also unoccupied. (See Map 15.)

Difficulties of moving up the wooded valley, meanwhile, had convinced Tompkins that this was a poor route. Why not exploit the gains of the Marines already half way up the right shoulder? The only reserve available to him at this time was a 22-man platoon from the Division Reconnaissance Company, since all three of his rifle companies were in the lines, engaged with the enemy. Leading this small body, Tompkins moved up to the 1st Platoon, Company E, in its position on Tapotchau's right shoulder, paused for a quick check with Rimmer, and continued on to the top.

The tiny plateau at the mountain's peak contained an abandoned square, 12-man dugout, which the Marines immediately put to their own use. Leaving the Reconnaissance Platoon leader, Lieutenant Marion M. Drake, in command, Colonel Tompkins went back down the right shoulder to lead up more substantial forces.

By the time he returned to his battalion, it was early afternoon. The difficult task then remained of disengaging units in close contact with the enemy, withdrawing them a short distance and swinging them single file to the right through the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines' zone and finally up the right shoulder to Tapotchau's crest. Tompkins determined that one of his companies (B) should remain in the

lines and maintain contact with the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, on the left. The other two companies (A and C) would move up and reinforce the Reconnaissance Platoon.

On Tapotchau's west slopes, meanwhile, Marines of Major Larsen's 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, fought a determined enemy that begrudged every foot of terrain. The constant pressure exerted by this unit aided Tompkins in the difficult task of disengaging two-thirds of his rifle strength. Had there been a less persistent surge on the western slopes, the Japanese might have foiled Tompkins' plans.

There was little time for Marines of the Reconnaissance Platoon to enjoy the scenery from Tapotchau's lofty heights. Japanese in the area at last realized that their prized observation post was now inhabited by the Americans and immediately launched a series of small counterattacks to regain it. During the course of the afternoon three Marines and 40 Japanese fell from these heated exchanges. The Marines held.

As the afternoon wore on, Japanese mortars became more active, particularly against Company E, 8th Marines. The 1st Platoon, still perched half way up the right shoulder, became the special target for much of this fire. To get off the bull's-eye, the platoon pulled down to the shelf and joined the rest of its company.

The task of disengaging the two companies of the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, had consumed the afternoon, so that it was not until just before sundown that Tompkins began the final ascent to the peak.

The 81mm mortars of the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, laid screening smoke on the mountain's northern slopes, while all available mortars of the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, plus the 105mm howitzers of the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines, joined in support of the climb. As dusk fell, the Marines moved single file up the steep route to the top. During the climb and in the subsequent establishment of defensive positions, not a single man was lost.

Digging into the rocky terrain at the summit was a real challenge. Only occasionally was there a patch of dirt. Most of the fox-

Counterattack
2315, 25 June

MT
TAPOTCHAU

PLATEAU

Death
Valley

1554 Ft

1300 Feet

LEGEND

--- Tompkins' Route To Peak

THE SEIZURE OF MT TAPOTCHAU

HASTY SKETCH
NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

MAP 15

RD 7093



AT TAPOTCHAU'S CREST men of the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, prepare positions. In such rocky formations, Marines built foxholes from the ground up rather than digging in.

holes were built up from the ground rather than dug into it. These small fortresses proved adequate when, at a few minutes before midnight, a force of Japanese struck Company A from the west side of the mountain. Most of the enemy threw grenades, some were armed with rifles, others had "idiot sticks" (wooden practice rifles with bayonets or knives tied to the end). The size of the Japanese force could not accurately be determined, but 18 Japanese bodies were lying in the area the following morning.

Saipan's key terrain feature had been captured at last. From this point forward, the Marines would look down on the Japanese, who heretofore had enjoyed the advantages of superior ground observation. And in addition, the Marines could now fight downhill for

awhile. The change would be appreciated.⁹²

Company F, 106th Infantry, remained with the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, but with this one exception units of the 27th Infantry Division still were some distance to the rear and contact had not as yet been attained.

The 1st and 3d Battalions, 8th Marines, made little progress during the day. Fighting along the tortuous terrain on Tapotchau's western slopes, the 3d Battalion ran into a jumble of crevasses and narrow ravines which often provided positions for Japanese riflemen and ma-

⁹² The foregoing is a synthesis of the following: *8th Mar Report*, Unit Report 25Jun44; *1st Bn, 29th Mar Report*, 6-7; *Follow Me*, Richard W. Johnston, 203-204; *Marine Corps Gazette*, Jul 46, "The Taking of Mt. Tapotchau," Capt J. R. Stockman; *Chamberlin*; *Tompkins*.



JAP'S EYE VIEW of Red and Green Beaches and surrounding areas. Here a bedraggled Marine, munching a "C" ration biscuit, appears to be wondering how United States forces ever got ashore under such ideal enemy observation.

chine gunners. Movement through this terrain was necessarily slow and tedious. Farther down Tapotchau's western slopes, the 1st Battalion could not push forward without breaking contact with the units on its flanks: the 3d Battalion of its own regiment on the right and on the left, the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, still punching unsuccessfully at the Tipo Pale strong point.

Since 23 June men of the latter unit—and Company K in particular—had been butting their heads against the pocket on Tipo Pale's northern slopes. This nuisance had retarded the advance of the entire regiment, if not the entire division; and Colonel Riseley, the 6th Marines' commander, determined upon a new scheme to get past the area. The 2d Battalion would pass through the 3d, leaving one company to contain and mop up the pocket while the remainder by-passed it and moved into the attack again.

In compliance with Colonel Riseley's order, Company E began the difficult task of clearing

the pocket. To avoid moving down the sheer cliff from Tipo Pale's summit, Company E passed around the right (east) of the hill and attacked to the west up the ravine's longer axis. Support was rendered extremely difficult because of the proximity of friendly troops; and, without the necessary support, the company's progress was negligible. While standing on Mt. Tipo Pale directing the operations in this area, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth F. McLeod, the 6th Marines' executive officer, was killed by a Japanese rifleman. Colonel McLeod was replaced by Lieutenant Colonel Russell Lloyd, who had previously commanded the 2d Division Shore Party.

Darkness found the 6th Marines' lines only slightly advanced and another failure recorded in the "battle of the pocket." As the 2d Battalion had not succeeded in passing through the 3d, the day's operations only had the effect of engaging more troops. In addition to the three rifle companies of the 3d Battalion, Companies E and F of the 2d Battalion had been

committed. Company F, 2d Marines, attached to the 6th Marines since landing on D-Day, also remained in the lines.

On the left of the 6th Marines' front, the 1st Battalion could not move forward without breaking contact with the other units. Thus, the troublesome strong point on the right flank still crippled the advance. As previously indicated, however, plans to by-pass the area had been undone by the enemy's refusal to be by-passed. While a wider swing around the position might have been more successful, the hour was too late to permit further efforts, and the regiment dug in for the night.⁹³

On and near the western shore the 2d Marines viewed Garapan from commanding positions at the town's southern edge. Further advance could only carry to less favorable terrain. General Watson, therefore, ordered the regiment to hold its positions along Radio Road until units to the right had seized the high ground on that flank. Meanwhile, security patrols moved out to the front. One 10-man patrol from the Scout-Sniper Platoon departed on a reconnaissance mission into Garapan at 2100, returning two hours and a half later. It received fire from a machine gun located in the rubble, but otherwise observed no enemy activity. No casualties were suffered on this mission.⁹⁴

Of the 2d Marines' operations during 25 June, the Japanese chief of staff of the 31st Army wrote:

The enemy has broken into our line... at the southernmost edge of Garapan and are reinforcing continually their troops (20 odd tanks; 20 odd artillery pieces; about 700 infantry troops have been observed).⁹⁵

The Division Shore Party, no longer engaged in unloading supplies or equipment, furnished 200 replacements to the 6th and 8th Marines: 110 to the former, 90 to the latter.⁹⁶

The 25th Marines, assigned as NTLF reserve on 23 June, remained in its assigned assembly



PRIVATE FIRST CLASS HAROLD G. EPPERSON, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for intentionally smothering a grenade's explosion with his own body and thereby protecting several comrades nearby (25 June 1944).

area in the vicinity of Hill 500. At 1855 the regiment's 2d Battalion was attached to the 2d Marine Division and further to the 8th Regiment, which could well use any available troops to assist in watching over the exposed right. With this attachment, Colonel Wallace commanded five battalions: three from the 8th Marines, the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, and the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines.⁹⁷

Stalemate at Nafutan Point

On Nafutan Point the virtual stalemate continued. The narrative account of the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, says that:

Enemy resistance on the ridges was stubborn. The terrain consisted of steep ridges, deep gulches with cliffs, ground broken with coral pinnacles and thick jungles type underbrush which impeded progress and made observation impossible.⁹⁸

⁹³ 6th Mar Report, 8-9.

⁹⁴ 2d Mar Report, 4.

⁹⁵ CINCPAC-CINCPMA Item #9983-85, 20.

⁹⁶ 2d Mar Div Report, 14.

⁹⁷ NTLF G-3 Journal, 25-26 Jun44. 2d Mar Div Report, 14-15, 25th Mar Report, 6.

⁹⁸ Narrative of Events, 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, June 22-July 3.



SAIPAN CHOO CHOO was an important supply means, particularly in the Aslito Airfield—Charan Kanoa-Garapan area. Whistle stop at rear is Charan Kanoa.

The only artillery (excepting naval gunfire) directly available to the Garrison Force (which now had the mission of securing Nafutan Point) was the antiaircraft artillery. In view of the nature of the terrain, it was considered that air bursts in the tree tops, approximately 12 feet above ground level, would be particularly effective. Accordingly, registration fire was conducted during the afternoon of 25 June in order to have antiaircraft batteries registered for preparation fires on 26 June.⁹⁹

On 25 June, Island Command, an organization which would administer Saipan after its capture, assumed responsibility for the southern part of the island. The only infantry unit available to it at this time was the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, still engaged in the Nafutan Point mop-up. Improvement and development of facilities at, and around, Aslito Airfield would hereafter be conducted under Island Command supervision. The little narrow-gauge railroad that ran from Charan Kanoa up to Aslito Airfield was put to good use, gasoline and bombs being carried on its tiny cars, pulled by a hastily repaired steam locomotive.

⁹⁹ Ltr from Col G. M. O'Connell to CG, USAFICPA, 2Jul44, Subject: Operations in Nafutan Point Area, Saipan, 1, hereinafter cited as *O'Connell Letter*.

Night of 25–26 June

From Sunharon Harbor on the west coast of Tinian, 11 personnel barges moved out during darkness of 25–26 June apparently bent upon reinforcing Saipan. Spotted by the destroyer *Bancroft* and the destroyer escort *Elden*, the barges were fired upon and dispersed. One was reported sunk, while the remainder scurried back to Tinian Town. Later, at about 0225, LCI(G)'s 438 and 456 observed several barges moving out of Tanapag Harbor on Saipan's west coast. Immediately opening fire, the LCI(G)'s accounted for one sunk and a second damaged; the remainder returned to Tanapag.

Both LCI(G)'s received some damage during this repulse, however. The 438 received 12 holes in her hull from one of the barges' 37mm guns, damaging the fire main, starting batteries and radar. The 456 suffered less, with only slight damage to her winch and refrigerator. The 438 suffered one man killed and two wounded and the 456 two wounded. A report from one of the LCI's that the Japanese barges had unleashed torpedoes during this action was later substantiated by a prisoner of war who stated that there were at least three torpedoes fired at U. S. ships at this time.¹⁰⁰

With the exception of barge activity, the withdrawal of the 2d Battalion, 106th Infantry, down Death Valley, and the abortive Japanese effort to push the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, off Tapotchau's summit, the night of 25–26 June was quiet.

"There Is No Hope for Victory . . ."

In two dispatches sent to the commanding general on Yap, General Iketa estimated that Japanese front line strength had been cut to less than 20 percent, leaving major Army units at the following levels:

- 118th Infantry Regiment—about 300
- 135th Infantry Regiment—about 350
- 136th Infantry Regiment—about 300
- 47th Independent Mixed Brigade—about 100
- 7th Independent Engineers—about 70
- 3d Independent Mountain Artillery Regiment—no weapons
- 9th Tank Regiment—3 tanks

¹⁰⁰ *TF 51 Report*, Encl A, 9; Encl L, 3.

There is every indication that Iketa underestimated the actual figures. But, on the other hand, it is believable that commanders of the various units listed had no more men available than shown in Iketa's message, as many Japanese, separated from their parent commands, were fighting alone or in small groups. As the Japanese were pushed back and compressed into the northern end of the island, these totals probably were raised. Moreover, no figures for Japanese Navy units were included in the message.

In the same message, Iketa conveyed information that the 47th Brigade was now under command of a 1st Lieutenant and the 7th Engineers under a sergeant. Japanese reserve units (companies and platoons), hospital units, equipment, maintenance and supply units were either "completely wiped out or reduced to the point where no fighting strength [could] be expected of them."¹⁰¹

Elderly General Saito had spent 11 discouraging days. He had found that the Americans continued to move forward despite the best efforts of his troops. Such counterattacks as he had been able to mount had been repulsed with heavy losses. The bulk of his artillery had been knocked out or overrun by the American onslaught. He had suffered critical losses in his principal subordinate commanders, and many of those that remained were not satisfactory from his point of view. Functioning of his command post had been seriously retarded by the insistent probing fires of American naval vessels. And, perhaps most serious, communications were so unsatisfactory that it was virtually impossible for him to make his decisions known. The avalanche of disappointing details had drained Saito of all optimism by 25 June, causing him to send the following message to the Chief of Staff in Tokyo:

Having lost the influence of the Emperor due to the weakness of our representatives, we are not able to work at our best here. Please apologize deeply to the Emperor that we cannot do better than we are doing.

However, the right hand men of the Emperor are rejoicing because they are not in places of death during the fight. The Governor General of the South Seas—a non-combatant, will retreat to the north end of Saipan

Island and the army will defend its positions to the very end, though that be death, to guard the Treasure. However, because of the units sunk at sea, the various forces have no fighting strength, though they do have large numbers; it is regrettable that there has been considerable disturbance in time of battle from the points of view of control and of code books and other secret documents.

There is no hope for victory in places where we do not have control of the air and we are still hoping here for aerial reinforcements.

Biggest obstacle to our forces, according to one unit commander, is lack of care in the selection of battalion commanders and above.

Praying for the good health of the Emperor, we all cry, 'Banzai'!¹⁰²

Thus the handwriting on the wall had been transposed to paper.

D-PLUS 11—26 JUNE

Mop-Up on Kagman Peninsula

Tinian, only three nautical miles south of Saipan, had never had reason to feel left out of the battle. Task Force 58's pre-D-Day strikes against targets in the Marianas had included Tinian, and since the Saipan landings naval guns and aircraft had pounded Tinian with daily regularity. Neither had General Harper's Corps Artillery forgotten Tinian; one battery of 155mm guns had turned toward that island on 20 June, and an entire 155mm battalion assumed the mission on 24 June. After 26 June, Tinian's defenders would have even less reason to feel neglected by the Americans.

This date marked the beginning of heavier and more systematic blows. The new plan, carefully coordinated between artillery, ships, and air, divided the island into a north and a south half. Air and naval gunfire alternated daily, working first in one half and then in the other, while artillery fired on any targets escaping other attention. A target map was maintained, information exchanged and new targets posted. Cruisers *Birmingham*, *Montpelier* and *Indianapolis*, using both air and direct (ship-board) spot, were assigned to execute the naval gunfire portion of the plan, while planes would be provided by Carrier Support Groups One and Two.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #9983-85, 22.

¹⁰² CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #9983-85, 19.

¹⁰³ *TF 51 Report*, Encl F, 22.

Along the front of the three divisions there was little forward movement on 26 June. Having completed its mission of seizing Kagman Peninsula, the 4th Division, pinched from the Corps' front, was designated as NTLF reserve. Mopping-up was still essential, however, and the 23d and 24th Marines set about patrolling assigned sectors and outposting the coast line. In their roles as NTLF reserve, the 23d and 24th Marines reconnoitered routes to the 27th and 2d Divisions' zones respectively.

Throughout the day Japanese field pieces emplaced on the high ground (Purple Heart Ridge) in the Army division's zone continued to fire at the Marines on Kagman Peninsula. While relatively few casualties resulted from this fire, its harrassing effects were considerable. Efforts of the 4th Division to get permission from the 27th Division to fire on these targets were hampered by discouraging delays. Though permission was eventually gained, the loss of time allowed the Japanese to move their weapons to new locations and the lengthy cycle was repeated. These delays, not indicative of uncooperativeness, stemmed from the necessity for all units checking twice before permitting other units to fire into their area. Precautions were necessary.

The 4th Division's assignment as NTLF reserve was short-lived. Before the division could be completely assembled, a warning order directed it to move back into the lines the following morning and take over the right of the Corps' front. The 25th Marines would remain at Hill 500 in NTLF reserve.¹⁰⁴

With Kagman Peninsula secured, movement of equipment began for construction of an airfield there. Work on Aslito Airfield, commenced almost at the moment the field was captured, had succeeded by 26 June in lengthening the strip to 4,500 feet and widening it to 300 feet.¹⁰⁵

Colonel Stebbins Takes Over 106th Infantry

Progress of the 27th Division was slow. General Jarman's disappointment with Colonel

Ayres had been magnified by the 2d Battalion's withdrawal during the night; and, when the 106th Infantry failed to launch its attack by 1000 on the morning of 26 June, he took drastic action. In his words:

I immediately sent forward General Kernan, the Artillery Commander, and Lieutenant Colonel Sheldon, G-3 of the Division, to look over the situation and see how the artillery could help them move forward. They both came back and stated that the battalions were standing still and there was no reason why they should not move forward and any artillery fire needed at any point would be brought to bear. They indicated that the regiment was somewhat demoralized and they didn't know whether it would ever move. I immediately relieved the Chief of Staff, Colonel Stebbins (26 June) and sent him forward to relieve Colonel Ayres, and brought Colonel Ayres back to my headquarters and returned him to Pearl Harbor.¹⁰⁶

Brigadier General Ross, the assistant division commander, was then assigned additional duty as chief of staff.¹⁰⁷

At 1409, 26 June, General Jarman sent a message of encouragement to all 27th Division units:

This division is advancing against a determined enemy that must be destroyed. Upon capturing a position, never give it up; hold and send reinforcements. I know I can depend on every member of the 27th to get into this fight with everything he has. Good hunting to every man.¹⁰⁸

After assuming command of the 106th Infantry, Colonel Stebbins spent the remainder of the day organizing the unit and moving the battalions into position for the attack of 27 June. Such action as was attempted on 26 June was unsuccessful "due to fatigue on the part of the men."¹⁰⁹

Major O'Hara, commanding the 2d Battalion, advised General Jarman as to where he encountered his greatest resistance on the preceding night. Fires of the 27th Division artillery were placed on the designated points. In addition, the Cannon Company, 106th In-

¹⁰⁶ Jarman. Colonel Ayres was ordered to report to USAFICPA (United States Army Forces In Central Pacific Area). TF 56, G-1 Journal, 1800, 25 June to 1800, 26 June 1944.

¹⁰⁷ Ross.

¹⁰⁸ 27th Division G-3 Journal, 26Jun44.

¹⁰⁹ Narrative Account of Operations of 27th Infantry Division During the Period 16 June-26 June, Colonel Albert K. Stebbins, 14Jul44, hereinafter cited as *Stebbins*.

¹⁰⁴ 4th Mar Div Report, Section VI, 27; 23d Mar Report, 43; 24th Mar Report, 21; 25th Mar Report, 6.

¹⁰⁵ TF 51 Report, Encl A, 9.



TROUBLESOME CLIFF on the 106th Infantry's left flank was pounded by all available weapons. Here, on 26 June, tank destroyers deploy to fire into the cliff. Ultimately, 27th Division soldiers reduced the enemy positions by working from the top of cliffs downward.

fantry, continued to fire 105mm howitzer shells point-blank into the troublesome cliff face.

On the right of the 27th Division zone the 165th Infantry, with the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry, attached, succeeded in by-passing the valley strong point, and attaining positions from which to move northward in conjunction with the 4th Marine Division. On the evening of 26 June Colonel Kelley, commanding the 165th, was informed that his regiment was detached from the 27th Division and attached to the 4th Marine Division.

At about 2100, after reporting to the 4th Division command post, Colonel Kelley received orders for the next day's attack. The 4th Division would advance with the 165th Infantry on the left and the 23d Marines on the right and seize Objective O-6. Colonel Kelley thereupon conferred with Colonel Jones of the 23d Marines and Colonel Hart of the 24th Marines to coordinate plans for the next day's attack.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Jarman. Lemp, 18. Kelley, 7-8. 165th Inf Report, 6.

By-Passing the Pocket

Important to the future action of the 2d Marine Division was the successful by-passing of the north Tipo Pale pocket. The tactics were basically the same as those used the previous day except that the detour was wider and the execution successful. Company E, 6th Marines (which had spent the previous day battering at the pocket), passed around to the right while Company F swung left of the irksome draw. By inserting a platoon of Company G between Companies E and F on the pocket's north side, contact was regained and the 2d Battalion's proper frontage assumed. Company K, by now familiar with the difficulties of cleaning the draw, remained behind to contain and, eventually, obliterate this stumbling block.

By 1400, the 6th Marines had gained contact with the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, on the right, and the move to the north was resumed. With improvement of the situation on the right of the 6th Marines' lines, it was possible for

Lieutenant Colonel Jones' 1st Battalion to move forward. No advance, save for patrolling of its zone of action, had been feasible for the 1st Battalion since 24 June. Advances on 26 June carried it to positions from which to deliver fires in support of the other two battalions of the regiment.

To the north, the 2d Battalion faced an open flat field, covered only with the scraggly stubble of what had once been sugar cane. Since the objective, a dominating ridge line, lay some 500 to 600 yards away on the far side of the open expanse, it fell to the 2d Battalion to cross the flat and seize the high ground. The Marines had advanced only a short distance when Japanese automatic weapons, emplaced at the base of the ridge line on the north side of the field, opened with grazing fire. Company E, on the right, was particularly hard hit and stopped. Supporting fires, adjusted upon the suspected enemy firing positions, were effective and some progress was made, but darkness found the objective well out of reach.

As the 2d Battalion dug in for the night, several gaps were discovered in the lines. To fill these, rifle platoons of Company G were inserted at various points along the front. Used thus as piecemeal reinforcements, Company G lost its unit identity and was not reformed as a company until the next day.¹¹¹

In the 8th Marines zone the day's advances were small. On the left the 1st Battalion regulated its progress on that of the 6th Marines. On the right the 2d Battalion's advance was restrained because of the lack of contact with 27th Division elements (except Company F, 106th Infantry). In the 8th Marines' center, the 3d Battalion and the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, made only small gains. The attached 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, remained with the regiment during the greater portion of the day, Company E being used in the lines, while the remainder of the battalion was employed in mopping-up operations. At 1500, the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, reverted to NTLF reserve. This reversion was only temporary, however, as the unit was reattached the next day.

¹¹¹ 6th Mar Report, 9. Fisher Interview.

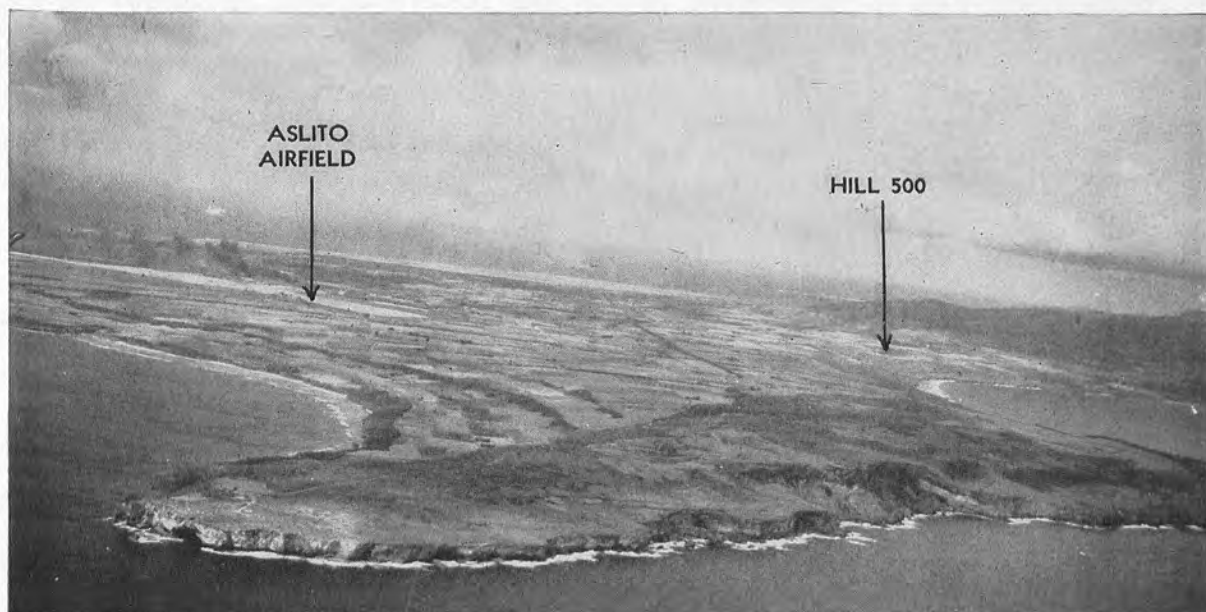
As already noted, the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, could move only as fast as the 6th Marines to its left if it were to retain contact. The deeply-gashed ground, more than enemy opposition, governed the rate of advance. One unusual enemy tactic employed against the battalion at this time is worthy of note: bundles of picric acid blocks were catapulted upon the Marines by Japanese soldiers located in the craggy rocks along the route. This device showed originality but little else; no casualties were inflicted upon the Marines.

Higher on Tapotchau's western slopes, the 3d Battalion also fought through difficult terrain. A statement from the 8th Marines' action report gives an indication of the problems in that zone: "To go from the left flank of 3/8 to the right flank of 3/8 required a two hour and 40 minute march over rough terrain."

At some points the Japanese threw or rolled grenades and demolition charges down upon the Marines as they struggled through the hilly thickets. And as if that were not enough, Japanese positioned above directed plunging machine-gun fire upon the advancing men. The 3d Battalion's left flank kept pace with the 1st Battalion, but the right flank lagged behind. By nightfall the 3d Battalion's lines stretched almost north and south along the base of a steep slope.

On 25 June the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, less one company, had secured a foothold on the summit of Mt. Tapotchau. It remained on 26 June, then, for Company B to move up the mountain's western slope and join the battalion. While waiting for this unit, Lieutenant Colonel Tompkins sent a 25-man combat patrol from Company A to seize the northernmost rise of Tapotchau's crest. This patrol was repulsed after some hard fighting, and it became apparent that this area would have to be thoroughly battered before a successful effort could be made. In the meantime Company B reached the mountain top, combing the area on the way.

From the 2d Battalion position (on the extreme right), the Marines observed men of the 2d Battalion, 106th Infantry, attempting to move up on the division flank. By the close of



NAFUTAN POINT: Pre-D-Day view of Saipan's southernmost tip. Japanese defenders slipped through lines of the 2d Battalion, 105 Infantry, on the night of 26-27 and struck Aslito Airfield and Hill 500.

the day, however, a gap of 600 yards still existed. To protect the exposed flank, the 2d Battalion bent its lines to the shape of a horseshoe with one company facing north, one east, and one south.

To sum up, the most important developments in the 8th Marines' sector during the day were the straightening of several small bulges in the lines and consolidation of the dominating heights won on 25 June.¹¹²

On the left of the division, Colonel Stuart's 2d Marines confined its activities to sending patrols 400 yards to the front. Those from the 1st Battalion came back with a report of no enemy contacts, but a 3d Battalion patrol encountered and destroyed a Japanese 37mm gun and its entire crew. Otherwise, 26 June was uneventful in the 2d Marines area.¹¹³

"Seven Lives for One's Country"

In preparation for the day's attack on Nafutan Point, the 81mm mortars of the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, commenced softening-up fires at 0645. The 90mm guns of Batteries A

and B, 751st AAA Gun Battalion joined in the preparation from 0750 to 0800., then stood by for all call fires. Further fire support was provided by three destroyers (*Patterson, McNair, Selfridge*) whose fires were used against possible targets along the west side of the peninsula's cliff line. Two 40mm guns and an SPM (self-propelled mount) were brought up to fire into cave entrances along the cliff line.

In regard to the employment of antiaircraft guns for support of the attack on Nafutan Point, Colonel O'Connell, commanding operations in that area, reported that:

the high muzzle velocity of these weapons, their rapid rate of fire and the flexibility obtainable by raising and lowering height of burst made them particularly effective. . . . There was scarcely a tree that had not been scarred and more than half of the enemy dead observed were badly mangled.¹¹⁴

The infantry attacked at 0800, spearheaded by the light tanks of Company D, 762d Tank Battalion. Although progress was slow and the day's advance slight, an enemy strong point, containing a 75mm field gun and seven machine guns, was reduced. Also, it was felt that the objective area had been considerably

¹¹² 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 15. 8th Mar Report, 15. 1st Bn, 29th Mar Report, 7.

¹¹³ 2d Mar Report, 4-5.

¹¹⁴ O'Connell, 3.

softened as a result of the supporting fires.¹¹⁵

The attack on the strong point had demanded the concentration of all three rifle companies of the 2d Battalion in one area of Nafutan Point. Since the day's activities had not ended until late in the afternoon, it was considered that insufficient time existed to re-deploy the battalion over its broad front. In addition, it was felt that too much time would be wasted on the following morning reassembling the battalion for the continuation of the attack. This situation all added up to the fact that vast expanses of the front were left uncovered or only under observation by small outposts. It had been hoped that these outposts could give warning of any enemy movement in time for the battalion to shift its strength.¹¹⁶ (See Map 16.)

Life had not been pleasant for the Japanese Nafutan Point defenders. From seaward, destroyers pounded the rocks and caves unmercifully; from land, a monotonously heavy volume of fire was maintained by 40 mm and 90mm antiaircraft guns, and 81mm and 60mm mortars, as well as fires of the light tank platoon, the self-propelled mount, and small arms of the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry. Movement on the point was rendered very difficult, and the shortage of food and water became acute. Captain Sasaki, commanding the 317th Independent Infantry Battalion of the 47th Independent Mixed Brigade, determined to move his battalion from the Nafutan Point trap and join other Japanese forces which he believed to be in the vicinity of Hill 500. On 26 June Sasaki issued the following battalion order:

1. The enemy situation is the same as you have been informed.

2. The Battalion will carry out an attack at midnight tonight. After causing confusion at the airfield, we will advance to Brigade Headquarters in the Field.

3. C. O. of the Ikeda Company will command the first attack unit. Under his command will be: #3 Company, the Hira Company, and the Murone Platoon. C. O. of the Koshiro Company will be C. O. of the second attack unit and will have under his command the Inoue unit, the Engineers, the remaining Naval units. Units will assemble at 1930 in areas to be designated separately.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁶ *The 27th Infantry Division in World War II*, Capt E. G. Love, 219-222, hereinafter cited as *Love*.

You must carry out the attack from the designated places.

4. Casualties will remain in their present positions and defend Nafutan Mount. Those who cannot participate in combat must commit suicide.

5. We will carry the maximum of weapons and supplies.

6. The password for tonight will be "Shichi Sei Hokoku" (Seven lives for one's country).

7. I will follow after the second attack unit.

Bn C. O.

Capt. SASAKI.¹¹⁷

Moving undiscovered through the thinly spread outposts of the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, Sasaki's force headed for Aslito Airfield. The only indication that men of the 2d Battalion had that the enemy was on the move came at about 0200 when "an extremely large group" stumbled into the command post, about 1,500 yards in rear of the front lines. After a lively skirmish, in which the soldiers suffered 24 casualties, the intruders disappeared. The next morning the bodies of 27 Japanese were found in the immediate command post area.¹¹⁸

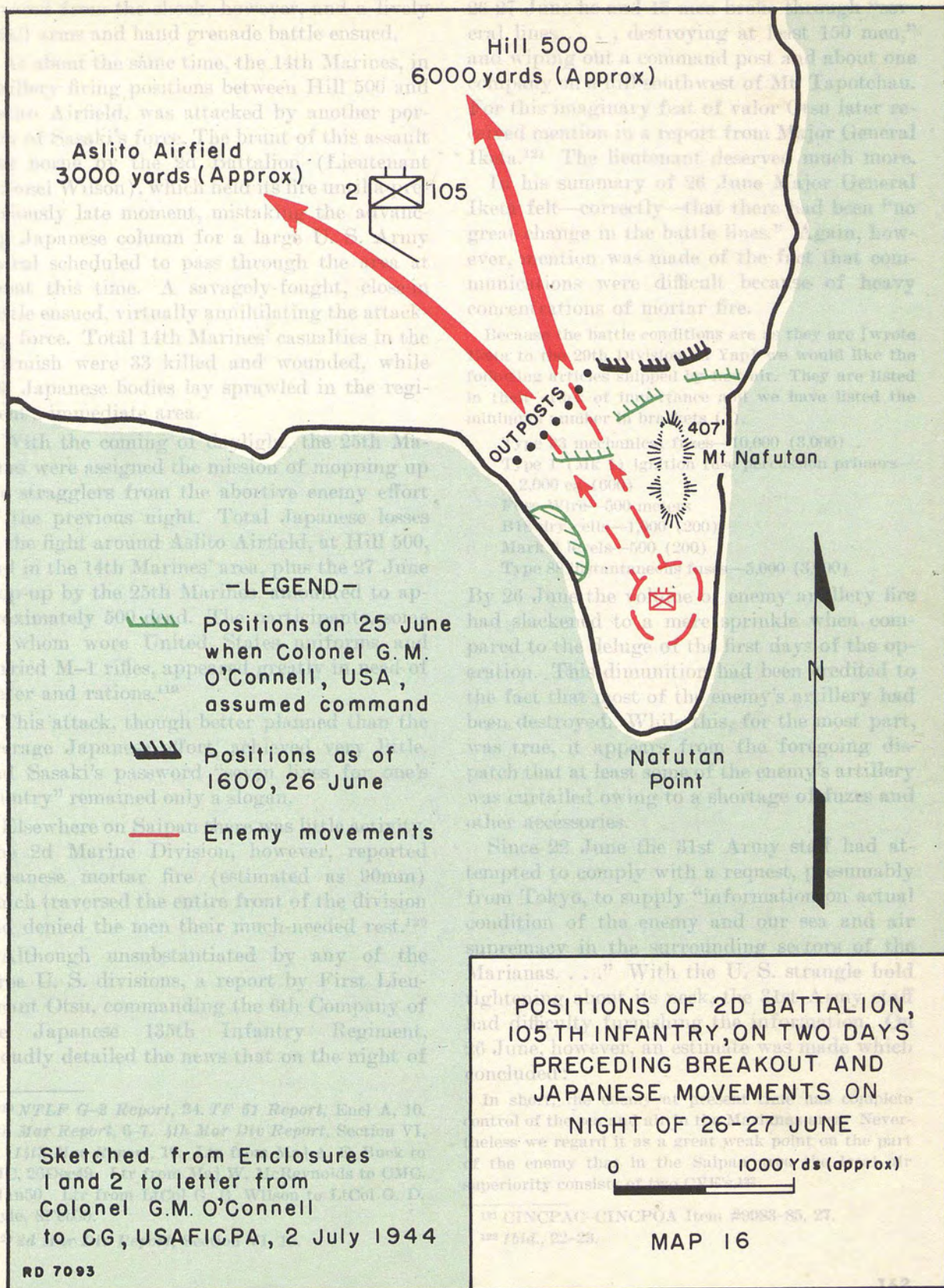
At about 0230 Sasaki's force struck Aslito Airfield. All U. S. personnel in that area were alerted after the enemy succeeded in setting fire to one P-47 and damaging three others.

Seabees and engineers quickly rallied to their unexpected mission, cleared the field of Japanese and set up a hasty defense. At 0430 the Commander, Air Defense Command, reported that enemy .50-caliber machine guns and 20mm guns were firing on Aslito Airfield.

After causing confusion at the airfield, the force advanced toward Hill 500, where they expected to find Colonel Oka's 47th Independent Mixed Brigade Headquarters (which had left the hill many days before). At about 0520 there were two surprises: the first was to Sasaki's men, who received an unexpected reception from the 25th Marines (still in NTLF reserve) on Hill 500, and the second surprise was for the 25th Marines, who were not expecting visitors and, in some cases, found the Japanese in their midst before they realized that anything was afoot. Both participants quickly re-

¹¹⁷ *NTLF G-2 Report*, 34.

¹¹⁸ *Love*, 221.



covered from the shock, however, and a lively small arms and hand grenade battle ensued.

At about the same time, the 14th Marines, in artillery firing positions between Hill 500 and Aslito Airfield, was attacked by another portion of Sasaki's force. The brunt of this assault was borne by the 2d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Wilson), which held its fire until a precariously late moment, mistaking the advancing Japanese column for a large U. S. Army patrol scheduled to pass through the area at about this time. A savagely-fought, close-in battle ensued, virtually annihilating the attacking force. Total 14th Marines' casualties in the skirmish were 33 killed and wounded, while 143 Japanese bodies lay sprawled in the regiment's immediate area.

With the coming of daylight, the 25th Marines were assigned the mission of mopping up the stragglers from the abortive enemy effort of the previous night. Total Japanese losses in the fight around Aslito Airfield, at Hill 500, and in the 14th Marines' area, plus the 27 June mop-up by the 25th Marines, amounted to approximately 500 dead. The participants, some of whom wore United States uniforms and carried M-1 rifles, appeared greatly in need of water and rations.¹¹⁹

This attack, though better planned than the average Japanese effort, achieved very little, and Sasaki's password "seven lives for one's country" remained only a slogan.

Elsewhere on Saipan there was little activity. The 2d Marine Division, however, reported Japanese mortar fire (estimated as 90mm) which traversed the entire front of the division and denied the men their much-needed rest.¹²⁰

Although unsubstantiated by any of the three U. S. divisions, a report by First Lieutenant Otsu, commanding the 6th Company of the Japanese 135th Infantry Regiment, proudly detailed the news that on the night of

¹¹⁹ NTLF G-2 Report, 34. TF 51 Report, Encl A, 10. 25th Mar Report, 6-7. 4th Mar Div Report, Section VI, 27. 14th Mar Report, 10. Ltr from Maj A. E. Buck to CMC, 26Dec49. Ltr from Maj W. McReynolds to CMC, 14Jan50. Ltr from LtCol G. B. Wilson to LtCol G. D. Gayle, 8Feb50.

¹²⁰ 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 15.

26-27 June he and 15 men broke through "several lines . . . , destroying at least 150 men," and wiping out a command post and about one company on a hill southwest of Mt. Tapotchau. For this imaginary feat of valor Otsu later received mention in a report from Major General Iketa.¹²¹ The lieutenant deserved much more.

In his summary of 26 June Major General Iketa felt—correctly—that there had been "no great change in the battle lines." Again, however, mention was made of the fact that communications were difficult because of heavy concentrations of mortar fire.

Because the battle conditions are as they are [wrote Iketa to the 29th Division on Yap] we would like the following articles shipped by fast air. They are listed in their order of importance and we have listed the minimum number in brackets ().

- Type 93 mechanical fuzes—10,000 (3,000)
- Type 1 (Mk 1) ignition fuse percussion primers—2,000 ea (600)
- Fuse Wire—500 meters
- B18 dry cells—1,000 (200)
- Mark 4 levels—500 (200)
- Type 88 instantaneous fuses—5,000 (3,000)

By 26 June the volume of enemy artillery fire had slackened to a mere sprinkle when compared to the deluge of the first days of the operation. This diminution had been credited to the fact that most of the enemy's artillery had been destroyed. While this, for the most part, was true, it appears from the foregoing dispatch that at least some of the enemy's artillery was curtailed owing to a shortage of fuzes and other accessories.

Since 22 June the 31st Army staff had attempted to comply with a request, presumably from Tokyo, to supply "information on actual condition of the enemy and our sea and air supremacy in the surrounding sectors of the Marianas. . . ." With the U. S. strangle hold tightening about its neck, the 31st Army staff had difficulty furnishing the information. On 26 June, however, an estimate was made which concluded:

In short, the enemy at present time has complete control of the sea and air in the Marianas area. Nevertheless we regard it as a great weak point on the part of the enemy that in the Saipan area the local air superiority consists of two CVE's.¹²²

¹²¹ CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #9983-85, 27.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 22-23.

In connection with the latter message, the old military axiom applied: never underestimate your enemy. Because only two CVE's could be seen was no reason to assume that there were no others available to intercept a Japanese move into the Marianas area.

Japanese requests for reinforcements were uniformly frantic. On the evening of 26 June the commanding officer of the 50th Infantry Regiment on Tinian received another communication treating the subject:

This is a preparatory order. As rapidly as possible you are to carry out an amphibious operation to Saipan with two large landing craft. Landing point will be coast east of Hanichiru. Reply.¹²³

Although the reply to this communication is not contained in documents consulted, the move, for some reason, was delayed until the 2d of July, when it met with disastrous results.

During the night of 26-27 June enemy aircraft again became active against shipping off Saipan. At 2040 shipboard radar picked up about 10 Japanese planes heading for the island. Flash Red was immediately ordered and the smoke plan executed. In an attempt to peer through the screen, the Japanese dropped parachute flares over the anchorage. At 2130 an enemy light bomber crashed into the jumbo boom on the cargo ship (AK) *Mercury*, unleashing a torpedo as the plane disintegrated. The torpedo penetrated a living compartment where the air flask exploded causing superficial damage. The torpedo's war head, fortunately, did not arm.

Aslito Airfield was bombed during the same raid, causing 11 personnel casualties. Otherwise, the attack was uneventful, except for a collision between one U. S. P-61 night fighter taking off and another landing. Both were lost.

In a later attack, at about 2300, "several" Japanese planes failed to achieve a single hit and in the process lost one bomber to ships' gunfire.¹²⁴

Progress in Unloading

Since D-Day (15 June), supplies and equipment had poured across Saipan's western beaches in a steady flow. By D-plus 10 (25

June) the assault shipping with the exception of Transport Division 34¹²⁵ was completely unloaded; approximately 60,000 troops and 75,000 tons of supplies (with a daily average of 6,563 tons) had been landed. This rate of unloading was very satisfactory, especially when considered in relation to the following hinderances: (1) artillery and mortar fire on the beaches until D-plus 4; (2) retirement of transports during the first two nights and then continuous retirement of the bulk of the transports for the next four days because of the Battle of the Philippine Sea; (3) shoals and reefs at low tide which made it necessary to use "ducks" and LVT's exclusively during these periods over Red, Green and Yellow Beaches; and (4) the narrow and shallow channel off Blue Beaches which at low tide would only accommodate LCM's and LCVP's.

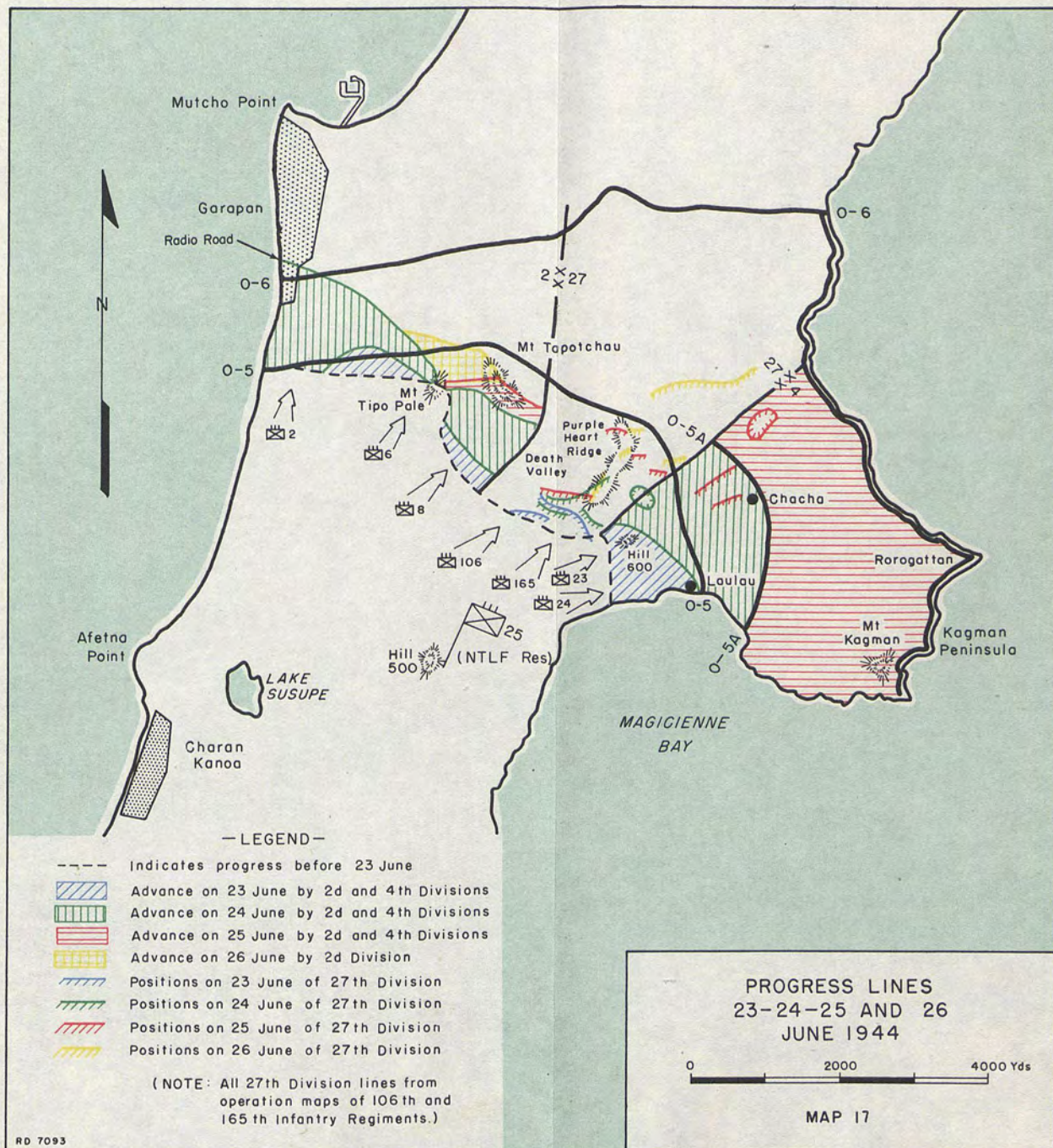
A great problem, in addition to moving supplies to the beach, was the handling of these supplies once there. Many types of landing craft became bottlenecked at the beachline (offering the enemy choice targets) and only the ducks and LVT's could move inland to dump their loads. Fairly extensive use was made of pallets (large, flat sleds upon which cargo was lashed) towed behind a duck. Without pausing for manhandling, the ducks could pull a pallet from a ship several thousands yards off shore to a supply dump well inland. So, besides relieving the beach snarl, pallets and ducks also reduced the amount of labor required.

The two Marine divisions made only limited use, while the 27th Infantry Division made extensive use, of palletization. The latter division, which had conducted a number of experiments and devoted considerable training in the handling the palletized cargo, even requested permission to palletize beyond the directed amounts. The Marine divisions were reluctant to embrace this system whole-heartedly because: (1) pallets were costly in labor, time, and material, and consumed considerable ships' space; and (2) pallets were difficult to handle by inexperienced personnel.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹²⁴ *TF 51 Report*, Annex 1 to Encl A; Encl L, 3.

¹²⁵ Transport Division 34 was composed of four AP's and one AK from the Joint Expeditionary Force reserve.





NAVY HOSPITAL CORPSMAN administers blood plasma to a wounded Marine near the front lines before evacuating him to rear areas. Other wounded men wait their turn for attention.

General Holland Smith, while acknowledging that there was much discussion pro and con in regard to palletization, concluded that "the reasons for palletization overbalance the negative effects," and, "in the future, consideration should be given to palletizing larger amounts of assault cargo."¹²⁶

Medical Situation

It appeared on 26 June that the evacuation situation was rapidly approaching a major crisis. On 21 June Group A transports had retired from Saipan carrying 1,474 casualties, followed the next day by Group B transports¹²⁷ with 1,400 casualties on board. Hospital ships *Relief* and *Samaritan* had departed with 1,355 casualties on 23 June. Transports of the reserve group left Saipan on 25 June with 675 casualties. With this exodus, only the *Cambria*, *Rocky Mount*, two hospital ships

(*Solace* and *Bountiful*) and assorted merchant cargo ships remained. The latter ships' capacities were limited due to their lack of medical personnel, and since the *Cambria* and *Rocky Mount* were to remain in the area, they could not be used for evacuation purposes. Fortunately, the casualty rate decreased, and no epidemics occurred during the critical period.

Considerable assistance to the over-burdened medical facilities was provided by the beginning of air evacuation from Aslito Airfield on 25 June. By the end of the operation, 860 casualties had been evacuated to the Marshalls by this means. Valuable as this method was, Admiral Turner noted that:

During the early stage of air evacuation, planes were not supplied with medical attendants, nor was a flight surgeon available for giving advice as to whether or not patients could sustain an air flight. Several serious casualties died enroute or shortly after arrival at destination. A flight surgeon with adequate medical attendants should be provided for air fields at the objective to supervise air evacuation.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ COMINCH P-007, 5-7, 5-11. *TF 51 Report*, Encl A, 9.

¹²⁷ Group A transports had lifted the 2d Marine Division while Group B had carried the 4th Division.

¹²⁸ COMINCH P-007, 5-19 and 5-20.

"Routine" was the word for the activities of the various medical installations on Saipan: routine in a heroic way. Their routine duties often extended well into the marginal combat functions of the Marines and soldiers for whom they cared. Daily activities of medical personnel placed them in the most dangerous of locations; where a man would fall, he would most often need attention. This help and care, almost invariably, would be at the hands of medical personnel who would move into the very bull's-eye and provide the necessary comfort and assistance. No immunity was accorded them by Japanese, who would fire on a man with a red cross on his sleeve as on one without it. And yet, fully aware that they were moving into an exposed position which had already claimed one or more casualties, the "docs" (and they were all called that, whether doctor or corpsmen) unhesitatingly went on their missions of mercy. A profound sense of duty transcended whatever fears they may have felt. In the pursuance of their important functions, these courageous men won the esteem and respect of all hands.

Related Raids by U. S. Navy

In a move designed principally to keep the Japanese off balance and never firmly set for counterpunches, Pagan Island was raided on 23 June by Carrier Task Group One. Nor were sister islands in the Marianas neglected; almost

daily photo reconnaissance missions were flown over Guam and Tinian so that any changes in the situation or dispositions could be taken into account before the landings. On 25 June Carrier Task Group Three executed powerful bombing raids against Guam and Rota to cripple further the airfields and installations on those islands.¹²⁹

The first of the post-battle naval raids to involve more than routine operations was an attempted strike against the Volcano-Bonin group which the Japanese turned into an air battle of impressive proportions. At 0600 on 24 June Vice Admiral Joseph J. Clark's Task Group 58.1 (*Hornet*, *Yorktown* and *Bataan*) launched a long-range fighter sweep (48 Hellcats) against Iwo Jima which was intercepted by a large number of enemy fighters. In the resulting action, four U. S. Hellcats were downed while Japanese losses were estimated at 68 fighters and bombers. This defeat, however, did not discourage the enemy from attempting an attack against Clark's task group with the remnants of his local air strength. This attempt proved equally disastrous: U. S. interceptors shot down 46 more aircraft to raise the day's total to 114. Its mission completed without bombing the airfields, Task Group 58.1 retired to Eniwetok without incident.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ *TF 51 Report*, Encl A, S.

¹³⁰ *The Navy's Air War*, 214.



SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

CHAPTER V

Swing to Tanapag

D-PLUS 12—27 JUNE 1944

Japanese Situation on D-plus 12

Another command post displacement was indicated for General Saito on 27 June. Mounting pressure against his site in the white cliffs on Tapotchau's east side demanded that the tired old general move farther to the north. His fifth command post was located in a small jungled depression about 2,200 yards north of the summit of Mt. Tapotchau. The cave selected, smallest of all his command posts, served him for two days.

Merger of the Central Pacific Fleet Headquarters (Nagumo's command) and the Northern Marianas Group Headquarters (Saito's command) took place on 27 June. Communications between the two had been extremely difficult—sometimes impossible—to maintain, and this move would relieve the problem. The complicated Japanese command structure, with its numerous duplications of responsibility, was difficult even for Japanese commanders to understand; and, with the consolidation of the two in one area, the chances of achieving consistency of orders were improved.

In a brief resume on the morning of 27 June, Major General Iketa summarized the situation:

The summit of Tapotchau was occupied yesterday evening.¹ Front line units tried to retake it with a

night attack, but did not succeed as planned. In Donay the enemy broke through with a number of tanks, but their advance was slow. Thereafter, no great change in the situation.

The defense force, along with the firmest possible defense of its present front line and its activities toward annihilation of the enemy, is at present setting up with a line between Tanapag—Hill 221²—Tarahoho as the final line of resistance. [For location of this "final line of resistance" see Map 18.]

General Saito originated two messages during the day which indicate that he was in a retrospective mood.

The essential points of English and American land warfare differ greatly with the common sense considerations of the past. The pressing need of the moment is that the mistake be not made of allowing this important experience in the defense of Saipan to be put to no practical end, and, the soldiers here to be robbed of the fruits of victory after having fought so bravely.

The general is not specific on what he considered the departures from the "common sense" tactics of the past, so that it is impossible to pursue this interesting thought to its conclusion. Possibly it is another example of Saito attempting to outguess and anticipate U. S. intentions; and, when that guess turned out to be incorrect, he felt that the Americans were not using "common sense."

Battalion, 29th Marines, reached Tapotchau's summit on 25 June.

² Marines named this hill "Radar Hill."

¹ The general's information was a day late. The 1st

A tribute to the effectiveness of naval gunfire is contained in a second dispatch from Saito:

The practical experiences of the defense forces of Saipan . . . have to do with the power of the enemy naval bombardment. If there just were no naval gunfire, we feel with determination that we could fight it out with the enemy in a decisive battle.

At the large plateau on the extreme northern end of Saipan the Japanese continued their efforts to finish the Banadero (Marpi Point) Airfield. Though hampered by U. S. planes and naval vessels, the work progressed with feverish intensity. Toil on the field was spurred by the groundless belief that it would—by some miracle—provide the funnel through which air reinforcement would pour. General Saito's estimate as to when the work would be completed is significant:

. . . the Banadero airport has not been completed, but in case the necessity arises, it can be used, and the Saipan defense forces trust that they can hold out until the first 10 days of the month (July), awaiting its completion.

Still obsessed with the opinion that there was a paucity of U. S. planes over Saipan, General Saito repeated the familiar refrain on 27 June:

Because the enemy planes which have appeared in the air are only carrier borne bombers and reconnaissance planes, the situation is such that our large fighter formations could seize good opportunity for daylight sinking of enemy destroyers, etc.

Since there is no indication that Saito deliberately attempted to present a false picture, the conclusion is drawn that he was grossly misinformed as to the status of U. S. air at, and around, Saipan, and also as to the willingness and ability of Japanese air to help him.

This, then, was what the Japanese high command did, thought and wrote on 27 June.³

Rapid Progress on the Right

As noted before, the Northern Troops and Landing Force attack order for 27 June directed that the three divisions attack abreast (2d on the left, 27th in the center, 4th on the right) and seize objective O-6. Shuffling of some subordinate units, demanded by the tactical situation, left the divisions somewhat changed, organically, from their normal struc-

ture. These temporary alterations had developed the major infantry organizations as follows:

<i>4th Marine Division</i>	<i>27th Infantry Division</i>
23d Marines	106th Infantry
24th Marines	105th Infantry (less 1st and 2d Battalions)
165th Infantry Regiment (less 2d Battalion)	2d Battalion, 165th Infantry
1st Battalion, 105th Infantry	
(total: nine battalions)	(total: five battalions)
<i>2d Marine Division</i>	
2d Marines	8th Marines
6th Marines	1st Battalion, 29th Marines
(total: 10 battalions)	
<i>NTLF Reserve</i>	<i>Saipan Garrison Force</i>
25th Marines	2d Battalion, 105th Infantry
(total: three battalions)	(total: one battalion) ⁴

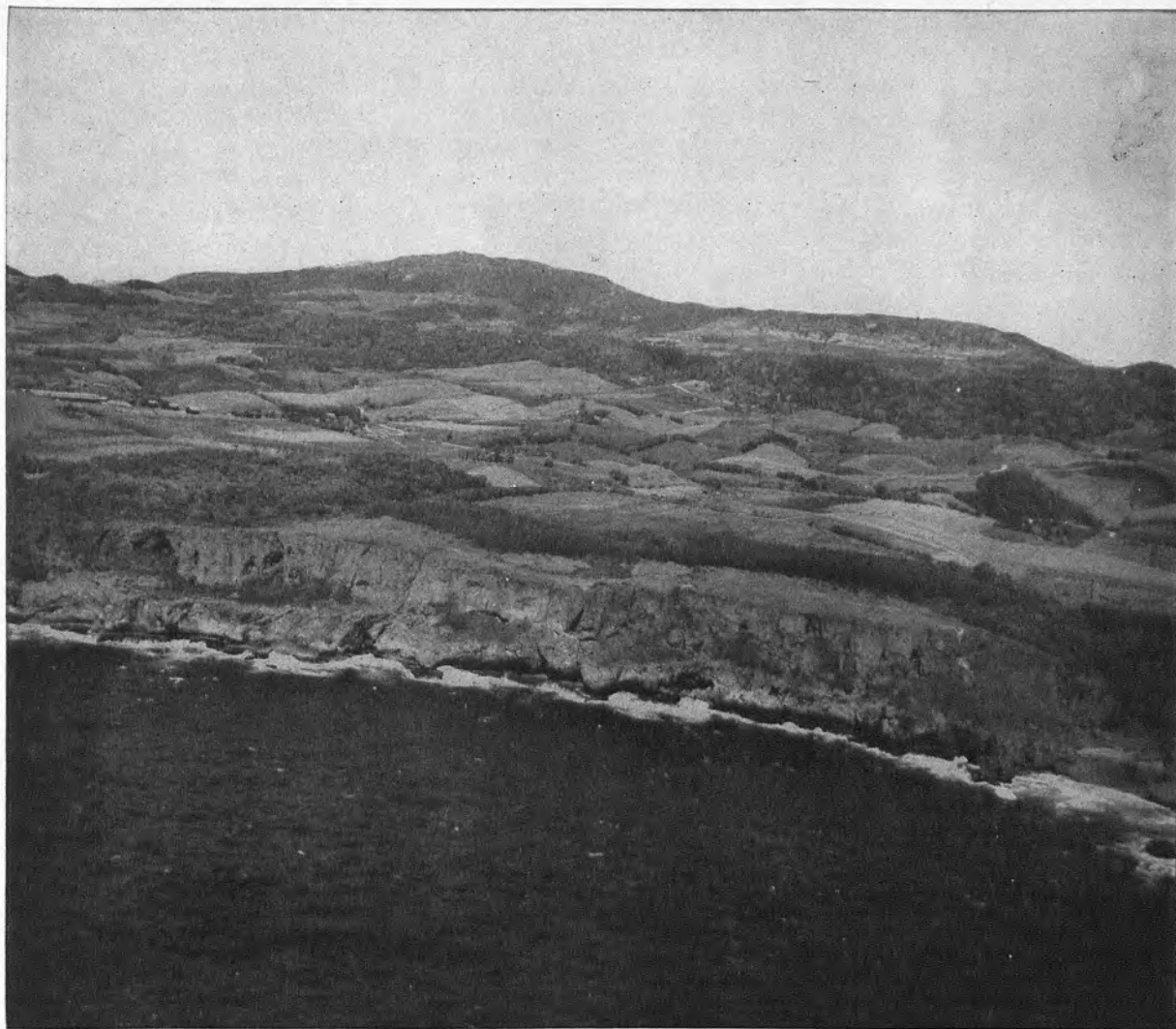
The Japanese escape from Nafutan Point the previous night had caused considerable confusion in rear areas of the 4th Marine Division, particularly in artillery positions of the 14th Marines. Because of the disturbance, the 4th Marine Division received permission from NTLF to delay its appointed attack hour from 0630 to 0730.

Progress in the 4th Marine Division zone on 27 June was rapid. The right assault regiment, the 23d Marines, advanced against only scattered small arms fire issuing from the villages of Donnay and Hashigoru. (See Map 18.) Underwater mines, which the Japanese had used as land mines, were found along the road and railroad in the vicinity of Donnay. Tanks detoured these mined areas without difficulty, however. A Japanese supply dump, found near Hashigoru, contained new clothing, ammunition, and infantry weapons.

Lieutenant Colonel Dillon's 2d Battalion, moving through the matted vegetation and ragged cliff line along the coast, experienced difficulty keeping abreast of the faster-moving 3d Battalion. Since a detailed search of the gnarled coast line could not be instituted without sacrificing the momentum of the attack, Colonel Jones ordered the 1st Battalion to follow Dillon's unit at 400 yards, mopping up and investigating suspicious areas. By 1640 the

³ CINCPAC-CINCPMA Item #9983-85, 24-25.

⁴ NTLF Operation Order 14-44.



RUGGED CLIFFS, typical of much of Saipan's eastern coast line, provided numerous hiding places for Japanese soldiers. Clearing the enemy from these areas was costly in men and time.

23d Marines had trudged to objective O-6. Both battalions immediately dispatched security-reconnaissance patrols to their front but made no contacts with the enemy.⁵

Promptly at 0730 the 165th Infantry (less its 2d Battalion, attached to the 106th Infantry) moved out. Formation for the attack was: 3d Battalion on the right (in contact with the 23d Marines) and 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry, (attached to the 165th Infantry) on the left. The reserve of the 165th—the 1st Battalion—would follow the left assault battalion at 600

yards, maintaining contact with the right flank of the 27th Division. The 165th moved rapidly through the hills, particularly in the zone of the right battalion. The left assault unit, weathering occasional squalls of Japanese small-arms fire and traversing rougher terrain, moved somewhat slower.

With the great strides of the 165th Infantry on 27 June and the relative immobility of units to the left rear, problems of maintaining contact were presented. About noon the 165th's commander, Colonel Kelley, advised Colonel Walter W. Rogers, chief of staff of the 4th Ma-

⁵ 23d Mar Report, 14. 2d Bn, 23d Mar Report, 4.

rine Division, that he feared that the 165th Infantry's reserve battalion had stretched to the breaking point in order to fill the ever-growing vertical gap. Kelley cautioned that further advances would make it physically impossible for the 165th Infantry, with the troops at its disposal, to sustain contact with the 27th Division. The obvious solution to the problem, and the one recommended by Colonel Kelley, was to move a battalion of the 4th Marine Division reserve (24th Marines) into the area to assist in manning the lengthy connection.⁶

At about 1730, orders came for the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, to fill the southern portion of the tenuous link between the two divisions. With commitment of this battalion, the schematic appearance of the 4th Marine Division was peculiar (see Map 18), with a front of approximately 2,500 yards and a left flank of about the same length.

No sooner had the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, arrived in position when two enemy medium tanks were sighted to the northwest. Although fired upon by 37mm guns and 81mm mortars, the enemy tanks fired several rounds and escaped unscathed.

As the 4th Marine Division dug in for the night after an advance of approximately 3,000 yards, there was concern in the division logistics section created by the ever-lengthening supply lines and the paucity of motor transport. This unfavorable circumstance caused the 4th Division action report to comment: "... supply of front line units was not maintained at a desirable level." Fortunately, however, there were no serious consequences of this situation.⁷

Important Localities Seized

As already noted, the 27th Division moved but little on 27 June. Colonel Stebbins, the 106th Infantry's new commander, spent the greater portion of the day getting the regiment in position for advances on 28 June. While this resulted in only minor progress, the situation

was much improved from the point of view of future action.

On the evening of 27 June General Jarman talked to Colonel Stebbins to get the latter's observations on the 106th Infantry. According to General Jarman, "He [Stebbins] stated that they seemed to lack the will to go forward; he had to personally get the units in hand and show them where to go and push the battalions out." To Jarman it was "apparent that upon the first firings of any kind by snipers the battalions immediately asked to be allowed to retire."⁸

In a narrative account written after the operation, Colonel Stebbins indicated no dissatisfaction with the fighting qualities of his regiment:

... difficulties of terrain and locating the Jap defenses were the causes for failure to advance. The cliffs and hillsides were pocketed with small caves and large caves. The wooded area was rough, filled with boulders, and excellent for defensive operations. Bands of fire were laid by the enemy through the underbrush and in such manner as to make it most difficult to discover their locations. . . . It was necessary to work forward taking out each gun in turn, employing tanks to draw fire so that guns could be located and destroyed. Rush and die tactics would never have succeeded.⁹

The most important gain in the 106th Infantry's zone on 27 June was made by the 1st Battalion, on the left. While one company (C) remained in Death Valley to contain the enemy in the cliff by directing fires into the caves from below, the other two companies (A and B) skirted to the west, climbed the southern end of the ridge, and attacked the Japanese positions from above. Since most of the enemy weapons in the cliff face were sited for enfilade fire into the valley, the two companies were able to approach the strong points from the rear. In this manner they avoided the heavy volume of fire that had immobilized movements across the lower ground for so many days.

Clearing the caves was a tedious task, requiring the coordinated activities of 1st Battalion riflemen and flame-thrower-demolition teams from the 102d Engineer Battalion. By late afternoon a solid toehold in the southern

⁶ Kelley, 8-9.

⁷ 4th Mar Div Report, Section VI, 27-28. 24th Mar Report, 21. Ltr from Maj A. B. Hanson to CMC, 14Feb50.

⁸ Jarman.

⁹ Stebbins.

end of the cliff line had been seized, a number of Japanese positions eliminated, and prospects for future advance through the area much improved. One strong point destroyed during the day housed about 20 Japanese soldiers, armed with rifles, machine guns, and three U. S. Browning Automatic Rifles. How they had obtained the latter three weapons was never revealed.

Movement by the remainder of the 106th Infantry was rendered difficult because of fire from Japanese located in that portion of the cliff line not yet reached by the men on top, as well as fresh opposition from a hill (designated "Hill Able") to the right front. This latter feature lay within the zone of the 2d Battalion, 165th Infantry (attached to the 106th Infantry); and, despite the best efforts of that unit to seize it on 27 June, the hill remained firmly in enemy hands at the close of the day. (See Map 18.)

Two platoons of medium tanks from the 762d Tank Battalion were attached to the 106th Infantry for the 27 June attack. These platoons were to move out before the infantry assault to neutralize Japanese positions in the cliff line. But plans, unfortunately, went awry. Soon after the tanks moved out on their mission, it began to rain. Dust on the tanks turned to mud, vision from within became blurred, and the machines lost direction. Instead of firing on the planned targets, they opened upon men of the 3d Battalion, 106th Infantry.

This miscarriage of plans postponed the attack until 1230, when the 3d Battalion, followed by the 2d Battalion, moved out. Again the enemy in the cliff line opened up, but this time the tanks found their targets and neutralized them. Despite fire from Hill Able to the right front, the 3d Battalion pushed on. By 1342 the unit had reached its objective, a small knoll west of Hill Able, and commenced digging in for the night. When the advance of the 3d Battalion permitted, the 2d Battalion, until then following in reserve, swung to the right and came abreast of the 3d. There it dug in for the night. Company F remained some distance ahead with the 8th Marines atop the cliff.

At the conclusion of the day's action, the commanding general of the 27th Division sent a message to the 2d and 3d Battalions, 106th Infantry:

Congratulations on a day's work well done. I have the utmost confidence in our continued success in a vigorous push against the remaining enemy. Keep up the good work. Jarman.¹⁰

The 106th Infantry had not been sparing in the use of supporting artillery fires. From 25 to 27 June, the following amounts of artillery ammunition had been expended in the regimental zone: 2,606 rounds of light high explosive (105mm); 117 rounds light smoke; 420 rounds medium high explosive (155mm).

The 27th Division's reserve (105th Infantry, less 1st and 2d Battalions) remained in an assembly area awaiting orders.¹¹

Pinch, Shift, Adjust, Consolidate

Only minor advances were made by the 2d Marine Division on 27 June. In the first hour of the attack, the 1st and 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, advanced about 200 yards along Tapotchau's western slopes. Resistance was light, but the terrain again provided the deterrent to rapid movement. At Tapotchau's summit, meanwhile, the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, completed seizure of the main crest and started the northern descent. The 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, on the division right, conducted aggressive patrolling in the northeast Tapotchau area. Anxious eyes still peered to the right rear in search of elements of the 27th Division, which, as yet, had not moved up on the flank. Though the 1st Battalion, 106th Infantry, had made important gains during the day, the action had been too far to the rear for the Marines to observe. At no time could the 8th Regiment relax attention to the right flank; the enemy capability of clambering up the cliff and striking from the rear was one not to be ignored or forgotten.

At 1000 the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines (from the NTLF reserve), was again attached to the 2d Marine Division. After further attachment to the 8th Marines, the battalion

¹⁰ 106 Inf Report, 9-11.

¹¹ 27th Inf Div Periodic Report No. 11, 27Jun44.



HIGHWAY, inland Saipan style. Bad as this route appears, it was excellent by comparison with some others that were used. Jeeps carried messengers and supplies forward, evacuated casualties rearward.

moved to Colonel Wallace's command post and again reported for duty with that regiment. (It had been attached to the 8th Marines on the previous day but at 1500 had been returned to NTLF control.) Colonel Wallace ordered the unit to relieve the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, of the flank-watching mission so that the latter could give full attention to the advance. By late afternoon this relief was accomplished, the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, being deployed in an almost north-south line along the 2d Division's right boundary. At 1700 the battalion made patrol contact with 27th Division troops in Death Valley.

Perhaps the most important result of the day's movements in the 8th Marines' zone was that the unit's normal frontage could be assumed. With the release of the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, from flank security duties, lines were straightened with resultant reduction in frontage.¹²

¹² *8th Mar Report*, 6-7.

Pinch, shift, adjust, consolidate, advance—these were the 27 June plans of the 6th Marines. The 3d Battalion (in the center), tired from days of continuous front line action, was to be pinched out of the front lines and shifted to regimental reserve. The 2d Battalion, on the right, would adjust itself to its new frontage, consolidate its contact with adjacent units, and finally advance. The 1st Battalion would move forward when units to its right had relieved the contact strain.

Prior to King-Hour (0630) a small counter-attack struck between Companies F and I, 6th Marines. Supported by knee mortars, about one Japanese platoon caused a brief flurry of excitement but little else. The Marines of the two companies converged their fires upon the meager enemy force and quickly repulsed it.

By 1410 the 3d Battalion, completely relieved from the lines, assembled in reserve. Upon determining that good contact existed on both flanks, the 2d Battalion moved forward. But, after progressing only a short distance through

a cane field, the unit was struck by a fierce fusillade of small-arms fire coming, as on the previous day, from the base of the ridge line to the north. The short stubble of the cane field gave the unit little or no protection from the grazing fire of the Japanese. As darkness of 27 June fell, the ridge line north of Mt. Tipo Pale remained firmly in enemy hands. With the short advance of the 2d Battalion, however, the 1st Battalion was permitted to move forward, seizing more favorable terrain and shortening its front for future action. Like its sister regiment, the 8th Marines, the 6th had gained but little during the day.¹³

Eager to finish a job which they knew was theirs and realizing that the task became no easier with waiting, men of the 2d Marines bided their time along Radio Road outside of Garapan. The wait was not their choice. Nor was it anyone's. To push the regiment—alone—through Garapan would have demanded that its former frontage be assumed by another unit. Since another unit was not available for any such assignment, it remained for the 2d Marines' front to hold and wait until the outer arc of the swing had advanced abreast of it.

The time was by no means wasted; daily patrols had thoroughly scouted the town's rubble and had provided timely information of enemy activities there. Patrols on 27 June discovered and routed a small enemy outpost and found an improvised mined area, employing aerial bombs, in the streets of the town.¹⁴

During the long wait at Garapan's southern edge the 2d Marines constantly improved defense positions. The possibility of an all-out Japanese counterattack along the coastal flats was never ignored, and all hands were constantly alert to just such a development. Across the regiment's front, "concertina" wire¹⁵ had

been strung, and just forward of that sheets of corrugated tin had been spread in order that any movement toward the lines would be loudly announced. More than one prowling pig met death by blundering upon this ingenious, if crude, warning device. Individual foxholes had been converted to tiny fortresses by the addition of overhead cover and, occasionally, by placement of steel armor-plate shields in front. The latter items were not issued but rather represented the fruits of a search through an enemy building. The Japanese had intended the shields as individual protection from small-arms fire, and the Marines were not ones to misuse acquired property.¹⁶

The seizure of Mt. Tapotchau provided an excellent observation post. From the mountain's towering heights, nearly the entire island could be viewed. To provide security for the 2d Marine Division observation post located there, one company of the 1st Provisional Battalion (formed from Shore Party personnel whose normal function was completed) was detached from the 2d Marines and moved to form a cordon around the installation.

Division air observers, operating from the tiny Charan Kanoa strip or from carriers since 15 June, now moved to Aslito Airfield together with their "grasshoppers."¹⁷ The vulnerable, little OY planes proved an extremely valuable means of acquiring enemy information throughout the operation.

By leaving Nafutan Point on the previous night, the enemy relieved the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, of the worst part of its assignment. On 27 June the soldiers, reporting scattered resistance, swept to the promontory's southernmost tip. It then remained for the myriad coast line caves and crevasses to be inspected and cleaned of Japanese. This task consumed several days of effort. The battalion subsequently reported counting 850 Japanese bodies on Nafutan Point. These were in addition to those killed in the breakout on the night of 26-27 June.¹⁸

¹³ 6th Mar Report, 9-10.

¹⁴ 2d Mar Report, 5.

¹⁵ "Concertina" is a single strand of barbed wire wound into a loose doughnut shape. When it is desired to put it to use, the two loose ends are pulled in opposite directions, stretching the barbed wire into a long cylindrical obstacle. A concertina can be laid in a fraction of the time that it takes to prepare a double apron fence.

¹⁶ *Throneson*.

¹⁷ 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 16.

¹⁸ Memo for Gen Richardson from Col G. M. O'Connell, 12 Jul 44. O'Connell Letter.

At 1845 ships in the transport area were alerted to the approach of Japanese planes, and the smoke plan was immediately executed. The radar had not erred; at 2000 and again at 2235, bombs fell on the transport area: five to eight in the early attack, 15 in the latter. The number of attacking Japanese planes was described as "several"; but, aside from a near miss on the *Cambria*, all bombs fell without causing damage. Aslito Airfield felt the impact of enemy bombs at 2352, but, here again, the only loss was peace and quiet. Equally ineffective was the retaliatory fire of ships' and shore-installed anti-aircraft guns. Nor did the Army night fighters which rose from Aslito Airfield achieve effective contact with the enemy formations.¹⁹

The fireworks displayed at Aslito Airfield and in the transport area provided the principal diversion during the night of 27-28 June. The 2d Marines, however, reported "sporadic enemy mortar fire falling" within its lines,²⁰ and the command post of the 2d Battalion, 165th Infantry, became the special target of an enemy 40 or 47mm flat trajectory weapon. The most serious consequence of the latter shelling was the wounding of the battalion commander, Major Gregory Brousseau, USA.²¹

A peculiar bit of activity occurred in the 23d Marines' sector at about 0200. Lumbering confidently along a road leading into the Marine lines was a truck carrying 12 Japanese soldiers and civilians. Whether attempting a bold tactic or merely lost, the enemy never revealed; vehicle and passengers met a quick end from the point-blank fires of a 37mm gun.²²

¹⁹ *TF 51 Report*, Encl A and Annex 1 to Encl A.

²⁰ *2d Mar Report*, 5.

²¹ Major Brousseau had taken command of the battalion on 25 June when Lieutenant Colonel John F. McDonough had been wounded. Replacing Brousseau temporarily was Captain James A. Dooley, USA, who commanded until Major Dennis D. Claire, USA, (transferred from the 3d Battalion) arrived to take over. With Major Claire's departure from the 3d Battalion, Major Martin H. Floery, USA, assumed command of that unit.

²² *23d Mar Report*, 44.

Not panic, but an ever-growing concern (nurtured by a steady diet of reverses) reveals itself in Iketa's situation report on the morning of 28 June:

1. Last night all fronts were without great change, but since dawn, enemy attacks have grown in intensity, particularly against Tapotchau area and the hill on the northwest side of Chacha, and the hill west of Donnay where the enemy has laid heavy artillery fire. On the south foot of Tapotchau, he seems to have 20 odd mortars, and in the southwest area, over 10 mountain guns and mortars.

2. About 50 men of the 118th Infantry are improving their positions on the east side of Hill 343,²³ and one company of the 136th Infantry is improving its position on Hill 268,²⁴ and about 50 men of the 118 Infantry are digging in on the north side of that hill. The main body of the 9th Expeditionary Force, about 200 men, and about 100 men from the 9th Tank Regiment are consolidating their positions north and east of there in the high ground (Chacha water area).²⁵ Though surrounded by the enemy, and receiving artillery fire, we are prepared to make stiff resistance along the cliff line.

3. As the battle progresses numbers of bravely fighting officers and men continue to appear, engaging in hand to hand combat, taking part in raids and scouting missions, and holding back nothing in the service of their Emperor.

4. Parts of our forces are in the midst of preparing positions against the enemy, in order to make the area north of Donnay and around Tarahoho secure against his advances.²⁶

The fact that Iketa made no mention of defenses west of Tapotchau, in the 2d Marine Division zone, would indicate that he had received no word from either the 135th Infantry Regiment or Navy units located in that area.

²³ The "east side of hill 343" was the cliff line which had troubled the 106th Infantry for so many days. The hill itself was about 1,200 yards south of Mt. Tapotchau.

²⁴ Hill 268, about one mile southeast of Tapotchau's peak, lay within the zone of the 165th Infantry. This hill constituted the southern end of Purple Heart Ridge.

²⁵ The "Chacha water area," not identified on U. S. maps, was a large fresh water spring on the high ground (part of Purple Heart Ridge) west of Chacha Village. The "water area" was near the 27th Division's right boundary.

²⁶ CINCPAC-CINCPA Item #9983-85, 25.



UP-AND-DOWN FIGHTING was necessary to clear Japanese from jumbled maze of coral rock characteristic of inland Saipan. Evacuating wounded from this type of terrain was a major problem.

Four "Pimples"

In the 2d Marine Division zone the advance slogged slowly forward. Along the beach the 2d Marines, still unable to advance without breaking contact with units to the east, conducted monotonous patrolling activities into Garapan. In preparation for projected moves through the battered town, artillery, naval gunfire and air strikes pounded targets located there. In one air strike three misdirected rockets fell within the lines of the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, causing 27 casualties.²⁷ This unfortunate accident occurred when a pilot mistook a puff of white smoke in the Marines' lines for his strike-marker (the target was to

be marked with a white phosphorous shell.

Major General Watson and Lieutenant General Holland Smith recommended disciplinary action because of this tragedy; but Admiral Spruance, commanding the Fifth Fleet, did not concur. While pointing out that such accidents should not be "casually condoned," Spruance felt that disciplinary action would have a "baneful effect on close air support operations." In regard to preventing a recurrence of an accident of this nature, Spruance wrote, "It can be taken for granted by all that the air force will take every possible precaution to avoid accidents of this nature in the future."²⁸

²⁷ 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 17.

²⁸ Ltr from Commander Fifth Fleet to Commander Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet, 29Jul44.

The length of two football fields or a fairly long golf drive (200 yards) was the average forward movement by the 6th Marines on 28 June. The left assault battalion (the 1st), restricted by the movements of units to its right, could only conduct patrolling operations. In this respect, it was more nearly related to the 2d Marines than to its parent unit.

Major Hunt's 2d Battalion continued to fight across the open canefield toward its objective, a low ridge line north of Tipo Pale. Japanese riflemen and machine gunners, secure in their hillside grotto, raked the clearing with grazing fire. Light flame-thrower and medium tanks were available to the 6th Marines, but their use in this instance was limited because of difficult routes of approach to enemy positions, and support had to be delivered from long ranges. This left the task to the infantrymen. As everywhere demonstrated, reduction of cave positions proved a slow, painful job. By late afternoon the situation had improved slightly and the volume of Japanese fire had diminished somewhat, but the 2d Battalion's unceasing efforts since 0630 found it still short of the ridge line objective and very tired. A great store of energy had been burned in moving across the murderous field, yet more effort would be required. It appeared that the Japanese were rooted to the pock-marked ridge line.

The Tipo Pale strong point, at which Company K, 6th Marines, had been whittling for many days, finally was secured on 28 June, permitting the company to rejoin its battalion. The tenacious Japanese soldiers in this pocket had sold their lives but had exacted from the 6th Marines a high price in time, men and effort.²⁹

Here today, gone tomorrow; that was the rule for the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines. At 0730, 28 June, the organization was again removed from 8th Marines' control and returned to NTLF reserve. After this change, the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, again assumed responsibility for the division right flank.

To the north in the 8th Marines' zone of action, four small hills could be seen. These hills, rising from relatively flat ground, looked tiny

from the "crow's nest" at the peak of Mt. Tapotchau and were nicknamed "the Pimples." (See Map 18.) Admirably suited for designation as battalion objectives, the blemishes were assigned by Colonel Wallace from right to left as follows: 2d Battalion, 8th Marines—Bill's Pimple; 1st Battalion, 29th Marines—Tommy's Pimple; 3d Battalion, 8th Marines—Stan's Pimple; 1st Battalion, 8th Marines—Larry's Pimple.³⁰

It was hoped that the advance of the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, would go forward rapidly since the terrain in this unit's zone afforded satisfactory routes for the forward movement of tanks. Jagged ground in the other battalions' areas was very unsatisfactory for tank traffic.

The 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, on the right, was ordered to move out on 28 June in spite of the fact that 27th Division elements had not come abreast. Normal precautions would be taken to prevent the Japanese from exploiting the gap between divisions, but the push to the north would no longer be delayed.

Facing the 2d Battalion in its assigned zone was an abrupt drop which virtually prohibited movement to the north. A crevice, not over two feet wide at most points, provided the only route of descent. Movement down this slot as well as the day's advance over a narrow cliff-side path demanded that the battalion move in a formation of companies in column and, further, individuals in column of files. Numerous caves had to be investigated as the unit moved parallel to the cliff; but, rather than halting the entire procession while these searches were instituted, small combat patrols were dispatched to do the job while the remainder continued toward Bill's Pimple.

The formation and tactics were sound in this situation, and during the move past the cliff the battalion killed about 100 of the enemy. These 100 were no worry, but the Marines' own casualties were another matter. The rugged nature of the terrain required that a single stretcher be manned by eight bearers. Thus, a

³⁰ These nicknames were for Major William C. Chamberlin (Bill), Lieutenant Colonel Rathvon M. Tompkins (Tommy), Major Stanley E. Larson (Stan), and Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence C. Hays, Jr. (Larry).

²⁹ 6th Mar Report, 10. Fisher Interview.

single casualty was, in effect, nine men at least temporarily out of action. Sad but true: a man wounded imposed a greater immediate loss on the unit than a man dead. Supply and evacuation in the 2d Battalion's area was improved when a bulldozer carved a lane to the top of the cliff. Although still not satisfactory for vehicular traffic, this route was used to manhandle supplies from the top of the cliff down to the battalion.

All along the 8th Marines' front resistance stiffened. This, plus the fact that observers noted many enemy moving on and around the "Pimples," lent emphasis to the belief that the main battle positions would be encountered in that vicinity. By 1600 the 8th Marines had lost momentum and received orders to hold for the night. As the regiment halted, it was still short of the four Pimples. Defensive positions left something to be desired; a 400-yard gap existed between the right of the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, and the left of the 106th Infantry. Also, a precipitous cliff separated the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, and the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines. So as not to imperil the regiment's right flank, the former unit anchored its flank firmly on the top lip of the cliff while the latter provided all-around circular defense for itself at the bottom.³¹

The result of this pressure in the north Tapotchau area is revealed in General Iketa's situation report on the evening of 28 June:

All our units are consolidating their positions and fighting hard but personnel has been sharply reduced by the enemy shelling over a period of many days and the enemy is gradually infiltrating among our positions. Especially in the vicinity of Mt. Tapotchau four or five enemy battalions, supported by several tons of mortars are attacking but our troops are checking their advance.³²

General Griner Assumes Command of 27th Division

This date, 28 June, marked the end of General Jarman's command of the 27th Infantry Division. Jarman, whose primary post was Saipan Garrison Force Commander, had commanded the division on a temporary basis awaiting the arrival of Major General George W. Griner, Jr., USA. At 1000 the new com-

manding general arrived at the 27th Division command post and relieved General Jarman. Then followed the usual orientation to the situation, staff reports, introductions and generally getting the new leader geared to his command. General Griner instructed Brigadier General Ross to continue in his dual capacity as chief of staff and assistant division commander.³³

Since moving into the lines on 23 June, the 27th Division had received mortar and machine-gun fire from the enemy in the cliffs on the left flank. No exception was to be enjoyed on 28 June. Progress, again, was slow.

The 1st Battalion, 106th Infantry, which had made some headway against these same cliffs on the previous day, found the craggy precipice dotted with caves. Flushing the Japanese from their hideouts was a lengthy process. Forward gains were short, but a number of enemy installations (housing 12 machine guns and several mortars) were destroyed.

A faster pace—initially—was maintained by the 2d and 3d Battalions. These units, advancing against small-arms fire, progressed about 400 yards before experiencing serious difficulties. Then an enemy field piece, located somewhere to the right front, joined the smaller weapons in a challenge to forward movement. In addition, the advance was complicated by the failure of the 2d Battalion, 165th Infantry, to seize Hill Able (see Map 18). This commanding position, located on the right flank of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 106th Infantry, was an uncomfortable thorn in the side of the two units. Dangerous exposure of this flank caused the two units to stop their forward movement.³⁴

Among the 3d Battalion's casualties on 28 June was the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Harold I. Mizony, USA, killed in action when two Japanese tanks unexpectedly appeared just forward of his battalion observation post. By chance, the two enemy vehicles had found a lucrative target; commanders of the 2d and 3d Battalions, together with their

³¹ 8th Mar Report, 7.

³² CINCPAC-CINCPMA Item #9983-85, 26.

³³ It will be recalled that Colonel Stebbins, the regularly assigned chief of staff, had taken over command of the 106th Infantry on 26 June. Certificate of MajGen G. W. Griner, 12Jul44.

³⁴ 106th Inf Report, 12-13.



FIRE SUPPORT, delivered by a heavy machine gun (foreground) and a 37mm gun (background), assists the infantry advance on enemy positions. Behind the weapon, two crewmen ready additional belts of machine-gun ammunition.

company commanders, were gathered to plan the next move. Tightly grouped a short distance behind them were the men of the two battalions, waiting for the orders that would send them into action. Within a matter of moments the enemy tankers reaped an awful harvest—12 killed, 61 wounded—and disappeared unscathed.³⁵

The 3d Battalion had suffered heavy casualties in its Death Valley fight. By June 28 its effective strength of riflemen numbered approximately 100, and it was reorganized into a single rifle company.³⁶ Plans were made to move the “company” into reserve when relieved by the 1st Battalion.³⁷

The 2d Battalion, 165th Infantry, on the division right, meanwhile, continued its assigned

task of clearing Hill Able. This was no easy job. On 26 June the battalion commander had reported that his troops occupied the hill, but morning of 27 June found him in error—the Japanese were still firmly in possession. Persistent tenants, they refused to budge despite heavy pressure applied on 27 June. Again on the 28th, repeated efforts were made, but the enemy held. One attempt which appeared to promise certain success inexplicably failed. This attempt had followed receipt of word that U. S. stretcher bearers had moved unmolested along the hill’s western base. Maneuvering through the zone already cleared by the 106th, the 2d Battalion, 165th, enveloped Hill Able from the west. Again the attack was repulsed and another failure in the struggle for Hill Able recorded. At 1815 the battalion was detached from the 106th Infantry, with which it had operated for several days, and attached to the 105th Infantry, which was taking over the right of the division zone.

³⁵ Love, 324–325.

³⁶ The unit was still referred to as the 3d Battalion, however.

³⁷ *106th Inf Report*, 12–13. 27th Inf Div Field Order #52.

Company F, 106th Infantry, meanwhile, moved down from atop the cliff and rejoined its parent battalion. This company had been with the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, since the evening of 23 June. The Marines were sorry to see the unit leave. During its week atop the cliff, Company F had proved itself an aggressive, well-led organization.

As night fell and the division dug in, a short 400 yards had been gained.³⁸

"Hold Present Positions. . ."

Holland Smith ordered the 4th Marine Division to "hold present positions until further orders." Its long advance of 27 June made further moves impracticable until the 27th Division had come abreast. To assist the latter in catching up, the 4th Marine Division was directed to "assist advance of 27th Infantry Division by fire." During the wait, rear areas would be mopped up, and two battalions of 105mm howitzers from the 14th Marines were prepared to pass to control of the Corps Artillery.³⁹

In compliance with that part of the order which directed that fire assistance be provided the 27th Division, General Schmidt ordered the 165th Infantry (less 2d Battalion) and the 24th Marines to establish one battalion each along the division boundary. The 1st Battalion, 165th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, found the extension too great for them to cover. Even with the commitment of another battalion from the 24th Marines (the 1st) and readjustment of the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry's lines, physical contact still did not exist with the 27th Division. Four battalions attempted to cover the open flank, while only three faced the front.

"Hold present positions" was a fluid phrase as it pertained to a division. It permitted small changes and shifts (to improve the position held) while, at the same time, requiring that the general trace of the front lines remain substantially fixed. In keeping with this logical interpretation, the 23d Regiment patrolled forward of its lines to a distance of 500 yards, and

the 165th Infantry occupied a dominating feature (Hill 700) a short distance to its front. With the shifts and minor advances, objective O-6 was completely occupied within the 4th Division zone during the day. Patrols from the 23d Marines made no contacts in the area to the front but observed indications of recent evacuation by enemy groups.⁴⁰

A serious blow befell the 165th Infantry on 28 June: an exploding Japanese mortar shell wounded the regimental commander, Colonel Gerard W. Kelley. After Kelley was evacuated, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph T. Hart, the executive officer, assumed command.⁴¹

The 4th Division's success in pushing along the east coast was recognized by the Japanese chief of staff in his summary of 28 June:

The enemy is steadily increasing his troop strength opposing our front lines in hill lines west of Donnay and is closing in on our positions; a few of the enemy have infiltrated into our positions. The enemy is still not north of Donnay.

A correction could have been added by the men of the 4th Marine Division: "We are already north of Donnay."

Some of the hardships the Japanese endured during the battle were indicated by a reference in General Iketa's report: "In our front line units, the troops have been three days without drinking water but are hanging on by chewing leaves of trees and eating snails."⁴²

On Nafutan Point the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, spent the day ferreting Japanese from the many caves and crevasses there. Among the weapons and equipment found were four 6-inch guns of British manufacture and three 14-centimeter guns. When discovered, only one of the 6-inch guns was in good firing condition; two were slightly damaged and one was badly damaged. None of the 14-centimeter guns was emplaced and one of the three was slightly damaged.⁴³

⁴⁰ *4th Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 28. *23d Mar Report*, 44.

⁴¹ *165th Inf Report*, 6.

⁴² Both Japanese quotes from CINCPAC-CINCPMA Item #9983-85, 26.

⁴³ *O'Connell Letter*.

³⁸ 27th Inf Div Periodic Report No. 12, 28Jun44.

³⁹ NTLF Operation Order 15-44.

Night of 28–29 June

The night of 28–29 June was similar to many other nights at Saipan. An enemy probing patrol explored too close to the muzzles of the 6th Marines' rifles and suffered a loss of ten men and two machine guns before it could extricate itself.⁴⁴

Even in the grimmest surroundings and under the most uncomfortable circumstances, an occasional incident cropped forth to brighten the situation, a moment of comic relief in an otherwise somber drama. Such a moment was provided in the 23d Marines' sector. Alert Marines peering into the darkness were astounded, sometime after midnight, to observe ten enemy vehicles, with headlights burning brightly, approaching via the east coast road. Not wishing to disclose their positions, the Marines held their fire, hoping to blast the enemy at close, final range. The trucks came on and on. And then—suddenly—as if awakening from a horrible dream at the brink of doom, the leading driver realized that he was on the wrong road, that, in fact, he was on his last road if he did not immediately reverse his course. This he did with frantic haste and strident grinding of gears. The others followed suit. Within a matter of seconds the convoy had evaporated into the night and the Marines were left with throbbing pulses and itchy fingers.⁴⁵

Enemy planes attacked Saipan again during the night. From 2040 to 2137 intermittent attacks were delivered on the transport area and Aslito Airfield. Of the five intruders, two were shot down by the antiaircraft weapons of the 864th AAA Battalion. One of the downed planes jettisoned its bombs in Magicienne Bay before crashing on Kagman Peninsula. The other, bursting into flames, fell north of Aslito Airfield. As it crashed, a bomb in the plane exploded, causing several casualties among U. S. personnel nearby.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 18.

⁴⁵ NTLF G-2 Report, 39.

⁴⁶ TF 51 Report, Encl A, 10–11. NTLF G-2 Report, 39.

D-PLUS 14 AND D-PLUS 15 (29–30 JUNE)

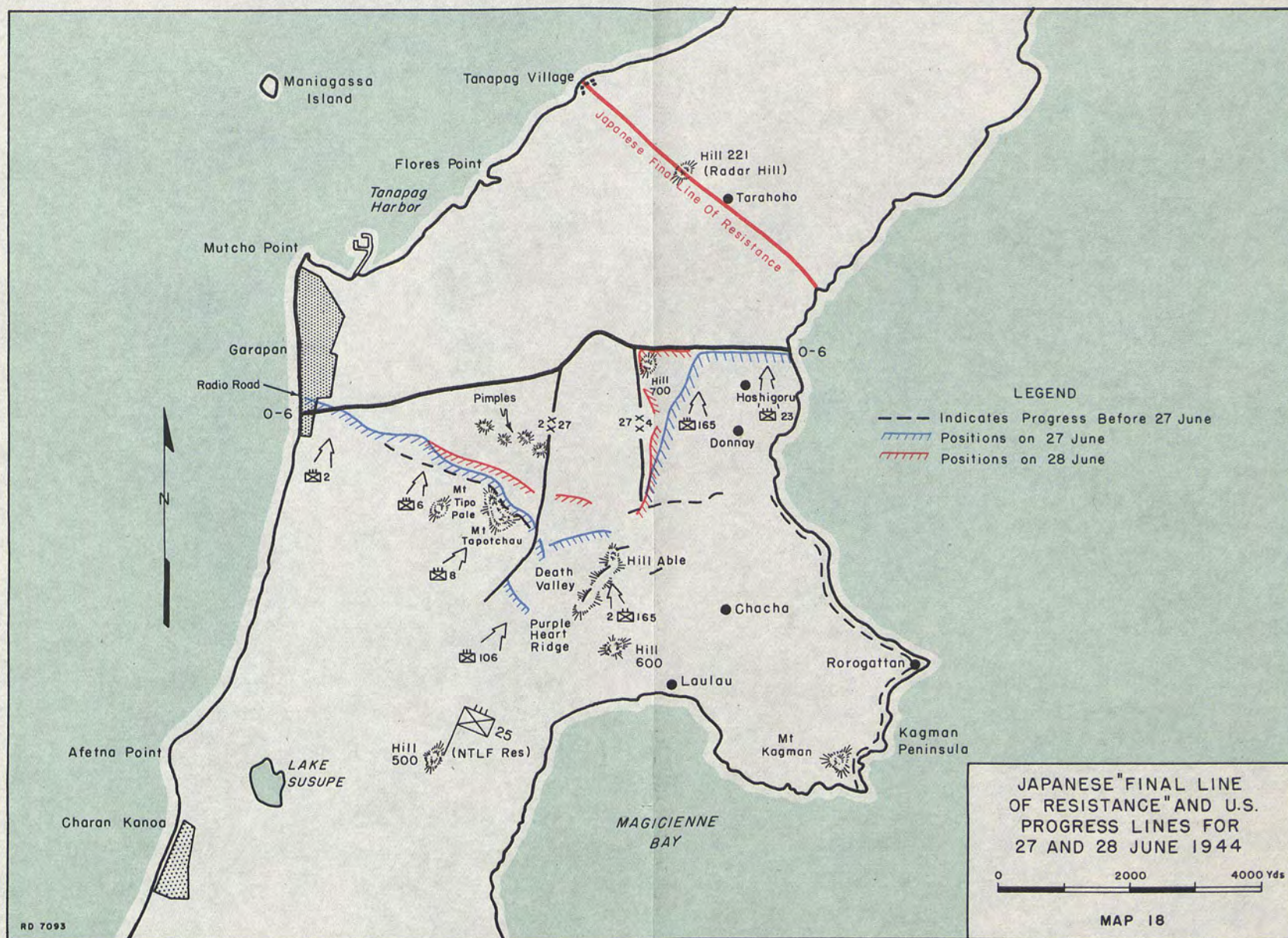
With the operation two weeks old, *everyone* on the island felt the weight of fatigue settling down. Like a runner waiting for his "second wind" the three U. S. divisions limped sluggishly at their tasks. To prevent this weariness from turning to apathy, the need for outstanding leadership became more pressing.

Everyone is an all-embracing word. *Everyone* was tired. For while the U. S. troops had endured much at Saipan, the Japanese had suffered more. It was effort expended positively against effort spent negatively, and the latter was more depressing. Then, too, it was easier to fight forward than backward.

Apart from the psychological implications, however, the Japanese had suffered more from U. S. supporting arms. This was material, this produced casualties, and even the best calculated propaganda could not erase its effects.

Despite the difficulties and confusion imposed by U. S. bombardment, Major General Iketa found time to answer a message from the Tinian Defense Force (50th Infantry) on 29 June. Still hopeful of receiving reinforcements from Tinian, Iketa admitted that the waters around Saipan were strongly patrolled by U. S. vessels, but "it is probably possible for small boat operations to break through Tinian channel at night and follow along the east coast and enter at Hanachiru." The uncertainty displayed by his use of the word *probably* is repeated in the concluding sentence: "The objective after landing will probably be in vicinity of wireless station."⁴⁷ From the volume of correspondence that had been exchanged on this subject, the impression is derived that the Tinian commander was not anxious to undertake these moves and was stalling for time. Then too, there is the possibility that those few miles of American-patrolled water separating him from his Saipan superiors had convinced the Tinian commander that he should do his own thinking. In any case, it is small wonder if he quailed at the prospect.

⁴⁷ CINCPAC-CINCPOA Item #9983–85, 27.



Waiting and Patrolling

Since 27 June, when it had advanced 3,000 yards in a rapid sweep, the 4th Marine Division had been restricted to only consolidation and readjustment of its lines. Further advance would merely accentuate an already acute contact problem, inasmuch as the 27th Division was still a long distance behind.

The 23d Marines, in position along the east coast, spent 29 and 30 June profitably: daily patrols scouted the terrain to the front in preparation for subsequent moves. Though valuable for the detailed examination of ground forms, roads and trails, these patrols made no large contacts with the enemy. Such few, scattered groups as were located were either captured or destroyed.⁴⁸

Having seized Hill 700 in the previous day's consolidation move, the 165th Infantry patrolled north and northwest of that feature and expanded its defenses. To permit the 165th greater freedom of maneuver in the latter connection, the 23d Regiment was ordered to assume some of the Army regiment's frontage. Principal complication to relaxed movement around Hill 700 was Japanese mortar and artillery fire coming from the west and northwest. In rebuttal, the 165th directed long-range machine-gun and artillery fire into suspected Japanese positions.⁴⁹

The 1st and 3d Battalions, 24th Marines, remained along the 4th Division left boundary, though they had been unable to stretch far enough to contact the 27th Division. Daylight of 29 June revealed that a number of Japanese had filtered through the gap between divisions. Once behind the 4th Division's lines, these infiltrators began an energetic program of harassment. Positive action was demanded, and the 2d Battalion, 24th Marines, in division reserve, set about the elimination of the hostile groups. Company G, 24th Marines, remained at Kagman Peninsula, executing a coastal observation mission.

The 24th Marines' situation remained generally unchanged until about 1700, 30 June,

when the 1st Battalion was pinched out by a shortening of the vertical connection as the 27th Division moved forward.

A shift in commanders was necessary in the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines; Lieutenant Colonel Vandergrift, wounded two days before, was finally evacuated on 29 June and Lieutenant Colonel Otto Lessing, formerly executive officer of the 20th Marines, took over.⁵⁰

The 25th Marines, in NTLF reserve, had had little excitement since the Japanese exodus from Nafutan Point on the night of 26-27 June. The unit's action report for the last three days in June reads as follows:

D-plus-thirteen (28 June). Regiment continued assignment in NTLF reserve.

D-plus-fourteen (29 June). Same as D-plus-thirteen.

D-plus-fifteen (30 June). Same as D-plus-thirteen.⁵¹

If the action for this period was as dull as the report, that was completely to everyone's liking. Certainly the 25th Marines had been in the thick of the fight earlier in the operation, and there was no reason to suspect that they still would not be in for more.

Vertical Gap Reduced

After days of virtual stalemate, the 27th Division's advances on the last two days of June were indeed gratifying. Lieutenant Colonel Bradt's 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry, ordered from division reserve into the lines on the right of the division front, arrived at the line of departure and attacked at 1100, 29 June. Rapid progress by this unit reduced the size of the vertical gap on the 27th Division's right flank by about 800 yards. On 30 June, after another sizeable surge, good contact was established with the 24th Marines. This advance cut the reentrant depth to about 1,200 yards.

Men of the 2d Battalion, 165th Infantry (now attached to the 105th Infantry), continued their battle of previous days to oust the persistent foe from Hill Able. This feature, erroneously reported captured on 26 June, demanded the unit's full effort and attention until 30 June, when it was finally secured.

⁴⁸ 23d Mar Report, 44-45.

⁴⁹ 165th Inf Report, 6.

⁵⁰ 24th Mar Report, 22.

⁵¹ 25th Mar Report, 7.

On the left of the division's front, the 106th Infantry continued its difficult move past the cliffs. Lieutenant Colonel Cornett's 1st Battalion, which had spent the two previous days in cliff-cleaning operations, moved back into Death Valley and relieved the decimated 3d Battalion on the regiment's left. But in all other respects the situation was unchanged. On 29 June, the regiment's advances were small, being principally hampered by a stuttering machine gun on its right flank and by several stationary, camouflaged tanks to the front. Difficult to locate, these tanks made movement through the area costly. By 30 June, however, the volume of fire had diminished and the two units moved rapidly. Physical contact finally existed with the 8th Marines on the left.

In division reserve, the tired 3d Battalion, 106th Infantry, mopped up rear cliff areas so that lines of communication and supply could operate with greater freedom and safety.⁵²

At 1600 on 29 June when it became apparent that important gains had at last been achieved, General Griner sent a field message to his subordinate units, a portion of which follows:

(1) Contact between adjacent divisions, regiments and battalions will be maintained at all cost.

(2) A continuation of the highest standards of personal leadership on the part of all officers is expected.

(3) The Corps Commander, after viewing today's operation from Mt. Tapotchau, expressly complimented the performance of the officers and men of the Division.⁵³

A Successful Ruse

The left flank regiment of the 2d Division, the 2d Marines, had had an opportunity to try a number of patrolling techniques during its long wait at Garapan's southern edge. Large patrols, small patrols, combat patrols, reconnaissance patrols; all proved invaluable both for the information they brought back and for the continuous state of unbalance their activities imposed upon the Japanese.

On 29 June the Marines successfully employed an unusual stratagem. On a knobby hill

500 yards forward of the 2d Marines' Radio Road positions, about a platoon of Japanese were well dug-in. This hill, named "Flametree Hill" for the effusive cluster of reddish-orange trees there, formed a tiny oasis in a desert of battered ruins. Once a shrine park, it still contained an austere statue of some long-forgotten Japanese statesman. During daylight hours, the bulk of the enemy on Flametree Hill remained in caves, with only a few occupying positions in the open. The latter were for the obvious purpose of watching the Marines and alerting their comrades in the caves of an impending attack. By this means, the greater part of the defenders were protected from the shower of supporting fires while at the same time they were in proximity to their defense positions should the 2d Marines begin the long-awaited attack. Even though the size of the enemy force was not great, the excellent observation afforded by the hill would allow the Japanese to play havoc with an organized attack toward Garapan.

The Marines' problem, then, was to get the sheltered Japanese into the open so that the supporting fires could impose casualties. To do this, a dummy attack was executed on the morning of 29 June. Commencing at daylight a thunder of high explosive and white phosphorous shells from artillery, 81mm and 60mm mortars enveloped the hill—the high explosive to confuse the enemy into thinking that the fires were in preparation for an attack, the white phosphorous to deny them observation. Simultaneously, six .30-caliber heavy machine guns explored the hill with searching and traversing fires.

Then, after the sudden deluge, the artillery fire stopped. Immediately, front line Marines opened with small arms to create the impression that the assault was commencing. The illusion was strengthened when mortars and heavy machine guns dropped out. Apparently, this was the signal for the Japanese to man positions, for at this point Flametree Hill suddenly came alive: a heavy volume of machine-gun and automatic rifle fire chattered an ominous challenge to the 2d Marines. The bait had been swallowed. Immediately, U. S. artillery, mortars and heavy machine guns opened up

⁵² 106th Inf Report, 14-16. 27th Div Periodic Reports 13 and 14.

⁵³ 27th Div Periodic Reports No. 13 and 14. Field Message 2 from MajGen Griner 29Jun44.

again. Previously, the artillery had used high explosive ammunition against the hill; now, with the enemy exposed, airburst shells were employed. Flametree Hill seemed to erupt and split apart under the concentrated shelling.

When, after several minutes of saturation, fires were lifted, the hill was quiet, with a heavy cloud of dust and smoke obscuring all details. Apparently, the ruse had worked; no estimate of casualties was possible, but several days later, when the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, moved into the area, many bodies littered the hill.⁵⁴

The 2d Marine Regiment had more than its share of accidents: on 28 June, a plane had misdirected three rockets into the 1st Battalion causing 27 casualties; again on 30 June, a Navy torpedo bomber, hit by a Japanese antiaircraft shell, crashed into the 1st Battalion's lines, resulting in a loss of seven more men. The pilot parachuted to safety from an unusually low altitude.⁵⁵

In the center of the 2d Division zone the 6th Marines moved but little on 29 and 30 June. Lieutenant Colonel Jones' 1st Battalion, on the left, was still in the same situation as on previous days. Like the 2d Marines, Jones' unit could not move forward until the dominating terrain on the right had been seized, or more specifically, until other units had come abreast. The time was, therefore, spent in patrolling of the area to the front and such minor adjustment in the lines as could be undertaken without breaking contact.

The right of the regiment's zone was, and had been, the scene of the most trouble. The 2d Battalion had punched at the ridge north of Tipo Pale for two days, and though it had not carried the objective, it made a substantial improvement, principally in the destruction of several enemy weapons. But the unit was tired. The fight had not been cheap. Colonel Riseley decided to pass the 3d Battalion through the 2d for the continuation of the attack.

The shift was accomplished by about noon.

The 3d Battalion, however, met the same determined, if slightly weaker, foe that had battled the 2d to a virtual standstill. By dint of great effort, the 3d Battalion was able, at 1630, to seize a toehold which presented a favorable forecast⁵⁶ of the next day's events.

Off from its starting blocks on 30 June, the 3d Battalion soon hit a minor snag: a previously unlocated automatic weapon opened brashly against them, cancelling hope for an easy ascent. Utilizing supporting fires and close-in grenade fighting, the Marines knocked out the position. As if by a cue, a second strong point asserted itself. The process was repeated: supporting weapons and grenades, finally the assault. The treatment was effective. The enemy was eliminated. After these encounters, the Marines swept rapidly to the high ground. Slower movement by the 8th Marines on their right, however, restricted the unit in its forward moves, and late afternoon found only a shallow gain. But everyone felt that a great weight had been removed from the unit's shoulders. "The day's advance," relates the 2d Marine Division action report, "placed CT 6 on commanding ground in the most favorable position for continuation of the attack since D-day."⁵⁷

The four Pimples on Tapotchau's northern face made convenient targets for the fires supporting the 8th Marines, as well as providing excellent objectives for the battalions. But a locality worth attacking is also apt to be an area worth defending. The enemy occupied the Pimples, during the last days of June, in sufficient strength to make it a fight. No one had reason to believe that the Japanese would withdraw without a fierce struggle.

During most of their battle around Tapotchau's rugged heights, men of the 8th Marines had been without active assistance of tanks. Though these were available, the terrain so restricted their movements that their use was curtailed. On 29 and 30 June, the Marines instituted a search for a route over which to

⁵⁴ *2d Mar Report*, Encl C. *Throneson*.

⁵⁵ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 19. Ltr from Capt C. Schultz, Jr., to CMC, 16Jan50.

⁵⁶ The forecast: Cloudy; probable showers of grenades; scattered Japanese.

⁵⁷ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 18-19. *6th Mar Report*, 11.

bring tanks into the fight. The possibility of moving the machines through the 27th Division's zone to the support of the 8th Marines appeared impracticable because of the time element. Then too, it was hoped that patrols would discover a more convenient route momentarily. None was found on 29 June, but the following afternoon a short advance by the 3d Battalion uncovered a route which, after improvement by bulldozers, served the purpose. Company A, 2d Tank Battalion, then proceeded to an assembly area in rear of the 8th Marines' lines in preparation for the attack of 1 July.

The two battalions occupying the right half of the regiment's front (1st Battalion, 29th Marines, and 2d Battalion, 8th Marines), fighting through similar terrain near the division's right boundary, found it imperative to coordinate their efforts carefully. Likewise, the two left battalions of the 8th Marines (3d and 1st), because of kindred terrain problems, assumed a closely-knit harmony of plan and action. Colonel Wallace, the regimental commander, quickly recognized the close integration of these groups and encouraged this attitude. Thus, Wallace was somewhat eased of the burden of coordinating the efforts of four assault battalions and was accorded a greater freedom of decision.

The most significant move by the 8th Marines during the last two days in June was the seizure of Bill's Pimple, on the division right flank. (See Map 19.) This hill, so tough to take had the Japanese chosen to make it so, was seized by the 2d Battalion on the late afternoon of 30 June without a serious fight. Immediately after the capture and as a result of an earlier request by the 8th Marines, a medium tank platoon of the Army's 762d Tank Battalion arrived on Bill's Pimple to render fire support. Since the 2d Battalion contemplated no further moves that day, the tanks were employed against Tommy's Pimple to the west. The latter feature had defied capture on 30 June, all attempts by the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, to advance against it being stopped. The 2d Battalion's advance, plus the availability of more supporting weapons (chiefly

tanks), made prospects for 1 July good, however.

The 8th Marines' picture had clarified and improved in several respects by the evening of 30 June: tanks were at last in supporting positions; all battalions, except the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, now had one company in reserve; all, save the 2d Battalion, were now supplied by truck, the open right flank was no longer such a worry: a company of the Provisional Battalion had moved in behind the 2d Battalion, and patrols from the Army's 106th Infantry now operated in the gap between divisions.

A perennial headache, misdirected friendly artillery fire, made itself felt again on 30 June. Ready itself for the day's attack, the 3d Battalion was enveloped in a thundering barrage emanating from deep to the rear. After 16 days of fighting, the effect of a miscalculation of this sort was particularly depressing and demoralizing. Other battalions had endured similar shellings; but, in spite of vehement complaints to higher echelons, the accidents continued. The identity of the unit, or units, responsible was never determined.⁵⁸

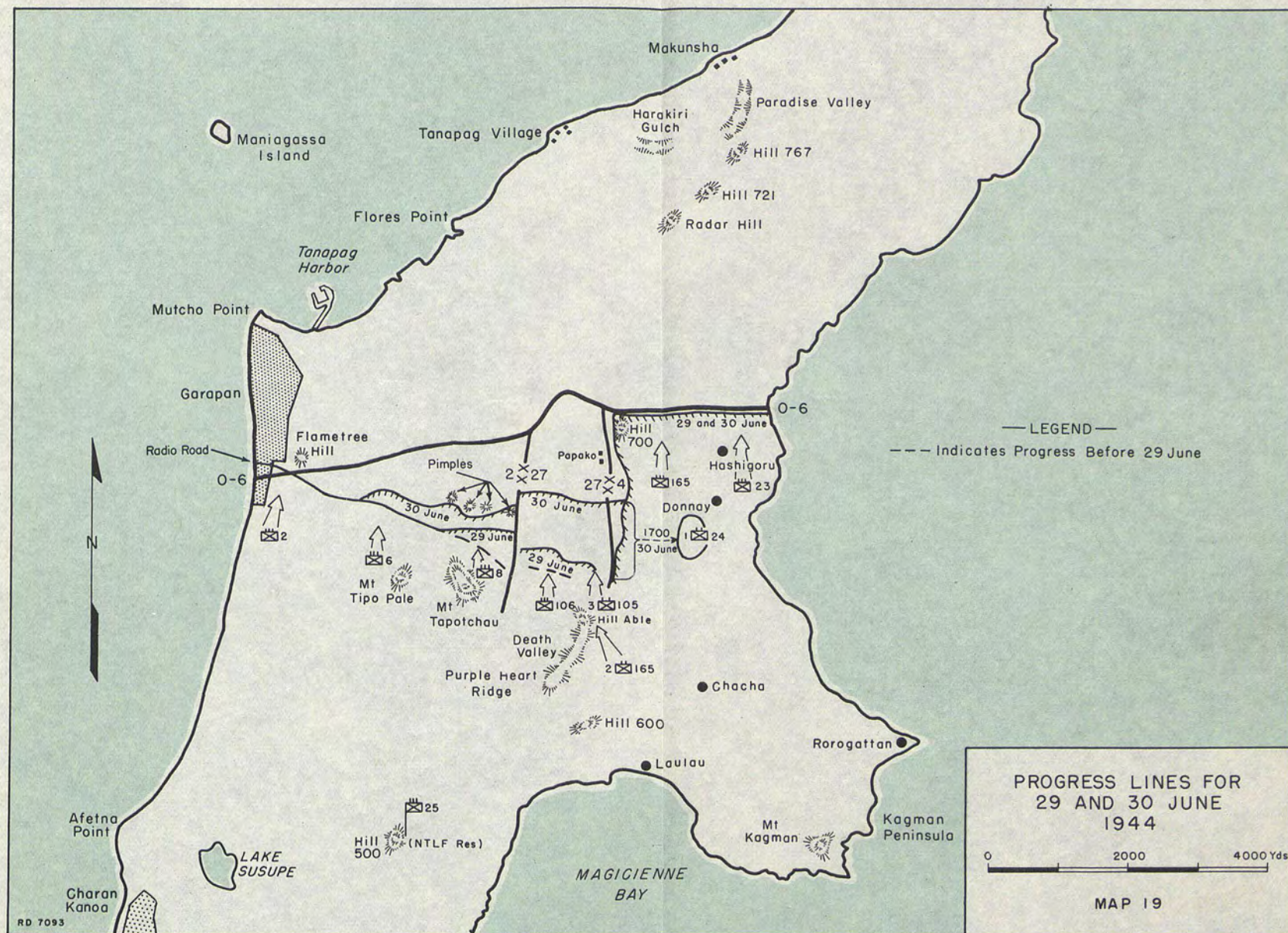
The 8th Marines' advance on 29 and 30 June had been slow but steady, using available supporting weapons to the maximum. In this connection, 75mm half-tracks blasted a number of positions forward of the 1st Battalion while rocket trucks released string after string of 4.5-inch projectiles at areas forward of the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines.⁵⁹

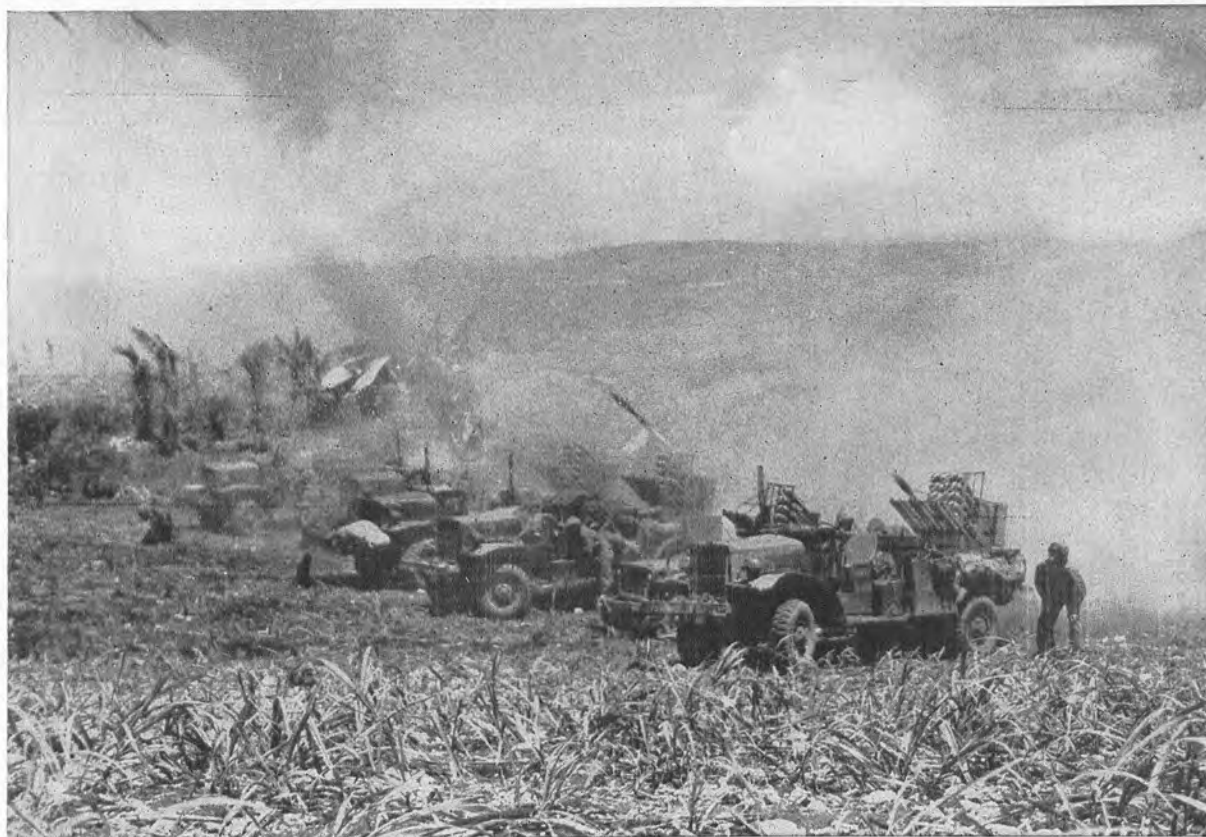
Though all three of its regiments were committed to the lines, the 2d Marine Division was not without a reserve, though at times it was only a provisional or composite group. On 30 June, for example, two companies from the Provisional Battalion, as well as the 2d Battalion, 18th Marines, whose engineers had been reorganized into three rifle companies of 175 men each, performed the reserve function.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Some conclusions on the reasons for these accidents will be found on page 250, Chapter VII.

⁵⁹ *8th Mar Report*, 7-8. *Tompkins, Chamberlin*.

⁶⁰ *2d Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 19-20.





ROCKET BARRAGE in the making. 4.2-inch rocket trucks were effectively employed by the 8th Marines north of Mt. Tapotchau and later by the 23d Marines at "4th of July Hill."

Nights of 29 and 30 June

Night activity had seemingly slackened; the night of 29 and 30 June remained reasonably quiet in all zones. Individual instances of sniping and infiltration were so commonplace by this time that they often were not even reported.

The usual Japanese air attacks failed to materialize on 29 June, but on 30 June the activities resumed with renewed vigor. Beginning just after dusk and lasting until after midnight, the air over Saipan was charged with excitement as "several" Japanese planes made nine separate raids on the island and the transport area. U. S. ships, hidden by a smoke screen, escaped damage; ashore, bombs dropped in the vicinity of Garapan failed to achieve any important hits. The most significant aspect of this particular incursion was

that it marked the first kill by U. S. night fighters at Saipan.⁶¹

Since 27 June General Saito had remained in a small cave 2,200 yards north of Tapotchau, but by 30 June this seemingly inconspicuous feature became the target for a booming mortar barrage. This stripped the tiny command post of its only advantage: seclusion. Saito felt that a change was indicated. His sixth and last refuge was another cave, this one located in a canyon cutting about 1,000 yards inland from the village of Makunsha. (See Map 19). The Japanese named the canyon "Paradise Valley." It was hardly an appropriate name.⁶²

Retreating Japanese were observed by the 4th Marine Division and the 105th Infantry during the early evening of 30 June. Generally,

⁶¹ *TF 51 Report*, Encl A, Annex 1.

⁶² Men of the 165th Infantry later called it "Valley of Hell."



BAZOOKAMAN (at left) and assistant cautiously search for targets at Garapan's outskirts. After a long wait for units on the right to come abreast, the 2d Marines finally advanced into Garapan on 2 July.

the withdrawal appeared quite orderly, the 4th Division reporting Japanese moving in column of files along a road to the north. Indications are that retrogression continued throughout the night, as moving lights were observed far to the north. The results of artillery and mortar fire against these targets could not be judged because of the long range at which it was delivered.⁶³

The reason for the enemy's general retirement was the desire of General Saito to pull back and shorten his line, regroup his forces, and coordinate the defense. With his command scattered through the roughest terrain, at the island's widest point, he had been unable even to disseminate his orders in time for integrated action. He hoped that the withdrawal would improve the situation and that he could then

conduct the type of mobile defense in which he believed.

D-PLUS 16 AND D-PLUS 17 (1-2 JULY)

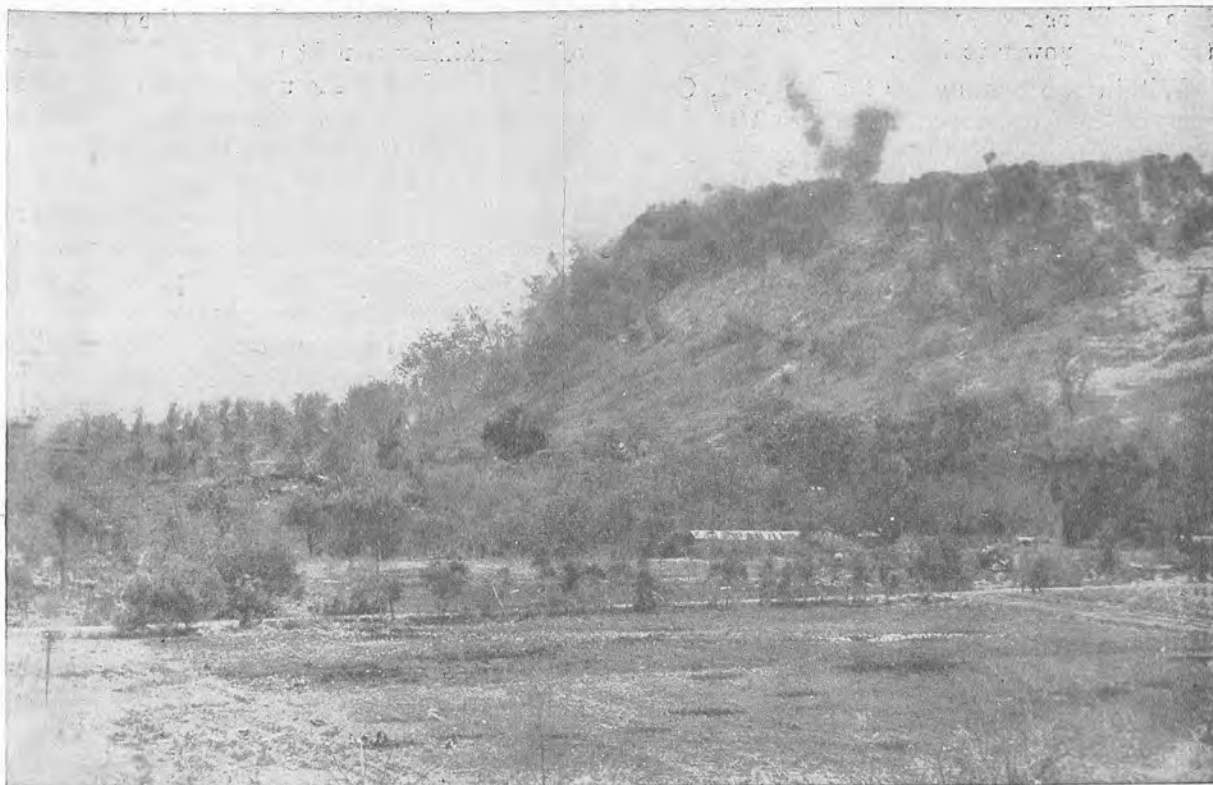
The Limestone Hill

The Northern Troops and Landing Force achieved important gains on the first two days in July. The swing to Tanapag began in earnest.

Reports of the general Japanese retreat had begun arriving at the NTLF command post on the previous night, and with the coming of daylight on 1 July, the reports continued. Along a road to the front of the 27th Division, the enemy could be observed pulling back to the north. They were on the run but still capable of turning around and making it a fight. There was plenty of venom left.

For the 2d Marine Division, 1 and 2 July marked the greatest forward surge since the

⁶³ NTLF G-2 Report, 42.



SUGARLOAF HILL dominated Garapan and surrounding coastal plain. 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, skirted these sheer south and west slopes and seized this feature from the east on 2 July.

D-Day landings. In a shift calculated to rest the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, the latter exchanged missions and positions with the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines.⁶⁴

Along the beach Colonel Stuart's 2d Marines spent 1 July in routine patrolling, but on 2 July began the long-delayed movement through Garapan. Attacking with the 1st and 3d Battalions abreast, 1st on the right and the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, in reserve, Stuart's men made excellent progress. The days and weeks of pounding paid dividends. Supported by Company C, 2d Tank Battalion, the 3d Battalion⁶⁵ swept through the rubble-strewn flat-

lands at a steady pace. Encountering rifle and machine-gun fire, men of the battalion took grateful advantage of the protection afforded by the torn hunks of concrete littering the area. With tanks ricocheting rounds among the shattered ruins, the Marines moved into the very heart of what had once been Saipan's largest town. (LVT(A)'s of the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion provided close fire support against targets near the beach.

Fighting through foothills overlooking Garapan from the east was Kyle's 1st Battalion. Here the going was tougher. Movement of supporting tanks was rendered extremely difficult by the rough terrain, but, surmounting the difficulties, the machines lumbered clumsily

⁶⁴ The 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, had done little fighting with its parent regiment. Attached to the 6th Marines on 15 June, it returned to the 2d Marines on 23 June and remained until attachment to the 8th Marines on 1 July.

⁶⁵ Now commanded by Major Harold K. Throneson who took over the 3d Battalion after Lieutenant Colonel Johnston had been wounded for the second

time on 21 June. Throneson achieved the distinction of occupying the most unusual observation post during the operation when he bridged with a plank the top corner of a shell-battered, roofless building in Garapan, climbed into his crow's nest with his radio operator, and carried on business as usual.

into positions from which to bring their shattering fire power to bear.

Within two hours after the jump-off, Company A had enveloped Flametree Hill from the west, fighting a lively skirmish with a detachment of cave-dwellers there. Then the battalion moved to the north towards the day's objective, a dominating eminence about 1,000 yards inland from Garapan's center. This feature, an expansive knob with forested slopes, had been named "Sugarloaf Hill" by the 2d Marines. Approached from north, south, or west, this feature presented steep, challenging slopes. From the east (inland) flank, however, the rise was very gradual and Kyle selected this approach. Against fairly heavy machine-gun fire, the battalion swept to the top of the hill, mopped-up the Japanese defenders and by 1700 established contact with the 6th Marines on the right.

Ever conscious of the threat of counterattack along the coastal road, Colonel Stuart ordered both assault battalions to send out security patrols to their front during the night. To provide depth to the regiment's defense, the colonel ordered his reserve (3d Battalion, 8th Marines) to establish a secondary defense line about 1,000 yards in rear of the forward elements.⁶⁶

As had been the case on so many previous days, the right half of the 6th Marines front gave the most trouble on 1 and 2 July. Emplaced in a ravine 500 yards forward of the 3d Battalion's lines were three Japanese field pieces protected by a host of rifles and machine guns. As the Marines attacked toward this area on 1 July, rifles and machine guns stuttered inhospitably, while the field pieces punctuated the threat with frequent rocking blasts. The 3d Battalion achieved little toward the destruction of this enemy stronghold during 1 July; but, with the support of tanks, 37mm guns and 75mm half-tracks, the unit finally moved to commanding ground facing the ravine.

The 1st Battalion, meanwhile, restricted its advance to conform to the slower movement of the 3d Battalion. Light resistance on its front

made rapid strides possible, but the difficulties of maintaining contact deterred Colonel Riseley from ordering the unit to push on. More open terrain, or an enemy less adept in infiltration, may have justified long thrusts by a single unit; but neither of these situations prevailed at Saipan. By dark of 1 July, when it was apparent that the ravine strong point would not be reduced, the 1st Battalion pulled back a short distance to achieve better contact.

The 6th Marines were old hands at dealing with troublesome cores: experience had been a stern teacher in the north Tipo Pale strong point. Without hesitation, unit commanders applied the tactics that had worked previously: Company B remained behind to contain and destroy while the rest by-passed the area and continued the attack.

Once past this "loaded" draw, both battalions swept rapidly forward. By nightfall of 2 July the Japanese had lost another 700 to 1,200 yards, the greatest gains having been made on the left and center. Just before dark the 6th Marines lost a jeep and a half-track when these vehicles ran over land mines which the Japanese had strewn haphazardly through the area.

To assist the 6th Marines in maintaining contact with adjacent units, two companies from the Provisional Battalion were attached on 1 July. The presence of these units eased contact problems, released infantry companies for the vital task of pressing the attack forward, and permitted Colonel Riseley to retain his reserve (2d Battalion) intact and in a state of absolute readiness.⁶⁷

Although still broken and heavily wooded in spots, the terrain facing the 8th Marines was the most favorable that the regiment had seen for many days. Tanks, which had found Tapotchau terrain awkward, could now move with dispatch, thus speeding the infantry's advances. This factor, coupled with the enemy's withdrawal, permitted the 8th Marines to sweep ahead nearly a mile on 1 and 2 July. And the welcome sight of the water at Tanapag spurred the efforts even further.

⁶⁶ 2d Mar Report, 5-6. *Throneson. Brooks. Kyle.*

⁶⁷ 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 20-22. 6th Mar Report, 11-12.

A well-executed tank-infantry thrust on the morning of 1 July carried the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, to the top of Tommy's Pimple without a fight. Then, in conjunction with the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, the attack continued. The two battalions now faced a series of relatively open ridges leading down to the coastal flats in the Tanapag vicinity. The exceptionally good observation facilities were used to advantage in bringing rocket and artillery fire to bear on any areas that appeared to offer positions for the enemy.

As the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, pushed its attack across an open field on the afternoon of 2 July, a small coral limestone hill on the right flank suddenly came alive. Grazing fire swept the open field, stopping the Marines' forward movement. The 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, also exposed to some of this fire, was slowed to a virtual standstill. During the afternoon this unit suffered the loss of another battalion commander; Lieutenant Colonel Tompkins fell wounded from a shell fragment. The 8th Marines' executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Jack P. Juhan, immediately assumed command.

The 2d Battalion, meanwhile, developed a stubborn, unseen foe of undetermined strength in the limestone hill. Hidden in the hummock's crevasses and caves the enemy brought accurate small-arms fire to bear upon the Marines. The word "accurate" is not used loosely here; few rounds were wasted. The battalion and Company G had a joint observation post located in a small island of trees in the center of the field. Each time a messenger attempted to run across the open field and enter the wooded clump, it was a dash through a gantlet of lead. Often as not, the messenger could not make the race to and from the observation post without getting hit. For this reason, this means of communication was not used except in cases of great emergency.

Major Chamberlin, commanding the 2d Battalion, tried to envelop the point of resistance, using Company F in a swing to the east. But the Japanese had not ignored this route of entry into their position and met Company F with a prohibitory fusillade. In addition, the Marines' envelopment route (the only one avail-

able) was through intertwining, snare-like underbrush, through which it was virtually impossible to move.

In the meantime, evacuation of casualties had become a problem: Marines had fallen on the open field, and all attempts to rescue them only resulted in more men being hit. The scheme finally adopted, and the one which brought success, was for a tank to position itself between the casualty and the limestone hill. By following directly behind the tanks, hospital corpsmen could then move safely to the wounded, apply hasty bandages, give them a shot of morphine, and place them on stretchers. Then, carefully coordinating their moves with the tank (by talking to the driver through the sound-powered phone on the rear sponson), the stretcher bearers would precede the tank from the site, all the while shielded from Japanese fire. White phosphorous rounds dropped on the hill by the 81mm mortar platoon plus frontal blasts from the chaperoning medium tanks also contributed to the success of this resourceful project. The fact that only small arms fire splattered against the thick hulls of the tanks indicated that the Japanese had no heavier weapons readily available in the limestone hill.⁶⁸

By dark, all wounded had been rescued, but the task of seizing the hill still remained. Captain Edward L. Bale, Jr., commanding Company A, 2d Tank Battalion, came up at this juncture with a suggestion both unique and resourceful. He proposed a night tank raid against the hill using illuminating shells and medium tank spotlights to brighten the area while light flame-thrower tanks (which had just arrived for the night mission) moved in close for the roast. The bizarre plan had one routine feature: riflemen and machine gunners of the 2d Battalion would watch the hill and shoot any Japanese attempting to dash from cover to place magnetic mines against the tanks.

⁶⁸ Credit for suggesting and supervising this scheme of evacuation goes to Pharmacists Mate 1st Class Frank M. Campbell, USN. On this and many other occasions, Campbell established himself as one of the bravest men to wear a uniform.



SURRENDER? Japanese soldier stumbles dazedly from a cave following a shattering explosion at the cave entrance. Marine at left watches, rifle ready.

About an hour after dark the raid was launched. As planned, the area was bathed in a lucid, bright light as the little tanks lumbered toward the hill on their mission. Once there, they spat at the hill with long streams of flame. Men of the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, with weapons at the ready, watched the arson with keen delight. After completing the searing process and discharging their flame-thrower fuel, the tanks returned to the lines. No one ventured upon the smoldering hill to inspect the results, but all felt that some good had been accomplished.

The two left battalions of the regiment (2/2 and 1/8), meanwhile, seized their Pimples on 1 July and pushed on to the north. Nutting's 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, which had exchanged

jobs with the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, on the morning of 1 July, quickly adjusted itself to the new surroundings and drove forward. Coral limestone cliffs, similar to those troubling Chamberlin's battalion, caused some difficulty, however. Japanese holed up in these formations invariably fought until they had either been killed or their cave positions sealed. Whether these Japanese represented that inevitable percentage that never gets the word (to withdraw in this case) or whether they were carrying out a delaying mission was never determined.

Contact difficulties were experienced at dark of 1 July between the 6th and 8th Marines. As already mentioned, the former was stopped by a strong point and not able to by-pass it until



STILL FIGHTING, although covered at point-blank range, this Japanese attempted to throw an explosive charge, but alert Marines (see picture opposite page), well familiar with such tactics, were quick to shoot him before he could pull the pin.

2 July. Progress by the 8th Marines, therefore, caused a break to develop. To fill this area the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, committed its reserve company. Just as the latter battalion prepared to halt for the night of 1-2 July, 30 Japanese, operating in the best traditions of a race that believed in death lunges, charged the Marines. Outnumbered and outgunned, the Japanese fell before the fence of bullets thrown out by the men of the 1st Battalion.

On 2 July, the two left battalions of the 8th Marines forged rapidly ahead, keeping pace with the surge around them. Misdirected artillery fire again marred the day's successes; just as the 1st Battalion poised itself to jump off in

the attack, friendly artillery fire thundered down and killed or wounded 51 Marines. Though delayed about 45 minutes because of the disorganization caused by this mishap, the battalion quickly caught up with flank units and moved about 800 yards during the day.⁶⁹

Gaining Momentum

The 27th Division by 30 June was indeed a skeletonized unit; only five infantry battalions were under General Griner's command. Throughout the series of special missions, at-

⁶⁹ 8th Mar Report, 8-9. 1st Bn, 8th Mar Report, 9. Gunter. Chamberlin.

tachments, and attachments within attachments, only the 106th Infantry remained intact. The other two infantry battalions under 27th Division control were the 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry, and the 2d Battalion, 165th Infantry, both operating under Colonel Bishop, the 105th's Commander.

Though General Griner's field order for 1 July gave missions to two regiments, the total assault battalions were only three: 1st and 2d Battalions, 106th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 105th.

Manning the left and center of the division's front, Colonel Stebbins' 106th Infantry moved 2,700 yards forward on 1 and 2 July against sporadic rifle, machine-gun and mortar fire, and occasional shelling from hostile artillery—nothing to compare with that experienced in earlier days of the Death Valley fight. Encountered and destroyed on 2 July were five Japanese tanks (emplaced as pillboxes) and numerous ammunition dumps. In connection with the capture or destruction of Japanese ammunition was the unescapably cheerful feeling that every round not in Japanese possession was a round that would never be fired at U. S. forces.

The 3d Battalion, 106th, remained in regimental reserve and continued its systematic mop-up of the left flank cliff line. Patrols reported no enemy contacts in this area, the first time such a report could be made since the 27th Division first encountered the sore spot on 23 June.⁷⁰

The 105th Infantry, attacking with its 3d Battalion in the assault and the 2d Battalion, 165th, in reserve, met its principal difficulties from Japanese flanking fire which issued from hillside caves in the regiment's zone. Here the story was an old one: the enemy, hidden in the deep shadows of natural caverns, funneled fire on their attackers. The tactic was as familiar and predictable as were the caves which abound on the island. And yet, the task of eliminating these holed-up individuals became only slightly easier with practice. (This schooling had too

few live graduates). Locating these caverns was difficult since it was usually necessary that they break silence and fire at least one round. That first round was apt to come from close by and would very often claim a casualty. With luck, then, the lair might be discovered with only a single loss. The hazardous task of sealing the cave, once located, required placement of the explosive in the cave entrance. This type of fighting was the work of individuals or small groups rather than units; and, while they executed their heroic tasks, the rest could only watch and wait and provide what fire assistance was possible.

No wonder, then, that the 3d Battalion, 105th, could gain but 300 yards on 1 July. And this much yardage was possible only because one hill strong point was by-passed during the morning, the 3d Battalion leaving one company behind to contain and destroy it. Later in the afternoon, elimination of this enemy pocket became the task of the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry, which had reverted from its attachment to the 4th Marine Division at 0900, 1 July. This unit arrived in the 105th Infantry's zone in time to take over and complete the mopping-up mission. The other battalion of the 105th (2d) was still operating in the Natutan Point area under Saipan Garrison Force control.

The 2d Battalion, 165th Infantry, separated from its parent regiment since 26 June, was ordered into NTLF reserve on the evening of 1 July, though it would remain in 27th Division rear areas. This assignment did not relieve the present reserve (25th Marines), but, rather, augmented it.

On 2 July, against much the same type of resistance encountered the previous day, the 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry, pushed about 700 yards. Though this represented over twice the previous day's gain, the battalion was far outstripped by the rush of units on either flank. The difference in speed was caused by a stubborn Japanese strong point near Papako (see Map 20) which defied frontal movement in the 105th Infantry's zone. From the moment the 3d Battalion nosed into this area, it became apparent that the going would be slow and that

⁷⁰ 27th Div G-3 Periodic Reports Nos. 15 and 16. *106th Inf Report*, 16-18. 27th Div Field Message 3, 30Jun44. 27th Div Field Order 53.

the speed of flank units could not be duplicated. By dark, therefore, both flanks were uncovered and the unit still faced the Japanese strong point.

Desiring to fill the gaps, Colonel Bishop, commanding the 105th Infantry, ordered the regimental reserve (1st Battalion) to pass to the left (west) of the hornet's nest, swing across the regiment's front, and tie in with the 165th Infantry on the right and the 106th Infantry on the left. This move, commencing about 1730, was successfully executed, although it was necessary to attach a company (I) of the 3d Battalion to help man the wide front. In effect, then, the 1st Battalion had taken over the 3d Battalion's zone, with the latter remaining behind to clean up the strong point.⁷¹

The 165th Infantry (less the 2d Battalion) had been waiting, as part of the 4th Marine Division, for the 27th Division to come abreast. This delay followed the 4th Division's rapid 27 June advance which left the 27th Division a considerable distance behind. To allow the latter time to knock out the resistance holding it up and to catch up, the 4th Division had restricted its activities to patrolling, minor adjustment of its lines, and fire assistance to the 27th Division.

With the return, on the morning of 1 July, of the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry, to the 27th Division, only two Army battalions remained under 4th Division control. And even their period of attachment was rapidly drawing to a close. An NTLF order directed the 165th to revert to 27th Division control at 0530, 2 July. Actually, this reversion had no effect on the unit's position on the front lines; it rather marked the termination of the period in which it was more convenient to have it attached to the 4th Division than to the 27th. Advances by the latter now warranted the return of the regiment to its normal command.

Selecting the same formation as the 105th Regiment, the 165th attacked on 2 July in a column of battalions, 3d leading, followed by the 1st in reserve. To mop up a small pocket

of resistance in the regiment's rear, Company C remained behind. The 165th's advance against virtually no resistance was very rapid, and by 1445 after a dash of 1,700 yards, General Griner ordered the regiment to hold its present positions to allow the 105th Infantry to catch up. A 30-minute concentration laid on the exposed left flank by the attached platoon from Company C, 88th Chemical Mortar Battalion contributed to the day's success. Good contact had existed with the 4th Marine Division throughout the day, and by nightfall the left was also tied in when the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry, hooked on to that flank.⁷²

The Surge to O-6A

Along the east coast the 23d Marines continued vigorous patrolling of the area to the front. Though penetrating enemy territory to a distance of 1,500 yards on 1 July, patrols made no contacts.

The 2d and 3d Battalions, 24th Marines, operating along the boundary between divisions, made minor movements to conform to the advance of the 27th Division. As the gap narrowed, the battalions kept pace. The regiment's 1st Battalion, pinched out on the previous day, assumed the coastal observation mission on Kagman Peninsula.⁷³

For the attack of 2 July the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, returned to the 4th Division. The rest of the 25th Marines, however, remained in NTLF reserve, an assignment first received on 23 June.

By 1345, 2 July, the division, attacking with the 23d and 24th Marines abreast, had advanced practically unopposed from O-6 to division intermediate objective O-6A. (See Map 20.) The assault unit of the 24th Marines, the 1st Battalion, suffered but one man wounded, an indication of the relative ease of the day's move. The 23d Marines reported mine fields and road blocks, covered by small detachments of riflemen and machine gunners, which temporarily impeded the 2d Battalion, but the other

⁷¹ *105th Inf Report*, 8.

⁷² *165th Inf Report*, 6-7.

⁷³ This disposition represented an exchange of jobs by the 1st and 2d Battalions 24th Marines.

assault battalion (the 1st) experienced no difficulty whatsoever.

Like the 165th Infantry, the 4th Division had pushed so far ahead of the 105th Infantry that further moves would present serious problems of contact. For this reason, the division was ordered to stop and dig in. Owing to the uncertainties of the left flank, the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, was placed along the division boundary facing to the west, prepared to counter any Japanese threat from that direction.

As soon as the division halted, patrols were dispatched toward O-7. Although continued throughout the night, patrolling failed to locate any strong enemy installations. This news, more evidence of the general Japanese withdrawal, was as welcome as sunshine on a picnic.⁷⁴

The Corps Artillery Commander, Brigadier General Harper, had found the rate of progress at Saipan "very disappointing" and was moved to write a statement which was delivered to Headquarters, NTLF, on 1 July. It concluded that the reason for the "very disappointing" progress was that the available artillery support was not being exploited by the infantry as it should be. "It is basic," says Harper's statement, "that a terrain feature and its approaches either merits softening up by the maximum employment of fire in mass or it should be assaulted and captured without delay if the enemy's resistance is weak."⁷⁵

General Holland Smith agreed with Harper's opinions and immediately sent a dispatch to all units directing that massed artillery be more extensively employed. While this represented neither new doctrine nor new policy, it came as a timely reminder to those units which had become overly sparing in the use of this valuable arm.

Either an interesting coincidence or evidence of prompt, direct results is revealed in the following statement from the 2d 155mm Howitzer Battalion's action report for 2 July (the day

following delivery of Harper's statement): "2 July was a memorable day. . . . This battalion fired 1573 rounds of ammunition, its daily high for this campaign. Most of the fire was coordinated by the Corps and the effect was excellent."⁷⁶

The reaction of the 2d Division commander, General Watson, to the directive regarding massed artillery fire is of interest:

... I immediately notified Headquarters NTLF (C/S Brig. Gen. Erskine) that, while I fully appreciated the value of and wanted to use massed artillery fires, wherever practicable, the artillery ammunition levels in the division dumps had never, since D-Day, been high enough to permit extensive use of this type of fire by Division artillery. He replied that sufficient ammunition would be made available. On the morning of 2 July I directed an artillery preparation be fired along the division front. This preparation lasted only for a few minutes.

Yet by mid-morning the expenditure of ammunition occasioned by this preparation coupled with the normal fires of the day caused NTLF to notify the Division that it would be impossible to provide sufficient ammunition to maintain minimum artillery dump levels for massed fires. Massed fires would therefore have to be restricted accordingly.

Elsewhere, General Watson showed a disagreement with at least a part of General Harper's opinions:

Without detracting from the important role played by artillery in the battle for Saipan the rate of progress was not and could not be primarily determined by the volume and frequency of delivery of artillery fires. Rate of progress was determined by the willingness and ability of the individual front-line Marine and soldier to dig out and kill the stubborn and skillful Japanese defenders.⁷⁷

Nights of 1 and 2 July

There was very little enemy activity during the nights of 1-2 July and 2-3 July. Apparently, the withdrawal had temporarily ruled out the possibility of counterattack by more than token forces. But no one slept well. There was just enough activity to maintain a state of perpetual tenseness. Relaxed slumber would have to wait.

What, exactly, did "little activity" mean on Saipan during the first two nights in July? On

⁷⁴ 4th Mar Div Report, Section VI, 30-31. 32d Mar Report, 45. 24th Mar Report, 22-23. 1st Bn, 24th Mar Report, 9.

⁷⁵ Utilization Of The Artillery In The Attack, 1Jul44, BrigGen A. M. Harper, USA.

⁷⁶ 2d 155mm Howitzer Battalion, V Amphibious Corps Report, 3.

⁷⁷ Watson.

the night of the 1st the 6th Marines captured 70 civilians and three Japanese military personnel through voluntary surrender. Later, a single Japanese attempting to move through the lines and return to his own unit met a quick fate. The same night, men of the 8th Marines spotted 15 prowlers along their front and killed them all. When the excitement from this diversion subsided, three Japanese soldiers carrying land mines were killed as they tried to move through the lines. The 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, intercepted and killed three would-be infiltrators. The 27th Division experienced sporadic, random firing all along its front and achieved the satisfaction of killing five Japanese by means of booby traps set by the 165th Infantry. In the 4th Marine Division it was even quieter. Only one instance of hostile mortar fire, which fell on the division command post, was reported.

The night of 2 July was similar. Japanese patrols continuously sneaked along the 2d Marines' front. Of three Japanese endeavoring to rove through the 6th Marines' lines, one was killed and the other two routed. Achieving the distinction of doing the unusual and unexpected during the evening, a Japanese soldier strode into the 6th Marines command post and signified his desire to surrender. This he was allowed to do.

The 106th Infantry reported that the enemy was firing flares intermittently from 2100 to 2400. This served to alert personnel to the possibility of a coordinated attack, but none developed. A number of violent exchanges between the soldiers of the 27th Division and lurking Japanese occurred throughout the night, but there was no indication that this enemy activity was intended as a major thrust. In the morning when a count was possible, the 105th Infantry found 27 Japanese bodies, while the 106th and 165th Infantry Regiments counted 10 and 18, respectively.

To this total for the night the 23d Marines added 25 more Japanese, caught as they moved south along the coast on the extreme eastern flank.⁷⁸

When the results of these night excursions

are balanced against the damage these same Japanese might have accomplished had they remained in caves, the futility of these moves is clearly revealed.

Shortly after midnight 1-2 July about five Japanese planes executed a small attack on Saipan and the transport area. The intruders, approaching at a low level to escape detection, were unsuccessful, achieving no damage to U. S. ships or units. One of the raiders flew too low and crashed into the water. Survivors (five) were captured by the destroyer *Renshaw*. Another plane was shot down by the *Bennion*, a ship of the transport screen. The rest buzzed around the island for a while, then departed.⁷⁹

The meager strength of enemy air over Saipan could give the beleaguered Japanese troops little comfort. The attacks were a nuisance to U. S. ships and installations, little more. Japanese planes did not raid Saipan again until 5 July.

Saito Changes His Defense

Since 15 June General Saito had been forced to stare grim reality in the face. His plans to drive the Americans into the water had been discarded in favor of a mobile defense. But most of the mobility had been backwards. Now he sought to delay the inevitable decision as long as possible. By midafternoon of 2 July mounting pressure along the entire front indicated the need for another withdrawal, and Saito issued a formal operation order which would pull the defense back from the Garapan—Tapotchau—Kagman Peninsula line to the general line: Tanapag—Hill 221—Hill 112.⁸⁰ The 31st Army chief of staff, Major General Iketa, had mentioned a withdrawal to this same general area in his resume of 27 June (see page 167), but the detailed assignment awaited Saito's order. This operation order and sketch fell into U. S. hands on the night of 3-4 July when one of Saito's principal subordinates (Colonel Ogawa) was killed in the command

⁷⁹ *TF 51 Report*, Encl A and Annex 1 to Encl A.

⁸⁰ As noted previously, Hill 221 was named "Radar Hill" by Marines; Hill 112 appeared as "Tarohoho" on U. S. maps.

⁷⁸ *NTLF G-2 Report*, 45-48.



STREET FIGHTING, the first experienced by Marines in World War II, was hot and heavy in Garapan. A flame-thrower is used here to roast an enemy hide-out in the rubble.

post of the 165th Infantry.⁸¹ (Details of this episode will be covered later in this chapter.)

D-PLUS 18 AND D-PLUS 19 (3-4 JULY)

Garapan Seized

The crumbling Japanese defense assumed landslide proportions on 3 and 4 July as all three U. S. divisions swallowed huge hunks of terrain. It was much like pushing against a stuck door, then suddenly feeling it yield. The quick rush was apt to shake one's equilibrium. But with scarcely a stumble the three divisions spurred forward. As he encouraged the troops of the landing force to even greater speed, General Holland Smith was applying one of his favorite maxims, written by the great German military thinker and writer, Karl Von Clausewitz:

For the victor, the engagement can never be decided too quickly; for the vanquished, it can never last too long. The speedy victory is a higher degree of victory; a late decision is on the side of the defeated some compensation for the loss.

Holland Smith wanted Saito to get as little "compensation for the loss" as possible.

For the 2d Marine Division the objective for

⁸¹ NTLF G-2 Report, 50-51.

3 July was O-7, which included the town of Garapan and the seaplane base at Tanapag Harbor. With half of shattered Garapan behind it, Colonel Stuart's 2d Regiment readied itself to complete seizure of the town and Mutcho Point, jutting from Garapan's north-western outskirts.

Duty in the town had little to commend it: battered skeletons of what had once been buildings, and humans, and animals, dotted the area; the choking smell of death hung about like a fog. And everywhere were the pieces of corrugated iron which the Japanese and natives had used as roofing for almost every structure from the hen house to the bank. To step on one of these huge rattling sheets was to inform everyone thereabouts of one's presence.⁸² Garapan's trash and garbage dump appearance was further enhanced by odd clothing, shoes, papers, books, and miscellaneous bric-a-brac strewn through the area. Perhaps the only bright point was the copious wells, providing adequate water for the 2d Marines to bathe away some of the filth on their bodies.

Dodging their way through the rubble, men of the 2d Marines made good progress: by noon of 3 July, despite abortive efforts of a few Japanese who determined to make a street fight of it, the 3d Battalion (on the left) had swept nearly 700 yards. In the center of the regiment's zone, several pillboxes were encountered, slowing movement there but allowing both flanks to advance. Light flame-thrower tanks and medium tanks seared and plastered the front of the pillboxes, while assault engineer teams, covered by riflemen and machine gunners, moved to the flanks or rear and placed their shattering explosives. Thus, the enemy positions were systematically reduced.

One position defied neutralization: this was located on a tiny islet in the center of a swampy pond near Garapan's northern end. Here a Japanese machine gunner had posi-

⁸² These corrugated sheets served another purpose, not only at Garapan, but all over the island: U. S. soldiers and Marines placed them over their foxholes in an attempt to stay dry during the torrential rains. Such improvisation was usually frustrated because the sheets, almost without exception, were riddled with shell holes.



AERIAL BOMBS were extensively employed as land mines by the Japanese. Buried with noses protruding above ground, the bombs could be set off by almost any United States vehicle. This 123-pound bomb was found in Garapan.

tioned himself and from there engaged anyone moving near the swamp's banks. Secure in the knowledge that he could be approached only by lizards, ducks, and other Japanese, he plagued the 2d Marines' efforts to clear the area. This point target seemed ideal for mortars, but it was soon discovered that the shells would not detonate in the spongy bog. Direct fire weapons could not be employed because of the danger to other Marines moving on the other bank. In his wet sanctuary the Japanese maintained his troublesome activity throughout the day. Nothing was heard from this determined individual on the following day, perhaps indicating that he evacuated his position

during the night. Or maybe he is still there.⁸³

The 1st Battalion, meanwhile, advanced through the foothills on Garapan's eastern environs. Progress until noon was not great (400 yards), but in the early afternoon the unit began to gain momentum. By 1800 it had pushed to O-7, at that point on the water's edge north of the town. This speedy thrust cut off the Japanese remaining in the Garapan vicinity.

During the rapid surge on the right, the left (3d) battalion was not idle; after clearing the Japanese from the remainder of the town's

⁸³ *Throneson.*



THE BATTLE WAS INTIMATE, lonely and personal, even though thousands of troops were present. Here a single Marine advances "on the double" near Tanapag Harbor.

streets, it swung out upon Mutcho Point, a movement chiefly complicated by annoying air bursts from a Japanese heavy antiaircraft gun in position north of Tanapag. By about dusk the advance halted for the night with only 400 yards of the point unconquered. The noose was tight and the Japanese who had retreated to the tip of the point were neatly trapped.

The 4th of July was almost a holiday for the 2d Marines. The 3d Battalion quickly mopped up the unfortunates on the point and established a coast line defense of the Mutcho Point—Garapan area. Remaining to be captured by the 1st Battalion was the boat basin which appears to hang suspended into Tanapag Harbor (see Map 20). Only one dryland approach existed: over the open, concrete ramp from the shore. Since troops moving upon this would be extremely vulnerable to grazing fires from any point in the boat basin or in the breakwater that surrounded it, the battalion commander decided to execute the move in amphibian tractors, landing at the end of the basin. Fire support would be furnished by the LVT(A)'s of the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion.

This landing was complicated by communications failures between the amphibians and

the troop commander but, nonetheless, was successful. Only a few Japanese were in the basin and these were incapable of more than token resistance. Only one Marine was wounded.

With this conquest the 2d Marines were pinched out of the attack and briefly, at least, could enjoy the prospect of not facing enemy-held terrain. At 1500 came word that the regiment, less 2d Battalion, would stand detached from the 2d Division to assume the role of NTLF reserve. The unit then entrucked and moved to an assembly area in rear of the 4th Marine Division.⁸⁴

In a repetition of so many previous days, the 6th Marines moved faster on the left than on the right, where the Japanese had exploited the defensible terrain. Keeping pace and acting in concert with the 2d Marines on 3 July, the 1st Battalion swung its left flank to the beach (O-7) while its right was echeloned far to the rear to contact the 3d Battalion. The latter unit moved rapidly at first; but, as the Marines approached the last high ground overlooking Tanapag Harbor, a heavy volume of Japanese rifle and machine-gun fire bid them unwelcome. By now the procedure at such times was clear: blast the area with all available supporting weapons, establish fire superiority, move in for the kill. By late afternoon the 3d Battalion seized the commanding ground; but, inasmuch as a distance of 1,000 yards still remained before the coast could be reached, Colonel Riseley ordered the unit to hold for the night.

Although contact between the two battalions of the 6th Marines was tenuous, nothing save desultory rifle fire occurred during the night.

The activities of 4 July resembled a mop-up more than an attack. By shortly after noon the 3d Battalion had completed the descent from the high ground, moved across the Tanapag flats, and joined the 1st Battalion on the beach. (See Map 20.) Then began the routine task of clearing the omnipresent snipers from the area.

At 1640 the 6th Marines were ordered detached from the 2d Marine Division and as-

⁸⁴ 2d Mar Report, 6. *Throneson, Brooks.*



TRAPPED JAPANESE, north of Garapan, attempted to gain refuge during the first days in July by getting to their sunken ships in Tanapag Harbor. Artillery and naval gunfire made quick work of the hulks, however. Dead Japanese soldier had no opportunity to reach the ships.

signed as NTLF reserve. In the latter function the regiment was to "reconnoiter routes and positions within the zone of the 27th Infantry Division" and to maintain a single battalion on antisniper missions within the general area: Flores Point—Tanapag Harbor—Garapan, extending to the high ground well inland of those areas. Colonel Riseley ordered his 2d Battalion to carry out this patrolling mission. The remainder of the regiment moved to an assembly area about 1,000 yards inland from Garapan's northern edge.⁸⁵

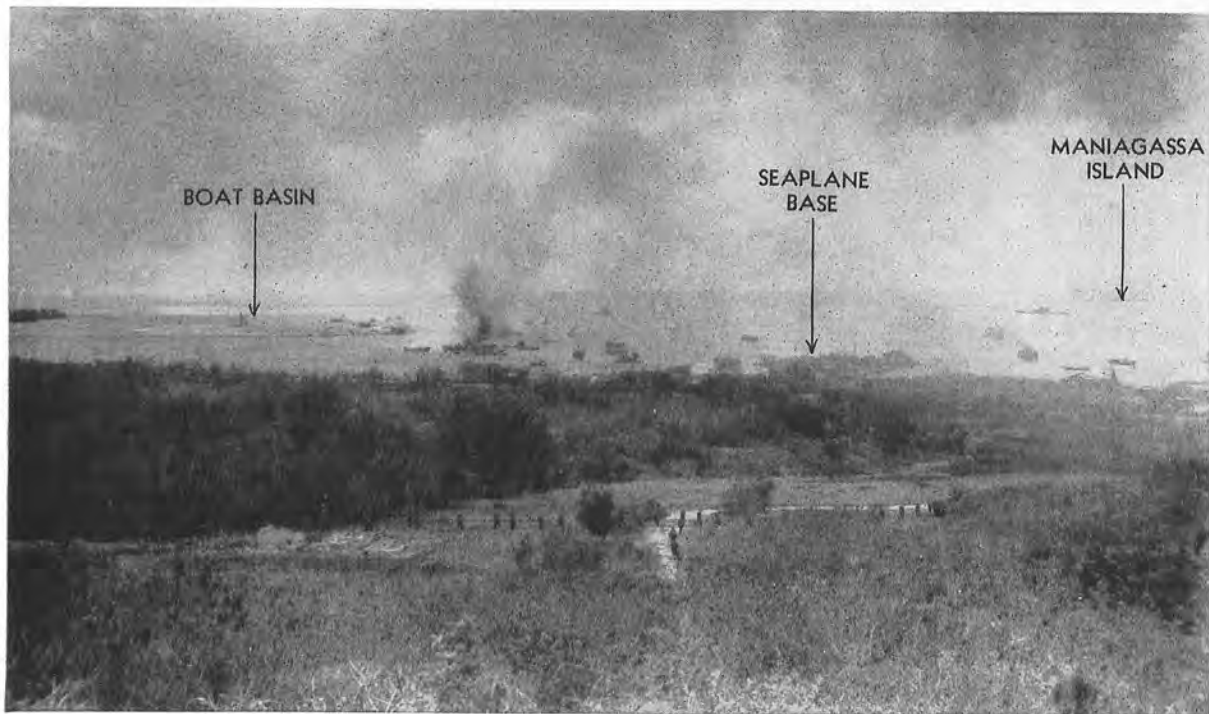
Farther out on the end of the 2d Division's swinging-gate movement was the 8th Marine Regiment. Just before launching the day's attack, the 1st Battalion again became the unfortunate recipient of friendly artillery shells. Compared to the 51 lost for the same reason on the previous day, however, the five casu-

alties of 3 July seemed light. Although this blunder delayed the unit's attack for 45 minutes and had the effect of making the personnel more "gun-shy" of their own artillery⁸⁶ than the enemy's, the battalion quickly caught up with units on its flanks and enjoyed a rapid advance against virtually no resistance.

The two center battalions of the 8th Marines (2/2 and 1/29 from left to right) moved forward rapidly, maintaining contact all the while. On the extreme right the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, found the small limestone hill still a tough nut to crack, despite hundreds of mortar, artillery and tank shells hurled at it and the thorough roasting administered by the light flame-thrower tanks the previous night. Rather than hold up the advance of the entire

⁸⁶ The term "own artillery" is here used to refer to all U. S. artillery at Saipan, since the unit, or units, responsible for these miscalculations was never definitely identified.

⁸⁵ 6th Mar Report, 13.



TANAPAG HARBOR on 4 July had fireworks to spare as Japanese vessels burned in the harbor. The boat basin was seized shortly before, and the seaplane base shortly after, this picture was taken.

regiment while neutralizing this strong point, the battalion commander (Major Chamberlin) ordered his unit to skirt to the left of the hill, leaving Company F to contain and destroy it.

Once past this sore spot, the battalion moved rapidly forward, maintaining contact with units on both flanks. Company F whittled and chipped at the limestone hill throughout the day and tightened the noose about it, but Japanese hidden in the nooks and crannies continued to pop up with telling bursts whenever the Marines ventured too close. At dark of 3 July the 2d Company of the Provisional Battalion arrived to relieve Company F of its task. The latter rejoined the 2d Battalion, by then over 1,000 yards ahead.

Independence Day was nothing more than a large scale mop-up, or a "rabbit hunt," as one Marine put it. Men of the 8th Marines moved rapidly down the hills to the Tanapag flats, beating the bush as they went, and by early afternoon reached the coast line in the vicinity of the seaplane base (see Map 20). There they ranged through the buildings and bomb shelters in search of strays but found very few.

Like Garapan, the seaplane base was a weird scene of destruction and desolation. Grotesque and deformed girders stood as mute testimony of the effectiveness of U. S. naval and air bombardment. Several charred planes lay scattered in the ramp area as a reminder that this had, indeed, once been an important installation at Saipan.

After weeks of trudging through the roughest terrain that the island could offer, the 8th Marines received good news on the afternoon of the 4th; the regiment would move to a bivouac-rest area. Under different circumstances, word of setting up a camp area anywhere on the fly-infested island may not have been exciting, but the conditions and situation being what they were, the word was as welcome as a reprieve to a condemned man. The rest area was located 2,000-odd yards inland from Beach Red 3, requiring a march of several miles. But no one complained.

At this time the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, which had operated as part of the 8th Marines since D-Day, reverted to 2d Division control. Lieutenant Colonel Jack P. Juhan, who had

commanded the unit since 2 July, resumed his regular job as 8th Marines' executive officer, and Major William W. McKinley succeeded him as battalion commander. Two days later the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, passed to the Saipan Garrison Force under direction of which it conducted patrol operations for weeks to follow.⁸⁷

The Thrust to Flores Point

The cross-island turn of the 27th Division on 3 and 4 July carried it to the Flores Point region on Saipan's west coast and objective O-7 (see Map 20). The point itself lay within the zone of the 105th Infantry, while the other two infantry regiments would strike the beach on either side of it—the 106th to the south, the 165th to the north.

With its formation unchanged (1st and 2d Battalions abreast), the 106th Infantry swept rapidly through its zone. Here, as elsewhere along the corps' entire front, the Japanese withdrawal had allowed a swift advance. All U. S. units capitalized on the situation. A few Japanese delaying groups remained behind to slow the U. S. drive, but most of these were quickly destroyed.

The 106th Infantry's left battalion (1st) met an unusually persistent delaying detachment on the morning of 3 July. This enemy group focused heavy machine-gun fire into the soldiers as they moved into the attack. Positioned as it was, near the boundary between the 106th Infantry and the 8th Marines, the enemy pocket was ideally situated to cause real trouble. But not for long, for the tank-infantry combination immediately went to work. The pattern was simple, yet effective. Tanks, each sheltering a cluster of infantrymen, advanced on the enemy position, blasting a path en route. Once the tanks had approached as close to the installation as terrain would permit, the surrounding infantrymen assumed the starring role and rushed the position. Even if the tanks completed the mission without infantry assault being necessary, the latter's presence served to discourage individual Japanese

from attempting to place magnetic mines against the tanks. The combination worked to the advantage of both.

In addition to the gain of approximately 1,000 yards on 3 July, the 106th made even greater headway on the 4th, reaching the beach just south of Flores Point by 1600. Besides sporadic outbursts from Japanese small arms and mortars, the unit experienced minor delays from two well-defended blockhouses. These ideal artillery targets were carefully pinpointed and destroyed. "Although there were considerable numbers of enemy encountered," commented the G-3 Periodic Report, "they appeared to be very much disorganized and confused."⁸⁸

The 106th Infantry's reserve (3d Battalion) spent the two days in mopping up rear areas as the assault units lunged forward.

The 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry, was the connecting link between the two flank regiments. On the evening of 2 July when the 3d Battalion had found itself embroiled in a fire fight with a well-entrenched enemy in the vicinity of Papako, the 1st Battalion had bypassed the strong point and tied in with the faster moving flank units. On 3 July the latter maintained a steady advance against negligible opposition, while the 3d Battalion completed its task of eliminating the stumbling block.

An important development on 3 July was the return to the 27th Division, at long last, of the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry. This unit, detached on 22 June, had been operating under NTLF and Saipan Garrison Force control. Upon its reversion, the battalion occupied an assembly area in division reserve. It remained in this status until the following evening, when it returned to the 105th Infantry.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ 27th Div Periodic Reports 18 and 19, *106th Inf Report*, 18-20.

⁸⁹ There was apparently some confusion as to the exact status of the battalion on 3 and 4 July. The 105th Infantry believed it to be under regimental control at 1300, 3 July and at 0940, 4 July ordered the unit to "comb area in Regtl zone..." This is contradicted by 27th Division Field Message 5 issued at 1800, 3 July: "2d Bn, 105th Infantry, Division Reserve, will remain in present position." And in 27th Division G-3 Periodic Report for 1600, 3 July to 1600, 4 July, mention is made

⁸⁷ *8th Mar Report*, 9. Wallace.

Maintaining its rapid pace, the 1st Battalion moved down from the foothills to the coastal flats and by late afternoon of 4 July secured Flores Point. By dark it was discovered that a sizeable interval existed between the left of the 105th and the right of the 106th. The recently released 2d Battalion was thrown into this hiatus and the flanks were firmly tied in. In compliance with an order from the 27th Division at 1545, the 3d Battalion went into the front lines on the 1st Battalion's right, taking over a portion of the 165th Infantry's former area in the process.⁹⁰ (Considerations which dictated this change will be discussed later in this chapter.)

The 165th Infantry, ready to move out at 0800, 3 July, discovered that the 4th Marine Division was directing an air strike and that any forward movement might be dangerous. The 4th Division, meanwhile, thought that the 165th was holding up awaiting units farther to the left. At 1100, however, following this faltering start, the 165th and the 4th Division got their signals straight and launched the attack.

With its battalions in column, 3d leading, the 165th Infantry moved forward steadily on 3 July, gaining about 500 yards. Enemy mortar and machine-gun fire, issuing mainly from the left front, plagued the soldiers throughout the day but failed to accomplish more than slowing their rate of advance.

During the night of 3-4 July the 165th Infantry command post became the scene of violent activity when 27 Japanese advanced into the installation, apparently by mistake. All of the Japanese intruders were killed with no loss to personnel of the 165th. In the morning, when an identification could be made, Colonel Ogawa, commander of the Japanese 136th Infantry, was discovered among the dead. Piecing the story together, it appears that Ogawa and his headquarters group had been by-passed by U. S. advance and that he

was attempting to displace to the northeast when he blundered into the 165th's command post. Many papers and documents found on the Japanese commander were sent to higher echelons for processing, translation and interpretation. One of these, a Japanese field order, contained detailed instructions relative to the establishment of new defensive areas to the north.

On the morning of the 4th, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph T. Hart, who had relieved the wounded Colonel Kelley as the 165th's commander on 28 June, ordered the 1st Battalion to pass through the 3d and continue toward the west coast. This shift was accomplished without difficulty, and at 0730 the attack was launched. Progress was favorable against virtually no opposition until the unit reached the high ground overlooking Flores Point. Here slower movement of the 105th demanded a short wait. But when the latter came abreast, the attack regained its momentum and, during the early afternoon, carried rapidly towards the coast.

Nearing the coastal flats, the regiment met the heaviest Japanese automatic weapons fire experienced during the day. While attempting to locate and neutralize the source of this resistance, the 165th received a division order changing its boundaries and swinging the direction of attack to the northeast. (Considerations which dictated the change of zones will be discussed later in this chapter.) The new zone of action included the area occupied by the two left battalions of the 4th Marine Division, so that a relief of these was indicated. As part of the same move, the 2d Battalion, 165th Infantry, in NTLF reserve since 1 July, returned to parent control. Lieutenant Colonel Hart, therefore, ordered his 2d and 3d Battalions to relieve the Marines in the new zone.

As the 27th Division accomplished the prescribed shifts, internal gaps developed, one between the 165th and the 105th, another between the 1st and 3d Battalions, 165th. The first mentioned break was filled shortly after dark, but the second remained vacant until nearly midnight, allowing the Japanese to use this area as an infiltration route. As a consequence the 3d Battalion, 165th, in the center

that the battalion had remained "in Div Res at TA 213." Later, 27th Division Field Order 54, issued at 2200, 4 July, formally returned the 2d Battalion to the 105th Infantry.

⁹⁰ 27th Div Periodic Reports 18 and 19, *105th Inf Report*, 8-9.

of the regiment's sector, spent a lively evening. A total of about 100 Japanese, in a series of thrusts, unsuccessfully attacked the unit's left during the night. With the coming of daylight the results of the skirmishes lay crumpled forward of the soldiers' lines: about 80 dead Japanese were counted.⁹¹

The Struggle for the Hills

Usually, to front line troops, one hill was like any other hill, even though one might be tall, another squatty, another wooded, another bare. It was only when a hill presented something distinctly unique in the way of appearance or—especially—enemy resistance that its name became familiar to all. In this connection witness the rash of "Bloody Nose" hills and ridges which dotted the islands of the Pacific.

Lying within the zone of the 4th Marine Division were four hills which became all too familiar during 3 and 4 July. Two of these were named for their heights in feet: 721 and 776; a third, nothing more than a nose protruding from the southeastern face of Hill 721, was appropriately designated "4th of July Hill;" the fourth, Radar Hill, was so named because of Japanese radar installations there. (See Map 20.) While every Marine in the division was not compelled to scale each of these, it is safe to say that everyone got into the act.

As noted previously the 4th Division had not jumped off promptly on the morning of 3 July because it thought that the 165th Infantry was waiting for other elements to the rear. The 25th Marines were released to parent control on 3 July with the proviso that the 2d Battalion could not be committed without approval of the landing force commander. With this extra strength the 4th Division started its advance at 1100.

The formation was unusual: three regiments abreast and each in column of battalions. The reason for this was that the division was cutting across the island so that each stride uncovered additional yardage on the right flank. It was conceivable that the right regiment

would soon be entirely committed in facing the ever-widening north flank. This method, General Schmidt considered, would require less coordination and would be simpler of execution than to detail a reserve regiment for the job. The 23d Marines, already on the division right, would peel off flank protection as the lines advanced.

The three assault battalions (from right to left: 3/23, 3/25 and 1/24) moved over the rugged terrain without difficulty for the first few hours; but at 1615 when the right battalion ventured toward the lower slopes of "4th of July Hill" and Hill 721, it encountered a sudden deluge of rifle, machine-gun and mortar fire. What had appeared as a series of contours on the map and as a pair of innocuous rises on the ground suddenly attained an ominous significance. Best estimates placed the enemy strength at about one battalion, with personnel nestled into every recess, cavity, cleft and cave. Hill 721 was reasonably open, while "4th of July Hill" was heavily wooded; both were well-notched with hiding places.

The 3d Battalion, 23d Marines, made several attempts to capture the position, both by frontal assault and by envelopment. All efforts were repulsed. Neither tanks, so valuable in this type of fighting, nor 75mm half-tracks could move closer than 1,000 yards to the hills because all approaches were heavily mined.

The assault battalions of the other two regiments, meanwhile, were unable to progress past the hills without placing themselves at the mercy of Japanese located there. Progress of the entire division, then, revolved about the seizure of Hill 721 and its wooded appendage.

By 1715, after several abortive ventures, it became obvious that the area would not be carried on 3 July. For this reason, Colonel Jones, the 23d's commander, ordered the 3d Battalion to withdraw about 300 yards so that artillery fire could safely be directed against the hills. Major Paul S. Treitel, the battalion commander, then received permission from the regimental commander to maintain the 3d Battalion command post in its present position so that evacuation of casualties could be expedited. This placed the command post in a

⁹¹ 165th Inf Report, 7-8. 27th Div G-3 Reports 17, 18 and 19.

vulnerable location approximately 150 yards forward of the front lines. Fortunately, no serious situations developed.

The other two battalions of the 23d Marines, meanwhile, were employed in protecting the north flank which now extended from the east coast about 2,500 yards inland. It was probably at this time, as plans were being made for continuation of the struggle the next day, that the apt name "4th of July Hill" was first applied.

As the 25th Marines dug in for the night, a single battalion (the 3d) occupied the front lines, while the 1st was in reserve. Contact difficulties soon demanded the services of two companies of the 1st Battalion, however; Company B went into the lines on the right and Company C on the left of the 3d Battalion. The 2d Battalion, which had been in NTLF reserve in rear of the 2d Marine Division, started the long, tiresome march to rejoin its parent unit. After its arrival (about midnight, 3 July) the battalion was designated as division reserve.

Men of Colonel Hart's 24th Marines established themselves on Radar Hill (1,000 yards southwest of Hill 721) for the night after shifting the 1st Battalion into reserve and moving the 2d and 3d Battalions into the lines.

Two command shifts were effected by the 24th Marines during the period 3-4 July. Lieutenant Colonel Vandegrift, evacuated on 29 June, returned to the 3d Battalion on 3 July and relieved Lieutenant Colonel Lessing. The following day, Lessing got a new job: command of the 1st Battalion. Lieutenant Colonel Brunelli, who had functioned as 1st Battalion commander since 18 June, then reverted to his regular assignment as regimental executive officer.

Throughout the night of 3-4 July the 14th Marines poured volley after volley into "4th of July Hill" but otherwise the night was quiet.

Preliminary to the general advance of 4 July the 4th Division ordered the 23d Marines to conduct a local attack to secure the troublesome heights. This move was to be preceded by a 30-minute artillery softening. Though good on paper, the plan was thwarted in so far as

the artillery was concerned. As soon as fires began, a blizzard of "cease fire" green star clusters appeared over the 25th Marines, and telephones and radios buzzed with the word that artillery was falling on friendly troops.⁹² Another attempt was made and again the 4th of July sky was filled with skyrocket protests.

Since the artillery preparation had been such a disappointment and since it was felt that softening was still necessary, a rocket barrage was requested and effectively delivered on "4th of July Hill." Following this the 1st Battalion passed through the 3d and moved up the slopes. Against light machine-gun and some mortar fire, the unit swept to the top of the first hill and from there continued to the top of Hill 721. The contrast in opposition to that of the previous day indicated that the bulk of the defenders had withdrawn.

This substantial advance had been achieved prior to noon, so that sufficient daylight remained for the attack to continue. Hill 767, approximately 700 yards to the northeast, would be next. But here the tactics would be different: while the main force remained at Hill 721, a strong combat patrol from the 1st Battalion would move to the objective and investigate. Enjoying greater success than anyone dared to hope, the patrol (led by Captain William C. Eisenhardt) found Hill 767 unoccupied and immediately took possession.

To make certain that the enemy did not reoccupy the hill, Colonel Jones ordered the 2d Battalion to move out and set up a defense there. Getting into position was not altogether painless, however: the unit was harassed by enemy small arms firing from a palm grove to the northeast. But the retaliatory rounds of the 81mm mortar platoon apparently had good effect and enemy firing slackened. By nightfall it was necessary to bend the battalion's right flank back in order to contact units of the 1st Battalion.

The 3d Battalion, meanwhile, patrolled the area to the northeast for a distance of 1,500 yards. When patrols met no resistance in that

⁹² The 23d Marines Action Report blamed this situation on the fact that the 25th Marines had "erroneously reported its position."



HILL 767 LOOMS in distance as men of the 27th Division watch United States tanks move along a ridge into firing positions. Hill 767 was seized by the 4th Division on 4 July. Japanese 20mm dual-purpose automatic cannon was apparently abandoned during enemy withdrawal.

area, the battalion moved out and occupied the dominating terrain just short of Objective O-7Z (see Map 20). By darkness the 23d Marines were solidly tied in across their front: 3d Battalion extending from the east coast inland about 1,000 yards; 2d Battalion on Hill 767; and the 1st Battalion in the center connecting the two.

While the 23d struggled for the hills, the other two regiments had kept pace. Nor had the going all been smooth.

The 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, passed through the depleted 3d Battalion⁹³ and con-

tinued the attack. Though Hill 721 had not been seized at the time of the unit's jump off, Lieutenant Colonel Mustain, the battalion commander, received permission to move out. By 1130, when it had pushed about 600 yards west of Hill 721, the direction of attack was changed. The battalion would execute a right turn and strike Hill 767 from the southwest. (This order was issued prior to the 23d Marines' successful combat patrol).

As it turned out, the 1st Battalion's route officers left, was dissolved and its personnel assigned to the other two rifle companies. This move placed three officers and 151 men in Company I and three officers and 164 men in Company K.

⁹³ The 3d Battalion was reorganized on a two company basis at this time. Company L, which had no

was a difficult one. Between Hill 721 and 776 the ground sloped stair-step fashion toward the western coastal plain in a series of cliffs and plateaus. It was necessary, therefore, for the Marines to move along these plateaus in their attack toward Hill 776. Shortly after changing direction, the left of the unit met a fusillade of enemy rifle and machine-gun fire. In an endeavor to knock out this resistance, Mustain ordered the attached tanks to overrun the Japanese troublemakers. Here, however, there was a complete miscarriage of plans. The tanks became lost and wandered 700 yards to the unit's left front. The imbroglio became complete when two of the tanks were knocked out by "something"—the crews could not determine whether it was mines, mortar or artillery fire. One platoon from Company A moved against heavy opposition to the disabled tanks, where the crewmen were besieged by Japanese soldiers *eager* to toss grenades in upon them. It was necessary to abandon the tanks, but the personnel returned safely.

Meanwhile, the battalion had broken through the resistance that had occasioned the original employment of the tanks and continued on to Hill 767. There the unit dug in for the night in contact with the 23d Marines. The 3d Battalion, 25th which had followed in reserve during the day, moved into the lines on the left, placing it along the top of the cliffs, overlooking the village of Makunsha. The 165th Infantry, after relieving most of the 24th Marines during the afternoon, moved up on the left flank and coordinated defenses with the Marines.

On the division left, the 24th Marines kept pace with the flank units as the advance swung toward the sea. Machine-gun fire which issued from the right front slowed the advance of the right battalion (3d), but with the assistance of tanks the unit forged ahead. Marines of the left battalion (2d) had an enjoyable day sniping at retreating Japanese soldiers on the coastal flats below.

Late in the afternoon when NTLF changed the direction of attack to the northeast, 27th Division units relieved the 2d Battalion and began the relief of the 3d. The latter, since it had one company (G) of the 2d Battalion

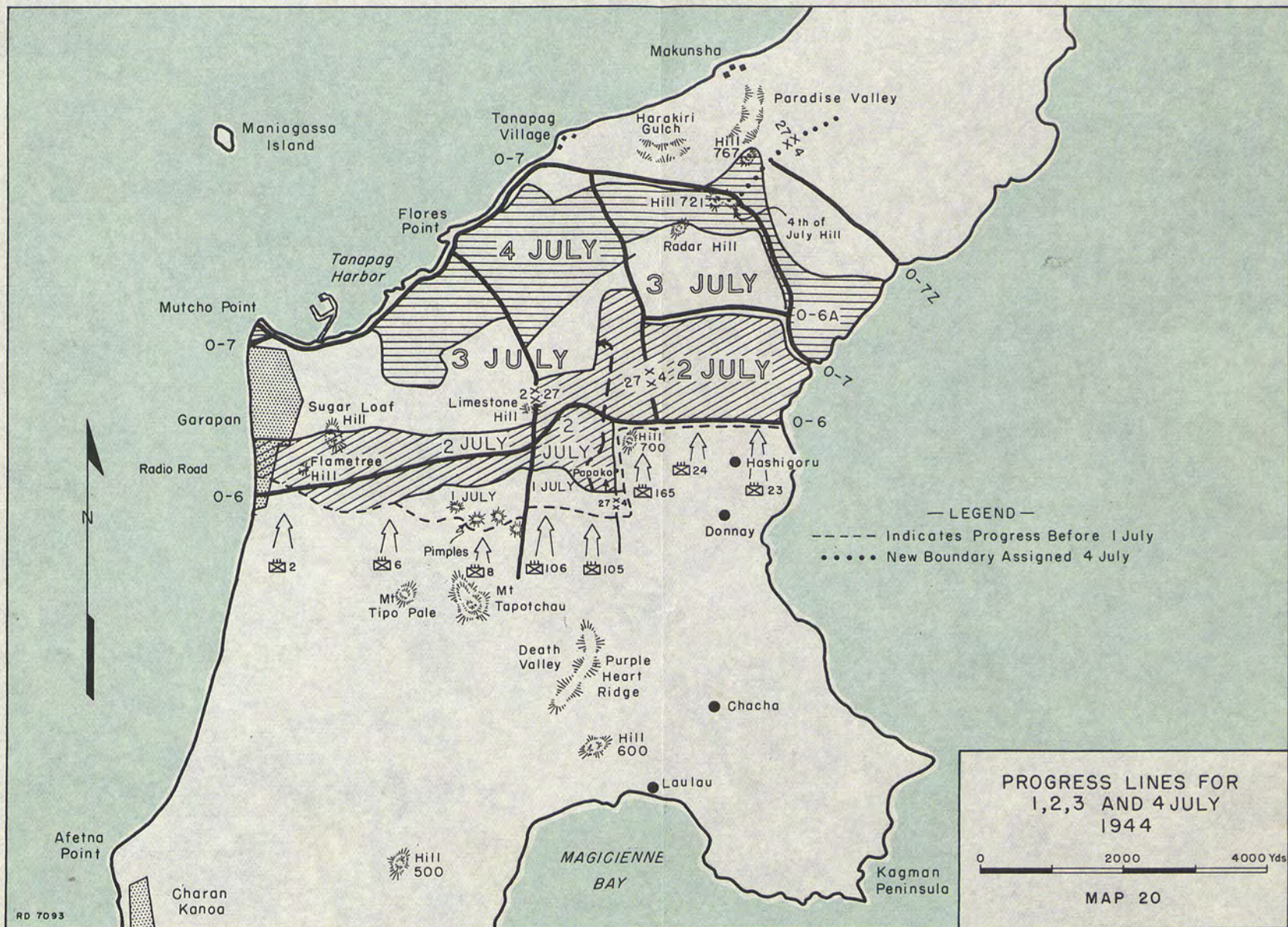
attached, was four companies strong at this time. As the 3d Battalion halted awaiting relief by the 165th Infantry, the formation from left to right was: K, L and I with Company G in reserve behind Company I. By 1600, Companies I and G had been relieved, K and L had not. The latter two units remained in their positions throughout the night, right flank in contact with the 165th Infantry, left exposed. No trouble developed, however. The two Marine companies were finally relieved the following morning (5 July) and returned to their battalion.

The 4th Marine Division made substantial advances during the day, executing a change in direction of attack, and disposing itself along favorable ground just short of O-7Z. (See Map 20.)⁹⁴

Change of Direction

As the 2d and 27th Divisions swept to the coast in the Tanapag Harbor—Flores Point region and the 4th Division to the very heart of the northern part of Saipan, the necessity for a change of direction became apparent. The entire northern part of the island remained to be seized, including the important Marpi Point area; and this demanded a swing of the axis of attack to the northeast. Holland Smith, therefore, split the unconquered portion in half, assigning the left segment to the 27th Division and the right to the 4th Division. To allow sufficient time for the juggling of front-ages and zones, the attack hour was delayed until noon of 5 July. Generals Griner and Schmidt, of the 27th and 4th Divisions respectively, were to "conduct such adjustment of their lines or make minor attacks prior to King-hour as they [deemed] necessary to launch a coordinated attack. . . ." The 4th Division's thrust had pushed well into the newly-assigned zone of the 27th Division, so that the previously described reliefs and shifts were

⁹⁴ The foregoing is a synthesis of the following sources: *4th Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 31-32; *23d Mar Report*, 45-47; *24th Mar Report*, 23; *25th Mar Report*, 7-8; *2d Bn, 23d Mar Report*, 5; *3d Bn, 23d Mar Report*, 7; *2d Bn, 24th Mar Report*, 9-10; *3d Bn, 24th Mar Report*, 9-10; *1st Bn, 25th Mar Report*, 16-19; *3d Bn, 25th Mar Report*, 12; *Treitel*; *L. R. Jones*.



necessary. Although the formal operation order outlining the change was not issued until 1800, 4 July, oral warning orders had placed the plan in motion in midafternoon.⁹⁵

Mindful of the significance of the day in American history and pleased with progress at Saipan, General Holland Smith distributed the following message to the landing force on the evening of July 4th:

The Commanding General takes pride on this INDEPENDENCE DAY in sending his best wishes to the fighting men on Saipan. Your unflagging gallantry and devotion to duty have been worthy of the highest praise of our country. It is fitting that on this 4th of July you should be extremely proud of your achievements. Your fight is no less important than that waged by our forefathers who gave us the liberty and freedom we have long enjoyed. Your deeds to maintain these principles will not be forgotten. To all hands a sincere well done. My confidence in your ability is unbounded.

Naval Activities from 27 June to 4 July

Most of what the U. S. Navy did at Saipan was so closely-related to ground actions that to separate the functions would be to present a false picture. With gunfire and aircraft the Navy assisted the ground troops directly and daily. Elsewhere, the constant pressure of naval power was more apparent to the Japanese than to the Americans ashore at Saipan.

On 27 June Mine Sweeping Squadron Four swept Magicienne Bay, clearing about 25 square miles in the process. On 28 June net cargo ship (AKN) *Keokuk* laid 10,000 feet of antisubmarine net off the entrance to Garapan anchorage as a positive barrier to Japanese underwater venturers. On the evening of 2

July the destroyer *Melvin* spotted two Japanese landing craft moving from Marpo Point on Tinian. Without waiting to determine their destination, the *Melvin* sank one and drove the other aground. Having secured the NTLF sea flanks in the Battle of the Philippine Sea, the Navy continued to protect those flanks against amphibious infiltration.

In addition, steady, daily raids were directed at those islands close enough to mount air attacks against Saipan. Among these, Rota was a favorite because it was felt that many enemy raids originated there. Tinian, although unable to launch an air attack from its battered fields, was struck with daily regularity. Here, the thought was towards softening the island for subsequent amphibious assault. Guam another convenient and important target, felt the impact of recurring blows. Both Guam and Tinian were the subjects of a number of photographic missions designed to keep higher echelons informed of latest developments.⁹⁶

If the routine of these raids became monotonous to the Japanese, some variety should have been provided on 3 July when two carrier task groups (58.1 and 58.2) of Admiral Mitscher's Force hit Iwo Jima. A sweep of 63 U. S. planes over the island shot down 50 fighters and destroyed an undetermined number of planes on the ground. On 4 July the two groups carried out a heavy flight schedule against Iwo, Chichi and Haha Islands.⁹⁷

The U. S. Navy's covering operations effectively isolated Saipan from outside Japanese interference.

⁹⁵ NTLF Operation Order 22-44.

⁹⁶ *TF 51 Report*, 10-13.

⁹⁷ *Navy's Air War*, 214.



SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

CHAPTER VI

Saito's Last Battle

D-PLUS 20—5 JULY

The Japanese were in a trap, the jaws of which were ever tightening. But, like cornered rats, they were capable of frenzied reaction.

Every indication supported the belief that the enemy remaining in the island's upper end were ill-equipped, ill-supplied, and, in many cases, ill. Communications had suffered almost a complete breakdown, hospital facilities were practically non-existent, and the shortage of food and water was telling on their moral. Passionate phrases of patriotism, which Japanese commanders erupted on the slightest provocation, were hard to swallow on an empty stomach.

And yet, to say that the Japanese were demoralized would be stating an untruth. After all, who had imposed this sorry condition but the hated American devils? And what better way is there to vent one's wrath and relieve one's gnawing hunger than to kill an American? Though these questions be surmise, the Japanese reaction in the last days of the campaign points convincingly to their accuracy.

As noted previously, Holland Smith's order for 5 July had designated 1200 as the attack hour. In the hours of daylight prior to noon, however, the two assault divisions were to conduct preliminary moves necessary to initiate a coordinated attack.

Tanapag Plain

For the 27th Division, assigned the left sector (see Map 21), these preliminary actions involved moves of approximately 1,600 yards for

units along the beach and only minor adjustments for those on the high ground inland.

Terrain was varied in the division zone: the left half included an 800-yard expanse of coastal flatland, while the right faced the turbulent maze of hills and ravines that is inner Saipan; near the center, an abrupt escarpment divided the extremes. The coastal flat and the hills which immediately dominate it were assigned the 105th Infantry, while the rugged interior fell to the 165th. The 106th Infantry had been pinched out of the attack on the previous day and reverted to division reserve.

In addition to mopping up the Flores Point area, the 105th Infantry was to push its front abreast of the 165th Infantry, occupying the high ground inland from Tanapag. Events of the day, as will be seen, prevented the regiment from achieving the desired gains.

The left assault battalion (the 2d) inched along the beach, investigating extensive defensive installations which the Japanese had prepared to counter U. S. landings. Although virtually no resistance was encountered, each position had to be carefully explored, lest dangerous thorns be left behind. The units moved steadily along the beach, through the scattered remains of Tanapag Village, and toward Road Junction 2. As the battalion neared that junction, the Japanese opened suddenly, fiercely, with a fusillade of machine-gun fire. The advance stalled.

As was so often the case, the enemy could not be located. And the Japanese discouraged curi-

osity with frequent, well-placed bursts of fire. Finally it was believed that the fire was issuing from a battered Japanese landing barge beached off to the left front. Two medium tanks were immediately dispatched along the coast road to destroy this supposed source of the trouble. After blasting the barge and apparently silencing the Japanese fire, the tanks swung off the road for the return to U. S. lines. This proved a bad move: the vehicles had driven into a Japanese mine field and one was completely wrecked before the truth was known. As if by signal the Japanese opened fire again, this time more heavily than before.

The rest of the day was spent in attempting to locate the enemy positions, all to no avail. The 2d Battalion dug in for the night just short of Road Junction 2. (See Map 21.)

The 105th Infantry's right assault battalion (the 3d) faced a zone that included a portion of the plain and also the rugged hills that closely fringed it. To negotiate this sector, it was necessary to advance one company (L) along the top of the bluffs while another (K) moved below on the flat. To the north of the battalion's lines, two narrow gorges could be seen, each cutting deep into the escarpment. Along the high ground between the two ran the bumpy, winding cross-island road. The 3d Battalion's right and the 165th Infantry's left would bisect the necks of the draws while the open mouths yawned toward units on the coastal flat. The near draw caused no trouble, but the second (later named "Harakiri Gulch") developed into a stubborn core of enemy activity.

The 3d Battalion moved well at first, but as the left company (K) approached a palm grove about 800 yards east of Tanapag Village a hail of enemy fire immobilized it. The fire emanated from the grove itself as well as the choppy ground to the east. A thrust by machines of the 762d Tank Battalion into the coconut grove failed to diminish the Japanese resistance and the company held up for the night. Higher on the bluffs the right company (L) had traversed the first draw without difficulty, but in moving across the road toward Harakiri Gulch, it was greeted by fire from cliff positions on the far side. Several battalions of 27th Division artillery were registered there, along with point-

blank bursts from a 3d Battalion antitank gun, but the enemy was not dislodged and became less hospitable than ever. In this unenviable position the battalion dug in for the night: Company L atop the spur facing Harakiri Gulch, Company K below and just southeast of the palm grove.

During the day the 1st Battalion had remained in regimental reserve, occupying an assembly area south of Tanapag Village.¹

The 165th Infantry was not required to conduct as extensive preliminary operations as the 105th. The change in direction and reassignment of zones had placed it well ahead. At 1300, however, the regiment launched its attack,² 2d Battalion on the right, 3d on the left. The former, in contact with the 4th Marine Division, moved without difficulty, but the latter, battling the upper reaches of the Harakiri Gulch cross-compartment, was stopped after a short 100 yard gain. Like elements of the 105th Infantry to its left, the 3d Battalion encountered heavy machine-gun fire from the draw's northern wall as well as mortar fire, which often made upright movement suicidal.

With the right extended well ahead in contact with the 4th Marine Division and the left checked on the high ground overlooking Harakiri Gulch, the regiment established its night defense. The 1st Battalion had remained in an assembly area just northeast of Radar Hill in reserve.³

The day's advance in the 27th Division zone had been disappointing, but General Griner hoped that the next day would see the unit moving rapidly again. In a message issued at 1800, 5 July, the general instructed the 105th Infantry and the left battalion of the 165th to move out at 0700, 6 July, and advance their lines to Makunsha, in elongation of the line held by the right battalion of the 165th Infantry. This was to be accomplished by 0900, so that the division could attack with units abreast. Stressing the

¹ War Department Historical Division Booklet, "Small Unit Actions, The Fight on Tanapag Plain," 66-73, hereinafter cited as *The Fight on Tanapag Plain. 105th Inf Report*, 9.

² Originally scheduled for noon, the attack was delayed until 1300 by NTLF order.

³ *165th Inf Report*, 8.



DOMINATING POSITION, captured by 165th Infantry, flanked Tanapag-Makunsha Plain. For once, the Japanese were caught in the open, vulnerable to fire such as that being delivered by this heavy machine gun.

importance of the move, Griner's message stated: "It is imperative that the left of the Division line be advanced to be abreast of the other units for the coordinated attack at 0900. The early advances will be pushed aggressively."⁴

From O-7Z to O-8A

General Schmidt's order to his 4th Marine Division on 5 July specified that the 23d Marines conduct preliminary operations for the seizure of O-7Z (the regiment had patrolled just short of this objective on the previous day). This would provide a favorable line of departure for the day's attack. The move was to be completed by noon so that the other two regiments could pass through and continue to division objective O-8A, some 1,400 yards forward of O-7Z. Included as the principal terrain feature of intermediate objective O-8A was the high ground on the north side of Karaberra Pass, a deep gouge in Saipan's upper middle.

⁴ 27th Div Field Message 6, 1800, 5 July.

From the pass, the objective line ran in a southeasterly direction to a cove on the east coast, labelled Inai Fahan (see Map 21).

The scheme was executed with only minor hitches.

The first of these occurred when the 23d Marines took somewhat longer than expected to occupy O-7Z. Moving with three battalions abreast, the regiment made rapid progress on both flanks, but the center unit (1st Battalion) was delayed by the nightmarish terrain through which it was forced to move. To remedy this situation the two flank units, already on the objective, stretched their lines to cover the vacant middle. Colonel Jones reported the objective occupied at 1315,⁵ and the passage began. The task of mopping-up its difficult zone of action took the 1st Battalion until 1500, at

⁵ Contradictions are found in the 4th Marine Division report which gives the time as 1155 and in the 25th Marines report which complained that it was forced to fight 400 yards before reaching the designated line of departure.

which time it joined the rest of the regiment in division reserve.⁶

Assuming the left half of the division front, the 24th Marines made good progress. Initially the regiment had been slowed by the failure of the 25th Marines to appear on the right flank; but, subsequently, when Colonel Hart ordered his battalions to move out anyway, the sweep was rapid. By 1600 the unit was in possession of its portion of O-8A, having seized the high ground on both sides of Karaberra Pass and, to prevent Japanese infiltration, extended its lines through the pass itself.

The 1st Battalion, moving in contact with the 27th Division, experienced little difficulty. The speed of its movement was regulated chiefly by units on its flanks. For the right assault unit, the 2d Battalion, the going was tougher: wooded draws and ravines lying within its zone contained many troublesome caves. The enemy in these required systematic extermination. As has been so often indicated, cave cleaning was a slow process. Karaberra Pass brought more of the same: here grenades and antipersonnel mines were rolled down upon the Marines as they trudged the valley floor. This particular area was extremely defensible and, had the Japanese chosen to make it so, could have been much worse than it was. By late afternoon the 24th Marines occupied the high ground on both sides of the pass as well as the floor itself.

The 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, had remained in reserve throughout the day. Two of its companies (K and L) had spent the previous night in the Army division's lines, but by 1100, 5 July, both had been relieved. With the coming of darkness the battalion was ordered to establish a secondary line, one company (K) being attached to the 1st Battalion to bridge a break on the left flank.

Since the 24th Marines had moved out in the attack prior to the arrival of the 25th Marines on the right flank, no contact existed between the two units until after 1500, when a patrol from the 25th Marines began operating through the area. When the advance stopped for the

night a 400-yard separation still existed. To prevent the Japanese from using this as a funnel through which to pour substantial forces (individual infiltrators were next to impossible to stop), the 25th Marines detailed a strong combat patrol with orders to rove the interval during the night. In addition, heavy machine guns were emplaced and mortars and artillery registered to cover the area should the need arise. The effectiveness of this security was not tested by the Japanese, however.⁷

Colonel Batchelder's 25th Marines had a difficult time schedule to meet: it was to pass through the right half of the 23d Marines, a maneuver involving a lateral move of about 2,500 yards. This move, moreover, could not commence until the 1st and 3d Battalions had been relieved by Army units. By about 1000 the relief took place, and the lengthy hike began. Delayed in its start, the regiment was late in effecting the passage, arriving at about 1330. Batchelder ordered his 1st and 2d Battalions to attack abreast, 1st on the right. The 3d Battalion would follow the assault battalions at 500 yards, using a route generally in the center of the regiment's zone.

The 1st Battalion started the day in an exciting way. In the early morning hours, prior to relief by Army units, the Japanese had set up a machine gun in Company A's thinly-spread front lines and began spattering bursts through the battalion command post. The proximity of friendly troops precluded the use of mortars against this target and dictated infantry assault. Designated to expel these intruders were the men of the attached 1st Platoon, Company A, 20th Marines, whose normal engineer functions were temporarily shelved. At 0540 the engineers attacked, killed or routed the Japanese, and restored the position. This incident cost a total of 12 Marine casualties.

After passage of the 23d Marines' lines, the 1st Battalion drove forward without encountering resistance. The heat and humidity were terrific, however, and the long hike resulted in

⁶ 23d Mar Report, 47. *L. R. Jones.*

⁷ 24th Mar Report, 23. 1st Bn, 24th Mar Report, 11-12. 2d Bn, 24th Mar Report, 10-11. 3d Bn, 24th Mar Report, 10.

many heat exhaustion casualties.⁸ Also proving a hindrance to swift movement were several aerial bombs (250-pound) buried along the coastal road. These bombs, installed with noses barely protruding from the ground, were intended to destroy U. S. vehicles moving along the road. Fortunately, these explosives were spotted before damage was done. The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Mustain, ordered the attached engineers to begin detonating the inverted bombs; and, since the task appeared too great for a single platoon to accomplish, he requested services of the engineers attached to the 3d Battalion. A bulldozer was provided to fill the holes left by the explosions, and by 1700 the road was open for traffic.

The itinerant 2d Battalion, meanwhile, moved on the left half of the 25th Marines' front. This well-travelled unit had performed directly under the control of not only its parent regiment, but 4th Division, Northern Troops and Landing Force, 2d Division and 8th Marines as well. Its "Cook's tour" had left little time for rest. Back with familiar faces once again, the battalion advanced steadily to its assigned objective.

By 1700 the 25th Marines dug in on O-8A. With the evening rations came the first fresh socks, and the Marines gratefully replaced their limp and soggy ones, which were unceremoniously interred.⁹

In addition to the 14th Marines, the 4th Marine Division had the benefit of reinforcing fires from the XXIV Corps Artillery during the afternoon. One small, troublesome plateau forward of the 2d Battalion, 24th Marines, had been effectively pounded by the massed fires of eight battalions of artillery.¹⁰

For the 2d Marine Division, in NTLF reserve, the day was quiet and uneventful.¹¹

⁸ These were allowed to rest for a day or two and returned to their units.

⁹ 25th Mar Report, S. 1st Bn, 25th Mar Report, 19-20. 3d Bn, 25th Mar Report, 12.

¹⁰ 4th Mar Div Report, Section VI, 33. This unusual density of fire was available for two reasons: first, only two divisions were now in the assault on a narrowed front; second, few counterbattery missions remained at this late stage in the operation.

¹¹ NTLF G-3 Journal, 1800 4 July to 1800 5 July.

Night of 5-6 July

About 2030 the 24th Regiment reported 250 Japanese to its front, apparently organizing for an attack. Artillery, mortar, 37mm and machine-gun fire converged upon the area and the Japanese dispersed. Later, at about 2300, there were minor attempts at infiltration in the regiment's zone, but no counterattack materialized.

Patrols from the 27th Division observed approximately two companies of Japanese northwest of Hill 767 as well as scattered smaller groups in the vicinity of Makunsha and northeast of that village. Here again, artillery fires kept the enemy stirred up and disorganized, and nothing more than desultory rifle fire developed.

Japanese aircraft made a feeble effort during the night. Just after dark three to five planes came over Saipan but failed to press anything resembling an aggressive attack. Two bombs, dropped near Aslito Airfield, achieved the rather unspectacular feat of slightly damaging one U. S. plane and cracking a windshield on another. While skittering nervously about the area, one of the raiders was downed by a U. S. night fighter. From the half-hearted, hesitant manner in which the raid was executed, the impression was derived that the planes were attempting air evacuation of key personnel. Just after midnight a single Japanese plane appeared over the island and was shot down by a night fighter.¹²

D-PLUS 21-6 JULY

The Ditch and the Gulch

NTLF plans for 6 July had prescribed a push to O-8 (see Map 21) with the remaining terrain on the island divided equally between the two assault divisions. To allow the left elements of the 27th Division an opportunity to come abreast, the 4th Marine Division and the right battalion of the 27th Division would delay their attack until 0900.

¹² Although never proved, it was believed that this plane had succeeded in landing on the field (Banederu) on Marpi Point, had loaded whoever or whatever it had come for, and had taken off again. It was at this stage of the proceedings that the U. S. night fighter intercepted the plane and sealed the mystery.

If this scheme had worked out, it is likely that the two divisions would have moved side by side to the end of the island. But, as will be seen, the early morning preliminary attack of the Army division's left units met stiff resistance, and the plan was thwarted before it could even begin. When it was apparent to Holland Smith that the going would be slow and difficult on the left and rapid on the right, he decided to change his plan.

The modification, issued shortly after 0900 on 6 July, altered the division boundaries to the extent that the 4th Marine Division would expand to the northwest, pinch out the 27th Division north of Makunsha, and take over the entire frontage for the sweep to Marpi Point. This move would not only enable the 27th Division to mop up properly the Tanapag—Makunsha—Harakiri Gulch area, but might also cut off enemy retirement to the north.

The 105th Infantry, which had launched its preliminary attack at 0700, was deeply embroiled in trouble by the time that news of the change arrived.

The scheme of maneuver for the 2d Battalion took into account the minefield which had been discovered on the previous day. To avoid this area, Major Edward A. McCarthy planned to swing his companies in column along the beach until past the minefield, at which time a two-company front could be assumed.

The battalion moved out under a protective rolling barrage fired by the 249th Field Artillery Battalion. The first 100 yards' advance was rapid, carrying the unit almost past the minefield; but, as the artillery lifted to targets farther to the northeast, the soldiers suddenly met a hail of grazing fire spitting across the coastal flat. Despite efforts of the battalion commander to regain momentum, the attack stalled.

Then began the difficult task of locating the source of the enemy fire. Though no one could realize it until much later in the day, the Japanese were well established in a shallow ditch only 150 yards to the front. This natural trenchwork, a drainage rut running from the base of the escarpment to the sea, was relatively insignificant when contrasted with the cliffs and gulches on the right flank and had not been credited

with being as strongly occupied as it was. As long as artillery fire showered on the area the Japanese had kept their heads down; but, as soon as it had lifted to the northeast, they had risen from their shelter and stopped the 2d Battalion's advance.

Tanks were immediately requested, but a communication failure delayed their arrival. While waiting, the 2d Battalion improved its position, broadened its front, and inched about 50 yards closer to the ditch. Work on the minefield was also progressing; one platoon from Company A, 102d Engineer Battalion, had undertaken the hazardous task shortly after 1000. Necessarily working in the prone position, the platoon made slow progress. The "mines" were the same type that had worried the 25th Marines on 5 July: buried 250-pound aerial bombs with noses fused to explode under the weight of vehicles.

At about 1000 five medium tanks from the 762d Tank Battalion arrived at Major McCarthy's command post. How and where should the tank thrust be made? (As yet no one had identified the ditch as the trouble spot.) The road was a possibility, but this could be conveniently interdicted by Japanese antitank weapons; and, also, the spindly bridge across the ditch would likely be mined or wired for demolition. The route selected was the railroad track running through the center of the battalion's zone.

Moving single file along the thin road bed, the tanks were soon stymied when the lead tank snarled its tracks on the narrow steel rails. While work was in progress to clear a path for the second tank to move around the first, Japanese antitank weapons opened up and achieved hits on both. Although shells pierced the vehicles, neither was put out of action. The turn of events had clearly indicated that this route was a poor one. By use of a cable both tanks were hauled clear of the area.

While the tanks were executing their abortive gesture, a rifleman in the left company (E) spotted some movement in the ditch ahead. The target seemed ideal for the 60mm mortars, but these, unfortunately, ~~were out of ammunition.~~ An effort by an SPM (Self Propelled Mount)



VICTIMS OF DOREY'S ATTACK, these Japanese blocked the 6 July advance of the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, along the Tanapag Plain until Dorey's tanks arrived on the scene.

was also disappointing; after moving up the coast for a short distance the driver, discouraged by near misses from the same antitank weapon that had hit the two tanks, abandoned the undertaking.

The next attempt, though boldly conceived, was also unsuccessful. One rifle squad rushed the position, but was repulsed after a wild skirmish.

At last the source of the trouble had been definitely located. But now what was to be done about it?

The situation was generally unchanged until about 1530 (except for the commitment and ultimate detachment of the battalion reserve, Company G, which will be described later). At this time three Army light tanks, previously

operating with the 3d Battalion around Hara-kiri Gulch, appeared in the 2d Battalion's zone in search of a mission. This they were not denied. Upon learning about the situation, Lieutenant Willis K. Dorey, USA, decided to roam out and examine the ditch.

Dorey moved to the ditch unhampered by antitank fire and found a tanker's dream target. Japanese soldiers were jammed along the ditch, almost shoulder to shoulder. One of his tanks was put out of action when an enemy soldier placed a magnetic mine against its side; but, after leaving his third tank to protect the cripple, Dorey ranged on alone. Using machine guns and cannister on the tightly-packed foe, Dorey slaughtered from 100 to 150 as he blasted the ditch from end to end.

At 1700, following this massacre, men of the 2d Battalion advanced with no difficulty. Such few Japanese as remained alive were incapable of resistance. The long, hard struggle for the ditch was over.

The 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry, had found the going no easier. This unit, as noted before, was straddling the cliff line with one company on the flat and another atop the bluffs. The morning attack would depart from the line seized on the previous day: the left just short of the palm grove and the right facing precipitous Harakiri Gulch. In accordance with General Griner's order, the battalion moved out at 0700 to bring its lines abreast of units farther to the right.

Selecting a defiladed route, the left company (K) moved to the edge of the grove without receiving fire. Once the unit emerged from its cover, however, two machine guns contested further approach. Savior in this situation was Lieutenant Dorey,¹³ whose tanks ploughed into the grove and destroyed the two machine guns. This relieved the pressure and the soldiers quickly swept to the northern edge of the trees.

Fire from the upper lip of Harakiri Gulch's mouth, meanwhile, had made all movement across the flat costly. Any further advance would place the left company directly in the fire-lanes. Capture or effective neutralization of the gulch area was therefore imperative if forward movement with a reasonable degree of safety were to be made.

With hopes of neutralizing the fire from this direction, or at least minimizing it, Lieutenant Dorey's tanks commenced working over the area. This measure appeared effective; the volume of enemy fire diminished and, finally, stopped. When, at about 1000, Dorey was forced to leave the area to replenish ammunition, the small arms fire of the 3d Battalion maintained the spray of rounds against the cliffs. The enemy remained dormant.

At this point in the proceedings word was received of the change in division boundary and the effect this would have on the scheme of maneuver. The weight would shift from left to

right as the division pivoted toward the sea. Strong pressure would be exerted by the 165th Infantry to swing down from the hills and to the beach north of Makunsha.

With the shift in balance, the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, would take over the entire frontage on the coastal plain, allowing the 3d Battalion to utilize its full strength on the bluffs above. This involved relief of Company K by Company G. The latter had spent the early morning hours mopping up in the vicinity of Tanapag Village. Relief took place at about noon following an unusual train of events.

Upon receiving notification of the change in attack plans, Company K's commander decided to undertake seizure of a small knoll north of the palm grove. Since Dorey's tanks had returned after supplying themselves with ammunition, these would be used to prevent Japanese interference from Harakiri Gulch and the cliffs around it.

Almost as soon as Company K moved out to seize the knoll, however, the enemy opened with devastating effectiveness from the cliffs to the right. It appeared that they had been biding their time awaiting just such a move. The right of the company was stopped. As the left lunged forward in a determined effort to carry the objective, the Japanese also started moving: from the cliffs towards the ditch immediately in rear of the knoll. What threatened to be a savage hand to hand struggle never materialized, for at this precise moment a blasting, crashing explosion rent the air, hurling Japanese and pieces of Japanese in all direction. The terrific concussion knocked most of the men of Company K from their feet, but the Japanese suffered more. What had been a thriving surge was suddenly—nothing. As a result of this blast, all enemy fire ceased in this area for nearly an hour.

What had caused this terrific explosion? The most plausible explanation seems to be that the leading Japanese of the counterattack group had blundered upon a mine, detonation of which set off a number of others.

Disorganized and slightly dazed by the concussion, Company K did not immediately move to the objective. By the time the unit had re-

¹³ The same officer who later in the day furnished such vital assistance at the ditch.

gained its composure and was ready to move up, Company G arrived and effected the relief.

The tanks had not escaped excitement either. While cruising near the mouth of Harakiri Gulch, the machines were met by two Japanese soldiers who ran out and attached a magnetic mine to one and threw a Molotov cocktail at the other. Both tanks were put out of action. Lieutenant Dorey ordered the surviving vehicles to depart from the area. The crews of the disabled tanks made good their escape on foot.

Higher on the bluff, meanwhile, the right company (L) of the 3d Battalion made unsuccessful ventures into Harakiri Gulch during the morning. Of the belief that it was imperative to build up supporting fires before attempting to cross the draw, the company commander attempted to move base of fire units into positions from which to cover the advance of the rest of the company. As part of the same scheme, tanks moved up from the gulch's longer axis into covering positions. Though the efforts continued throughout the morning, all failed. In the process, one tank was lost when a Japanese rifleman placed a magnetic mine against it.¹⁴

While Company L exercised its unsuccessful stratagems against Harakiri Gulch during the morning, the change in attack plans had been made known. For the afternoon attack the 27th Division would still have four battalions in the assault, but the emphasis changed from left to right. The new scheme is well described by an Army historian:

The basic plan of movement called for the 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry to attack across Harakiri Gulch and up onto the high, almost level plateau that covered the area between there and Paradise Valley. The companies of these two battalions would then wheel left, go down the face of the cliffs from above, and sweep out across the Tanapag Plain to the sea, each arriving on the plain at a point progressively farther east toward Makunsha. The 2d Battalion, 165th would proceed north down Paradise Valley, cleaning out this strongpoint, and reaching the beach just above Makunsha. While this operation was going on in the hills, the 2d

Battalion, 105th Infantry, on the division's left wing, was to make a limited attack northeast along the beach.¹⁵

This simple, direct plan was destined to failure, however.

The 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry, failed to gain during the afternoon. The commander of the left assault company (L), decided to undertake no further moves until he had located and destroyed the enemy positions which had stalled his morning efforts. The right company (I), after moving about 75 yards down into the gulch, met rifle fire and was stopped. Later in the afternoon the company withdrew to its starting point on top of the hill.

A determined afternoon thrust against Harakiri Gulch was made by the 1st Battalion, 165th Infantry,¹⁶ but here again results were not encouraging. The brunt of the 1st Battalion's fight fell to Company A.

This company faced the upper part of the gulch at a point where the 3d Battalion, 165th, had been stalled on the previous day. Rather than attempt another cross compartment move, the change of direction would allow the company to advance down the draw's longer axis. After descent to the gulch floor, the company cautiously crept through a series of man-made ditches that had carved the area to resemble a huge washboard. All eyes were straining toward the rocky slopes for some sign of the Japanese among the large umbrella-like trees and little straw shacks that dotted the valley. At first, all was quiet. Then, unexpectedly, the tiny shacks rocked with the force of explosion after explosion. The chain of blasts continued for about 15 minutes, during which time the soldiers kept under cover in the ditches. When silence returned and investigation was possible, the startling truth was discovered: about 60 Japanese, scattered through the small abodes, had placed grenades against their abdomens and committed suicide. It was this incident that gave the gulch its name.

Hopes that these suicides would mark the end

¹⁴ The normal practice of sending infantrymen along with the tanks as protection had not proved feasible in the gulch. Once inside the draw, riflemen made easy targets for the well-hidden Japanese.

¹⁵ *The Fight On Tanapag Plain*, 89.

¹⁶ This unit had relieved the 3d Battalion, 165th, early on the morning of 6 July, the latter reverting to regimental reserve.

of Japanese resistance in the draw were soon dispelled; accurate grazing fire stopped the unit as it resumed the push. In addition, the shacks were now ablaze. The explosion of the grenades had turned the combustible huts into fiery patches, and the heat forced soldiers nearby to pull back. To expose one's body for even a moment was enough to attract a well-aimed burst, and casualties mounted. Handling their fallen comrades proved a difficult task for the men of the company. The number of men killed or wounded while attempting to evacuate other wounded was alarming; loss to would-be rescuers was altogether out of proportion to the number of personnel being saved. It was a vicious circle.

When it became apparent that Company A's attack had stalled, the company commander ordered the unit to withdraw. Extrication was not easy, since the soldiers were under heavy fire; and it was after 1500 when they were finally reassembled at the gulch's upper entrance.

Probably the greatest contributory factor in this failure was the fact that the company had had no assistance on either flank. The 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry, as mentioned before, had not advanced during the afternoon. Had this unit moved, it might have relieved some of the pressure on Company A's left. On the right, terrain prevented all but one platoon of Company C, 165th Infantry, from attempting to help the gulch attackers, and even this platoon was slow in starting. By the time it finally got underway, Company A had recognized the attack as a lost cause and was withdrawing, so that the platoon's lonely venture onto the slopes of Harakiri Gulch was violently repulsed.

Farther to the right, the 2d Battalion was unable to proceed down Paradise Valley in its assigned zone and had received permission to maneuver through the 1st Battalion's sector. This move, of course, was stymied by the 1st Battalion's failure to make progress.

In an effort to press the assault down to the Makunsha Plain area, the 3d Battalion, 106th Infantry, was attached to the 165th with orders to attack between the two flank units. By the time this order (issued at 1500) was translated into action, however, darkness was approaching and the battalion failed to move into the lines.

The unit was ordered, therefore, to remain in an assembly area southwest of Hill 767.

In midafternoon, with forces at Harakiri Gulch stalemated and the battalion along the beach immobilized (prior to Lieutenant Dorey's eminently successful tank foray against the ditch), General Griner ordered Colonel Bishop to commit his reserve (1st Battalion), to swing past the gulch strong point and continue to the beach 1,200 yards beyond Road Junction 2. To throttle the gulch while the 1st Battalion moved past, Company G would swing into position facing up the draw. For this mission the company was attached to the 3d Battalion.

The attack proceeded generally according to plan. Moving out at 1715, the 1st Battalion advanced rapidly. Enemy fire against the unit ranged from moderate on the left to heavy on the right, in direct proportion to the proximity of the high ground where numerous caves overlooked the coastal flat. With the assistance of SPM's, men of the 1st Battalion neutralized the cliff dwellers and continued their surge toward Makunsha. By dark between 800 and 900 yards had been gained, the unit having carried to about 150 yards from the beach.

At this point, however, the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel O'Brien, discovered that his front had progressed beyond the 2d Battalion along the beach and that his troops had swung partially across the 2d Battalion's front. To improve this situation, O'Brien ordered his forward companies to pull back and tie in with the 2d Battalion. By about dark most of O'Brien's unit had accomplished this, but the reserve (Company C), which had concentrated its attention and effort on the caves on the right flank, did not completely assemble in the defense area until 2100. Because of darkness at the time of its arrival, Company C did not find or occupy its assigned position in the two-battalion defense area, but, instead, overlapped a portion of the 2d Battalion. Also, the late adjustment in the lines masked the fires of several heavy machine guns and one antitank gun positioned in the 2d Battalion area. O'Brien commented on this unsatisfactory state of affairs, but it was considered unwise to make any shifts in the dark. Later in the night when trouble de-

veloped, these masked weapons opened fire, pinning down one company (A) of the 1st Battalion and causing some confusion.

Since units facing Harakiri Gulch had not moved, the right flank of the perimeter was open, Company G, 300-odd yards to the southeast, being the closest friendly unit on that flank. The latter company, unsuccessful in sealing the mouth of the gulch, had disposed itself on dominating terrain from which it could cover most of the area by fire. (See Map 22 for positions of 27th Division units on the night of 6-7 July.)

There is some indication that the exact dispositions of the 105th Infantry were unknown to both the regimental and division commanders. According to the 27th Division G-3 Journal, the only message relating to the gap was received from the 105th Infantry on the late afternoon (1845) of 6 July: "... G Co. filling gap between 1st and 3d Battalions."¹⁷ At 2000, having received no further information on this, General Griner issued a field message which merely directed a continuation of the attack the following day.¹⁸ Had the division commander known that the gap existed, he still would have had time to order a reserve unit to establish a connection. The 3d Battalion, 106th Infantry, was in reserve southwest of Hill 767, less than 2,000 yards from the gap.

Despite the discouraging events around Harakiri Gulch, the late afternoon advance along the coastal flat was encouraging indeed. But on the other hand, everyone from the corps commander to the front line riflemen was well aware of the enemy capability to strike at any point along the lines and that any position might find itself in the vortex of an all-out *banzai* attack. Since the 15 June landings the western coastal plain had seemed the most likely area for such a thrust. An enemy attack there would be no surprise, but no one foresaw the consequences of the battle that later developed.¹⁹

¹⁷ 27th Inf Div G-3 Journal, 1845, 6 July.

¹⁸ 27th Inf Div Field Message 7, 2000, 6 July.

¹⁹ *The Fight on Tanapag Plain*, 86-113. *106th Inf Report*, 9-10. *165th Inf Report*, 8.

Expansion of the Front

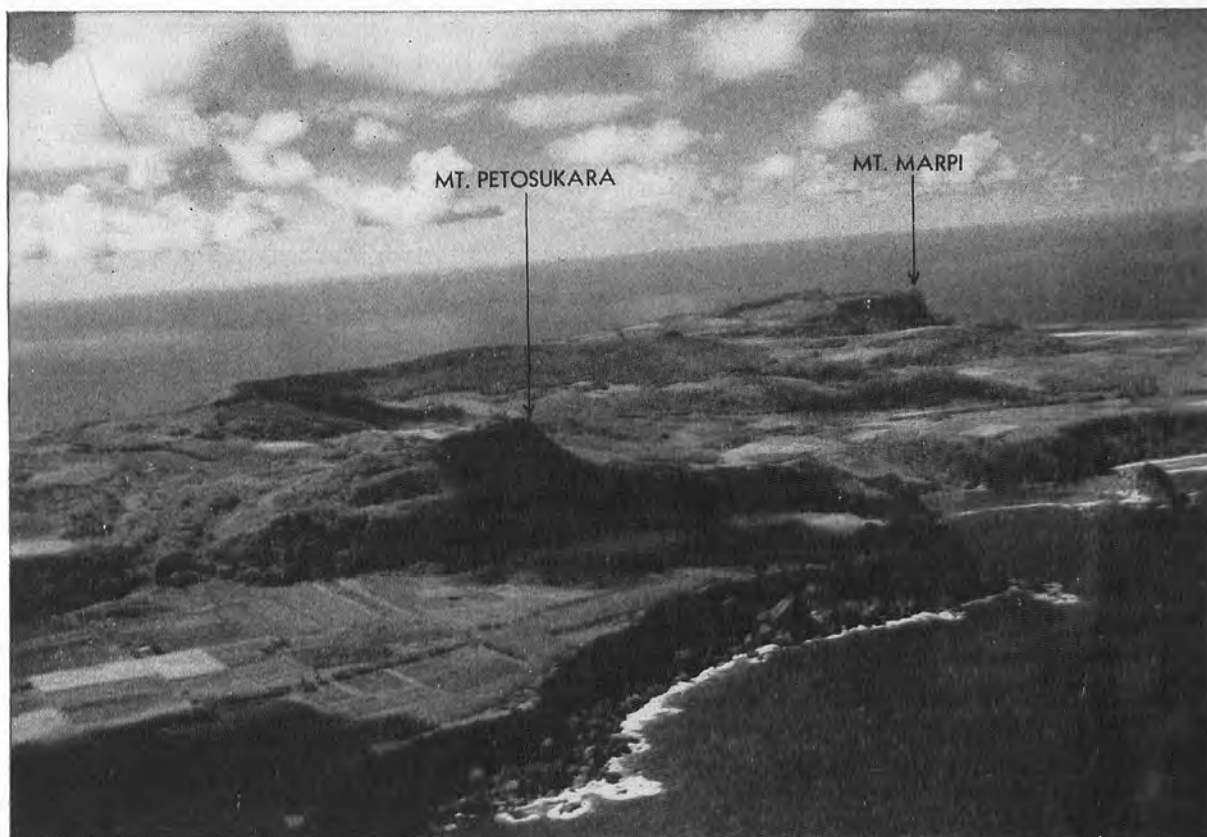
After jumping off at 0900 on 6 July, the 4th Marine Division's attack moved well for about 20 minutes. Then a temporary halt was demanded by a change in the NTLF scheme of maneuver. With the 4th Marine Division taking over the entire island sector for the final push, it was necessary to insert another regiment into the lines. Accordingly, General Schmidt ordered the division reserve (23d Marines) to move in on the division left flank and expand the frontage to the west coast at a point just beyond Makunsha. In effect, the division would attack both northeast and, temporary at least, northwest.

This deployment, so easy on paper, took considerable time. To get into its newly-assigned zone, the 23d Marines hiked 4,300 yards, arriving at its line of departure at about 1415.

Here the regiment faced a steep, 300-foot cliff which had to be descended to reach the coastal plain and, eventually, the beach. Jumping off shortly after 1415, the Marines discovered that the cliff was cloaked with heavy, scrubby underbrush and pitted with scores of natural caves. Working troops down the declivity was a challenge in itself, there being only two paths. As soon as Marines began filtering down these, Japanese riflemen and machine gunners countered with well-aimed fire. Thus denied, the regiment busied itself in a search for other routes of descent to the plain.

Since this portion of the long cliff line dominated the Black Beaches (northeast of Makunsha), positions encountered were probably part of the prepared beach defenses. From commanding terrain atop the cliff, however, the Marines could observe large numbers of Japanese fleeing to the north along the plain. Many of these, no doubt, had been flushed by the pressure of the 27th Division. The Marines cascaded the fire of rifles, machine guns, mortars, and half-tracks upon these popular targets.

By dark, after a series of unsuccessful efforts to work small detachments down the cliff on ropes, the 23d Marines established a defense along the lip of the precipice for the night.



NORTHERN SAIPAN. Mt. Petosukara was seized by the 25th Marines on 6 July, and Mt. Marpi by the 2d Marines on 9 July. Rocky coastline offered last ditch positions to stubborn Japanese.

Contact was established with the 27th Division along the cliff top, but none was attained with the 24th Marines on the right.²⁰

In the division center the 24th Marines started the day's activities with the 165th Infantry to its left and the 25th Marines to its right; but, with the alteration in division boundaries, the 23d Marines replaced the Army regiment. The juggling of units took some time and the 24th had to wait; an independent move would greatly endanger the unit's left flank.

About 1400, however, the 24th Regiment was permitted to push forward again, and the momentum was maintained until commanding ground about 400 yards short of Objective O-8 was reached. During this surge only sporadic resistance was encountered. The large

gain (1,400 to 1,800 yards) far outstripped the 23d Marines on the left and the aforementioned gap developed. To protect this flank the 24th Marines' reserve (3d Battalion) was committed, but a physical tie-in was not accomplished.

During the day the left assault battalion (1st) had encountered an ingeniously-designed dummy position, containing sham antiaircraft guns, gunners and radar. The 2d Battalion, on the other hand, found a very real foe in an irregular cliff formation to its front. As the Marines approached, about 200 Japanese began a hasty retreat to the north, speeded by fire from 75mm half-tracks, 37mm guns, and rockets. The infantry then picked up the pressure, pursuing the Japanese as long as daylight permitted.

Though the regiment's left had not been tied in, the right was in firm contact with the 25th

²⁰ *4th Mar Div Report*, Section VI, 33-34. *23d Mar Report*, 47. *2d Bn, 23d Mar Report*, 6. *L. R. Jones*.

Marines, which likewise had enjoyed rapid movement.²¹

The 25th Marines' zone on Saipan's east coast was similar to that of the 105th Infantry on Tanapag Plain. Here, however, the coastal flat ended in steep drops to the sea rather than a gradual merging of beach and water. On the inland side of the flat there were also cliffs, but these rose precipitously above the plain to a second, smaller plateau, in turn fringed by another slope which rose to a third plateau. Along this escalating terrace the 25th Marines would move until the levels fused and culminated into Mt. Petosukara, the dominating terrain short of O-8. (See Map 21.)

To negotiate the hodgepodge, the 1st Battalion would move along the coastal flat, while the 2d Battalion straddled the cliffs and plateaus inland. The reserve would move along the second plateau in rear of the assault units.

Off at 0900, the regiment advanced rapidly. In the 1st Battalion's zone, well suited to vehicular movement, 13 tanks from Company C, 4th Tank Battalion, preceded the sweep. One of these was used as a mobile observation post to spot naval gunfire. Missions and corrections were relayed from the tank to Shore Fire Control Party 251 and from there to the firing ship. This device worked very well and a number of missions were directed in this manner. Principal naval gunfire targets were enemy positions in the cliff lines, both the one at the water's edge and the one which fringed the coastal plain.

A glance at the map and a knowledge of the Japanese system of defense was enough to convince the 25th Marines that trouble would come from the cliffs. It did. Men of the 1st Battalion, particularly, were exposed to plunging fires as they trudged through the hot cane fields. But, employing coordinated tank-infantry, the Marines systematically destroyed the troublemakers and pushed on.

More difficult was the problem of the cliff which dipped from the plain to the water's edge. Here Japanese soldiers could remain concealed in the caves until Marines attempted

to approach; then, suddenly, they would open with devastating bursts. Usually, the cliffs were too steep to permit descent from the top, and an approach along the narrow strip of beach at the bottom was a sure invitation to disaster. Naval gunfire was helpful in sealing some of the cave entrances, but the caves were many and the job was a slow one.

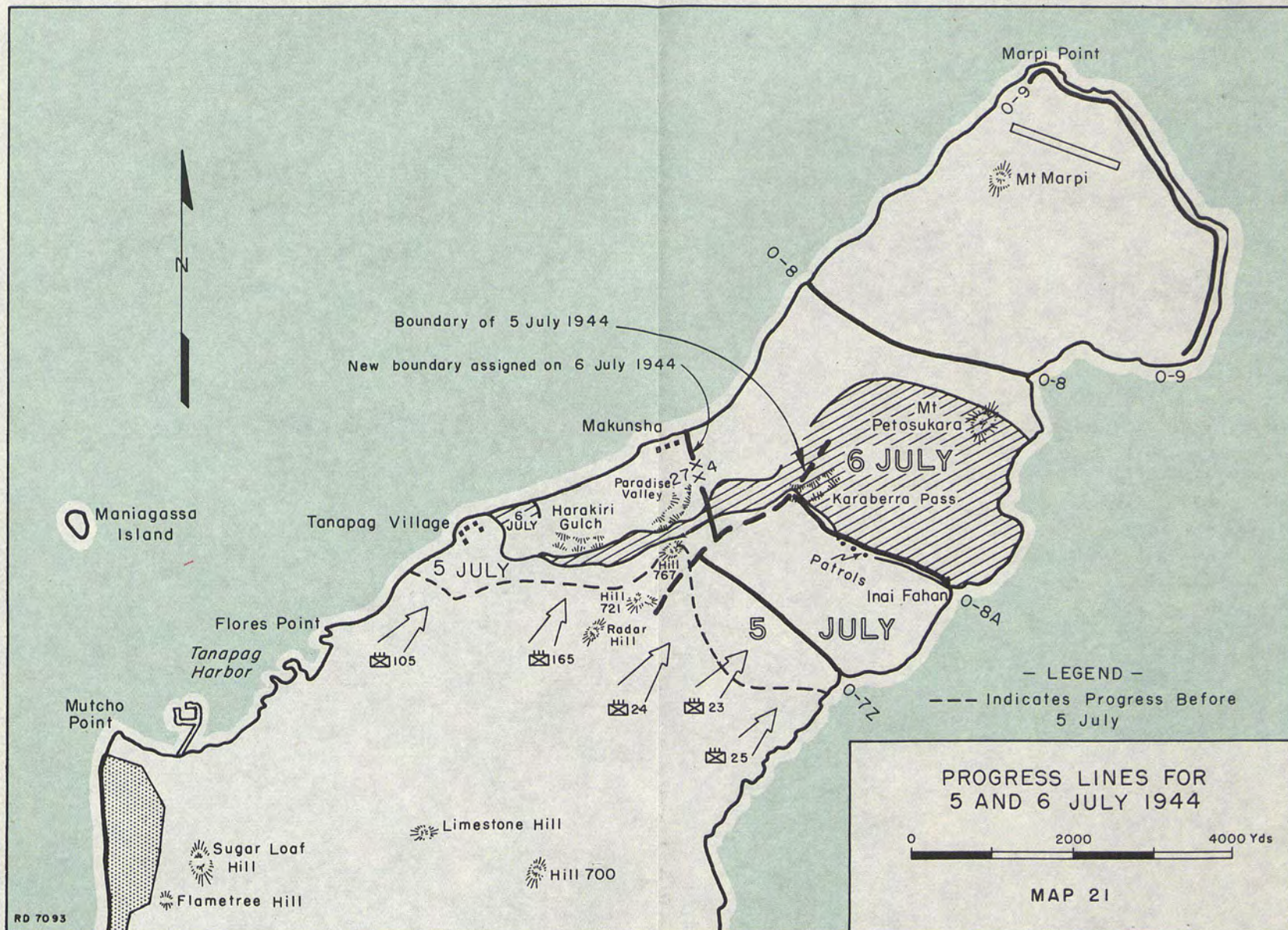
Among the worst features of the situation was the fact that most of the caves housed more noncombatants than soldiers. Interpreters were unceasing in their efforts to get cave occupants to surrender, and many of these efforts proved fruitful. In all too many instances, however, civilians were dissuaded by Japanese soldiers who threatened or took the lives of any who would weaken to the Americans' invitations. After several Marines were killed in sincere efforts to extricate civilians, patience became somewhat worn. After that, the occupants were invited to come out; and, if they hesitated over-long, the caves were blown.²²

Realizing that seizure of the coast line would demand considerable time, Lieutenant Colonel Mustain ordered the assault companies of his 1st Battalion to push on, leaving his reserve to work the caves. With assault units relieved of this detailed, time-consuming activity, the 1st Battalion swept rapidly forward. The infantrymen were glad to have the tanks along, particularly when two enemy vehicles hove into view shortly after noon. Under the fire power of the U. S. armor the enemy withdrew. The tanks were glad to have the infantry along, too: while firing into the fringing cliff on the left flank, they were rushed by several Japanese, who were cut down by surrounding Marines before they could attach the magnetic mines they carried. Incidents like these nurtured a growing mutual respect.

The 2d Battalion, meanwhile, kept pace through its nightmarish zone. Pushing a coordinated attack over such terrain was a strain in itself, even had there been no crafty de-

²¹ 24th Mar Report, 24. 1st Bn, 24th Mar Report, 12. 2d Bn, 24th Mar Report, 11. 3d Bn, 24th Mar Report, 10.

²² Although cited in this one specific instance of the 25th Marines' move along the coast, this same procedure prevailed in other units before and after this particular example.



fenders present. By late afternoon, however, the battalion had moved to Mt. Petosukara.

Establishment of the defensive position for the night was very difficult, inasmuch as a vertical gap of about 500 yards existed between battalions. In the reshuffling process, which was still underway after dark, the 1st Battalion flushed a covey of Japanese directly into the 2d Battalion's lines. In an effort to prevent more Japanese from entering its lines, the latter called down an emergency artillery barrage which fell among the approaching left units of the 1st Battalion. Fortunately, the fire was lifted before any Marine casualties resulted. After a brief flurry, the enemy was repulsed.

The situation regarding the separation between the two battalions was reconciled shortly and they dug in for the night, 2d Battalion generally on the west and 1st Battalion on the east slopes of Mt. Petosukara. The gap was never filled, although a platoon from Company C was placed on a dominating point between them.

Just at dusk, 700 to 800 civilians came through the 1st Battalion's lines to surrender. This produced a delicate and dangerous situation, since Japanese soldiers could have followed the civilians with a strong attack. Though considerable apprehension was caused by this possibility, no attack developed.

The 3d Battalion, followed in reserve, committed only one company during the day. This company (K) became embroiled in a sizeable scrap when one of its platoons searched out some caves in a by-passed hill and found a virtual beehive. After a lively skirmish, the hill was cleared of the enemy and 61 Japanese bodies were counted.²³

Night of 6-7 July

The night of 6-7 July was to be long-remembered. It produced the most devastating *banzai* attack of the entire war. Compared with the stroke that was launched against the 105th Infantry, all other Japanese efforts during the night take on an extremely pale color.

²³ 25th Mar Report, 3. 1st Bn, 25th Mar Report, 20-23. 3d Bn, 25th Mar Report, 13.

And yet, carrying the comparison further, these "pale" attacks were more violent than any that had gone before, and for those individuals who found themselves in the midst of one of these, even the smallest conflict may assume elephantine stature. Ordinarily, the fury of a battle is judged on its over-all effect, numbers of troops involved, and casualties but fails to consider the effect on any one individual.²⁴ The smaller thrusts of this momentous night will be covered first.

Individuals of the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, spent an unpleasant night on Mt. Petosukara. After a series of smaller probing missions the Japanese struck the Marines' right with about one rifle company. Coming in the midst of a heavy downpour, the attack, for a time, appeared to be making headway. But 60mm mortar shells, dropped within 50 yards of the front lines, together with small-arms fires and artillery, broke the enemy. But many Japanese, who seeped through the 2d Battalion's lines, set about a vigorous program of harassment. There was no sleep for anyone atop Mt. Petosukara for the remainder of the night. Early in the morning the battalion aid station was attacked by a small group, but corpsmen and doctors, plus Marines in the area, rallied to the threat and repulsed the enemy. Daylight revealed that between 60 and 70 Japanese had been killed in the abortive punches at the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines.²⁵

Elsewhere along the 4th Division front there were numerous instances of minor infiltration attempts, with all units reporting activity. For the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, stationed to protect the regiment's exposed left flank, the action was particularly vicious. Just before dawn the enemy rushed forward, armed with grenades and "idiot sticks," encouraging themselves with loud shouts and screams. Though this thrust failed to penetrate the Marines' lines, some of the enemy fell within

²⁴ Major General Merritt A. Edson was once asked which was the toughest operation in the Pacific. His classic answer is apropos: "The one in which you got hit!"

²⁵ Barringer. Joslin.

five yards of the foremost foxholes. The action report of the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, estimated the number of enemy killed in this attack at "more than 200."²⁶

The Banzai Attack

Since the early stages of the Saipan planning General Holland Smith had been convinced that, if and when an all-out *banzai* attack were launched at Saipan, it would come along the western coastal plain. It was this belief (shared by all officers on the Corps staff) that prompted Holland Smith to caution Major General Watson to keep the left of his 2d Marine Division strong as it advanced up the coast. Inasmuch as Watson and his staff had arrived at a similar conclusion, the division, in its long surge from the Charan Kanoa beaches to Tanapag seaplane base, had been ever alert to Japanese attack along the coastal plain.

On 2 July, with the Japanese becoming more and more compressed in the island's northern end, the Corps commander issued an order warning all units to take special precautions against a mass attack and to tie in—by physical contact—all front lines at night.

On 6 July, Holland Smith, accompanied by Major General Watson, visited the 27th Division command post and while there warned General Griner that "a *banzai* attack probably would come down Tanapag Plain late that night or early the next morning." Further, Holland Smith cautioned Griner to "make sure that his battalions were physically tied in." To this, according to General Smith, General Griner gave assurance that "his division was prepared for just such a Japanese move."²⁷

Holland Smith's warning was timely.

In regard to this conference, General Griner later wrote:

He [Holland Smith] makes no mention of the change in orders which was the purpose of his visit. The first evidence any of us had of the impending counterattack was the report of a Jap prisoner, captured in the early

evening of July 6 by the 105th Infantry, who was sent to the Corps G-2 for further interrogation.²⁸

The attack which hit the 1st and 2d Battalions, 105th Infantry, on the early morning of 1 July was the culmination of a long series of reverses for Saipan's defenders. General Saito had virtually given up hope on 25 June when he wrote: "There is no hope for victory in places where we do not have control of the air. . . ." And since then nothing had occurred to warrant optimism. By 6 July, according to the NTLF G-2 Report, the Japanese had two courses of action remaining: "to fight a withdrawing action ending in complete annihilation on the northern tip of the island, or to attempt to muster their disorganized and crumbling forces into one all out '*banzai*' charge." Saito chose the latter.

Huddled in Saito's cave command post at about 0600, 6 July, his subordinates heard the general's order:

I am addressing the officers and men of the Imperial Army on Saipan.

For more than twenty days since the American Devils attacked, the officers, men, and civilian employees of the Imperial Army and Navy on this island have fought well and bravely. Everywhere they have demonstrated the honor and glory of the Imperial Forces. I expected that every man would do his duty.

Heaven has not given us an opportunity. We have not been able to utilize fully the terrain. We have fought in unison up to the present time but now we have no materials with which to fight and our artillery for attack has been completely destroyed. Our comrades have fallen one after another. Despite the bitterness of defeat, we pledge "Seven lives to repay our country."

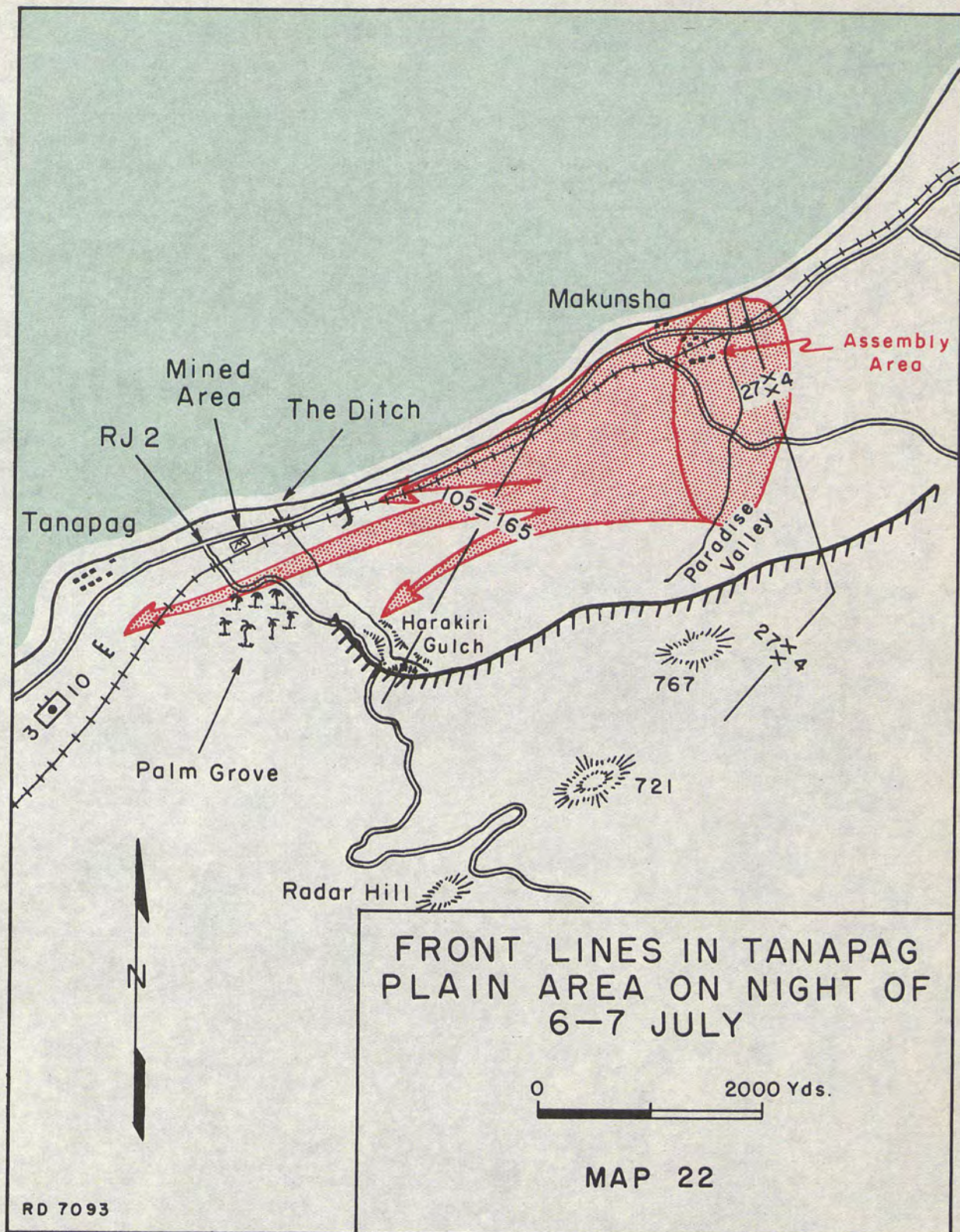
The barbarous attack of the enemy is being continued. Even though the enemy has occupied only a corner of Saipan, we are dying without avail under the violent shelling and bombing. Whether we attack or whether we stay where we are, there is only death. However, in death there is life. We must utilize this opportunity to exalt true Japanese manhood. I will advance with those who remain to deliver still another blow to the American Devils, and leave my bones on Saipan as a bulwark of the Pacific.

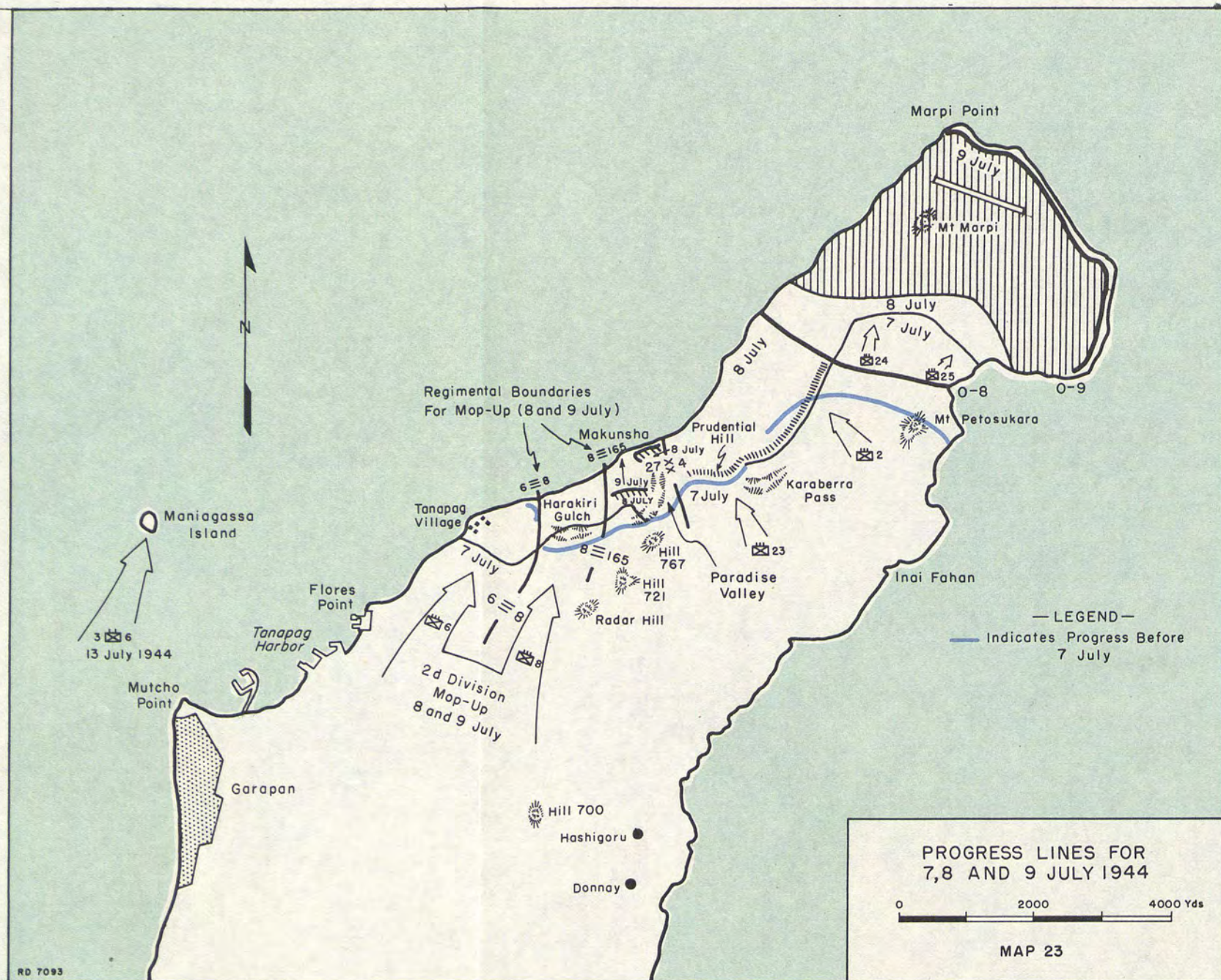
As it says in the "SENJINKUN" [Battle Ethics], "I will never suffer the disgrace of being taken alive,"

²⁶ 3d Bn, 24th Mar Report, 11.

²⁷ Quotations from *Coral and Brass*, 194. Another reference to this same conference may be found in *On To Westward*, Robert Sherrod, 131.

²⁸ Ltr from MajGen G. W. Griner, Jr., to MajGen O. Ward, 17Dec49. The "Jap prisoner" to whom Griner refers was a leading seaman from the 55th Keibitai who stated that his unit had been ordered to make an all-out attack at 2000. *NTLF G-2 Report*, 57.





and "I will offer up the courage of my soul and calmly rejoice in living by the eternal principle."

Here I pray with you for the eternal life of the Emperor and the welfare of the country and I advance to seek out the enemy.

Follow me.

If the subordinates, had, indeed, followed the example of General Saito, there would have been no attack. The tired general, feeling that he was too aged and infirm to be of use in the counterattack, held a farewell feast of *saki* and canned crab meat and then committed harakiki.²⁹

Several days prior to Saito's final order the assembly of remaining Japanese forces had begun. Some Japanese were out of reach behind U. S. lines, others were hidden in the deep shadows of caves, but all available were mustered. Marpi Point, Paradise Valley and Harakiri Gulch were sites for mobilization and reorganization. Many provisional units were formed in an effort to achieve some degree of tactical unity among the assorted groups and individuals.

Weapons and equipment were wanting and some Japanese were armed only with grenades or crudely-fashioned spears. One Japanese staff officer (Major Kiyoshi Yoshida) who participated in the battle estimated the total participants at 1,500, many with no weapons. In the light of subsequent events, however, his estimate appears too low. Assuming that he was misinformed on this point, it is not at all surprising; even at the assembly points, U. S. artillery and mortar fire hampered Japanese efforts to organize their troops and an accurate count was impossible.

As the conglomerate force moved toward Makunsha, which would serve as a point of departure, it was subjected to persistent, heavy concentrations of artillery fire. This resulted in a limping approach with leaders calling upon every conceivable device to maintain the unity of their commands. Greater silence by the sprawling force would have helped; early in the evening patrols from the 27th Division Reconnaissance Troop had detected unusual activity. This had resulted in the large num-

ber of unobserved fire concentrations thrown into the Makunsha vicinity.

Despite what has been said about the unsatisfactory state of weapons and equipment, the willingness of the individual Japanese to die honorably and to take seven American lives to repay his country somewhat compensated for the shortage. Here was a determination which was seldom—if ever—matched by the fighting men of any other country.

Preceding the main force as it approached U. S. lines were a number of strong patrols. In their reconnaissance-in-force missions the patrols poked and prodded the lines, seeking vulnerable points and goading the soldiers to open up and reveal positions. These explorations, no doubt, divulged the 300 yard gap between the 1st and 3d Battalions, 105th Infantry. The blow fell at 0445. First and hardest struck were the isolated positions held by the 1st and 2d Battalions, 105th Infantry. The attack on these units hit from front, flank and, after moving through the gap, the rear. Almost as soon as the attack was launched, communications to the rear were cut. It was then simply a matter of two isolated battalions of soldiers fighting for their lives. This they did and did well. Some of the soldiers stacked so many dead Japanese forward of their positions that it was necessary to move to get fields of fire.

Major McCarthy, commanding the 2d Battalion, described the onslaught:

It reminded me of one of those old cattle stampede scenes of the movies. The camera is in a hole in the ground and you see the herd coming and then they leap up and over you and are gone. Only the Japs just kept coming and coming. I didn't think they'd ever stop.³⁰

The sheer weight of this attack, its ponderous momentum, carried it through the soldiers' lines. In addition, hundreds of Japanese moved past the isolated defense area, using the gap on the right.

The fanatical surge then carried to the 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry, located on the high ground overlooking Harakiri Gulch. Here the soldiers were on better defensive terrain; the Japanese had to climb up to them. The lines held, and the Japanese suffered staggering

²⁹ NTLF G-2 Report, 57-58. For a detailed Japanese account of the days leading up to this climactic episode, and the suicide itself, see Appendix IX, page 284.

³⁰ *The 27th's Battle For Saipan*, 15.



LIEUTENANT COLONEL WILLIAM J. O'BRIEN, USA, 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry, posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for refusing evacuation after he was seriously wounded during the Tanapag Plain *banzai* attack and instead manning a jeep-mounted .50-caliber machine gun until his death.

losses. This portion of the battle did not cease with the coming of daylight on 7 July but continued until midafternoon.

Next to feel the impetus of the determined thrust was the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines, in firing positions about 500 yards southwest of Tanapag Village.³¹ The Japanese mass that struck this unit was apparently that portion of the *banzai* force which had moved through the

³¹ The 3d and 4th Battalions, 10th Marines, now attached to the 4th Marine Division, had occupied this area during 6 July to provide supporting fires for the 23d Marines in their sweep to the northern tip of the island. These two artillery units had been formed into a groupment under the commanding officer of the 4th Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth A. Jorgensen). After arrival in position areas the later officer had contacted the commanding officer of the 105th Infantry, informed him of the artillery positions and, at the same time, secured information as to the 105th Infantry's front lines. Telephone and radio communications were established between the Marine artillery and the 105th's command post, and a Marine liaison officer remained with the Army commander. Interview with Maj W. P. Oliver, Jr., 16Jan50.

gap between the 1st and 3d Battalions, 105th Infantry. Hardest hit were Batteries H and Headquarters and Service, in position on the left of the railroad track (see Map 22). Batteries I and G, set up on the right of the track also got into the fight, although they were not as closely engaged as the other two. The only battery that actually fired its howitzers during the melee was H, the others being forced to remain silent by the presence of other artillerymen to their front.

First Lieutenant Arnold C. Hofstetter, an officer of Battery H, tells the story of the vicious action:

Small arms and machine gun fire was heard to the front and right front at considerable distance at about 0300, July 7, 1944. No information as to source could be obtained. Later, the fire appeared to come closer and, since it appeared that the position might be attacked, the gunners were told to cut time fuzes to 4/10 second in preparation for close in fire.

About 0515, just as it was getting light, a group of men seen advancing on the battery position from the right front at about 600 yards. It was thought that Army troops were somewhere to the front, so fire on this group was held until they were definitely identified as Japs at about 400 yards. We knew that our men manning the listening post were somewhere to the front, so the firing battery was ordered to open fire with time and ricochet fire on the group to the right. Firing was also heard from the machine guns on the left.

After the howitzers started firing, it sounded to me like numbers 3 and 4 were not firing enough, so I went to these pieces to get them firing more. I got them squared away and stayed with number 4 until Japs broke through wooded ravine to the left, and I heard that word had been passed to withdraw. The firing battery fired time fuze and percussion fuze so as to get a close ricochet. Some smoke shell was fired. Cannon-eers were shot from their posts by machine guns and small arms, . . . which interrupted the howitzer fire and finally made it impossible to service the piece.

The remainder of the firing battery fell back about 150 yards from the howitzers, across a road, and set up a perimeter defense in a Japanese machinery dump. This was about 0700. We held out there with carbines, one BAR, one pistol, and eight captured Jap rifles, Japs got behind us and around us in considerable strength. They set up a strong point in a point of woods to our rear. . . . About 1500, an Army tank came in from the right and got the strong point and Army troops relieved us.

I estimate that 400-500 Japs attacked the position. They used machine guns, rifles, grenades, and tanks.³²

³² The presence of Japanese tanks in this attack is of interest mainly because of the curiosity of these

Some mortar fire fell in the area, but it may have been from the . . . rear.

During the early phases of the battle, before Battery H was forced to abandon its firing positions, one of its howitzers was turned completely around to engage a Japanese medium tank which had ploughed through to the rear. At a range of less than 50 yards the artillerymen sent 105mm shells crashing into, and destroying, their armored target. Eventually, however, the pressure from Japanese infantrymen was too great; Battery H's outnumbered survivors pulled back. In the frantic confusion and haste of the retreat, they failed to remove the breech blocks or firing locks from the howitzers. The Japanese, oddly enough, neither used nor destroyed the weapons while they had control of the area.

Battery I had been attacked at 0455, with Japanese advancing astride the railroad track. The first thrust was repulsed and the Japanese fell back to reorganize. A series of actions, followed this same pattern, continued until 0650, when all of the battery's small-arms ammunition was expended. At this time the battery commander (Captain John M. Allen) ordered the firing locks removed from the howitzers and the unit to fall back to the positions of Battery G. Here the two batteries continued the fight until relieved by elements of the 106th Infantry later in the day.

Located directly behind Battery H, headquarters and service personnel of the battalion were forced to retire after heavy, close-in fighting. Among the 136 casualties in the battalion was the commanding officer, Major William L. Crouch, who was killed. Japanese killed in the encounter numbered 322.³³

Even as the Japanese surged directly against

remaining operative after over three weeks of steady reverses. The vehicles were three in number; one an amphibious tank, one a medium and one a light.

³³ The foregoing account of the activities of the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines, is derived from the following sources: Memorandum to the Commanding General, Expeditionary Troops from Brigadier General Graves B. Erskine, 19Jul44; Report of enemy counterattack into position of 3-10 on 7 July 1944, ltr from CO, 10th Marines to CG, 2d Mar Div with Enclosures (A), (B), (C) (D), and (E).



PRIVATE FIRST CLASS HAROLD C. AGERHOLM, 4th Battalion, 10th Marines, awarded the Medal of Honor for making repeated trips through a fire-swept area in a jeep-ambulance to load and evacuate singlehandedly approximately 45 wounded men of the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines, before he was mortally wounded by an enemy rifleman.

the 3d Battalion, brother artillerymen of the 4th Battalion, 10th Marines, in position to the southeast, received pressure from the fringe of the main enemy tide. In defense of its firing positions, the battalion killed about 85 Japanese. Despite the turmoil of the *banzai* attack, the 4th Battalion responded on the morning of 7 July to an urgent request for support originated by the 23d Marines, fighting down the cliffs above Makunsha.³⁴

By 0530 the lunging stab had pierced another 400 to 600 yards to the command post of the 105th Infantry. Rallying to the defense of the installation, headquarters personnel met the Japanese in what was to be the end of the savage surge. The soldiers fought from deserted Japanese positions and exchanged blow for blow, bullet for bullet, with their attackers. Their defense perimeter was never penetrated; and, after several hours of close-in fighting,

³⁴ Interview with Maj W. P. Oliver, 16Jan50.

the battle was over. The enemy survivors withdrew.³⁵

While most of the credit for the repulse goes to the personnel fighting the Japanese at close hand, the fires of the 27th Division artillery also contributed prominently to the outcome. From 0515 to 0615, 7 July, the three 105mm howitzer battalions fired a total of 2,666 rounds—an average of more than 44 rounds per minute for a period of an hour.

Meanwhile, as the main prong of the attack spent its fury in the manner just described, two secondary efforts struck up Paradise Valley and Harakiri Gulch. Emerging head-on into the prepared positions of the 2d Battalion, 165th Infantry, the Paradise Valley Japanese were massacred as they spurted from the narrow funnel of the ravine. The other effort was just as funereal. Striving to break out of Harakiri Gulch and seize the high ground to the south, the enemy were slaughtered by the 1st Battalion, 165th, and the 3d Battalion, 105th, in position along the rim of the gulch. At dawn, the 3d Battalion, 106th, was inserted in the center of this position.

The same cross-compartment move which had been attempted by the U. S. soldiers during the day was now being tried—from the opposite direction—by the Japanese. The shoe was on the other foot, and the Japanese met murderous fire as they exposed themselves. Neither of these secondary efforts achieved anything positive for the Japanese, and in the process virtually exterminated the entire force. Not content that their efforts had been repulsed, the Japanese continued to expend themselves in futile charges throughout most of 7 July.

After the Japanese *banzai* attack had passed over them, men of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 105th, were cut off from friendly troops. Of those present when the attack started, only 25 per cent now remained, the rest being killed, wounded or missing. In addition, they had no

communications with other units and there was little ammunition left. Carrying or dragging the wounded, the decimated force started trudging to the south to reach friendly lines.

Japanese units, repulsed by units farther south, trickled in small, disorganized bands toward Makunsha, their starting point, and more often than not met the battered remains of the 1st and 2d Battalions on the way. This resulted in a series of uncoordinated skirmishes and finally forced the soldiers to form a perimeter defense at the village of Tanapag, both flanks tied into the water. In this position they fought off a succession of thrusts which continued for about 15 hours.

As if fate had not been cruel enough, about noon of 7 July, Army artillery observers spotted the soldiers' perimeter at Tanapag and, presuming it to be an enemy outpost, directed fire down upon it. A great number of the survivors, driven into the water by the deluge, were picked up by U. S. destroyers at the reef's edge. The remainder was evacuated by means of amphibian tractors and DUKW's. Casualties (killed, wounded and missing) in the two battalions were heavy: 1st Battalion—349; 2d Battalion—319.³⁶

Thus ended one of the most devastating single battles of the war. The mop-up would take another two days, but the fight was gone from the Japanese survivors. Just how many Japanese were committed to this struggle is unknown. Major Yoshida's estimate of 1,500 was doubled by a Korean civilian, Mamoru Iwaya, who also participated in the attack. Both agreed that there was a shortage of weapons (Iwaya said about one-third of the personnel carried rifles and the rest had spears). Estimates of the number of machine guns: Yoshida said one heavy and "a few" light machine guns, Iwaya said "approximately 10" light machine guns. The latter also thought that the attack was personally led by General Saito, who, he thought, was killed in the fight. In a large jumbled force such as this, no one

³⁵ Major Regan Fuller, NTLF Liaison Officer with the 27th Division, reported that "there was nothing going on but a little sniping by 1100 in vicinity of the C. P." Ltr from Maj R. Fuller to CMC, 12Jan50.

³⁶ Among the dead was the 1st Battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel William J. O'Brien, who posthumously was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the *banzai* attack.



BANZAI AFTERMATH. Japanese dead litter Tanapag Plain in the zone defended by the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry.

could be sure just how many participants there were.³⁷

The following narrative account by Major General Griner, the 27th Division Commander, gives a concise summary of the over-all picture:

At 0530, 7 July, the Commanding Officer, 105th Infantry, telephoned that tremendous masses of the enemy were attacking his 1st and 2d Battalions, that terrific mortar fire was falling on them, and that the telephone lines had gone out. He estimated the enemy attackers to number fifteen hundred (1500). I alerted the 106th Infantry (less one (1) battalion)³⁸ for move-

ment and telephoned General Erskine, Chief of Staff, NT&LF, giving him the estimate of the enemy strength. Further investigation of the situation at the front led me to believe that the enemy strength was underestimated, and at 1100, 7 July, I again telephoned General Erskine, stating that this was the main enemy counter-attack and consisted of no less than three thousand (3000) enemy soldiers. I stated that I was employing the Division Reserve and requested that a battalion of the 2d Marine Division be turned over to me as soon as practicable at a specified location. He attached to the Division the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines. Our tank losses from enemy action were somewhat large. Twice we requested that an additional platoon of tanks, which represented only a small fraction of those available to NT&LF, be made available to the Division. These requests were denied, obviously because that headquarters did not accept my version of the importance

which was attached to the 165th Infantry, in position on the rim of Harakiri Gulch.

³⁷ 27th Div Interrogation of Mamoru Iwaya (Korean) 2d class worker (civilian), 7Jul44. NTLF Interrogation of Major Kiyoshi Yoshida, intelligence officer of 43d Division Headquarters, 11Jul44. *The 27th's Battle For Saipan*, 15-16. *165th Inf Report*, 8-9. *105th Inf Report*, 10.

³⁸ The one battalion referred to is the 3d battalion



SERGEANT THOMAS A. BAKER, USA, Company A, 105th Infantry, posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for refusing, even though wounded, to leave the lines. When his unit was forced to withdraw during the savage *banzai* attack, Baker, unable to move by himself, requested that he be propped against a tree from which he could carry on the fight alone. Later, when the sergeant's body was found, his weapon was empty, and eight Japanese lay dead before him.

of the action then in progress. At this time, the 4th Marine Division was experiencing no opposition in the advance to the northeast. I issued orders about noon to the Commanding Officer, 106th Infantry, to counterattack the enemy to relieve the 1st and 2d Battalions, 105th Infantry, and to recapture a Marine Artillery Battery which, unknown to this Division,³⁹ had taken positions in the Division Zone of Action six hundred (600) yards in rear of the forward line of the preceding night. It later appeared that this artillery was in support of the Marine regiment, 2d Marine Division, which was on the left of the 4th Marine Division.⁴⁰ The 106th Infantry advanced five hundred (500) yards in front of their line of Departure but failed by three hundred (300) yards to relieve the battered elements of the two battalions of the 105th Infantry. This incident was

³⁹ Though the 27th Division C. P. was not informed of the presence of Marine artillery, the 105th Infantry C. P. was. See footnote 31 on page 224.

⁴⁰ This was the 2d Marines, attached to the 4th Division at 0920, 6 July.

witnessed by Major Fuller,⁴¹ Liaison Officer from NT&LF, who reported to his headquarters that the advance could easily have been continued and subsequently gave me the same report. Colonel Stebbins, the Regimental Commander, upon being interrogated later, stated that the decision to advance no farther was his own and made despite the protest of one of his battalion commanders, that although the enemy fire being received was not heavy, he realized that masses of Japs were being passed over who could fire in his rear. He stated that the mopping up of the area already gained consumed the remaining period of daylight. When the line stabilized, I inserted the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, between the right of the 106th Infantry and the left of the battalion of the 105th Infantry which was still intact⁴² with instructions that the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines would advance only to conform to the movement of the right of the 106th Infantry. I also made arrangements for the evacuation by DUKWs of the beleaguered elements of the two battalions, 105th Infantry. I then called the Chief of Staff, NT&LF, as was my custom as the daylight hours drew to a close, to report the existing situation. I advised that the line was firmly established, without break or gap of any kind, and stated that another battalion of the 2d Marine Division would provide sufficient reserve if made subject to my call. The Chief of Staff then advised that the 2d Marine Division had been moved forward to a line about fifteen hundred (1500) yards in rear of the then existing front and that General Smith was contemplating passing them through the 27th Division at daylight the next morning. General Erskine then asked if the 27th Division could complete the job and wipe out the enemy. I replied that we could. He stated that he would call back. Within thirty minutes he telephoned that the 2d Marine Division would pass through the 27th Division at daylight and that the Division (less 165th Infantry) would pass to NT&LF reserve. The 165th Infantry would be attached to the 2d Marine Division.⁴³

As indicated, the 1st and 2d Battalions, 106th Infantry, were ordered at about noon of 7 July to counterattack and relieve the battered battalions of the 105th. Though this move regained the positions of the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines, and pushed farther to the north, the advance was halted 200 to 300 yards short of the Tanapag Village perimeter. Since physical relief had not been accomplished, it remained for the two battalions to be evacuated by amphibian

⁴¹ Major Regan Fuller, USMC.

⁴² The battalion here referred to is the 3d Battalion which was still on the high ground overlooking the mouth of Harakiri Gulch.

⁴³ Source of this quote is Major General George W. Griner's Certificate of 12 July 1944, para. i.

tractors. The LVT's of the 773d Amphibian Tractor Battalion supplied the transportation and at 2200, 7 July, the last survivor left the perimeter.

With the 106th Infantry's advance through the battlefield, the true scope of the enemy attack was revealed: Japanese bodies littered the plain area. An accurate count would have to await complete mop-up, however.

When the 106th Infantry stopped, an interval existed between it and other 27th Division units along Harakiri Gulch. To fill this, the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, was committed. As night fell the 27th Division's front was solid, extending from the beach, across the plain, through Harakiri Gulch's mouth, along the top of the cliffs as far as Paradise Valley, then inland to a connection with the 4th Marine Division.

Against the coastal portion of this line the Japanese executed a vigorous thrust during the night of 7-8 July. Though the strength, organization and planning of this second attack were weak by comparison with the previous effort, the vigor and determination with which it was executed did not vary. Shortly after midnight a report came from the observation post atop Hill 767; Japanese force moving south. Enemy "feeler" patrols probing for weak spots were engaged as early as 0300, but the information that they took back to their commanders must not have been encouraging. No holes existed.

The attack, launched about 0430, struck the 1st Battalion, 106th Infantry, along the beach. Grazing defensive fires swept across the flat beach like a scythe, cutting all in its path. The Japanese never seriously threatened penetration of the lines and those that attempted to swim around the flank were spotted and killed. Shortly after 0700 the Japanese attack petered out and died. The 106th Infantry estimated that it had slaughtered about 1,000 of the enemy, while at the same time its own losses were practically negligible.

As actions of the tanks on 7 July have not been mentioned thus far, it will be well to summarize their activities. Available to the 105th Infantry were two platoons of light tanks and one platoon of mediums. Early in the morning of 7 July before the regimental commander was fully aware of the tragic circumstances of his

1st and 2d Battalions, he ordered one platoon of lights to proceed to the front lines. After moving along the beach road as far as Road Junction 5 (in the vicinity of Battery H's firing positions), two of the tanks were lost due to enemy actions and a third slipped off the road and "bellied up." The personnel of the latter were rescued by the platoon of mediums which also had ventured up the road as far as the road junction. The presence of enemy soldiers along the route made it apparent that a tank thrust, unprotected by infantry, would be a costly operation, and the tanks withdrew to the command post of the 105th Infantry. There they assisted the headquarters personnel in the defense of the installation.

The next tank excursion was not made until shortly after noon. This followed the shelling, by friendly artillery, of the beleaguered band of soldiers in the vicinity of Tanapag. It will be recalled that the intensity of this fire had driven many soldiers out onto the reef. Once there, they were subjected to small-arms fire from Japanese located along the beach. In an attempt to eliminate this source of trouble and relieve the situation, three light tanks sortied. Bends in the shore line masked their fire, however, and the three vehicles ventured upon the reef in search of direct firing positions. This proved a bad maneuver. All three fell into a hole and had their motors drowned out.

Meanwhile, two medium tanks advanced along the beach road and reached the isolated perimeter. There Major McCarthy, the 2d Battalion commander (and one of two officer-survivors), went on board one machine and used its radio to describe his dire situation to the regimental commander. On the tanks' return trip, Major McCarthy followed on foot with a small detachment. After the latter's arrival at the 105th Infantry command post, the entire situation was reviewed, providing the first complete summary of what had taken place. This resulted in Griner's orders to the 106th Infantry to push out and relieve the men at the battered perimeter.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, the 2d Marine Division had been alerted and moved to a position which would

⁴⁴ Love, 495-501.



2D DIVISION MOP-UP following *banzai* attack. Marines had to be alert for wounded Japanese who could still fire one more shot or hurl one more grenade.

afford depth to the west coast defenses. A line from Tanapag Seaplane Ramp extending about 3,000 yards inland was established by dark of 7 July. The NTLF Operation Order for 8 July instructed the 2d Marine Division, less detachments,⁴⁵ to "advance in the present 27th Infantry Division zone of action, pass through elements of [that] division on its front line, attack, mop up and destroy enemy elements. . . . Upon passing through the 27th Infantry Division assume operational control 165th Infantry and 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, . . . assume tactical control within the assigned zone of action at 0630 [8 July]." Upon passage of its lines the 27th Division would revert to NTLF reserve.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Detachments included: 2d Marines and Company A, 2d Tank Battalion, which were attached to the 4th Marine Division and the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, which was attached to the Saipan Garrison Force.

⁴⁶ NTLF Operation Order 25-44.

THE 2D DIVISION'S MOP-UP OF 8 AND 9 JULY

No effective resistance was offered the 2d Marine Division after it had passed through the 27th Division on the morning of 8 July, although large numbers of poorly armed and totally disorganized enemy were encountered. Some Japanese used the familiar device of hiding in caves and firing from the deep shadows, but the bulk seemed eager to die and made headlong rushes at the Marines. This foolish expenditure simplified the mop-up.

The 6th Marines, advancing on the division left, uncovered one strong pocket of resistance in a wooded swampy area just east of Tanapag Village. Here an estimated force of 100 holed-up Japanese set about a lively defense of their positions. Flame-throwers, tanks, and 75mm half-tracks blasted at the strong point, but the fight continued. Since this sector promised to be extremely time-consuming and since it was de-

sired that the mop-up continue, one company (F) stayed behind to contain and destroy the enemy force while the remainder of the regiment swept on. By dark the 6th Marines had reached the water's edge and stopped for the night.

Meanwhile, many Japanese had waded out upon the reef to escape the onslaught. This was but a temporary reprieve, however, inasmuch as amphibian tractors, embarking combat patrols, were sent to encourage the enemy to surrender and, if they refused, to eliminate them. The 6th Marines' action report characterized the day's activities as an "attack . . . against a disorganized, swarming mass of Japs . . . waiting for the final death blow. . . ." Adding the hundreds found strewn through its zone to the number that it disposed of, the 6th Marines made a "conservative estimate" for 8 July of 1,500 dead Japanese in its area.⁴⁷

A correspondent, who surveyed much of the battle area on 7 and 8 July, was moved to write: "The whole area seemed to be a mass of stinking bodies, spilled guts and brains."⁴⁸

On more rugged terrain inland the 8th Marines encountered much the same type of resistance. Here, with more caves to investigate, the sweep was somewhat slower. One wooded pocket encountered, a deep ravine, caused a minor delay. The tactic that previously had worked so well was again employed: one company stayed behind to contain and mop-up while the rest continued the push. The 8th Marines' zone, being inland of the main path of the *banzai* attack, contained fewer enemy bodies; but, even so, there was conclusive evidence that a terrific battle had taken place.⁴⁹

As noted before, the 165th Infantry had been attached to the 2d Marine Division for the mop-up of 8 July. Actually, however, this regiment had begun mopping up on 7 July almost as soon as the Japanese attack dissipated. Fighting through deeply-gouged Harakiri Gulch was much easier on 7 July than on previous days. The *banzai* attack relieved the soldiers of the



SERGEANT GRANT F. TIMMERMAN, 2d Tank Battalion, posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his action during the 8-July mop-up. Timmerman blocked with his body a Japanese grenade which would have fallen through his tank's open turret hatch upon the other crewmen inside.

worst of their tasks. By dark the 1st Battalion had moved through Harakiri Gulch and had reached the plateau overlooking the coastal plain. The regiment was thus placed in a favorable position for the descent.

On the 8th, however, the soldiers delayed their sweep, awaiting arrival of the Marines on their left flank. By about 1130 the Marines were abreast and the push was resumed. Moving down the cliff proved difficult. Wooded fissures and eroded cuts provided excellent hide-outs for die-hard stragglers from the *banzai* attack and eradication of these was a Herculean task. Independent smaller actions—a job for squads and platoons rather than a coordinated battalion attack—were necessitated by the great number of indentations in the cliff face.

While the 1st Battalion, 165th Infantry, stalked the stragglers in the cliff, the 2d Battalion by-passed Paradise Valley, leaving the

⁴⁷ 6th Mar Report, 15-16.

⁴⁸ *On to Westward*, Robert Sherrod, 140.

⁴⁹ 8th Mar Report, 9. 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 25.



FOLLOWING BANZAI ATTACK, 2d Division passed through the 27th Division and mopped up the area. Here Marines, deployed as skirmishers with the welcome support of a medium tank, move along Tanapag Plain in search of enemy stragglers.

mop-up to the 3d Battalion. This resulted in a rapid surge to Makunsha Village for the former. The valley was still a cesspool into which many stragglers had drained, and the task would take time. Darkness cut short the 3d Battalion's work on 8 July, and the unit withdrew to positions at the valley's upper entrance for the night.

On 9 July, while the 2d Battalion waited in Makunsha, the 1st Battalion finished its cliff task and moved to the coast. The blasting this cliff received had altered its appearance; much of the underbrush was gone and many of the caves and crevasses had been filled. Paradise Valley was also cleared of Japanese during the day. The 3d Battalion systematically combed

the valley's jagged slopes and by about noon emerged on the coastal plain.⁵⁰

Activity in the sectors of the 6th and 8th Marines followed the pattern established on 8 July. The 8th Marines met little difficulty and devoted a share of its fire power (including attached tanks) to support the 165th Infantry.

Action against the enemy that had swum out to the reef continued. Efforts to induce these to surrender were to little avail: only 14 prisoners were taken by the LVT's patrolling there, while about 100 resisted and either were killed or took their own lives. One Japanese officer was observed to behead four of a

⁵⁰ 165th Inf Report, 8-9. 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 26. Love, 475, 498, 514-518.

group of his soldiers before he himself was killed by the Marines.

One episode, described by First Lieutenant Kenneth J. Hensley of Company G, 6th Marines, indicates the difficulties experienced in convincing the Japanese on the reef that they should surrender. Hensley was in command of four amphibian tractors and 24 riflemen on 9 July when the incident occurred.

... We closed to about 100 yards from the 50-60 enemy on the reef and motioned them to come to the boat.⁵¹ They motioned us away. One officer armed with a rifle and standing on a rock, apparently controlling the 50-60 enemy soldiers, aimed his rifle at the boat several times. We covered this officer with machine guns and closed with the LVT(4)'s to about 50 yards. We again motioned for them to come out to the boats. The Jap officer then fired at the leading boats, and a machine gun, apparently about .50 caliber, opened fire on the boats putting two holes completely through one LVT(4). Many of the enemy threw hand grenades from the reef and fired rifles at the leading boats. Immediately all boats opened fire with all small arms and annihilated these 50-60 enemy on this section of the reef.⁵²

In addition to its reef-sweeping details, the 6th Marines also cleared the pocket east of Tanapag Village during the day. One hundred Japanese bodies were counted there.

Following the precedent of their fallen comrades, Japanese emerged during the night from their hiding places and attempted to pierce the strong U. S. defense. On the night of 8-9 July the 165th Infantry killed about 75 in front of its positions. Similarly, the next night 150 more fell from such abortive incursions. The 6th Marines reported killing "50 or more" on each night as the enemy attempted to sneak through the lines. Just where they were going, or what they were trying to accomplish, is not clear. These efforts amounted only to a gesture, or a final gasp, from a dying Japanese force.⁵³

And so, the Tanapag-Makunsha plain area was again in U. S. hands. As indicated throughout the narrative of this phase of the Saipan fight, the Japanese had suffered an almost unbelievable massacre. And yet not un-

believable, for densely sprawled through the area for all to see was the hideous evidence. By the 27th Division's count, 4,311 enemy dead lay in the battle area.

To determine accurately just which Japanese were killed by the various participating units in this battle is impossible. There are certain clues, however. In the sectors of the two battalions of the 105th Infantry which bore the brunt of the initial attack, 2,295 Japanese bodies were counted. Another 2,016 lay to their rear. How many of these fell prior to the climactic *banzai* attack as a result of artillery, naval and air bombardment which had been almost continuous since 13 June? And how many, on the other hand, were killed during the savage attack and the mop-up that followed?

The questions started very soon after the battle. On 12 July the G-1 of the 27th Division submitted a letter to NTLF on the subject of burial of Japanese dead. General Griner added an endorsement to the letter which said in part:

In view of press releases and official dispatches indicating the numerical strength of the enemy counter-attack on 7 July as between 300 and 500, basic report is forwarded indicating that by actual count, 4,311 enemy soldiers were buried in the area between the farthest advance of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 105th Infantry, and the farthest advance of the enemy. In the same area, 406 bodies of American soldiers were found.

A further breakdown of enemy dead indicates that 2,295 were killed in the combat area of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 105th Infantry, and 2,016 in the combat area of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 106th Infantry, the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, and the 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry. These dead represented the number of enemy that pushed beyond the defensive line of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 105th Infantry.

Basic report is forwarded in the hope that by proper distribution of the facts, accuracy of historical records and press releases will be preserved.⁵⁴

General Schmidt, who had recently relieved Holland Smith as Commanding General, NTLF,⁵⁵ answered General Griner's letter on 15 July. Schmidt did not question the number of

⁵¹ "Boat" is here used to refer to amphibian tractors.

⁵² Statement of 1stLt K. J. Hensley, Appendix K to NTLF G-2 Report.

⁵³ 2d Mar Div Report, Section VI, 26. 6th Mar Report, 13. 165 Inf Report, 9.

⁵⁴ CG, 27th Inf Div, 1st Endorsement to ACofS, G-1 27th Div, ltr of 12Jul44.

⁵⁵ Schmidt turned over the 4th Marine Division to Major General Clifton B. Cates (later nineteenth Commandant of the Marine Corps) on 12 July 1944.

dead Japanese found and buried but seriously doubted that these had all fallen as a result of the *banzai* attack. Also, Schmidt's letter called attention to the interrogation of Major Yoshida, who had estimated that only 1,500 Japanese had participated in the attack.

The areas over which the enemy made its counter-attack [continued General Schmidt's letter] against the 105th Infantry on 7 July have, from time to time, been subjected to naval gunfire, bombing, strafing attacks and artillery fires from 13 June to 7 July, and it is evident that these fires produced some casualties. It is probable that some of the dead remained on the ground as a result of the initial occupation by the 105th Infantry, and subsequent advance of the 106th Infantry and elements of the 2d Marine Division in the same zone of action.

Staff officers and observers, who visited the scene of attack soon after the ground was recaptured by the 2d Marine Division, have reported very large numbers of enemy dead within the zone and have also stated that many of the dead, due to the advanced state of decomposition, had apparently been in the area for some time. Some photographs turned in to this headquarters bear out these reports.

More than 300 freshly killed Japanese were counted on 8 July, in front of and in the positions of the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines (Artillery) which were overrun. It is probable that these Japanese constituted a large part of the enemy force which penetrated the positions of the 105th Infantry.

General Griner was not long in answering. His letter of 16 July said in part:

It was not suggested that each enemy soldier was killed by infantry elements of this division, or by its infantry and artillery, although the 27th Division Artillery was the only artillery in direct support of the action. Our Naval gunfire, aerial bombing, and Corps Artillery did good work everywhere on the island and at all times. Any estimate of the casualties inflicted by them on the enemy is acceptable, provided it is applied uniformly in all Division Zones of Action.

On the morning of 8 July, over 24 hours after the NTLF liaison officer with the 27th Division, Major Regan Fuller, had estimated the enemy counterattack force at 1,500, NTLF had sent a dispatch to Admiral Turner which stated that the 1st and 2d Battalions, 105th Infantry, had been "overrun by a considerable force estimated to be at least 300 to 400 Japanese, supported by two tanks."⁵⁶ It was to this inaccurate dispatch that Griner next referred and demanded correction, saying in part:

The great mass of the enemy dead found in the area between the extreme advance of the 105th Infantry and that of the 106th Infantry (2295) obviously were killed by the 105th Infantry since the enemy counter-attack had subsided completely prior to the advance of the 2d Marine Division at noon, 8 July.

In view of the fact that 2,016 enemy dead lay in the area in rear of the positions of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 106th Infantry, the statement . . . that it is probable that the 300 Japanese dead found in front of the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines (Artillery) "constituted a large part of the enemy force which penetrated the positions of the 105th Infantry" is not a reasonable conclusion. No mention is made of the fact that this position was relieved by the 2d Battalion, 106th Infantry, which reasonably could have been expected to have inflicted casualties in doing so.

As the only General Officer who was present on this front at any time prior to noon, 8 July; as the Commander of all troops operating in that zone, except a Battalion of Marine Field Artillery which had entered the area without the knowledge of this headquarters and had emplaced certain field guns 520 yards in rear of the most advanced line, not however for the purpose of supporting the troops in this area; and as one who followed in detail each event as it occurred, I submit that my personal observations should receive greater credence than is indicated by the record. I viewed perhaps a thousand enemy dead and did not see more than two or three in an advanced state of decomposition. Paragraph 127 of the Army Medical Field Manual, "Field Sanitation" (FM 8-40), states that at a temperature of 85° F maggots will be formed in about eight hours. The staff officers and observers did not arrive on the scene until at least thirty-one (0500, 7 July, to 1200, 8 July) hours had elapsed after the launching of the enemy counterattack.⁵⁷

Realizing that a controversy was developing at Saipan, Admiral Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific, sent a dispatch to Admiral Spruance, Commander Fifth Fleet, on 9 July ordering an investigation of the *banzai* attack. For this task, Spruance appointed two members of his staff, Colonel James E. Jones, USMC, and Lieutenant Colonel George S. Eckhardt, USA. These officers developed the facts of their report by conversations with General Holland M. Smith, General Griner, members of the NTLF and 27th Division staffs, and "such representatives of the troop units involved as were available for explanation of the action on the ground."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ltr from MajGen Griner to CG, NTLF, 16Jul44.

⁵⁸ This investigation has often been erroneously referred to as the "Spruance Board."

⁵⁶ NTLF G-3 Journal, 1800, 6 July to 1800, 8 July.

On 19 July Spruance submitted a report to Admiral Nimitz containing his conclusions relative to the counterattack. Spruance's report failed to establish the exact number of enemy that had participated in the attack, saying: "Estimates of the enemy strength in the assault run from 1500 to 3000." Though this figure is not specific, it serves to correct the first report from NTLF of "300 to 400." The last paragraph of the report contains comments on the conduct of troops and commanders involved in the fight:

(a) The gap between the 1st and 3d Battalions 105th Infantry could have been readily closed by swinging the left of the 3d Battalion forward. In any case, this gap should have been covered by local reserves and/or planned machine gun fires. There is no evidence of such measures being taken.

(b) The 3d Battalion 105th Infantry although not as heavily engaged as the other two, [made] no effort to go to the relief of the 1st and 2d Battalions. The reserve company of the 3d Battalion was not committed except to protect the battalion command post which was under attack.

(c) Although the position of the 27th Division was penetrated to a depth of 1000 to 1500 yards, this penetration was always firmly contained.

(d) There is no question that our troops fought courageously in this action. The 1st and 2d Battalions and Headquarters Company, 105th Infantry and the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines deserve particular mention.

(e) All evidence points to the fact that the front line units of the 27th Division were alert to the imminence of a Japanese attack at dawn on 7 July 1944.⁵⁹

Whatever conclusion the reader may draw from the facts presented, the statement in subparagraph (d) of Admiral Spruance's report should emerge in bold relief above the clouds and fog of controversy: "*There is no question that our troops fought courageously in this action.*"

D-PLUS 22, 23 and 24 (7, 8 AND 9 JULY)

To the Shore at Marpi Point

It will be recalled that on 6 July the 4th Marine Division had been ordered to take over the entire front at a point just beyond Makunsha. From there it would drive to Saipan's northeastern tip. Assumption of its broad zone

demanding commitment of all three infantry regiments of the division, and on 7 July NTLF attached an additional regiment, the 2d Marines, to assist in delivering the last punches. Artillery support had been bolstered also; the 3d and 4th Battalions, 10th Marines, attached to the 4th Division, moved to advanced positions from which they could deliver fires forward of the 23d Marines. As already indicated, however, these two battalions suffered heavy personnel losses in the *banzai* attack and were in no condition to provide effective support. The 2d 155mm Howitzer Battalion, V Amphibious Corps, executed general support missions from its newly occupied positions about 500 yards inland from Garapan's south edge.

The Japanese *banzai* attack had an important bearing on the final drive of the 4th Division. Many of the enemy who would have contested the last few miles of Saipan had already expended themselves in the Tanapag onslaught. The several thousand who accelerated their appointment with death could have provided a considerable challenge in the rocky approaches to Mt. Marpi. This result was not apparent to the men of the 4th Division, since they were not in the attack's path but was true nonetheless. But this is not to say that the last days at Saipan would go unopposed.

On 6 July the center and right regiments (24th and 25th respectively) had made rapid progress, reaching the dominating ground just short of O-8. The 23d Marines, however, met rugged terrain in its expedition to the west coast. A precipitous cliff, carved with enemy positions, would have to be descended before the unit could begin its final, half-mile drive to the west coast. The newly-attached 2d Regiment was assigned a zone between the 23d and 24th. On its four-regiment front the division attacked at 0930.

The two right regiments moved at a fast clip on 7 July, encountering only minor trouble in the form of sporadic small-arms fire from small bands or patrols of the enemy. In addition, the 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, reported fire from a large-caliber gun positioned in a cave. This weapon was pushed out for one or two rounds then hastily retracted before the

⁵⁹ "Report on Japanese Counterattack at Saipan on Morning of 7 July 1944" from Commander, Fifth Fleet to Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas, 19Jul44.



TAKING COVER behind a medium tank, these Marines try to locate the source of the automatic fire cracking about them. Man in foreground carries an SCR 300 radio with short antenna. Oak planking on side of tank is to prevent Japanese magnetic mines from sticking there.

Marines could bring down counter-fires. Eventually, however, the enemy gunner selected the wrong moment to peek his gun from the hiding place, doing so just as a shell landed in the entrance. The cave gun and its elusive gunner were destroyed.

One difficulty during the day was presented by the great number of civilians pouring through the lines. Until these had approached close enough for recognition, it was impossible to distinguish them from enemy soldiers, and it was necessary to proceed with a great deal of caution.

By early afternoon of 7 July the two right regiments had pushed so far ahead of units on

the left that General Schmidt ordered them to hold up and wait.⁶⁰

The going had been tougher on the left. Here the problem was to find suitable routes from the cliff top to the flat below. In a maneuver designed to exploit the 24th Marines' success, Colonel Stuart's 2d Regiment moved to its right through the the 24th Marines' zone and reoriented its direction of attack straight toward the west coast. By dark of 7 July, Stuart's Marines were disposed along the high ground overlooking the coastal plain (see Map 23).

⁶⁰ 4th Div Report, Section VI, 34-35. 24 Mar Report, 24. 25th Mar Report, 9.



THROUGH A BATTERED CANEFIELD on the west coast, men of the 2d Marines, accompanied by a medium tank from Company A, 2d Tank Battalion, push toward the northern end of the island. Hundreds of the enemy were killed during this phase of the operation.

For the 23d Marines the activities of 7 July were a continuation of those begun the previous day. This regiment had to cross the coastal plain and reach the beach just northeast of Makunsha, and no amount of detouring would allow it to execute this until the cliff line flanking Karaberra Pass was cleared of enemy forces. Some imaginative Marine named the high ground overlooking the pass "Prudential Hill,"⁶¹ and the title stuck. To attempt to traverse the plain without first clearing the cliffs which dominated it would have been an invitation for the Japanese to deliver fire into the regiment's rear.

This was the problem then: the Marines faced the west coast and the Japanese did also. The Marines needed the base of the cliff for a line of departure but this was dominated by

the Japanese in the cliff. In addition, the base was mined and covered with plunging fire. The struggle continued throughout 7 July and most of the caves and positions were destroyed. The coming of darkness, however, indicated the desirability of returning to the high ground for the night with plans to get a fresh start on 8 July. From positions overlooking the coastal flats, the 23d Marines observed large straggler groups moving toward Marpi Point and brought long-range machine-gun and 75mm half-track fires to bear on them. According to the 23d Marines' action report, "over 500 were killed."⁶²

Fighting in and around Karaberra Pass was close-in, personal and, frequently, individual Marine against individual Japanese. Because of this, men of the 3d Battalion, 23d Marines, were especially alert for anyone with oriental facial characteristics as they cleaned the area.

⁶¹ Though this name was derived from the Prudential Life Insurance Company's trademark, Webster's definition, "Prudential—That which relates to or demands the exercise of discretion," is also apt.

⁶² *23d Mar Report*, 47-48.



ANTICIPATING A BLAST, Marines hug cover near island's northern end. At times like these, one may only hope and pray.

So it was that one dark-complexioned person, dressed in a Marine uniform but showing a poor command of the English language, narrowly escaped death before he was finally permitted to surrender. After being marched to the 3d Battalion command post, he explained to Major Treitel, commanding the unit, that he was a Marine, of Puerto Rican ancestry, who had the misfortune of resembling the Japanese. It was the third time he had been taken prisoner by fellow Marines at Saipan. Major Treitel described him as "one frightened hombre," and well he might have been.⁶³

As the division stopped for the night of 7–8 July the lines took on a peculiar appearance. The left had not progressed, while the right had moved from 700 to 1500 yards. Connecting the two extremes was the 2d Marines, facing the west coast. The night passed quietly.

For the attack on 8 July, General Schmidt decided to hold the right of his line stationary,

while the left moved to the sea. This, in effect, was a reorientation of the direction of attack, since units would be moving to the northwest rather than the northeast. If successful, however, this maneuver would greatly reduce the division frontage, which on the morning of 8 July was 6,300 yards. The scheme affected units as follows: the 25th Marines and the right battalion of the 24th (2d) would hold their positions facing to the northeast, while the remainder of the division swept to the northwest (see Map 23).

The plan was a good one, having as its most unique feature the support provided by rocket craft—LCI(G)'s—lying off Makunsha and firing into the cliffs directly below the 23d Marines. Though delayed somewhat by the terrain, occasional road blocks and mines, and desultory fire from caves, the advance to the coast was rapid. After placing the finishing, blasting alterations on Prudential Hill's western landscape, the 23d Marines dashed across

⁶³ *Treitel.*

the coastal flat and reached the beach at 1410.⁶⁴

The 2d and 24th Marines, meanwhile, kept generally abreast and secured their assigned zones by 1530. A great number of Japanese were killed during this move and in the subsequent mop-up along the coast. Many of those encountered were no doubt survivors of the *banzai* attack which had struck the 27th Division. In three operations (Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan), men of the 2d Marines could not recall a single day in which they had killed as many Japanese. It is probable that the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, with its score of about 800 enemy killed on 8 July, accounted for more

Japanese on that day than it had throughout the rest of the operation.⁶⁵ One company commander observed that "hunting was exceptionally good."⁶⁶

An unusual employment of 37mm guns during the day is worthy of note. In order that the 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, might use all available men in the push across the coastal plain, Major Roger G. B. Broome (Weapons Company, 24th Marines) volunteered to assume, with two 37mm guns and a few riflemen, a position from which to protect the right flank as the unit swept to the coast. After the in-

⁶⁵ Interview with Capt C. Schultz, 16Jan50.

⁶⁶ Brooks.

⁶⁴ Dillon.



BELOW MT. MARPI'S AUSTERE HEIGHT (833 feet), 4th Division's tanks and infantry push across flat toward the final objective on 9 July. Many positions on Marpi's sheer northern face were by-passed by the speedy moves, and Marines had to return later for the mop-up.



UNCOMPLETED MARPI AIRSTRIP was overrun by 4th Division's 9 July dash to Saipan's northern coast. Marines appear alert after 25 days of combat.

fantry had departed, Broome's isolated position was rushed by a numerically superior group of Japanese. During the skirmish, the 37mm crews fired their pieces at ranges of 10 to 20 yards, taking up the brief slack between rounds by throwing grenades and firing small arms. For a time the issue was in doubt, but the Marines held. This exceptional employment of a weapons unit was necessary and effective in this situation.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Ltr from Col O. Lessing to CMC, 11Jan50. Major Broome died from wounds received during this skirmish.

The 2d and 24th Marines, after reaching their objectives, spent the remainder of the day mopping up the jagged coast line.

Earlier in the afternoon, when it was apparent that the attack to the northwest would be successful, General Schmidt approved the 25th Regiment's request to advance its lines to the dominating terrain 600 yards to its front. Patrols had located no enemy in that area, and Colonel Batchelder deemed it advisable to capitalize on the situation. The advance had the additional advantage of providing observation over the Marpi Point area.



SAIPAN WON, the landing force command and unit representatives attend official flag raising at Charan Kanoa.

During the day the division's left had moved 1,500 yards in seizing the western coastal area and had advanced the northern portion of its line approximately 600 yards closer to the island's tip. At one point in the proceedings (shortly after noon), General Schmidt had entertained hopes of reaching Mt. Marpi during the day and issued an operation order to that effect. Time consumed mopping up beach areas, however, caused the general to defer the plan until the next day.

Night activity was confined to the coastal areas, where groups of civilians and some military personnel came from the caves to surrender.⁶⁸ Surrender was not on the minds of the screaming Japanese that attacked the 1st

Battalion, 2d Marines, however. This battalion, set up on the lip of the coastal cliff, received a series of miniature *banzai* attacks that lasted most of the night. The point of attack was a logical one: at the right center of the battalion's front, where a 30-40 yard break existed. This break tilted sharply to the water's edge, affording the Japanese a corridor for the climb to the top of the cliff. Whatever the cause of this unusual formation, it had been apparent to the men of the 1st Battalion that this area had dangerous potentialities. In view of this, machine guns had been emplaced on either shoulder with sectors of fire interlocking over the mouth of the chute.

Into these prearranged fires the Japanese hurled themselves in attack after attack and, despite the repulse of all attempts, succeeded—

⁶⁸ 4th Mar Div Report, Section VI, 35-36. 23d Mar Report, 48. 24th Mar Report, 24. 25th Mar Report, 9.



ELECTING TO LIVE, these Saipan civilians cast their lot with the Americans. This puzzled, tired group eyes apprehensively one of the United States invaders to whom they surrendered.

by the sheer momentum of their thrust—in knocking out both machine guns. These were replaced, however, and the slaughter continued. Later, one of the replacements was also destroyed. Vast quantities of incendiary grenades were used during the night to light the funnel and expose the enemy, but mortars or artillery could not be used because of the proximity of the Marines to their attackers. Machine guns, rifles and grenades were enough, however; the enemy soldiers were stopped before they could really get started. As had been the case in other such attempts, the Japanese seemed to feel an obligation to get killed in an attack, as if some higher honor would thus be accorded them. The coming of daylight revealed enemy dead thickly stacked in

the narrow confines of the corridor. No accurate count of the bodies was completed, but the battalion commander estimated about 100.⁶⁹

Objective O-9 (extreme northeastern tip of Saipan) had seemed very distant on 15 June 1944 when the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions hit the Charan Kanoa beaches. It seemed to get no closer as the days grew to weeks, and the number of casualties climbed from one digit to five,

⁶⁹ A count, initiated by Gunnery Sergeant Claude E. Moore, was abruptly terminated when the latter received four holes in his buttocks from a single bullet. While stooping to count the bodies, the sergeant presented a profile view of his posterior to a Japanese survivor in a nearby cave, who inflicted the unusual wound. The bullet hit no bones and the sergeant was not too uncomfortable to see the humor of the situation. *Kyle*.

and the young matured to grim old age. As long as a single wooded hummock separated the front lines from the farthest tip of land, objective O-9 had been an ambition—little more.

Ambition became reality on 9 July when the 4th Division spurred to the shores of Marpi Point. The final thrust was made with three regiments abreast, from right to left, 25th, 24th, and 2d. Men of the 23d Marines, meanwhile, spent the day mopping up along the northwest coast, assisted by the LVT(A)'s of the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion which fired on cave positions from seaward.

The attack of 9 July produced nothing startling in the way of tactical situations or enemy reactions. Firm pressure was applied all along the front and a fast pace maintained. Indeed, many units, anxious to be the first to reach Marpi Point, moved faster than reasonable caution would dictate. Many enemy groups were by-passed with the result that much time and effort were spent extricating holed-up Japanese after 9 July.

Along the west coast in the 2d Marines' zone, isolated enemy units somewhat retarded the push, but generally the Japanese realized the futility of coming out to do battle and instead chose to remain in the myriad caves along the coast. Extermination of all of these was not to be accomplished on 9 July—or 9 August, or 9 September, for that matter.

By 1615 all three regiments had reported that they were in possession of O-9.⁷⁰ And as the Marines looked to the north, all that they could see was water. There was no objective O-10.

Good news travels fast. In the same minute that the 4th Marine Division reported seizure of O-9, Admiral Turner, the Expeditionary Force Commander, declared the island secured. The time was 1615, 9 July 1944.

This was merely a formal declaration, however. It meant that all organized resistance had ceased and that the entire island—technically at least—was in our hands. Or, as one Marine put it: "It means that if you get shot now, you were hit in your own rear areas." For the men of the 2d Battalion, 24th Marines,

word that the island was "secured" came as something of a surprise. In the words of the battalion's action report:

At 1615 a message was heard from an unknown station by tank liaison officer over tank TCS radio, that the island was secured. Part of F Company was pinned down on the beach for four hours by intense enemy machine gun and rifle fire from the western cliff face which resulted in one dead and ten wounded. This company was not able to pull completely back on to the high ground until darkness set in. It took five hours to evacuate the wounded up the treacherous cliff.⁷¹

For the Japanese, hundreds of whom still lurked in the many caves and recesses, "secured" had no meaning. Mopping up of these die hards continued for months thereafter. More than a year later, even after the final surrender of Japan, there were still Japanese soldiers at large on Saipan.

Naval Activity

During the closing days of the operation, the Navy bent a good share of its efforts toward the improvement of facilities at Saipan. Tanapag Harbor would figure prominently in the post-battle value of Saipan, and the task of clearing mines, wrecked barges and ships was already underway. By 6 July the Minesweeper and Hydrographic Survey Group reported that a 150-foot channel had been swept from Tanapag Harbor to the northwest docks. This set the signal for initiation of work on the piers and seaplane ramps in the Tanapag-Garapan area.

There was no diminution in the pressure exerted against other islands in the Marianas. Tinian, Guam, and Rota were peppered daily with bombs in preparation for contemplated landings. On 7 July Admiral Spruance announced the target dates for two of them: Guam—21 July, Tinian—24 July.

Japanese air activity in the final days of the campaign was weak and ineffective. During the night of 6-7 July, while Saito's loyal subordinates prepared for the final *banzai*, 12 to 15 planes made two raids against Saipan and ships near the island. Although the Condition Red lasted from just after dark until after midnight, the raiders failed to achieve any hits. In the process, U. S. night fighters

⁷⁰ 4th Mar Div Report, Section VI, 36-37.

⁷¹ 2d Bn, 24th Mar Report, 13. Rothwell.

from the fast carrier groups downed two of the intruders and the destroyer *Hudson* accounted for a third. Again, some Japanese planes attempted to land at Marpi Point Airfield and at North Field on Tinian but, apparently, were frustrated by ships' gunfire.

The final air attack executed against Saipan during the capture and occupation phase of the operation came at 1945 on 7 July and lasted until after midnight. In all, the Japanese launched nine separate raids during the evening but, aside from the dust, noise and excitement kicked up by the 25 bombs dropped on Aslito Airfield, achieved nothing. Night fighters rising from Saipan and from the fast carriers divided the honors, each shooting down one enemy plane.

Much more devastating attacks were launched against the airfields at Saipan in the months to follow, but the feeble display of 7 July marked the last one prior to "securing" the island on 9 July.⁷²

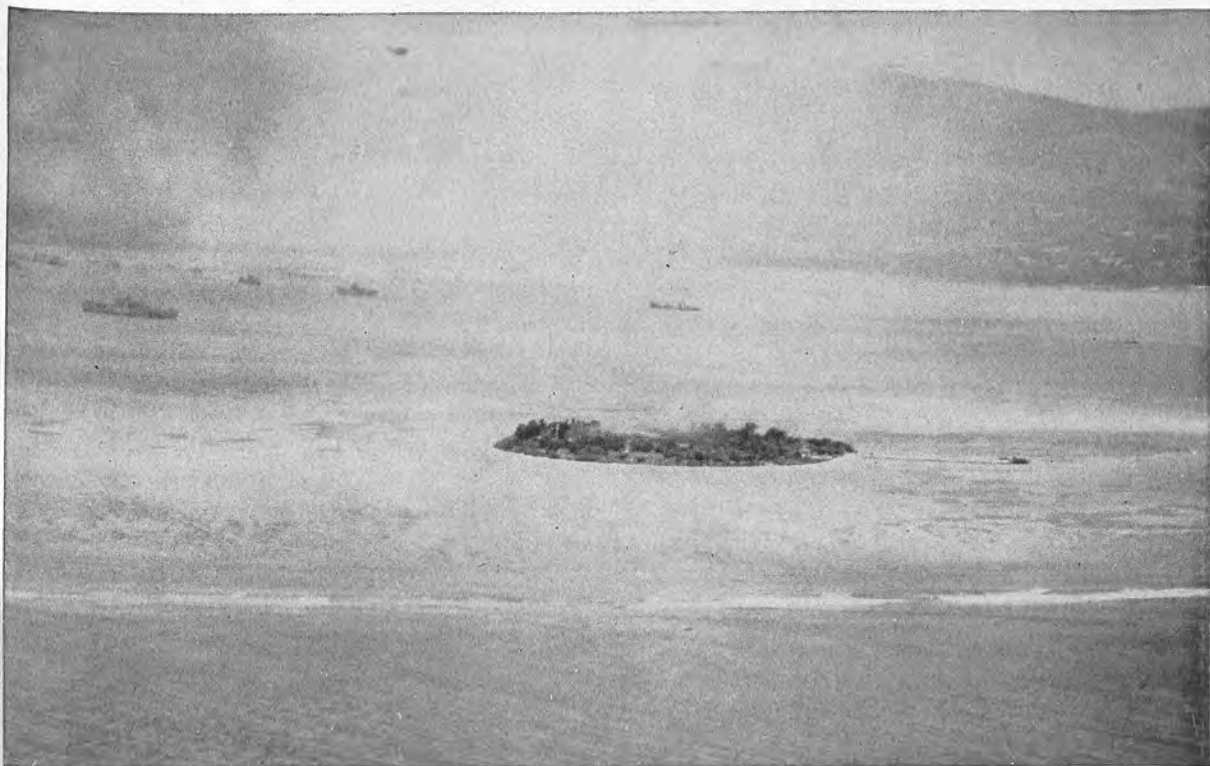
As noted at various points throughout this narrative, the Japanese ground troops were not happy with the poor showing of their aircraft. Another indication of this appears in the diary of an unidentified noncommissioned officer stationed on Tinian: "6 July—Did Vice Admiral Kakuda (Commander in Chief 1st Air Fleet) when he heard that the enemy had entered our area go to sleep with joy?"⁷³

⁷² *TF 51 Report*, Encl. A, 13-14, and Annex 1 to Encl. A.

⁷³ CINCPAC-CINCPMA Item #11.405.



ELECTING TO DIE, hundreds of Saipan civilians refused surrender offers, flung children and selves upon the jagged coastal rocks.



TANAPAG HARBOR'S MANIAGASSA ISLAND, a nuisance and threat to American shipping, was seized on 13 July by the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines. Ships in this pre-D-Day picture are Japanese. Mutcho Point is in right background.

The Crowning Horror

Following the declaration that the island was secured, efforts to induce cave-occupants to surrender were intensified. Interpreters, using public address systems, pleaded with people in caves to come out. The device was not only attempted from land but from sea as well. LCI gunboats moved close inshore and broadcast promises of good treatment, for which they were answered with fire from Japanese soldiers in the caves. Even some of Saipan's leading citizens, who had surrendered and received good treatment, talked to those in the caves, urging them to yield. But, for the effort expended, the results were not encouraging. The primary reason for this failure was that the people had been saturated with Japanese propaganda to the effect that the Americans intended to torture and kill them. This had been repeated so often that the people came to believe it.⁷⁴

At this time the very zenith of horror occurred. Hundred of civilians, believing that the end had come, embarked on a ghastly exhibition of self-destruction. Casting their children ahead of them, or embracing them in death, parents flung themselves from the cliffs onto the jagged rocks below. Some waded into the surf to drown or employed other gruesome means of destroying themselves. How many civilians died in this orgy of mass hysteria is not known. A commander of a patrol craft (YP) said that progress of his boat around Marpi Point at this time was slow and tedious because of the hundreds of corpses floating in the water.

soldiers would not permit the civilians to surrender and killed those who weakened. This was not borne out, however, by an atrocity investigation which was conducted by five officers from the NTLF G-2 Section. Approximately 150 Japanese and Chamorro civilians were interrogated on this point, and none testified that they were threatened or used as shields by Japanese soldiers. There is a strong possibility, however, that those who would have testified differently are dead.

⁷⁴ Another reason often mentioned is that Japanese

Maniagassa Island

One small objective in the Battle for Saipan remained. This was tiny (250 yards wide, 300 yards long) Maniagassa Island in Tanapag Harbor. Lying like a possessive apostrophe some 2,500 yards northwest of the seaplane base, the isle was known to be occupied. It was conceivable that Japanese located there could harass activities within the harbor as well as provide Japanese on other islands with information relative to U. S. ship and plane movements. Even a small radio set could relay messages to other islands in the Marianas for further transmission to Japan.

The special assignment of capturing Maniagassa went to the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, commanded once again by Lieutenant Colonel John W. Easley.⁷⁵ Preparations for this miniature operation were as complete as those for a full-scale campaign. Air observers from the 2d Marine Division conducted the reconnaissance, took the necessary aerial photos, and di-

⁷⁵ This officer had commanded the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, during the D-Day landings, but had been wounded and evacuated by D-plus 1. He returned to duty in time for the closing stages of the operation.

rected supporting artillery fires. Naval gunfire support was furnished by one LCI(G) firing its 40mm guns. The 5th Amphibian Tractor Battalion provided 25 LVT's to transport the battalion, while five LVT(A)'s from the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion rendered close-in support.

With detailed preparations completed, the landing was executed at 1100, 13 July 1944. In the 15 minutes preceding this, the 10th Marines rained 900 105mm howitzer and 720 75mm shells upon the island. Nearly the entire objective was within the bursting radius of each shell, and the target was well saturated. Marines of Companies I and K hit the beach unopposed and hastily set about completion of their mission. Within an hour Maniagassa was overrun. Of the 29 Japanese defenders, 15 were captured and the remainder killed. The Marine casualty report was singular: one man wounded in action. One rifle platoon and a 60mm mortar section were left to garrison the new possession, and the remainder of the attacking force returned to Saipan.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ *6th Mar Report*, 17.



SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

CHAPTER VII

Conclusions

SUMMARY

Thus, in less than a month, Saipan had been ripped from the enemy's determined clutches. Tangible proof was again provided that persistence and determination are important adjuncts to, but never substitutes for, tools and technique. As emphasized in many instances, the Japanese were not wanting in individual heroism. But in their willing hands were insufficient or inadequate tools. They did well with what they had. It simply was not enough. With Saipan "secured" the months of mopping up began. To the men required to stalk and ferret out the remaining Japanese hidden about the island, "secured" had only psychological significance. The enemy whom they sought was as real on 10 July as on the day before. Possibilities of meeting death from the dark shadows of a cave were still present. The ground was just as hard at night. The flies were every bit as thick. The canned rations were monotonous and tasteless.

What, then, of the psychological implications? Only this: officers and enlisted men now felt that caution was a more laudable quality than bravery; patience more important than aggressiveness. The unspoken maxim applied: "Look before you leap." In the fevered excitement of battle, news of friendly casualties was accepted with stoic calm; minds, as well as bodies, became conditioned to combat. But every man hit after 9 July—and there were many—became a matter of personal sorrow to

all that heard of it. At last there was time to be sad.

Naval Gunfire

In considering the tools that attained the U. S. success, naval gunfire looms forth conspicuously. During the pre-D-Day bombardment certain factors (listed on page 36, Chapter I) limited the effectiveness of preparatory fires. But these notwithstanding, naval gunfire achieved appreciable results at Saipan. Foremost in achievement was the almost complete rupture of enemy communications. Although this did not represent the fruits of a single weapon or arm, certainly ships' gunfire deserves a great amount of credit. Admittedly, total ammunition expenditure does not necessarily mirror the effectiveness of a weapon, but it does reflect the vigor of the effort. Total rounds expended on troop support missions (not counting pre-D-Day bombardment) by battleships, cruisers and destroyers in the Saipan operation were 138,391, a weight of over 8,500 tons. In addition to this, 5,882 starshells were fired.¹

The tremendous impression upon the Japanese created by U. S. naval gunfire is indicated

¹ Expeditionary Troops, Marianas Report, Naval Gunfire Support, Appendix A to Part 2, Enclosure G. Of the battleships, *Tennessee* fired the most rounds with 5,579; of the cruisers, *Birmingham* led the field with 12,673, followed by *Cleveland* with 10,149; destroyer *Wadleigh* could claim the honors in its class, firing 4,598 rounds, over 1,000 more than its closest competitor (*Pringle*).



ARCH OF TRIUMPH. Marines return from mopping-up patrol after Saipan was declared secure.

in the following extracts from prisoner of war interrogations and captured documents:

... I was horrified by the number of deaths on our side due to the naval gunfire which continued every day.

We did not stay long in this fourth headquarters. Caught in the concentration of naval gunfire the wounded and dead continued to increase.

... most feared ... was the naval shelling which managed to reach the obscure mountain caves where ... CPs were located.

The greatest single factor in the American success ... [was] naval gunfire.

The feeling of everyone is 'if they would only stop the naval shelling. ...'

The enemy naval gunfire, using mainly a shell with attached instantaneous fuze (land shell) has great destructive power. They also use a shrapnel shell. The call fire on land is extremely quick and exact and until night attack units are some tens of metres from the enemy they continue to receive naval gunfire.

... The practical experiences of the defense forces in Saipan in the battle which lasted over half a month lay only in power of the enemy naval bombardment. ...

This is by no means a complete list of the testimonials, but this sampling clearly indicates Japanese opinion of this weapon. As the NTLF Naval Gunfire Report summarizes:

Naval gunfire is a powerful weapon in amphibious

operations. It has many important uses even after a successful landing has been made ashore. In order to properly utilize the weapon and to take full advantage of its capabilities, its control ashore must be placed in the hands of highly trained and experienced personnel. Future planning and training should take this into account.²

Air Support

Working hand in glove with ships' gunfire during the preparatory stages and, subsequently, in support of troops ashore was the aircraft's strafing and bombing. Since 11 June, when Mitscher's Task Force 58 trespassed the Marianas' waters and skies, the planes had been engaged in almost constant action. The Marianas, and more specifically Saipan, placed the air war on its most equal basis up to that time in the Central Pacific. The lightning knockout which had been the rule in the Gilberts and Marshalls did not obtain at Saipan. The unconscious foe kept reviving himself and contesting the issue.

Why this was true is no mystery: geographically and strategically the Marianas demanded decisive defense. This was basic, simple and logical. The implications of U. S. seizure of these islands were more than the Japanese higher command cared to ponder. With a prodigality born of desperation and fright, the Japanese squandered their aircraft. It was like a gambler attempting to recoup his losses with larger wagers. While momentarily causing some rearrangement and adjustment of U. S. dispositions and plans, this extravagance finally resulted in a resounding defeat for the enemy and, as noted previously, after the Battle of the Philippine Sea the Japanese fast carrier fleet virtually retired from the war. Land-based aircraft, however, flying from Japan via the Bonins or Volcanos, then to fields in the Marianas or Palaus, delivered a series of raids on U. S. ships and installations at Saipan.

Admiral Mitscher's fast carriers played the key role in repulsing the enemy fleet, but it remained for the escort carriers³ to stave off

² NTLF Naval Gunfire Report, 19-21.

³ The escort carriers (CVE's), used experimentally in the Gilberts campaign, had performed so excellently



UNITED STATES NAVAL GUNFIRE scored a direct hit on this 6-inch naval gun casemate on Agingan Point. After being overrun, the position served United States personnel as an observation post.

those raiders that penetrated to Saipan itself. Helping in this task were U. S. Army P-47's stationed at Aslito Airfield.

Any recital of the exploits of planes at Saipan which fails to mention the valuable OY observation aircraft would be an incomplete one indeed. These vulnerable little planes performed nobly in their myriad assignments. Not only did they focus the wrath of U. S. artillery on Japanese troops and installations, but they acquired a wealth of intelligence information

and proved so valuable that they were a "must" in the Marianas. In all, 12 participated.

by their constant snooping over the enemy's holdings.

Close support of ground troops presented no innovations or departures from accepted technique. Initially, strike groups for infantry support were furnished by planes from the carriers of Task Force 58, while antisubmarine and combat air patrols, photographic, smoke, observer, spotter, and air delivery missions went to planes on the CVE's. After the forenoon of 17 June, however, most of the close support was furnished by Navy planes flying from CVE's and later by Army planes from Aslito Airfield. During the first days of the

campaign there were, at times, as many as twelve "urgent" requests for close support missions. Since it was physically impossible for aircraft to operate in a restricted area on more than one mission at a time, a filter system was devised whereby the officer handling the support air request net passed the mission to the air liaison officer at the regimental or division command post for screening and decision as to which mission, then pending, deserved priority.

This system of lower-level screening worked satisfactorily and was the best solution considering that only one Support Aircraft Control Party controlled aircraft supporting three divisions. For this party to perform all screening itself would have imposed more of a workload than it could have handled efficiently. After artillery had been established ashore, fewer requests were made for air, and the latter's missions were confined to targets which, owing to the configuration of the terrain, could be struck best from above.

The most oft-heard complaint regarding close air support at Saipan was that too much time was required getting strikes executed. Through the lengthy process of requesting the mission, effecting coordination, designating the target, and finally having the mission flown, infantry units had to wait. A large majority of the requested missions were cancelled by reason of the infantry advancing past targets before the planes appeared.

In his report after the operation, General Holland Smith expressed the opinion that it was unwise to depend upon the fast carriers for close support, since these would frequently be needed to battle the enemy fleet (as they had in the Battle of the Philippine Sea). Further, these carriers would often be unavailable for vital rehearsals preceding the various operations. This, Holland Smith felt, was unfortunate. For these reasons, he recommended:

... that sufficient air groups be designated and trained as direct support groups and be assigned to CVE type carriers.

... that Marine Aviation provide air groups for this specialized duty. The troop experience of senior Marine pilots combined with the indoctrination of new pilots in infantry tactics should insure greater cooperation and coordination between air and ground units.⁴

⁴ COMINCH P-007, CG JtExpTrps, 2-7.

Favorable action on Holland Smith's recommendation is indicated by the following paragraph from Admiral Nimitz' report:

Four CVE's have been designated for close (troop) support and will embark Marine aircraft squadrons. It is not anticipated that Marine squadrons will furnish all close air support but they will be used with Marine divisions when the situation permits. In addition a certain number of Marine aviators are being assigned to the various amphibious force flagships to assist in the control of support aircraft.⁵

Artillery

Certainly the four major artillery units (one from each division plus XXIV Corps Artillery) performed a vital function at Saipan.⁶ The total number of rounds fired, 291,495,⁷ tells only part of the story; time and time again the 75's, 105's and 155's brought timely, effective fire on the precise source of enemy resistance. Throughout this narrative the excellence of this support has been taken for granted, just as it was at the time. All artillery units were exceptionally well-trained and well-led and, once assigned missions, *hit their targets*. This excellence of performance must not be forgotten or mistaken in any subsequent criticism of artillery coordination.

Only a minute proportion of the accidents resulting from misdirected artillery fire can be traced to errors by gunners. In any case, these can neither be determined nor analyzed. The bulk of the trouble arose from the fact that

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2-8.

⁶ General Harper capsulized the XXIV Corps Artillery's role by saying that "... it reaped a harvest and accomplished more in furtherance of the common cause than possibly has ever been done by a similar group of battalions in the history of the Army. Saipan was a Corps Artilleryman's dream." Ltr from BrigGen A. M. Harper to CG, USAFICPA, 13Jul44.

⁷ This figure is derived from an addition of the totals of each unit as listed in individual action reports. All, save the 27th Division artillery, gave a specific figure for Saipan; the exception gave a grand total for Saipan and Tinian but did not separate the two. A reasonably accurate estimate was provided, however, by the fact that approximately two-thirds of its missions were fired at Saipan; and, thus, approximately two-thirds of its ammunition were expended there also. This total does not include the rounds fired by the cannon companies of the three infantry regiments of the 27th Division, nor those fired by the regimental weapons companies of the Marine regiments.

there was *no strong, central control* of the four separate artillery units. This meant that no single source could be consulted to find out who was firing where. Before an air support mission could be flown, for example, it was necessary to check with each individual artillery unit. Though time-consuming, this process had to be followed rigidly to preclude the possibility of friendly aircraft flying into the path of onrushing artillery shells. The most serious consequence of this situation was that troop commanders, having requested the air strike, had to delay their moves until it was executed.⁸

Much more critical than the long waits, however, were the instances of barrages landing within U. S. lines. Since it was inconceivable that a forward observer would deliberately call in fire upon his own head, the conclusion drawn was that most of these misdirected concentrations were called by observers on a flank. It was long-established doctrine that artillery should not fire outside its own division zone without specific permission from the adjacent division concerned; and, since all artillerymen were well indoctrinated on this point, it must be assumed that this was general practice. Just how many, if any, accidents occurred because of a violation of this policy can not be estimated.

What, then, of the instances where permission to fire was requested and granted? Normally, this would appear virtually to guarantee the mission's safety. In most cases it did. In some others, however, there is the possibility that the front line unit had not accurately reported its position or that the report was incorrectly plotted on situation maps. Another startling possibility is that the unit requesting permission to fire outside of its zone had erred in its map reading, failing to orient properly an area on the ground to one on the map. Thus, permission to fire on a specific map location

may have been granted, whereas the rounds themselves would fall into a ground area occupied by friendly troops. The map of Saipan, as indicated before, left much to be desired, and on many occasions individuals believed themselves on certain terrain features located in one area when in actuality they were in another.

Obviously, the addition of a strong artillery coordination agency would not automatically have solved all these difficulties. Even well-oiled machinery requires human hands to set it in motion. But few persons will deny that more centralized control of the artillery was needed at Saipan.

The "joint operations section," an embryo coordination and control agency for all three supporting arms (air, naval gunfire, artillery), functioned from the NTLF command post. But, hampered by a shortage of personnel and communications, it was unprepared to control properly all the U. S. artillery. Most of its information had to be secured by roundabout, indirect means which slowed its processes and limited its effectiveness. Representatives of all three supporting arms were present in the section, however, and the work they did, with limited resources, was excellent. The limitations of the group is indicated in the following excerpt from the Corps Artillery report:

Each time an air strike was requested by an Air Liaison Officer to Commander Support Air Afloat, it was necessary for the Commander Support Air to call Commander Support Air Ashore by radio who in turn inquired of the Corps Artillery representative [Assistant S-3] whether or not the Corps Artillery was firing in a given area. He then had to call the Corps Artillery FDC (where it was frequently necessary to call the Groups or Battalions) and pass the information back to Commander Support Air Afloat along the same chain of communications. A similar situation existed with naval gunfire, but the time element was not as vital nor was there the necessity for closely timed coordination since naval gunfire and artillery fires do not necessarily interfere with each other.⁹

Landing Vehicles

Selection of the LVT as the principal landing vehicle was demanded by the fringing reef off Saipan's western beaches. These vehicles

⁸Two plans were in effect at Saipan to protect planes from the high ordinates of howitzers. One plan restricted the trajectory of shells in a given area to a specific maximum height. The other stopped all artillery fire within a prescribed area. The latter plan was the subject of vehement complaints from infantry commanders, who at times were denied artillery support for periods ranging from 30 to 90 minutes.

⁹XXIV Corps Arty S-3 Report, 12-13.



FLAME-THROWER TANK shoots stream of fire into an enemy cave. Marine at rear of vehicle is talking on sound-powered telephone to tankmen.

proved eminently satisfactory. During the long D-Day churn from the line of departure to the beach, many officers and men cursed the slowness of the LVT's, but when the tracks ground into the reef, hung for an agonizing moment, then clawed for the beach, the curses became murmurs of appreciation.

Bobbing like ping pong balls in the choppy seas, armored amphibians (or amphibian tanks as the Army called them) preceded the troop-carrying LVT's. It is doubtful that while afloat armored LVT's were able to locate and hit point targets, but the fact that continuous fire was maintained upon the beaches was enough to confirm their value. During the ship-to-shore movement there is a short, but critical,

interval in which the troops are too close to the shore to permit naval gunfire or air bombardment of the landing beaches. During this period at Saipan the armored LVT's assumed the starring role. Once upon the beach, these vehicles suffered heavily.

The name "armored amphibian" presents a false picture of the invulnerability of this vehicle. While in the water the vulnerable points are protected, but once it emerges upon the dry land of the beach, or hangs for a moment at the reef's edge, it presents a huge area which can easily be penetrated by almost any caliber of enemy shells. In reality, only the turret is armored, the remainder is an inviting Achilles heel.

The value of the armored LVT's did not end with the ship-to-shore movement. They performed vital missions of beach security during the nights and executed fire missions against enemy coast line cliff positions during the days.

Significant in the Saipan operation was the introduction of the LVT(4), which included a ramp for loading and discharge of cargo. Jeeps, artillery pieces, and other heavy gear were unloaded without the use of booms or cranes—and with far less hazard to troops.¹⁰

The 4th Marine Division's plan to move to the high ground (O-1) aboard LVT's did not prove feasible. Only a few of the vehicles made the trip successfully. The failure of this bold tactic may be attributed to two causes: first, the vehicles provided large, slow-moving targets for enemy weapons, and, second, the terrain at many points forbade movement inland.

Every one of 719 LVT's and LVT(A)'s in scheduled assault waves debarked from LST's on D-Day, and over 98 percent of these reached the beaches as planned. Considering the heavy volume of enemy fire which peppered the

beaches, this percentage is surprisingly high. Grouping combat and non-combat losses into single categories, casualties in amphibian vehicles for the entire operation were as follows: armored LVT's—65; cargo LVT's—139.¹¹

Tanks

While no startling innovations in tactics or technique in the employment of tanks were unveiled at Saipan, the operations of these weapons were a vital, and often decisive, factor in each day's operations. Aside from proving their superiority over the enemy's tanks whenever a duel could be provoked, U. S. armor blasted pillboxes and caves impeding the infantry advance, assisted in the evacuation of casualties, carried vital supplies to hard-pressed front line troops, and, on at least one occasion, provided a mobile observation post for the direction of naval gunfire. Throughout the operation they were valuable to the perpetuation of a high state of morale among the soldiers and Marines who felt that virtually

¹⁰ Ltr from Maj W. C. Stoll, Jr., to CMC, 11Jan50.

¹¹ NTLF LVT Officer's Report, 26Jul44. Ltr from LtCol V. J. Croizat to CMC, 20Dec49.



MEDIUM TANKS move through favorable terrain on Saipan. The firepower of these weapons was a vital factor in the speedy United States success.

nothing could stop them as long as tanks were present.

Saipan marked a further growth in the technique of tank-infantry cooperation. After the inevitable growing pains of earlier campaigns and training areas, the tank-infantry concept reached full maturity at Saipan. Here, through terrain more variable than that encountered in previous Pacific operations, the tank-infantry team passed the rigid test of combat.

At least one item of equipment which made its first battle appearance at Saipan is worthy of special note: tanks employing flame-throwers as their main weapons. Though imperfect in many respects, these served a useful purpose, particularly in close assault on troublesome locales. But against more distant targets the weapon's effectiveness was limited by the short range of its fire stream, together with the unavailability of napalm, demanding that ordinary fuel oil be burned. Many of the principles of tactical employment, as well as suggestions for improvements in design and maintenance, developed at Saipan.¹²

The operation also marked the first extensive use—by the Marine Corps—of the tank-dozer. This vehicle, nothing more than a medium tank with a bulldozer blade installed on its bow, performed vital missions of digging and filling, while at the same time providing armored protection to its personnel.

Devices for the added protection of tanks, such as fencing the sponsons with oak planking as a preventive measure against magnetic mines, were further developed at Saipan. Many vehicles had reinforced concrete between the planking and the armor plate as well as additional tank blocks welded to the glacis plate and turret. Saipan was an important period of elaboration and development in the technique

¹² This was the progenitor of a much improved flame-thrower vehicle used by the 1st Marine Division a few months later at Peleliu. Chief improvement of the Peleliu flame-thrower was a great increase in the range of the fire stream, but the vehicle upon which it was mounted—an LVT—was too vulnerable for full effectiveness. The obvious outgrowth of this was the installation of the long-range flame-thrower on a medium Sherman tank. This weapon was used in the Iwo Jima operation.

of added protection, a technique that reached its zenith in the Iwo Jima and Okinawa operations.

Perhaps the most unusual single items of equipment relating to tanks at Saipan were rubber, self-sealing water tanks, fastened to the bustles of some of the 4th Tank Battalion's vehicles, enabling infantrymen to fill canteens in the midst of a fire fight.¹³

Engineers

The functions of the engineers, in almost any campaign, may be brushed over with the brief notation that they did a good job. And yet this inadvertently implies that the life of an engineer is really not so bad after all. Such cursory handling represents the fact that much of what the engineers do is routine, unglamorous, and tiresome. Certainly there is little narrative value in the improvement of a road, establishment of water purifier, or removal of a tank barrier; these are tedious and humdrum activities which are taken for granted. Even the touchy job of disarming bombs, mines and booby traps normally becomes an individual or small group project and captures only passing interest when performed in the midst of an island conquest. One may only shudder to contemplate the effect on the tactical scheme if all these prosaic engineer duties were not performed, however. Engineer support is inextricably tied to the activities of the infantry, and it is only fitting and proper that this relationship be recognized in its true light.

The vital shore party function was executed by the engineers, also. Initially assigned to this backbreaking labor were the Pioneer (2d) Battalions of the 18th and 20th Marines (2d and 4th Divisions respectively) and two naval construction (Seabee) battalions (18th and 121st). When the two Seabee units left the beach on 18 June for work on Aslito Airfield, the Army's 152d Engineer Battalion (part of the Saipan Garrison Force) took over shore party functions on the Blue Beaches. At night shore party personnel assumed responsibility for beach security.

Later in the operation, when ships were un-

¹³ R. K. Schmidt.



COMMUNICATION TEAM OF 1ST JASCO operates its SCR 284. Good United States communications at Saipan were the key to controlling the complex amphibious assault forces. Poor Japanese communications, made worse by United States fire superiority, were fatal to General Saito's maneuver schemes.

loaded, shore parties were released for infantry missions. The 2d Marine Division formed its returning shore party personnel into a Provisional Battalion which was used for a number of security and mopping-up assignments. The 4th Division did not reorganize its pioneer battalion after reversion but attached companies to infantry regiments for "defensive missions only."

So far, only incidental mention has been made of the combat, or assault, engineers. The 1st Battalions of the 18th and 20th Marines and the 102d Engineer Battalion (U. S. Army) furnished personnel especially trained in the assault and demolition of blockhouses, pillboxes and caves. These battalions were broken up into companies and attached to the infantry regiments on the basis of one combat engineer company each. Then followed the breakdown

from company to platoon with one assault engineer platoon being assigned to each infantry battalion.¹⁴ These attachments remained constant throughout the operation, and in nearly every instance in which demolitions were required, these engineers performed their dangerous specialty.¹⁵

With these amplifying remarks, then, it is safe to say that the engineers did a good job, without fear that the statement will be undervalued.

¹⁴ On 1 May 1945 a change in Marine Corps Tables of Organization placed an assault platoon in each infantry battalion. This platoon, similar to the assault engineer platoons that operated at Saipan, was organized, equipped and trained to execute missions of assault on fortified positions.

¹⁵ 20th Mar Report, 1-13. 102d Engr Report, 1-3.

Signal Communications

In any careful analysis of the Japanese situation at Saipan, the failure of communications crops forth steadily. Enemy commanders nearly always found their hands tied by the absence of means to pass on instructions to their subordinates. It would be difficult to determine just how many of the enemy's ill-coordinated attacks could be traced directly to poor communications.

U. S. commanders, on the other hand, had a completely different experience and were nearly always able to reach subordinates (usually by several means) to convey instructions, orders and information. This was a priceless advantage. One regimental commander pointed out, in this connection:

... our communications worked so well that there is a general disposition to take them for granted. The work of signal troops is not spectacular and goes unnoticed when everything is in working order, but abuse is heaped upon them for each little failure. Sections were usually under-manned and their work was never finished.¹⁶

One item of signal equipment left much to be desired: the infantry platoon leader's radio (SCR 536). Unpredictable, fragile, short-ranged, easily affected by moisture, the tiny sets did not answer the requirements. The need for improvement of these radios was apparent to all who had to depend upon them for communications.¹⁷

Logistics

Logistics is "that branch of military art that comprises everything relating to the movement and supply of troops."¹⁸ To most fighting men the term took on a significance as fundamental as beans and bullets. Few realized, for example, that embarked in the assault shipping for Saipan was a ratio of over a ton of equipment and supplies to *each man* of the landing force.¹⁹ Only by pausing for a moment over that starting truth may we realize the tremendous scope of logistical support. And, of course, the supply of troops did not end with

the landing, nor even with securing of the island. It may accurately be stated that the logistical task is never done.

Tonnage carried by individual ships at Saipan was greater than in previous operations. In earlier days of the war, when air supremacy over target areas was questionable, transports were lightly loaded with the aim of quick unloading and rapid routing to a rear area. With the air issue no longer in doubt, it followed that the tonnage could be increased.

In general, throughout the operation, supply functioned without critical hitches. In the matter of mortar and artillery ammunition, however, there were shortages from time to time. This situation caused General Holland Smith to comment that "seven units of fire for artillery and mortar ammunition were generally inadequate." In view of this, he recommended that, in the future, ten units of fire be carried for these weapons.²⁰

Medical

Few persons, indeed, are aware of the great number of personnel engaged in medical activities during a combat operation. The surgeon of the 27th Division shed some interesting statistical light on this situation:

The medical service of the Division and attached troops included the 102d Medical Battalion, the 98th Portable Surgical Hospital, the 28th Field Hospital, and the organic Medical Detachments with each regiment, separate battalion, etc. This made a total of approximately 100 Medical Officers and 1200 Medical Department enlisted men, *or one Medical Department man for every 14 combatants*. [Author's italics.]²¹

A check of the rosters of the two Marine divisions reveals a ratio of about one doctor or corpsman to every 17 Marines.

It is almost superfluous to state that these medical personnel were busy. While a great number of minor wounds were handled directly in the battalion and regimental aid stations and never were admitted to division hospitals, the following table of admissions indicates the extent of the latter's activities:

¹⁶ Wallace.

¹⁷ Ltr from Capt W. H. Pickett to CMC, 9Jan50.

¹⁸ Modern Military Dictionary, 1936, Max B. Garber.

¹⁹ COMINCH P-007, 5-4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5-18. An examination of the Peleliu and Iwo Jima action reports reveals that this recommendation was not adopted for those campaigns.

²¹ 27th Division Surgeon's Report, 1.



SAIPAN HOSPITAL was rough but ready. Speedy evacuation and expert medical attention was a key factor in maintaining high morale.

TOTAL ADMISSIONS (all causes)

2nd Marine Division Hospital -----	5,156 ²²
4th Marine Division Hospital -----	5,203 ²³
27th Infantry Division Hospital ----	4,274 ²⁴

In addition to the medical units attached to the divisions were several Corps installations: Medical Battalion, V Amphibious Corps; 31st Field Hospital (Army); 2d and 3d Provi-

²² Report of activities of Medical Department, 2d Marine Division during FORAGER Operation, 8.

²³ Medical Report, 4th Marine Division, 7.

²⁴ 27th Division Surgeon's Report, Table I. This report actually showed an aggregate of 5,166, 892 of whom were killed in action. In the interest of consistency with Marine reports (which did not include KIA's under Admissions) these 892 have been subtracted from the total.

sional Portable Surgical Hospitals (Army). And, though not actually on the island, the doctors, nurses and corpsmen of the hospital ships (*Solace*, *Bountiful*, *Relief* and *Samaritan*) further swell the totals of medical personnel.

Also, though not specifically carried on muster roles as medical personnel, the Marine and soldier stretcher bearers were a vital cog in the evacuation machinery. The lion's share of credit for this dangerous, fatiguing task goes to the men of the division bands, who, in combat situations, put aside their cornets and trombones to man the stretchers. Few tasks in combat are more thankless and heart-rending than this. Obviously, these specially-assigned stretcher bearers could not perform the entire



EVACUATION OF CASUALTIES was difficult and fatiguing. Here a poncho is used as a stretcher, a substitution often necessary because of a shortage of stretchers.

chore, and it was often necessary to assign regular combat troops to the job.

Still another category of personnel engaged in medical support can be made of the pilots who successfully air-evacuated 860 casualties from Saipan to hospitals in the Marshalls.

The only new medical problem presented at Saipan was the extra work load imposed by the thousands of civilians, many of whom required care. Without exception, medical installations performed all tasks excellently and earned the esteem and gratitude of all hands.

Japanese Tactical Lessons

In no battle up to that time were the Japanese as conscientious about reporting and analyzing U. S. combat methods as they were at Saipan. The volume of messages dealing purely with tactical lessons clearly indicates that the importance of this information had been forcefully impressed on all Japanese commanders. Some of the conclusions and deductions based upon these reports are of interest, particularly since many of them coincide with U. S. opinions on the same subjects.

A staff officer of the Japanese Combined Fleet, Captain Taisa Shimamura, wrote one of the more astute studies on the subject of tactical lessons. Prepared in August 1944, the document was captured at Leyte, Philippine Islands in October-November 1944. The captain's observations as to the place of the U. S. landings on Saipan is of interest:

Since the 31 Army's arrival on Saipan in March of this year all estimates were consistently in agreement that the enemy would attempt landings at the harbor on the west coast of Saipan, particularly at Oreai (the actual landing place), and that he would attempt to seize the "Aslito" airfield. In May the defending forces even simulated such an action and executed joint Army-Navy maneuvers. However, there were many other suitable landing beaches elsewhere on the island. Therefore it was not possible to concentrate sufficient combat strength at Oreai. . . .²⁵

Shimamura's remarks regarding the Japanese organization of the ground point up shortcomings which U. S. reports also emphasized:

Although the enemy landing area was anticipated yet because of the following factors, fortifications had not progressed much beyond the stage of a single line of light defensive positions.

a. Coral sand impeded the strengthening of the beach positions.

b. Cement did not arrive (due to transport sinkings).

c. Although the defense plan had been established, the defensive positions were not organized in depth owing to a change in command during preparations.

Light shelters were constructed here and there in the beach position. There were practically no communication trenches leading from the beach position to the rear. There were no obstacles on the beach.²⁶

Relative to the conduct of the defense at Saipan, Captain Shimamura observed:

On the night of the 16th [June], we carried out a large scale night attack [against the 6th Marines]. One battalion broke through a portion of the enemy's line and penetrated to his rear, but we suffered great losses. Contact between higher headquarters and the attacking force was disrupted and there was even a rumor that Lt. Gen. Saito had been killed in action.

Further on in the same document is a logical conclusion to the tactic of launching all-out night attacks:

. . . it may be inferred that a more flexible delaying action might have been executed even though the enemy

²⁵ Captured Japanese document, "Tactical Lessons—Naval Shelling of Saipan," Captain Taisa Shimamura, August 1944, 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

had command of sea and air, if fortification and communication had been adequate, if we had made thorough preparations for the effective employment of our forces, and if we had avoided the sudden weakening of our defensive potential by limiting the number of troops used in the night attack.²⁷

It is significant to note that many of the Japanese commanders recognized that the frantic night assaults were foolish wastes of manpower; but, rather than recommending that this long-established tactic be discarded, they instead suggested that the number of troops committed to the nocturnal efforts be reduced. Here is illustrated a basic, fundamental flaw in Japanese military thinking which had been evidenced in every operation since the war's beginning: whenever there was doubt in a commander's mind as to the success of a venture, he cut down the number of troops committed and, thus, foredoomed it to almost certain failure.

All of the reasoning leading up to a specific recommendation in regard to night attacks is present in the following passages from Shimamura's study, but a helpful conclusion is not forthcoming:

In the execution of our night attacks, we must give further study to the coordinated use of our strength, the use of smoke, and the use of small, picked units. But the *chief consideration* [author's italics] is the fact that . . . a night attack by the bulk of the defending force might defeat its purpose and help the enemy in securing his landing.

Thus leaving the reader suspended, the captain anticlimatically added: "The night attack is our only recourse against the enemy, but at present even it has only a slight chance of success."²⁸

Japanese conclusions in regard to U. S. naval gunfire have already been quoted, but Shimamura's analysis exposes one point which other enemy sources did not (and which many U. S. sources did):

The duration of naval shelling during landing preparations depends upon the degree of neutralization and destruction the enemy deems necessary. Apparently because of heavy losses [suffered by U. S. forces] in the Saipan landing after only two days of preliminary shelling, in their subsequent landing on Guam, pre-

liminary shelling continued for ten days with the obvious intention of destroying gun emplacements and positions.²⁹

The lessons learned in regard to the application of air power were a summary of more than the Saipan operation:

Needless to say, air power is the best means of disrupting an enemy landing. However, there is not a single instance in the past where the enemy was destroyed upon landing or his plans frustrated by air power. In view of this, the urgent need of the moment upon which the fate of our nation depends, is to supplement the combat power of the forces responsible for island defense by the consolidated use of all available weapons and material.

In another part of the same document Captain Shimamura commented that the Japanese forces had been "exposed to such air superiority since Guadalcanal, and . . . have been completely immobilized by day in battle after battle."³⁰

Perhaps the most important tactical lesson which the Japanese drew from Saipan was the importance of organizing their defenses in depth. At Peleliu, Iwo Jima and Okinawa, the enemy did not depend upon a shallow, linear defense but, instead, prepared positions in considerable depth. Bitter experience finally taught its lesson, but the Japanese were reluctant pupils.

One of the foremost criticisms of Japanese tactics by U. S. sources was the failure to mass artillery fire. Later in the war the enemy corrected this shortcoming, but it is interesting to note that the weakness is not mentioned in any of the Japanese messages or studies prepared after Saipan.

Japanese Strategic Summary

The decisive defeat at Saipan shook Tokyo to its deepest roots. Almost unanimously, in-

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6. Unfortunately, Shimamura credited us with a deduction that we did not make. The lengthy preparation for Guam was more accidental than planned, inasmuch as the reason was the delay imposed by the necessity of returning ships from the Marianas to Pearl Harbor to lift the 77th Infantry Division. The commitment of the 27th Division at Saipan had left a vacancy in the Guam plans which had to be filled. Spruance.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8-9.



THE VICTOR at Saipan was the front line infantryman, who, despite the tremendous tonnage of supporting fires, still had to root out and defeat the enemy. Here a 16-inch naval shell provides a seat for a ragged Marine as he returns several days' accumulation of topsoil to Saipan. This man's rifle is clean.

formed Japanese concluded that the war was lost. Three months before the Saipan operation began, the Japanese General Staff recommended making peace with the United States because of severe shipping losses, but it was not until the jolting loss of Saipan that the opinion became general. After the shocking news had reached Tokyo, Premier Hideki Tojo announced that: "Japan has come to face an unprecedentedly great national crisis." Almost immediately, Tojo, the one man most responsible for his country's entry into the war, was relieved as active head of the Japanese army, which post he held by virtue of his position as Chief of Staff. This was only the beginning of Tojo's downfall; on 18 July 1944 Tojo, with his entire cabinet, resigned, and General Kuniaki Koiso succeeded him as premier. The new government was charged with giving

"fundamental reconsideration" to the problem of continuing the war.³¹

After stating that he considered Guadalcanal the turning point from Japan's offensive to defensive, Fleet Admiral Osami Nagano, Supreme Naval Advisor to the Emperor, spoke in forceful terms of that time when Japan's hopes for effective defense ended. "When we lost Saipan, Hell is on us."³² Vice Admiral Shigeru Fukudome, who had served in a number of prominent naval positions, spoke along the same lines: "With the loss of the Marianas I felt that the last chance had slipped from us definitely."³³ Lending further testimony to the same opinion was Vice Admiral Shigeyoshi Miwa, who said: "Our war was lost with the loss of Saipan. I feel it was a decisive battle. The loss of Saipan meant [that the U. S.] could cut off our shipping and attack our homeland."³⁴

As noted in the narrative of the Battle of the Philippine Sea, Japanese naval air strength had been virtually eliminated from the war in that decisive engagement. Captain Mitsuo Fuchida, air staff officer to the Commander in Chief, Combined Fleet, underlined this fact:

... this operation [Marianas] was to be a decisive one because we felt if the Marianas were lost there could no longer be a dependable line even in the Philippines. So we planned an all out attack and used up practically all of our air strength.³⁵

³¹ *Campaigns*, 220.

³² USSBS Interrogation Nav No. 80, Fleet Admiral Nagano, Osami, Chief of Naval General Staff Apr41-Feb44; Supreme Naval Advisor to the Emperor, 20 Nov45.

³³ USSBS Interrogation Nav No. 115, VAdm Fukudome, Shigeru, IJN, 9-12Dec45. Chief of Staff, Combined Fleet from 1940 to Apr41; Chief First Section, Naval General Staff, Tokyo, Apr41-May43; Chief of Staff, Combined Fleet from May43-Mar44; Commander, Second Air Fleet, Jul44-15Jan45; Commander, 10th Area Fleet, 15Jan45-Dec45.

³⁴ USSBS Interrogation Nav No. 72, VAdm Miwa, Shigeyoshi, IJN; successively director Naval Submarine Department and CinC Sixth (Submarine) Fleet.

³⁵ USSBS Interrogation Nav No. 99, Capt Fuchida Mitsuo, IJN, 25Nov45. Senior staff officer of First Air Fleet in which capacity he served in the Marianas Sept43-Apr44; air staff officer to CinC Combined Fleet from Apr44 to end of war.



THE COST of Saipan was over 3,000 killed. Here a rifle and helmet mark the location of a dead Marine so that he may be picked up for proper burial.

The Assessment

It is plain, from these expressions, that the Japanese were fully cognizant of what Saipan's loss meant. Their assessment was accurate: it was the beginning of the end.

To relatives of fighting men in the far-off United States, news of casualties (see Appendix III) was staggering. Imperceptible to many were the facts that the enemy's fleet had lost the potential of operating beyond the covering range of shore-based aircraft and that a base providing adequate airfields for long-range raids against the Japanese homeland had been seized. These were vital truths, which Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal expressed as follows: "The final occupation of Saipan will enable us to project surface and air

operations that will include the mainland of Japan, the Philippines, and a greater part of the Dutch East Indies."³⁶

But even for those who took the trouble to examine a map and found that Saipan was, indeed, within land-based aircraft striking distance of the Empire, the true import was not apparent. To most, Saipan was a dirty little plot of ground, many thousands of miles from the United States, where over 3,000 Americans died. In the frantic flood of war news and the continuation of the assault against Japan, it is doubtful that many United States citizens ever made the real assessment.

Looking back on the battle, realizing its significance in the course of the war in the Pacific.

³⁶ Quoted from *History of World War II*, Miller, 683

analyzing its effect on the Japanese military and citizenry, we may now recognize Saipan in its proper perspective. In this connection, General Holland Smith wrote:

I have always considered Saipan the decisive battle of the Pacific offensive. Creasy, establishing the criterion for his *Battles* defined decisive as an event which varied the world drama in all its subsequent scenes. Saipan was decisive because it varied the Pacific drama in all its subsequent scenes.

Two Jima and Okinawa were costlier battles and carried us closer to Japan, but their capture was made possible only by our earlier success at Saipan, which breached Japan's inner defense line, destroyed the main bastions and opened the way to the home islands.³⁷

Precisely, how had Saipan "varied the Pacific drama in all its subsequent scenes?" Before Saipan, the United States and Japan both had powerful carrier-based air; after Saipan, only that of the United States was effective. Before Saipan, U. S. land-based bombers were beyond range of the Japanese homeland (except for the tenuously held air bases in China); after Saipan, land-based U. S. bombers could rain destruction upon the Japanese cities. Before Saipan, U. S. submarines were based approximately 2,400 miles from Japanese home waters; after Saipan, the distance was reduced by about one-half, increasing submarine efficiency vastly. Before Saipan, the Japanese government that had precipitated the war against the United States was still in power; after Saipan, the government changed and the new one was directed to reconsider the feasibility of continuing the war. In these respects the Pacific drama had been varied.

Saipan was a bold venture in which U. S. soldiers, sailors and Marines challenged and defeated Japanese might. It was a matter of projecting U. S. arms and resources 1,000 nautical miles from the nearest base into the very heart of an island group possessing a powerful potential. Previous island hops had not exceeded 600 miles and never had sur-

rounding enemy air bases been as close or as powerful. In this situation the enemy was brought to his knees.

But on his knees he fought. And the Japanese fought well in this, or any other, position. Whenever men of various parts of the world are compared in fighting tenacity, the men of Japan must rate among the best. Their fighting psychology has often been called fanaticism, but the connotation of that term perhaps does the Japanese an injustice. Perhaps "inspired patriotism" is a fairer appraisal. At any rate, the Japanese were possessed of fighting characteristics of which any nation could be proud.

From the acrid beginning until the bitter end, the Saipan operation represented a triumph of the well-led over the poorly-led, the more-skilled over the less-skilled, the stronger over the weaker. Reduced to its basic formula, this spelled success for one, doom for the other. And yet, to fail to mention the myriad examples of personal heroism by U. S. forces would be a serious omission indeed. In addition to the six men (four Marines, two soldiers) who posthumously received the Medal of Honor, there were thousands of examples of heroic acts, most of which were never officially recognized. U. S. forces, though less anxious than their adversaries to expend themselves in battle, showed no hesitancy in executing assigned missions—even when prospects for immediate success were not particularly bright. With all the superiority granted by weapons and supply, there is still no substitute for fighting when the enemy chooses to fight to the bitter end.

From the top commanders who initiated the strategic planning, to the front line riflemen who wrested the soil from the stubborn defenders, the traditional "well done" applies. Now, as never before, the United States was truly at the Empire's threshold. A strong, hard fist was hammering on Japan's front door.

³⁷*Coral and Brass*, 181.



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APPENDIX I

Bibliography

The preparation of the Saipan monograph entailed consultation of several thousand documents. Many of these merely confirmed information found in other sources, some contributed only a single fact or an isolated impression, still others were so general that they could hardly be considered as valuable. In this bibliography, therefore, only the most important and useful will be mentioned. Unless noted differently, the below listed documents are filed in the Marine Corps Historical Division.

Documents

JICPOA Information Bulletins 7-44 and 29-44. The former, entitled "Marianas," gives detailed facts concerning the islands' appearance, history, geography, climate and people. The latter, entitled "Weather Survey for Carolines and Marianas," gives weather statistics for the islands.

VAC G-2 Study of the Theater of Operations, Southern Marianas. Contains descriptions of Saipan, Tinian, Aguijan, and Rota, together with information on terrain, climate and meteorology. This document was very important in the preparations of detailed landing force attack plans.

CINCPAC-CINCPOA Operation Plan 3-44, 23Apr44. Assigns southern Marianas as a specific objective. Filed at Naval Records and Library.

TF 51 Operation Plan A10-44, 6May44. Assigns detailed missions to troops and ships of the Joint Expeditionary Force.

TF 56 Operation Plan 3-44, 26Apr44. NTLF Operation Plan 3-44. 2d Mar Div Operation Order 18, 1May44. 4th Mar Div Operation Plan 4-44, 6May44. These documents give troop plans for the seizure of Saipan. The 27th Infantry Division prepared 21 separate plans for possible employment at any of the Marianas objectives; three preferred plans—Hq 27th Inf Div Opn Plan I, II, and III—are filed at the U. S. Army Historical Division.

COMINCH P-007, 30Dec44, "Invasion of the Marianas, June to August 1944." Prepared at the Headquarters of the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, this document is a valuable synthesis of action reports received from major subordinate units participating in the Saipan, Tinian and Guam operations.

ComFIFTHFleet Reports (Initial and Final) on the Operation to Capture the Marianas Islands, 13Jul44 and 30Aug44, respectively. The former report contains a comprehensive summary of the Battle of the Philippine Sea; the latter draws general conclusions (chiefly strategic) regarding the entire Marianas campaign.

TF 51 Report on Amphibious Operations for the capture of the Marianas Islands, 25Aug

44. Contains detailed, day-by-day account of activities of all principal elements of the Joint Expeditionary Force, 15 enclosures.
- TF 56 Report on FORAGER, 20Oct44. Basic report of Commanding General Expeditionary Troops, seven enclosures in separate volumes, covering planning, operations, intelligence, logistics, personnel and special staff officers' reports.
- NTLF Special Action Report of Marianas, Phase I, Saipan, 12Aug44. Recounts in detail the day-by-day progress of the landing force, from early planning stages to operation's conclusion, 12 enclosures in separate volumes. Most valuable source for over-all summary of ground action at Saipan. Enclosure I contains reports of XXIV Corps Artillery, NTLF Air Officer and NTLF Naval Gunfire Officer.
- 2d Mar Div Special Action Report, Phase I, Marianas, undated. Narrative account of division activities from initiation of planning to the end of the operation. Contains a number of excellent photographs showing the terrain over which the division operated. Action reports of regiments and battalions of 2d Marine Division filed in separate folders.
- 4th MarDiv Operations Report Saipan. 15 Jun-9Jul44. Narrative account of division activities from initiation of planning to the end of operation. Contains, in addition to reports of staff sections, reports of major subordinate units, 12 annexes.
- 27th Inf Div Report of Operations on Saipan, 24Oct44. Narrative account of division's activities from initiation of planning to the end of operation. Contains, in addition to reports of staff sections, reports of major subordinate units and activities, 14 volumes.
- CINCPAC-CINCPOA translations of captured Japanese documents including field orders, message files, "lessons learned" summaries, recommendations, organization charts, and diaries. Of this great mass of material, Item #9983-85, "Dispatches sent and received by 31st Army Headquarters on Saipan from 13 to 29 June 1944 . . ." is by far the most valuable.
- Proceedings of a board of officers appointed to inquire into the circumstances surrounding the relief of Major General Ralph C. Smith, 0-4723, USA, from command of the 27th Infantry Division while engaged in the FORAGER operation. The proceedings, exhibits, testimony of witnesses, and conclusions contained in this board's report, though sometimes prejudiced and opinionated, provide a wealth of narrative detail relating to the Saipan operation.

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Letters and Interviews

In addition to sources already cited, over 300 officers and men in key positions during the Saipan operation were consulted by letter or interview. Many of the letters were in comment on a preliminary draft of this monograph. In addition to correcting errors of omission or commission, these letters were helpful in confirming statements which had been gleaned from impersonal, frequently confusing, action reports. To list each of these letters and interviews separately would impose too much bulk upon this manuscript. Suffice it is to say that these are available in the working files of the Marine Corps Historical Division for the reference of any bona fide student of this phase of military history. Many of these letters and interviews have been cited at appropriate points throughout the monograph.



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APPENDIX II

Chronology

1944

30 January– 23 February	U. S. Marines and Army troops seize Marshalls Islands.	1 May	Northern Troops and Landing Force issues operation order; 2d and 4th Marine Divisions to land on Saipan's western beaches in the Charan Kanoa vicinity.
17–18 February	Task Force 58 strikes Truk, revealing weakness of that base. Decision to by-pass comes soon after.	17–19 May	Landing Force maneuvers and rehearses at Maui and Kahoolawe, Hawaiian Islands.
22–23 February	Task Force 58 strikes Southern Marianas.	21 May	Six LST's, embarking assault elements of the two Marine divisions, burn at Pearl Harbor.
29 February	U. S. Army troops land at Los Negros in the Admiralties.	25 May	LST's, carrying assault elements of the two Marine divisions, LVT's and artillery, depart Pearl Harbor.
12 March	Joint Chiefs of Staff direct that Southern Marianas be seized, target date 15 June.	29–30 May	Portions of the two divisions not embarked in LST's, depart Pearl Harbor.
20 March	4th Marines (Reinforced) seizes Emirau. Admiral Nimitz issues FORAGER Joint Staff Study setting forth the purpose of the Marianas Operation.	6–11 June	Joint Expeditionary Force at Eniwetok for final staging.
22 March	U. S. Army troops land at Hollandia.	11–13 June	Task Force 58 executes preparatory bombardment of Saipan.
23 March	Admiral Nimitz issues operation order for Marianas; Admirals Spruance and Turner follow suit.	14 June	Fire support ships of the Northern and Southern Attack Forces arrive at Saipan and commence bombardment.
30 March– 1 April	Task Force 58 strikes Western Carolines.	15 June	2d and 4th Marine Divisions land at Saipan.
26 April	Expeditionary Troops operation order states mission "... to capture, occupy and defend Saipan, Tinian and Guam. . ."	16 June	27th Infantry Division begins landing at Saipan.

16-17 June	Japanese launch strong, unsuccessful tank-infantry night attack against 6th Marines.	6-7 July	Japanese launch savage all-out <i>banzai</i> attack along Tanapag Plain; 105th Infantry and 3d Battalion, 10th Marines hardest hit.
17 June	First observation planes (OY's) land at Charan Kanoa airstrip.	8 July	2d Marine Division passes through 27th Infantry Division for mop-up of Tanapag Plain.
18 June	165th Infantry captures Aslito Airfield.	9 July	4th Marine Division reaches Marpi Point; Admiral Turner announces Saipan secured; mop-up begins; 2d and 4th Marine Divisions get ready for Tinian operation.
19-20 June	Battle of the Philippine Sea. Japanese Navy suffers decisive defeat.	12 July	Major General Harry Schmidt assumes command of Northern Troops and Landing Force when Lieutenant General Holland Smith decides to go to Guam; Major General Clifton B. Cates assumes command of 4th Marine Division.
22 June	Aslito airfield becomes operational for fighter aircraft.	13 July	3d Battalion, 6th Marines, captures Maniagassa Island.
24 June	Major General Ralph C. Smith relieved as commander, 27th Infantry Division; Major General Sanderford Jarman assumes command.	9 August	Aslito Airfield becomes operational for Liberator bombers (B-24).
25 June	Mt. Tapotchau, Saipan's key terrain feature, captured by 8th Marines. Kagman Peninsula seized by 4th Marine Division.	15 October	Aslito airfield becomes operational for B-29's.
28 June	Major George W. Griner, Jr. assumes command of the 27th Infantry Division, relieving Major General Sanderford Jarman.	24 November	Saipan-based B-29's raid Tokyo.
4 July	Advance reaches Tanapag Seaplane Base; 2d Marine Division pinched out of lines.		



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APPENDIX III

Casualties¹

UNIT	Killed or Died of Wounds		Wounded		TOTAL	
	Officers	Enlisted	Officers	Enlisted	Officers	Enlisted
NTLF Troops ² -----	1	22	6	148	7	170
XXIV Corps Arty (USA) ³ -----	1	5	5	10	6	15
2d Marine Division;						
Division Troops ⁴ -----	3	17	18	161	21	178
2d Marines;						
H&S and Weapons-----	1	13	4	86	5	99
1st Bn-----	1	61	14	239	15	300
2d Bn-----	1	45	6	207	7	252
3d Bn-----	4	76	12	243	16	319
6th Marines;						
H&S and Weapons-----	2	22	4	92	6	114
1st Bn-----	6	90	16	323	22	413
2d Bn-----	6	120	13	335	19	455
3d Bn-----	5	105	17	408	22	513
8th Marines;						
H&S and Weapons-----	1 ⁵	337 ⁵	6 ⁵	73 ⁵⁸	7	88
1st Bn-----	5	90	16	355	21	445
2d Bn-----	6	91	9	364	15	455
3d Bn-----	3	89	17	304	20	393
1st Bn, 29th Marines-----	6	91	17	333	23	424
10th Marines ⁶ -----	10	88	25	237	35	325
18th Marines-----	4	73	14	355	18	428
2d Armd Amph Bn-----	5	36	7	100	12	136
2d Amph Trac Bn-----	0	10	5	46	5	56
5th Amph Trac Bn-----	1	6	3	33	4	39
2d Tank Bn-----	0	5	0	13	0	18
4th Marine Division;						
Division Troops ⁶ -----	4	16	12	101	16	117
23d Marines;						
H&S and Weapons-----	5	16	4	52	9	68
1st Bn-----	4	84	12	304	16	388
2d Bn-----	5	97	18	278	23	375
3d Bn-----	4	95	13	275	17	370
24th Marines;						
H&S and Weapons-----	0	16	9	71	9	87
1st Bn-----	7	71	20	319	27	390
2d Bn-----	2	78	19	295	21	373
3d Bn-----	7	109	11	355	18	464

¹ Marine casualty figures furnished by Machine Records Section, HQMC, on 23 Nov 49 for period 15 June-9 July 1944.

² Included in this category for purposes of this breakdown: V ACHq, Med Bn, Sig Bn, Air Del Sec, Amph Recon Bn, 18th and 121st NC Bns, 7th Fld Dpt, AWS #5, and other Corps Hq Troops.

³ Figures from XXIV Corps Arty S-1 Report.

⁴ Included in this category for purposes of this breakdown: Div Hq, MP Co, Sig Bn, Recon Co, Prov Rkt Det, VMO, JASCO, Ser Bn, MT Bn, and Med Bn.

⁵ Also includes 2d 155m Howitzer Bn, V Amphibious Corps.

⁶ Included in this category for purposes of this breakdown: Div Hq., MP Co, Sig Bn, Recon Co, Prov Rkt Det, VMO, JASCO Ser Bn, and Med Bn.

UNIT	Killed or Died of Wounds		Wounded		TOTAL	
	Officers	Enlisted	Officers	Enlisted	Officers	Enlisted
<i>25th Marines;</i>						
H&S and Weapons-----	1	2	5	18	6	20
1st Bn-----	5	67	9	267	14	334
2d Bn-----	2	88	10	288	12	376
3d Bn-----	6	78	21	297	27	375
14th Marines ⁷ -----	4	44	24	227	28	271
20th Marines-----	4	26	14	140	18	166
10th Amph Trac Bn-----	0	2	1	20	1	22
4th Tank Bn-----	1	17	5	36	6	53

UNIT	Killed in Action		Wounded in Action		Missing in Action		TOTAL	
	Officers	Enlisted	Officers	Enlisted	Officers	Enlisted	Officers	Enlisted
<i>27th Infantry Division,⁸</i>								
Special Troops-----	1	2	3	7	0	0	4	9
<i>105th Inf Reg;</i>								
1st Bn-----	9	199	15	276	1	46	25	521
2d Bn-----	11	166	16	291	0	29	27	486
3d Bn-----	0	45	8	158	0	2	8	205
Sp Units-----	2	42	6	60	0	4	8	106
Det 295 JASCO-----	4	7	2	4	0	5	6	16
<i>106th Inf Reg;</i>								
1st Bn-----	3	46	14	224	0	0	17	270
2d Bn-----	5	51	11	206	0	0	16	257
3d Bn-----	5	50	14	206	0	0	19	256
Sp Units-----	1	9	3	43	0	0	4	52
Det 295 JASCO-----	0	2	2	2	0	0	2	4
<i>165th Inf Reg;</i>								
1st Bn-----	9	69	7	237	0	0	16	306
2d Bn-----	2	50	19	233	0	1	21	284
3d Bn-----	1	39	4	149	0	0	5	188
Sp Units-----	0	2	3	40	0	0	3	42
Det 295 JASCO-----	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
27th Div Arty-----	5	18	11	44	2	2	18	64
102d Med Bn-----	0	4	0	22	0	0	0	26
1165th Engr Group-----	0	0	1	14	0	0	1	14
Co C, 88th Chemical Bn-----	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	3
102d Engr Bn-----	0	18	2	50	0	13	2	81
773d Amph Trac Bn-----	1	4	2	12	0	2	3	18
762d Tank Bn-----	3	15	3	54	0	6	6	75
38th Fld Hosp ⁹ -----	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
708th Amph Tank Bn ¹⁰ -----	0	19	0	155	0	10	0	184
715th Amph Trac Bn ¹⁰ -----	0	8	0	41	0	4	0	53
534th Amph Trac Bn ¹⁰ -----	0	8	0	25	0	0	0	33
GRAND TOTAL ¹¹ -----	195	2,949	588	10,364	3	125	786	13,438

⁷ Also includes 4th 105mm Howitzer Battalion, V Amphibious Corps.

⁸ Since no revised 27th Infantry Division casualty figures for the period 15 June-9 July are available, 27th Infantry Division G-1 Report for 21 July has been used.

⁹ From 27th Inf Div G-1 Periodic Report, 11Jul44.

¹⁰ From "Army Amphibious Tractor and Tank Battalions in the Battle for Saipan, 15 June-9 July 1944", 1stLt R. A. Gugeler, USA, 20Jan45. No breakdown into officers and enlisted was shown.

¹¹ The following U. S. Army organizations suffered no casualties during the operation: 94th and 95th Bomb Disp Squads, 1st Plat, 604th Graves Reg (QM) Co, and 98th Portable Surgical Hospital.



SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

APPENDIX IV

Command and Staff List of Major Units¹

Expeditionary Troops

Commanding
General _____ LtGen Holland M. Smith.
Chief of Staff _____ BrigGen Graves B. Erskine.
G-1 _____ LtCol Albert F. Metze.
G-2 _____ Col St. Julien R. Marshall.
G-3 _____ Col John C. McQueen.
G-4 _____ Col Raymond E. Knapp.
G-5 _____ Col Joseph T. Smith.

Northern Troops And Landing Force

Commanding
General _____ LtGen Holland M. Smith.
Chief of Staff _____ BrigGen Graves B. Erskine.
G-1 _____ LtCol Albert F. Metze.
G-2 _____ LtCol Thomas R. Yancey (USA).
G-3 _____ Col Robert E. Hogaboom.
G-4 _____ LtCol Joseph C. Anderson (USA).

2d Marine Division

Commanding
General _____ MajGen Thomas E. Watson.
Assistant Division
Commander _____ BrigGen Merritt A. Edson.
Chief of Staff _____ Col David M. Shoup.
D-1 _____ LtCol James T. Wilbur.
D-2 _____ LtCol Thomas J. Colley.
D-3 _____ LtCol Wallace M. Greene, Jr.
D-4 _____ Col Robert J. Straub.

2d Marines

Commanding
Officer _____ Col Walter J. Stuart.
Executive Officer _____ LtCol John H. Griebel.
R-1 _____ Capt Leonard G. Hicks.
R-2 _____ Capt John L. Schwabe.
R-3 _____ Maj Samuel D. Mandeville, Jr.
R-4 _____ Maj Harold "K" Throneson.

1st Battalion, 2d Marines

Battalion
Commander _____ LtCol Wood B. Kyle.
Executive Officer _____ Maj Wendell W. Andrews.
Bn-3 _____ Maj Charles P. Lewis, Jr.

2d Battalion, 2d Marines

Battalion
Commander _____ LtCol Richard C. Nutting.
Executive Officer _____ Maj Michael P. Ryan.
Bn-3 _____ 1stLt William B. Somerville.

3d Battalion, 2d Marines

Battalion
Commander _____ LtCol Arnold F. Johnston
(WIA 21 June).
Maj Harold "K" Throneson
(21 June to 4 July).
LtCol Arnold F. Johnston
(from 5 July).

Executive Officer _____ Maj Benjamin T. Owens.
Bn-3 _____ Capt Richard Phillippi.

6th Marines

Commanding
Officer _____ Col James P. Riseley.
Executive Officer _____ LtCol Kenneth F. McLeod.
R-1 _____ Capt Philip J. Costello.
R-2 _____ Capt Donald V. Nahrgang.
R-3 _____ Maj Loren E. Haffner.
R-4 _____ Maj Cyril C. Sheehan.

1st Battalion, 6th Marines

Battalion
Commander _____ LtCol William K. Jones.
Executive Officer _____ Maj James A. Donovan, Jr.
Bn-3 _____ Capt Charles H. Triplett.

2d Battalion, 6th Marines

Battalion
Commander _____ LtCol Raymond L. Murray
(WIA 15 June).
Maj LeRoy P. Hunt, Jr.
(from 15 June).
Executive Officer _____ Maj Howard J. Rice.
Bn-3 _____ Capt Joseph E. Rowland.

¹ Changes in *commanders only* are shown. Officers listed in other staff positions are those who *originally landed* with the unit at Saipan. Casualties other than commanders are not shown.

3d Battalion, 6th Marines

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol John W. Easley
(WIA 15 June).
Maj John E. Rentsch
(15 June to 2 July).
LtCol John W. Easley
(from 3 July).

Executive Officer --- Maj John E. Rentsch.

Bn-3 ----- Capt Edward L. Singletary.
8th Marines

Commanding

Officer ----- Col Clarence R. Wallace.
Executive Officer --- LtCol Jack P. Juhan.
R-1 ----- Capt Lloyd E. Iverson.
R-2 ----- 1stLt James H. Kavanagh, Jr.
R-3 ----- Maj William H. Souder, Jr.
R-4 ----- Maj Alfred E. Holland.
1st Battalion, 8th Marines

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol Lawrence C. Hays, Jr.
Executive Officer --- Maj Robert J. Oddy.
Bn-3 ----- Maj Daniel V. McWethy, Jr.
2d Battalion, 8th Marines

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol Henry P. Crowe
(WIA 15 June).
Maj William C. Chamberlin
(from 15 June).
Executive Officer --- Maj William C. Chamberlin.
Bn-3 ----- Capt Arthur J. Rauchle.
3d Battalion, 8th Marines

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol John C. Miller
(WIA 15 June).
Maj Stanley E. Larsen
(from 15 June).
Executive Officer --- Maj Stanley E. Larsen.
Bn-3 ----- Capt Osborne K. LeBlanc.
1st Battalion, 29th Marines
(Attached to 2d MarDiv)

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol Guy E. Tannyhill
(WIA 17 June).
LtCol Rathvon M. Tompkins
(from 17 June, WIA 2 July).
LtCol Jack P. Juhan
(from 2 July, reverted to
8th Marines' executive officer
4 July).
Maj William W. McKinley
(from 4 July).
Executive Officer --- Maj William S. Vasconcellos.
Bn-3 ----- Maj William W. McKinley.
10th Marines

Commanding

Officer ----- Col Raphael Griffin.
Executive Officer --- LtCol Ralph E. Forsyth.
R-1 ----- 1stLt Russell C. White.
R-2 ----- Capt Robert W. Sullivan.

R-3 ----- LtCol Howard V. Hiatt.
R-4 ----- Capt Edward R. Gilbert.
1st Battalion, 10th Marines

Battalion

Commander ----- Col Presley M. Rixey
(transferred to Regimental
Executive Officer on 24 June).
Maj Wendell H. Best
(from 25 June).

Executive Officer --- Maj. Wendell H. Best.

Bn-3 ----- Capt Michael J. Bo.
2d Battalion, 10th Marines

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol George R. E. Shell
(WIA 16 June).
Maj Kenneth C. Houston
(from 16 June).

Executive Officer --- Maj Kenneth C. Houston.

Bn-3 ----- Capt Richard B. Cavanaugh.
3d Battalion, 10th Marines

Battalion

Commander ----- Maj William L. Crouch
(KIA 7 July).
Maj James O. Appleyard
(from 8 July).

Executive Officer --- Maj Wade H. Hitt.

Bn-3 ----- Capt Alan H. Tully.
4th Battalion, 10th Marines

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol Kenneth A. Jorgensen.
Executive Officer --- LtCol Harry N. Shea.
Bn-3 ----- Maj James O. Appleyard.
2d 155mm Howitzer Battalion, V Amph Corps

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol Marvin H. Floom.
Executive Officer --- Maj Gene N. Schraeder.
Bn-3 ----- Maj Earl J. Rowse.
18th Marines²

Commanding

Officer ----- LtCol Russell Lloyd
(to 6th Marines on 25 June).
LtCol Ewart S. Laue
(from 26 June).

² Command and staff list of 18th Marines is from the unit's muster roles. A check of other available records and letters from officers gives the following additional information: Lieutenant Colonel Russell Lloyd was also CO 2d Marine Division Shore Party until 25 June 1944 when he was attached to the 6th Marines. Major G. L. H. Cooper commanded the division shore party from 26 to 30 June 1944 when the beaches were turned over to the Army. Lieutenant Colonel Chester J. Salazar retained administrative command of the 2d Battalion, 18th Marines, throughout the period, although his unit, with personnel from other regiments and attached units, functioned as the 2d Division Shore Party. Lieutenant Colonel Ewart S. Laue had administrative command of the 18th Marines until 25 June 1944 and tactical command from 26 June.

Executive Officer ___ LtCol Ewart S. Laue.
 R-1 _____ Capt Winfield S. Haltom, Jr.
 R-2 and R-3 _____ Capt Murdoch J. McLeod.
 R-4 _____ Capt Walter J. Hulsey.

1st Battalion, 18th Marines

Battalion
 Commander _____ LtCol August L. Vogt.
 Executive Officer ___ Capt Joseph G. Polifka.

2d Battalion, 18th Marines

Battalion
 Commander _____ LtCol Chester J. Salazar.
 Executive Officer
 and Bn-3 _____ Capt Jerome R. Walters.

2d Tank Battalion

Battalion
 Commander _____ Maj Charles W. McCoy.
 Executive Officer
 and Bn-3 _____ Capt John C. Richards, Jr.

2d Amphibian Tractor Battalion

Battalion
 Commander _____ Maj Henry G. Lawrence, Jr.
 (transferred to NTLF staff as
 LVT control officer on 2 July).
 Maj Fenlon A. Durand
 (from 2 July).
 Executive Officer ___ Maj Fenlon A. Durand.
 Bn-3 _____ Capt William H. Housman, Jr.

5th Amphibian Tractor Battalion

Battalion
 Commander _____ Capt George L. Shead.
 Executive Officer ___ Capt William C. Stoll.
 Bn-3 _____ not shown.

2d Motor Transport Battalion

Battalion
 Commander _____ Maj Milton J. Green.
 Executive Officer ___ Maj Robert H. Sanders.
 Bn-3 _____ Capt Harry C. Olson.

2d Service Battalion

Battalion
 Commander _____ Capt Robert V. Perkins.
 Executive Officer ___ Lt Francis E. McElroy.
 Bn-3 _____ not shown.

2d Medical Battalion

Battalion
 Commander _____ LtComdr Claude R. Bruner.
 Executive Officer
 and Bn-3 _____ not shown.

4th Marine Division

Division
 Commander _____ MajGen Harry Schmidt.
 Asst. Division
 Commander _____ BrigGen Samuel C. Cumming.
 Chief of Staff _____ Col William W. Rogers.
 D-1 _____ Col Walter I. Jordan.
 D-2 _____ LtCol Gooderham L. McCormick.
 D-3 _____ Col Walter W. Wensinger.
 D-4 _____ Col William F. Brown.

23d Marines

Commanding
 Officer _____ Col Louis R. Jones.
 Executive Officer ___ LtCol John R. Lanigan.
 R-1 _____ Capt Charlie J. Talbert.
 R-2 _____ Capt Richard W. Mirick.
 R-3 _____ Maj Edward W. Wells.
 R-4 _____ Capt Henry S. Campbell.

1st Battalion, 23d Marines

Battalion
 Commander _____ LtCol Ralph Haas.
 Executive Officer ___ Maj James S. Scales.
 Bn-3 _____ Capt James R. Miller.

2d Battalion, 23d Marines

Battalion
 Commander _____ LtCol Edward J. Dillon.
 Executive Officer ___ Maj Albert H. Follmar.
 Bn-3 _____ Maj Robert H. Davidson.

3d Battalion, 23d Marines

Battalion
 Commander _____ LtCol John J. Cosgrove
 (WIA 19 June).
 Maj Paul S. Treitel
 (from 19 June).
 Executive Officer ___ Maj Paul S. Treitel.
 Bn-3 _____ Maj Robert J. J. Picardi.

24th Marines

Commanding
 Officer _____ Col Franklin A. Hart.
 Executive Officer ___ LtCol Austin R. Brunelli.
 R-1 _____ Capt Kenneth N. Hilton.
 R-2 _____ Capt Arthur B. Hanson.
 R-3 _____ LtCol Charles D. Roberts.
 R-4 _____ Maj Clyde T. Smith.

1st Battalion, 24th Marines

Battalion
 Commander _____ LtCol Maynard C. Schultz
 (DOW 16 June).
 Maj Robert N. Fricke
 (16 to 18 June).
 LtCol Austin R. Brunelli
 (18 June to 4 July).
 LtCol Otto Lessing
 (from 4 July).

Executive Officer ___ Maj Robert N. Fricke.
 Bn-3 _____ 1stLt Gene G. Mundy.

2d Battalion, 24th Marines

Battalion
 Commander _____ LtCol Richard Rothwell.
 Executive Officer ___ Capt Claude M. Cappelmann.
 Bn-3 _____ Capt Charles C. Berkeley.

3d Battalion, 24th Marines

Battalion
 Commander _____ LtCol Alex. A. Vandegrift, Jr.
 (WIA 27 June, evacuated
 29 June).
 LtCol Otto Lessing
 (29 June to 3 July).
 LtCol Alex. A. Vandegrift, Jr.
 (from 3 July).

Executive Officer
and Bn-3 ----- Capt Webb D. Sawyer.
25th Marines

Commanding
Officer ----- Col Merton J. Batchelder.
Executive Officer --- LtCol Clarence J. O'Donnell.
R-1 ----- Capt Francis A. Norton.
R-2 ----- Capt Charles D. Gray.
R-3 ----- LtCol William F. Thyson, Jr.
R-4 ----- Maj Arthur E. Buck, Jr.

1st Battalion, 25th Marines

Battalion
Commander ----- LtCol Hollis U. Mustain.
Executive Officer --- Maj Henry D. Strunk.
Bn-3 ----- Capt Fenton J. Mee.

2d Battalion, 25th Marines

Battalion
Commander ----- LtCol Lewis C. Hudson, Jr.
Executive Officer --- Maj William P. Kaempfer.
Bn-3 ----- Capt Victor J. Barringer.

3d Battalion, 25th Marines

Battalion
Commander ----- LtCol Justice M. Chambers
(WIA 22 June).
Maj James Taul
(22 to 23 June).
LtCol Justice M. Chambers
(from 23 June).
Executive Officer --- Maj James Taul.
Bn-3 ----- Capt James G. Headley.

14th Marines

Commanding
Officer ----- Col Louis G. DeHaven.
Executive Officer --- LtCol Randall M. Victory.
R-1 ----- 1stLt Cecil D. Snyder.
R-2 ----- Capt Harrison L. Rogers.
R-3 ----- Maj Frederick J. Karch.
R-4 ----- Maj Richard J. Winsborough.

1st Battalion, 14th Marines

Battalion
Commander ----- LtCol Harry J. Zimmer.
Executive Officer --- Maj Clifford B. Drake.
Bn-3 ----- Maj Thomas McE. Fry.

2d Battalion, 14th Marines

Battalion
Commander ----- LtCol George B. Wilson, Jr.
Executive Officer --- Maj William McReynolds.
Bn-3 ----- Capt Jack H. Riddle.

3d Battalion, 14th Marines

Commanding
Officer ----- LtCol Robert E. MacFarlane.
Executive Officer --- Maj Harvey A. Feehan.
Bn-3 ----- Capt Fenton H. Elliott.

4th Battalion, 14th Marines

Commanding
Officer ----- LtCol Carl A. Youngdale.
Executive Officer --- Maj John B. Edgar, Jr.
Bn-3 ----- Maj Roland J. Spritzen.

4th 105mm Howitzer Battalion, V Amphibious Corps
Commanding

Officer ----- LtCol Douglas E. Reeve.
Executive Officer --- Maj Marvin R. Burdett.
Bn-3 ----- Capt Joe H. Daniel.

20th Marines

Commanding
Officer ----- LtCol Nelson K. Brown.
Executive Officer --- Capt William M. Anderson.
R-1 ----- Capt Martin M. Calcaterra.
R-2 ----- Capt Carl A. Sachs.
R-3 ----- Maj Melvin D. Henderson.
R-4 ----- Capt Samuel G. Thompson.

1st Battalion, 20th Marines

Battalion
Commander ----- Maj Richard G. Ruby.
Executive Officer --- Maj George F. Williamson.
Bn-3 ----- Capt Martin H. Glover.

2d Battalion, 20th Marines

Battalion
Commander ----- Maj John H. Partridge.
Executive Officer --- Capt Howard M. Dowling.
Bn-3 ----- Capt George A. Smith.

4th Tank Battalion

Battalion
Commander ----- Maj Richard K. Schmidt.
Executive Officer --- Maj Francis L. Orgain.
Bn-3 ----- Capt Leo B. Chase.

10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion

Battalion
Commander ----- Maj Victor J. Croizat.
Executive Officer --- Maj Harry T. Marshall, Jr.
Bn-3 ----- not shown on rolls.

4th Motor Transport Battalion

Battalion
Commander ----- LtCol Ralph L. Schiesswohl.
Executive Officer --- Maj Vaughan H. Huse.
Bn-3 ----- 1stLt Walter W. Alford.

4th Service Battalion

Battalion
Commander ----- Col Richard H. Schubert.
Executive Officer --- not shown.
Bn-3 ----- 2dLt James T. Willis.

4th Medical Battalion

Battalion
Commander ----- LtComdr George W. Mast.
Executive Officer --- LtComdr George M. Davis, Jr.
Bn-3 ----- not shown.

27th Infantry Division³

Division
Commander ----- MajGen Ralph C. Smith
(relieved 24 June).
MajGen Sanderford Jarman
(from 24 June, reverted to

³ Complete staff and command list for 27th Division units not available.

Saipan Garrison Force Commander on 28 June).
MajGen George W. Griner
(from 28 June).

Assistant Division

Commander ----- BrigGen Ogden J. Ross.
Chief of Staff ----- Col A. C. Stebbins.
G-1 ----- LtCol M. Oakley Bidwell.
G-2 ----- LtCol W. M. Van Antwerp.
G-3 ----- LtCol F. H. Sheldon.
G-4 ----- LtCol Charles B. Ferris.

105th Infantry

Commanding

Officer ----- Col Leonard A. Bishop.
S-2 ----- Maj Malcolm M. Jameson.
S-3 ----- Maj Philip E. Smith. *

1st Battalion, 105th Infantry

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol William J. O'Brien
(KIA 7 July).⁴

2d Battalion, 105th Infantry

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol Leslie Jensen
(transferred to Regimental
Executive Officer).⁵
Maj Edward McCarthy.
Executive Officer --- Maj Edward McCarthy.

3d Battalion, 105th Infantry

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol Edward T. Bradt.

106th Infantry

Commanding

Officer ----- Col Russell G. Ayres
(relieved 26 June).
Col A. C. Stebbins
(from 26 June).
Executive Officer --- LtCol Joseph J. Farley.

1st Battalion, 106th Infantry

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol Winslow Cornett.
Executive Officer --- Maj John Nichols.

2d Battalion, 106th Infantry

Battalion

Commander ----- Maj Almerin C. O'Hara.

3d Battalion, 106th Infantry

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol Harold I. Mizony
(KIA 28 June).
Maj Francis Fisher
(from 28 June).
Executive Officer --- Maj Francis Fisher.

⁴ Name of O'Brien's replacement not shown in documents consulted.

⁵ Date of this change not shown in documents consulted. Assumed to have been about 1 July.

165th Infantry

Commanding

Officer ----- Col Gerard W. Kelley
(WIA 28 June).
LtCol Joseph T. Hart
(from 28 June).

Executive Officer --- LtCol Joseph T. Hart.

S-1 ----- Capt Edward S. McCabe.
S-2 ----- Maj William F. McCahill.
S-3 ----- Capt Charles E. Coates, Jr.
S-4 ----- Capt Herman M. Lutz.

1st Battalion, 165th Infantry

Battalion

Commander ----- Maj James H. Mahoney.
Executive Officer --- Capt Edward J. Strong.
S-3 ----- Capt Henry A. Berger.

2d Battalion, 165th Infantry

Battalion

Commander ----- LtCol John F. McDonough
(WIA 25 June).
Maj Gregory Brousseau
(from 25 June, WIA 27 June).
Capt James A. Dooley
(temporary 27 June).
Maj Dennis D. Claire
(from 27 June).

Executive Officer --- Maj Gregory Brousseau.

S-3 ----- Capt James A. Dooley.

3d Battalion, 165th Infantry

Commanding

Officer ----- Maj Dennis D. Claire
(transferred to 2d Bn 27 June).
Maj Martin H. Foery
(from 27 June).

Executive Officer --- Maj Martin H. Foery.

S-3 ----- Capt Martin E. Nolan.

27th Division Artillery

Commanding

General ----- BrigGen Redmond F. Kernan, Jr.
Executive Officer --- Col Harold G. Browne.

104th Field Artillery Battalion

Commanding

Officer ----- LtCol George P. VanNostrand

105th Field Artillery Battalion

Commanding

Officer ----- LtCol Nicholas D. LaMorte.

106th Field Artillery Battalion

Commanding

Officer ----- LtCol John J. Fitzgerald.

249th Field Artillery Battalion

Commanding

Officer ----- LtCol Dwight McCallum.

XXIV Corps Artillery

Commanding

General ----- BrigGen Arthur M. Harper.
Adjutant ----- Capt Wayne B. Young.
S-2 ----- Maj Milford W. Wood.
S-3 ----- LtCol F. W. Wheless.
S-4 ----- Maj E. P. Waggoner, Jr.



SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

APPENDIX V

Kyle's Mission

Kyle's Mission

From its inception, the mission assigned to the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, in NTLF Operation Plan 3-44 was the subject of much thought and discussion. That mission, in part, follows: "... land on the night of D minus one-D day, on selected beaches of Magicienne Bay, move rapidly inland, seize Mt. Tapotchau before daylight, and defend same until relieved."¹

To carry the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, to Saipan for its daring assignment, six destroyer transports (APD's) were assigned. To fit this shipping, the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Wood B. Kyle, reorganized his unit (normally three rifle companies and a headquarters company) into five companies and assigned numbers in place of normal lettered designations. Each company, about 125 officers and men strong, was then assigned to an APD. Three of the companies were basically rifle units, while the other two each contained an echelon of battalion headquarters, rifle and weapons units. Remaining personnel, transportation, and equipment of the battalion were attached to the 2d Marines' headquarters and transported to Saipan with the 2d Marine Division convoy. The sixth APD (five were used to carry the five companies) would trans-

port Company A, Corps Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion, which had been attached for the mission. (See Appendix VII for Task Organization.)

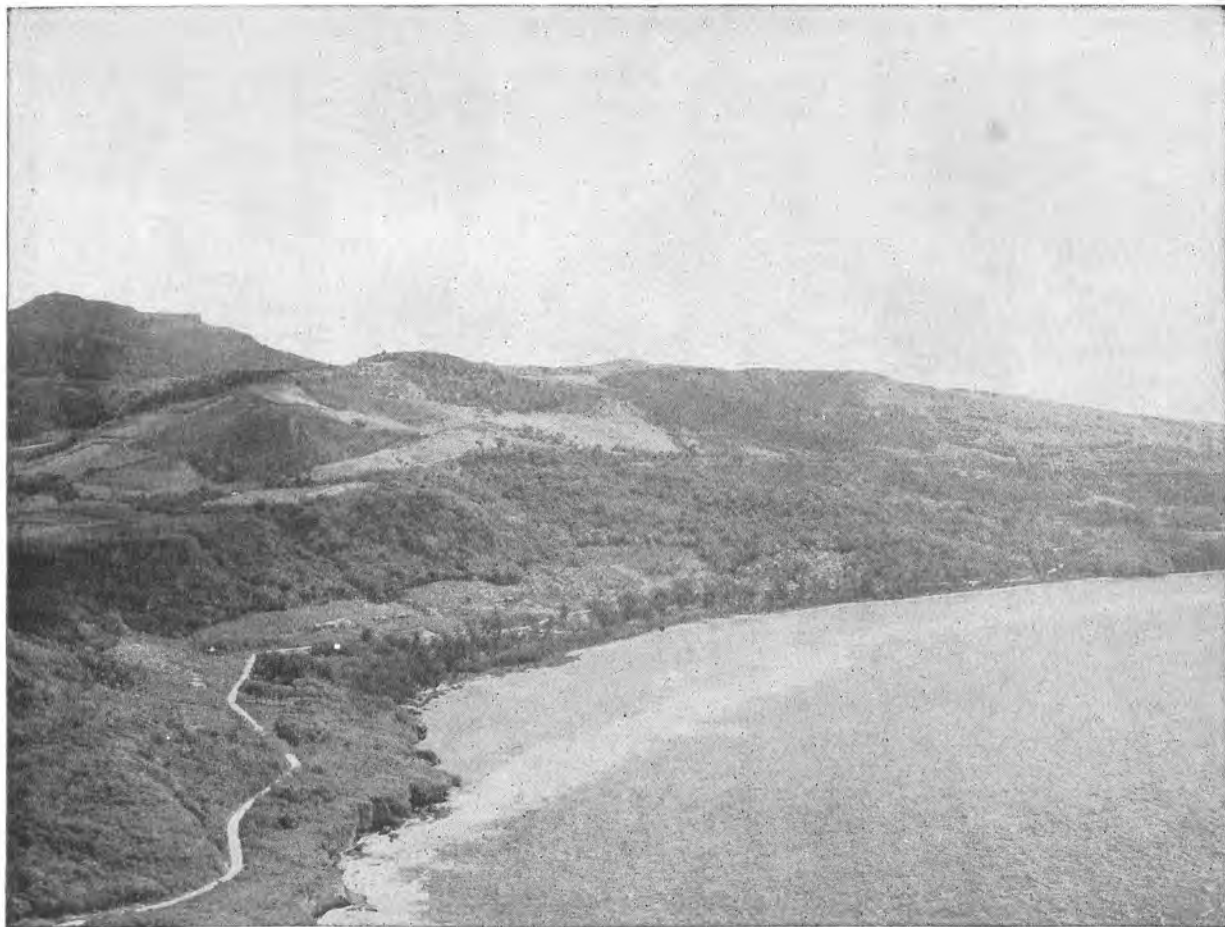
To preserve mobility, Kyle's unit would carry no weapons heavier than 60mm mortars; the heavy machine guns and 81mm mortars, plus five days of all types of supplies, were embarked aboard two escort carriers (CVE's). A portion of the Corps Air Delivery Platoon was embarked in the designated carriers to package and handle supplies and equipment for further parachute-drop to the battalion from torpedo planes.

The battalion's ship-to-shore movement would be accomplished in rubber boats, towed by landing craft to within about 50 yards of the beach, from which point they were to be paddled ashore. The amphibious reconnaissance company would precede the main landing by about one hour, find and mark the beach and hold a shallow beachhead until the remainder of the battalion had landed. From that point, the long, hard trek to Tapotchau's summit would begin.²

The desirability of having friendly troops so located on the morning of D-Day is obvious; possession of that height would to some extent limit the enemy's observation of our

¹ NTLF Operation Plan 3-44.

² Kyle.



RUGGED TERRAIN and a prepared enemy would have confronted the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, in its move from the shore of Magicienne Bay to Mt. Tapotchau's heights. Fortunately, the mission was cancelled.

beachhead and would afford us a precious advantage. But would this advantage be overbalanced by prohibitive losses? Or, more specifically, was there sufficient indication that the mission would be successful despite the cost?

Gambles frequently pay off; the Guadalcanal campaign had proved that. Guadalcanal had been a tribute not only to the "ready" Fleet Marine Force but to the willingness of our higher command to accept risk. The exact point where gamble becomes foolhardy venture is sometimes difficult to determine. Looking with historical rather than planning eyes, it is easy to decide that Kyle's mission exceeded the bounds of acceptable risk; but, at the time, lacking the complete and detailed aerial photograph coverage which had been requested, it was a difficult decision.

Aside from the risk to personnel, there were several disconcerting imponderables. Would possession of the mountain's summit be sufficient to curtail the enemy's observation to any marked degree? The battalion could hope to occupy only a part of the vast hill mass, and the remainder would still be available to the Japanese. Enemy observers might even be accorded a greater degree of safety by the Marines' presence, since U. S. naval gunfire, air and artillery bombardment of that area would be somewhat limited.

A 2d Division staff estimate, prepared during the planning stage, deduced that Kyle's mission was impracticable and would be disastrous. Since the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, was operating as an immediate subordinate unit of the Northern Troops and Landing Force,

it remained for the 2d Division to present its views to the Corps staff. Lieutenant Colonel Wallace M. Green, Jr., division operations officer (D-3), journeyed to Corps Headquarters and was referred to the G-5 (Planning) Section. There Colonel Greene presented the estimate to Colonel Joseph T. Smith and Lieutenant Colonel Joseph C. Anderson, USA, with the recommendation that the mission be cancelled. The estimate was accepted, but no action on the cancellation of the mission was taken.³

As part of the same 2d Division effort to convince Corps' planners that Kyle's mission was unfeasible, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas J. Colley, 2d Division intelligence officer, flew to Pearl Harbor and presented his section's conclusions to the Corps intelligence officer. These conclusions, based upon a comprehensive interpretation of available aerial photographs, established the fact that the enemy had strong defensive positions facing Magicienne Bay.⁴

The mission was finally changed on order of Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, who had spent many sleepless nights pondering the problem. Prior to departure from Pearl Harbor for the target area, the general arrived in the office of his chief of staff, Brigadier General Graves B. Erskine, and said something to the effect: "I've decided that battalion won't execute that mission." He went on to indicate that the unit would remain under NTLF control as a ready reserve to be committed whenever a desirable situation presented itself. The battalion would still be transported in six APD's, and supply would still be accomplished by air-drop. It was too late to change these details, and indeed, circumstances might later

develop which would make the arrangement desirable.⁵

The wheels were thus set in motion to cancel the mission. It is interesting to note that, though plans had been cancelled to land Kyle's unit before the main landings, the unit was to "be prepared *after How-hour* [author's italics] to land on order on selected beaches of Magicienne Bay, or on other beaches to be designated later."⁶ In addition to written changes to operation orders (Joint Expeditionary Force published the change on 20 May), there were a number of conferences between principal commanders and all units were informed of the alteration.

Even now we may breathe a sigh of relief. Magicienne Bay's coastline bristled with defenses, and the long nightmarish route from the bay to Mt. Tapotchau would have been a formidable challenge even had there been no enemy along the way and had it been undertaken in broad daylight.

Few schemes of maneuver or plans of action throughout the entire Pacific war were the subject for as much argument and discussion as the one assigned to the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines. That all of the opinion, even on the Corps staff, was not favorable to the scheme is indicated by the following observations of Colonel John C. McQueen, G-3, V Amphibious Corps:

The G-3 Section, V Amphibious Corps, did not subscribe to the plan of landing Kyle's battalion at Magicienne Bay. The section firmly believed that Kyle's battalion would completely fail in its mission and also believed that those of the battalion who might successfully be landed would be wiped out before getting very far toward their objective. . . . To us the idea of this battalion successfully reaching the summit of Mt. Tapotchau before daylight, even from the viewpoint of terrain alone, seemed incredible. When Kyle first reported to me for secret instructions pertaining to the type of training his battalion would undergo for the planned hazardous landing, it was easy to discern that he knew he was in for an extremely tough assignment, and he appeared to fully realize the seriousness of the undertaking. Of course we did not disclose our own feelings in the matter. Our section's reaction to the

³ LtGen T. E. Watson's endorsement to LtCol W. B. Kyle's ltr, 20Nov48. The date of Col Greene's recommendation is not indicated in documents consulted, but it is assumed to have been in early May 1944.

⁴ Ltr from Col T. J. Colley to CMC, 14Jan50. The photographs concerned in this study, Colley writes, were "very poor in quality. The photos were taken at various angles, neither vertical nor oblique, of changing elevation (and scale) and somewhat fuzzy in detail." He felt it was likely that the plane which had taken the pictures was attempting "to evade attack by Japanese airplanes."

⁵ Interview with Col R. E. Hogaboom, LtCol J. L. Stewart and LtCol E. W. Durant, Jr., 3Dec48.

⁶ NTLF Operation Plan 3-44, Change No. 1.

plan was made known and discussed with G-5 and the Chief of Staff. However, those in authority decided to incorporate the scheme in the operation plans and carry it out in the event later intelligence data indicated not too strong opposition in the Magicienne Bay area. We were greatly relieved when we learned . . . that the mission had been cancelled by General Smith.⁷

Another observation, furnished by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas R. Yancey, USA, G-2, Northern Troops and Landing Force, further clarifies the reasons for the cancellation:

I am sure that what actually prompted General Holland Smith to . . . change the mission of the battalion was the lack of detailed information concerning enemy dispositions and defense positions in the Magicienne Bay area. There was very little information that could be obtained on this area due to lack of cloud free photographic coverage of large enough scale to determine accurately hostile defensive installations.

General Smith and his Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Graves B. Erskine, were both concerned about this situation and during the planning phase of the operation frequently visited the G-2 Section to emphasize the importance of obtaining information of the Magicienne Bay area. When this information was not forthcoming, it appears logical that the mission as initially assigned reached the stage when it was more than a calculated risk and was subsequently cancelled.⁸

⁷ Ltr from Col J. C. McQueen to DirPubInfo, 15Jun49.

⁸ Yancey.

With all that has been said of the Magicienne Bay plan, it is of particular interest to note that personnel of the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, were in no sense pessimistic about their assigned task. In this respect, the commander of Company A (Captain Louis V. Brooks) has written:

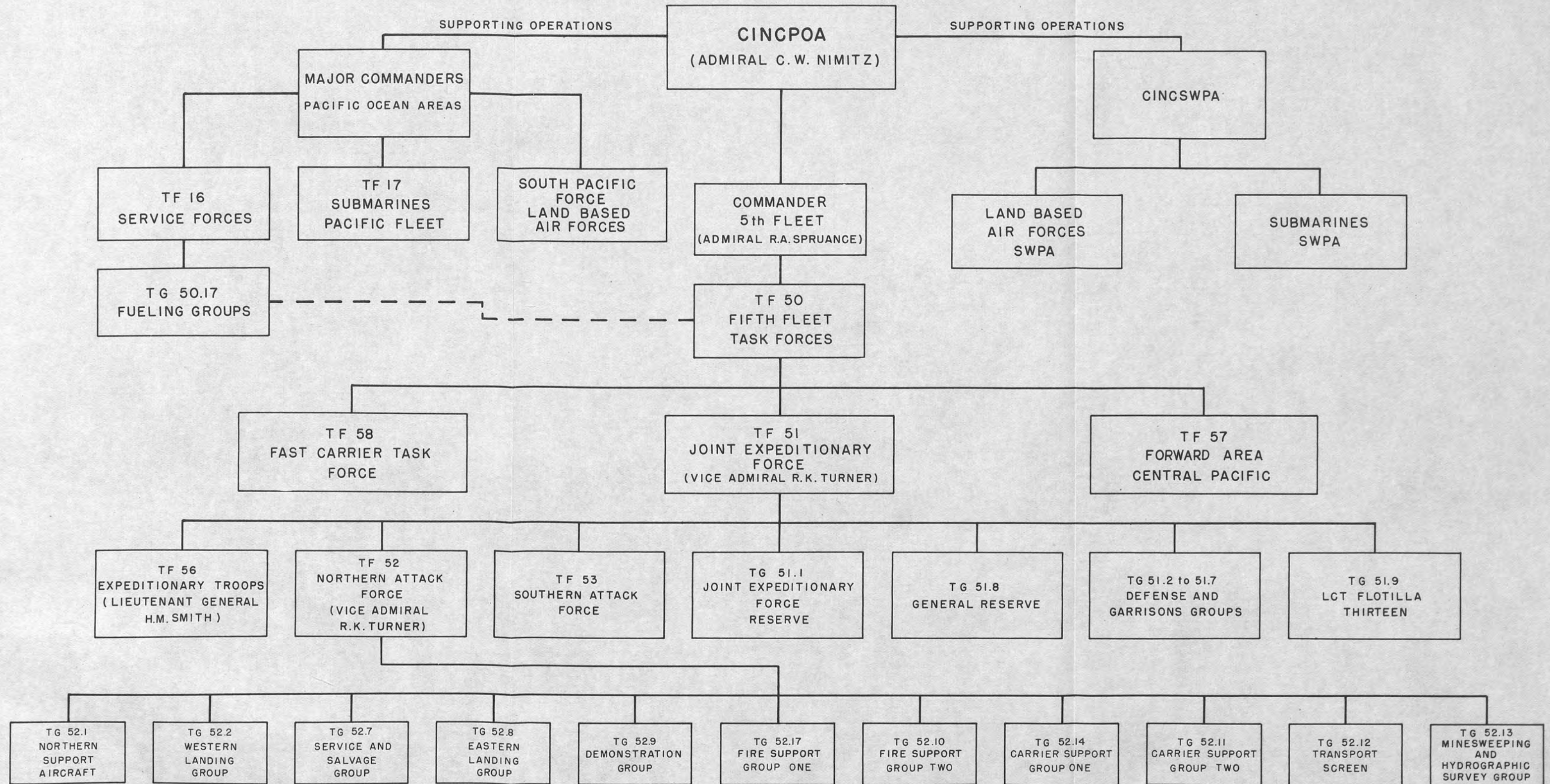
There was probably no doubt in anyone's mind that the mission was unusually hazardous, but this very fact seems to have lent a zest to it which contributed substantially to the high morale. And morale definitely was high. Throughout the training phase there was a sense of exhilaration derived from the knowledge that the battalion had been selected for something special, and it was felt by the officers and men of the battalion that they had been so chosen because they were well led and had a good fighting record. Such appellations as "Kyle's Raiders" and "Suicide Battalion", given us by men of other units, merely served to increase our pride.

Our training took on a special character, and as it progressed, our confidence in our ability increased. Along with this was a widespread confidence in Colonel Kyle's leadership. This was particularly strong among those of us who had been with him at Guadalcanal and Tarawa.

. . . The fact that we had been chosen for a special mission—alone—and that there might be many outcomes seemed merely to heighten our enthusiasm.⁹

⁹ Memo from Capt L. V. Brooks to author, 25Jul49.

APPENDIX VI—BASIC ORGANIZATION, HIGHER ECHELON TASK FORCES





SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

June 1944

Task Organization

APPENDIX VII

Northern Troops and Landing Force—Lieutenant General H. M. Smith.

Corps Troops

Headquarters and Service Battalion, V Amphibious Corps (less detachments).

Signal Battalion, V Amphibious Corps (less detachments).

Motor Transport Company, V Amphibious Corps (less detachments).

Headquarters, Provisional Engineer Group, V Amphibious Corps.

Headquarters, Provisional LVT Group, V Amphibious Corps.

7th Field Depot (less detachments) (Reinforced).

Medical Battalion, V Amphibious Corps.

31st Field Hospital (Army).

2d Provisional Portable Surgical Hospital (Army).

3d Provisional Portable Surgical Hospital (Army).

Air Warning Squadron #5 (less detachments).

Detachment, 680th Air Warning Company (Army).

Detachment, 726th Air Warning Company (Army).

Detachment, 763d Air Warning Company (Army).

Detachment, Company C, 101st Signal Battalion (Army).

Mobile Communication Unit Central Pacific (Army).

Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion, V Amphibious Corps (less Company A).

a. *1st Battalion, 2d Marines (Reinforced)*—Lieutenant Colonel Kyle.

1st Battalion, 2d Marines (Reinforced).

Company A, Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion, V Amphibious Corps.

b. *2d Marine Division (Reinforced)*—Major General Watson.

2d Marine Division (less 1st Battalion, 2d Marines).

1st Battalion, 29th Marines.

2d Armored Amphibian Battalion.

2d Amphibian Tractor Battalion.

5th Amphibian Tractor Battalion.

715th Amphibian Tractor Battalion (Army).

2d Joint Assault Signal Company.

18th Naval Construction Battalion.

1st Amphibian Truck Company.

Detachment, 7th Field Depot.

3d Platoon, 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company (Army).

Detachment, Air Warning Squadron #5.

2d Provisional Rocket Detachment.

2d 155mm Artillery Battalion (Howitzer), Corps Artillery, V Amphibious Corps.

c. *4th Marine Division (Reinforced)*—Major General Schmidt.

4th Marine Division.

708th Amphibian Tank Battalion (Army).

10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion (less Company A) Attached: Company C, 11th Amphibian Tractor Battalion.

773d Amphibian Tractor Battalion (Army).

534th Amphibian Tractor Battalion (Army).

1st Joint Assault Signal Company.

121st Naval Construction Battalion.
 2d Amphibian Truck Company.
 Detachment, 7th Field Depot.
 311th Port Company (Army).
 539th Port Company (Army).
 Detachment, Air Warning Squadron #5.
 4th 105mm Artillery Battalion (Howitzer),
 Corps Artillery, V Amphibious Corps.
 1st Provisional Rocket Detachment.

d. *Corps Artillery*—Brigadier General Harper,
 USA.

XXIV Corps Artillery

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery,
 XXIV Corps Artillery.
 1st Provisional Gun Group (155mm Gun)
 (Army).
 1st Provisional Gun Battalion.
 32d Coast Artillery Gun Battalion.
 225th Field Artillery Howitzer Group
 (155mm Howitzer) (Army).
 145th Field Artillery Battalion.
 225th Field Artillery Battalion.
 447th Amphibian Truck Company (Army).

e. *Antiaircraft Artillery*—Colonel Barager,
 USA (from Garrison Forces).
 864th Automatic Weapons, Antiaircraft Bat-
 talion (less detachments) (Army).
 Battery A, 751st Antiaircraft Battalion
 (Army).
 Battery B, 751st Antiaircraft Battalion
 (Army).

f. *Saipan Garrison Forces*—Major General
 Jarman, USA.
 Army Defense Troops.
 Army Service Troops.
 Other units as assigned.

g. *Tinian Garrison Forces*—Major General
 Underhill.
 17th Marine Antiaircraft Battalion.

18th Marine Antiaircraft Battalion.
 Other units as assigned.

h. *27th Infantry Division (Reinforced)*¹—Ma-
 jor General Ralph Smith.
 Hq, 27th Infantry Division.
 Hq, Special Troops.
 Hq Company.
 MP Platoon.
 27th Division Band.
 27th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop.
 727th Ordnance LM Company.
 27th QM Company.
 27th Signal Company.
 105th Infantry Regiment.
 106th Infantry Regiment.
 165th Infantry Regiment.
 Hq, 27th Division Artillery.
 104th Field Artillery Battalion.
 105th Field Artillery Battalion.
 106th Field Artillery Battalion.
 249th Field Artillery Battalion.
 102d Engineer Battalion.
 102d Medical Battalion.
 98th Portable Surgical Hospital.
 38th Field Hospital.
 295th JASCO.
 762d Tank Battalion.
 766th Tank Battalion.
 1165th Engineer Group Hq.
 34th Engineer Battalion.
 152d Engineer Battalion.
 1341st Engineer Battalion.
 94th Bomb Disposal Squad.
 95th Bomb Disposal Squad.
 88th Chemical Battalion.
 604th QM Graves Registration Company.
 Detachment, 534th Amphibian Tractor Bat-
 talion.

¹ The 27th Infantry Division, initially in Expedi-
 tionary Troops reserve, was released to Northern
 Troops and Landing Force control on 16 June 1944.



SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

APPENDIX VIII

Japanese Order of Battle—Saipan

STRENGTH AT SAIPAN

ON 15 JUNE

Army Units

31st Army Headquarters—LtGen Hideyoshi Obata. Administrative command for Army troops in the Marianas-Bonins-Marshalls-Carolines. General Obata was at Palau when United States forces landed and therefore did not participate in Saipan's defense.	1,100	*43d Division Transport Company—Captain Yamamoto.	94
Northern Marianas Army Group and 43d Division Headquarters (combined)—LtGen Yoshitsugu Saito. Saito's command included all Army units on Saipan, Tinian and Pagan.	268	*43d Division Field Hospital—LtCol Fukayama. 246 of the personnel were detached and sent to Pagan on 21 May 1944.	500
*118th Infantry Regiment—Colonel Ito. Three infantry battalions with one artillery battery attached to each, regimental engineering, communication, supply and medical companies. Original strength 3,463, regiment lost 858 men from submarine attack while in transit to Saipan. This unit did not arrive until the first week in June 1944.	2,605	*43d Division Intendance Battalion—LtCol Okawa. Only 120 of this group were Army personnel; the others were laborers and technicians.	2,500
*135th Infantry Regiment (minus 1st Battalion) Colonel Suzuki. Two infantry battalions with one artillery battery attached to each, regimental engineering company, supply and medical units. 1st Battalion of this regiment was on Tinian.	2,200	47th Independent Mixed Brigade Headquarters—Colonel Oka. The 315th Independent Infantry Battalion, which had been part of the Brigade, departed for Pagan before U. S. landings on Saipan.	227
*136th Infantry Regiment—Colonel Ogawa. Three infantry battalions with one artillery battery attached to each, regimental engineering, communication, supply and medical companies.	3,650	**316th Independent Infantry Battalion—Captain Eto. Three infantry companies, a machine gun company and a gun company.	618
*43d Division Ordnance Company—Captain Murase.	99	*317th Independent Infantry Battalion—Captain Sasaki. Three infantry companies, a machine gun company and a gun company.	618
*43d Division Communication Company—Captain Washizu.	223	**3d Independent Mountain Artillery Regiment (less 2d Battalion)—LtCol Nakashima. Two battalions, each organized into three four gun batteries.	845
		**3d Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment—Captain Yamane. One battery of eight field guns, two batteries of seven howitzers each.	323
		*3d Company, 25th Engineers Regiment—1st Lieutenant Yoneya.	188
		9th Tank Regiment—Colonel Goto. Five tank companies and one maintenance company. Each tank company equipped with 10 medium tanks, one or more light tanks and one tankette.	550
		1st Battalion, 18th Regiment—Captain Kubo. ..	600

* Units marked * were part of the 43d Division.

* Units marked * were part of the 43d Division.

** Units marked ** were part of the 47th Brigade.

25th Anti-Aircraft Regiment (less 2d Battalion Headquarters and the 3d, 4th, 5th and 9th Batteries)—Lieutenant Colonel Niiho. This unit included searchlight and antiaircraft batteries.	600	55th Naval Guard Force (Maizuru Keibitai)—Captain Takashima.	2,000
43d Independent Anti-Aircraft Battery — 1st Lieutenant Kimishima.	150	1st Yokosuka Special Landing Force — Lt Comdr Karashima. Three rifle companies battalion gun, demolition, communication, supply, transport and engineer sections, medical and intendance units.	800
44th Field Machine Cannon Battery—1st Lieutenant Nagatani.	150	5th Communication Unit—LtComdr Miyazaki.	369
7th Independent Engineers Regiment (less 2d Company — Colonel Koganezawa. Two companies and an ordnance and material platoon. One company of this regiment was on Guam. Also known as an Army Fortification Regiment.	600	5th Construction Unit—Rear Admiral Tsujimura.	456
16th Shipping Engineers Regiment (less 2d Company and one detachment)—Major Tsunegana. The second of its three companies was located on Guam and a detachment at Pagan.	450	41st Naval Guard Force (Sasebo Keibitai)—A reinforcement, destined for Truk, not a complete unit.	400
264th Independent Vehicle Company—Captain Iwama.	120	Office of Supplies, Accounts—Paymaster Commander Mihara.	45
278th Independent Vehicle Company—Captain Arima.	120	Military Stores — Commander Mizumoto; Transport—Commander Mizumoto; Harbor Master—Ensign Takashima.	100
<i>Miscellaneous Straggler Units</i>		14th Air Group***	
9th Expeditionary Force. This straggler unit was originally 1,500 strong.	908	902d Air Group***	
11th Independent Engineer Regiment.	200	Air Flight U 156.	300
150th Infantry Regiment.	300	Southeast Area Air Base—Vice Admiral Sato.	500
14th Independent Mortar Battalion.	580	Aerology Bureau, Saipan—Captain Yamaga. ..	88
17th Independent Mortar Battalion.	580	115th Airdrome Construction Unit.	269
3d and 4th Independent Tank Companies. Suffered heavy casualties from submarine attack. Survivors combined into one unit.	118	23d Airdrome Construction Unit.	392
		14th Hangar Maintenance Section.	29
		14th Anti-Aircraft Maintenance Section.	110
		Tora Construction Battalion (air maintenance).	600
		Total Army Forces	22,702
		Total Navy Forces	6,699
			29,662
<i>Navy Units</i>			
Central Pacific Fleet Headquarters and 5th Special Base Force Headquarters (combined)—Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo. Administrative command for Navy in Marianas-Marshalls-Carolines.	502	<p>*** The majority of these two air groups was gone at the time of United States landings and only small elements remained. Intelligence agencies were unable to establish their strength on Saipan.</p>	



SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

APPENDIX IX

The Last Days of General Saito

The following is a translation from a captured Japanese officer's personal account of the last days of Lieutenant General Saito, the Commanding General of all Army forces on Saipan. The personal story of this officer who participated in the counterattack against our forces the morning of 7 July 1944, reveals a vivid picture of events leading up to the attack that occurred on the above date.

I don't remember the exact date too well, because of the intense bombardment and the naval shelling, but about the time that the Field Headquarters moved stealthily in the middle of the night from among the mountains in CHACHA to the fourth position (4 kilometers into the mountains due EAST of the NORTH-EASTERN limit of GARAPAN Town), the 135th Infantry, by now robbed of the summit of TAPOTCHAU, was chased far into the TALAFORO area by the enemy forces along the eastern sea coast.

At the new Field Headquarters a conference was quickly held to decide how to extricate themselves quickly from this predicament.

Some officers proposed that "we should die gloriously in battle with a final charge now, in this place."

However, General SAITO ordered "Because there are many military units which were left scattered on the field of battle, gather these all together and construct positions from here toward the NORTH in the narrowest portion of SAIPAN Island. You must chew the AMERICAN forces to pieces."

At this point the staff determined those positions on maps. They fell in a line running from NORTH of TANAPAG through HILL 205.2 to TALAFORO.

However, in order to carry out the construction of that defensive line, they had to gather picks and shovels. They were all in BANADERU.

I did not think that the plan, as General SAITO conceived it, would work under these conditions.

However, before the positions were completed, the enemy was upon our front lines and we couldn't spare even one man as a runner during that day. This was 2 July. Because our lines of communication were broken all control had to be carried out at night. Moreover, under these conditions of retreat, it is impossible to control the situation except at night.

Here is an example of that.

The 135th Infantry drew back to rear positions a day before they were supposed to. When the Division Headquarters learned of this it was already too late to stop it. Because of this, the strategic plan of the Division was ruined. That is to say, the Naval forces and the portion of the Army forces which had been fighting bravely and stubbornly around GARAPAN Town were cut off from a patch of withdrawal. The 136th Infantry and other Army units which were on the EAST slope of TAPOTCHAU were isolated. And what aggravated the condition most and was most bothersome, was that we could not transport back to the new positions the provisions to halt the enemy advances.

We did not stay long in this fourth headquarters. Caught in the concentration of Naval gunfire the wounded and dead continued to increase.

We stayed at the fifth headquarters only 2 days. On about 3 July (I'm not sure of exact date) we moved to the sixth and final headquarters.

This area is generally called THE VALLEY OF HELL [Paradise Valley] and we felt that this was an unpleasant hint and suggestion concerning our future.

The intelligence which managed to reach me at this last place was all depressing.

On 4 July, an enemy unit [165th Infantry] appeared on the other side of the valley and fired at us with heavy automatic weapons. At that time I felt we were entirely surrounded and had lost all hope.

General SAITO was feeling very poorly because, for several days he had neither eaten nor slept well and was overstrained. He was wearing a long beard and was a pitiful sight.

That morning that very valley received intense bombardment (I don't know whether it was naval gunfire or pursuing fire from artillery, but it was the second most intense bombardment I had been in). It was so fierce that I thought maybe the cave where the headquarters was would be buried. At this time the Staff and Lt. Gen. SAITO received shrapnel wounds.

I felt that the final hour was drawing near.

Lt. Gen. SAITO called his Chief of Staff and held a secret conference of his unit commanders. The contents of that conference were never revealed to us but nevertheless it was undoubtedly aimed at taking a final action in realizing the end in true Japanese Army fashion. This final decisive action had to be simply one of two courses. First, to remain as we were and starve to death or secondly, to make a last attack and fight to the finish. Of course, the Division Commanding General and Chief of Staff chose the latter. However, in order to carry out the latter there were many difficulties to be encountered. First of all, to what extent could the soldiers be assembled? Even if they could be assembled, only a few could be supplied with weapons. Furthermore, it would take two days and two nights to assemble them and issue the orders. Whereupon, the evening of 6 July or 7 July was decided upon. Having lost the freedom of maneuverability there was only one road left open, a last all out desperate attack. There was no hope for success. The final order and instructions were written up and undoubtedly resulted in the order to carry out the forementioned ceremonial action. The opinion of Vice Admiral NAGUMO was probably received but even though he was in the vicinity there was no communication between the two headquarters. Under these conditions the final plan was drawn up. However, since the fighting on SAIPAN Island was under the command of SAITO, combining both Army and Navy forces, this was quite proper.

Officer messengers took a period of four days and nights [sic] to disseminate orders to the unit commanders in various places.

After issuing the orders, it seemed that the work of headquarters was finished. Everybody put his personal belongings in order. By the kindness of the headquarters cook a farewell feast for General SAITO was prepared for the evening of the 5th. However this consisted of only sake and canned crab meat.

Why did they have this farewell feast? Since General SAITO, because of his age and the exhausted condition of his body, would not participate in the attack of the 7th and had decided to commit suicide in the cave, it was fated. 10 A.M. 6 July!! This time was set by the General himself as the final hour. I had to be up at the front that morning in a liaison capacity so I was unable to witness the final hour.

I think that it happened in the following manner.

Cleaning off a spot on the rock himself, SAITO sat down. Facing the misty EAST saying "TENNO HEIKA! BANZAI!" (Hurrah for the Emperor!), he drew his own blood first with his own sword and then his adjutant shot him in the head with a pistol.

When I returned to the headquarters from my duties, (10 P.M. 6 July) they had already cremated the General's body. He had probably said "It makes little difference (in this battle) whether I die today or tomorrow, so I will die first! I will meet my staff in YASUKUNI Shrine!" 3 A.M. 7 July.

This was the time ordered for the commencement of the attack.

Because the units were confused and mixed as described previously, from the middle of the night of 7 July, we set out for MATANSHA¹ to gather the troops. However, as usual, we were shelled enroute.

At 0330, the troops who were able to gather at MATANSHA, the non-combatant troops of the headquarters, all together totaled barely 600. Many had no weapons. The total participants I would estimate at about 1500, mixed Army and Navy!

The Battle commences!

We had only one machine gun but it kept firing bravely, making night into day! About the time the gun was silenced the whole attack came to an untimely end, fading like the dew on the dawn of the 7th.

7 July! This is a significant day in the war. This was the day marking the end of the fighting on SAIPAN; the day when the brave officers and men of the Japanese Army followed General SAITO to his end.

I will attack the enemy alone again soon and join my brave comrades!"

¹ Matansha was a small village about 1,000 yards northeast of Makunsha.



SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

APPENDIX X

Navy Unit Commendation

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

THIRD BATTALION, TENTH MARINES, SECOND MARINE DIVISION
FLEET MARINE FORCE

for service as follows:

"For outstanding heroism while serving with the 2d Marine Division in action against enemy Japanese forces on the island of Saipan in the Marianas, July 7, 1944. When Japanese forces initiated a final concerted attack down the west coast of the island before dawn of July 7, the 3rd Battalion, 10th Marines, was occupying a newly won position astride the railway along the west coast road, with two batteries disposed on the left of the railroad and the remaining two on the right and echeloned to the rear. The mounting enemy attack penetrated the extreme left flank of our front lines and moved between the coast road and the railway. Security elements to the front of the forward batteries recognized and gave battle to the oncoming force of approximately 600 Japanese supported by tanks. Battalion howitzers opened up at point-blank range, firing shells with cut fuzes; gunners employed ricochet fire when the fanatic banzai troops over-ran the forward section; and the cannoneers, command post and supply personnel in the rear positions united as one to engage the infiltrating Japanese soldiery. Under the forceful direction of skilled officers, this artillery battalion functioned effectively as an infantry unit despite the lack of specific training, the four batteries waging a furious and prolonged battle from quickly organized strongpoints and holding the line indomitably until relieved several hours later. Strengthened by fresh troops, the defending garrison continued its counter-and-thrust tactics and, recapturing the heavy guns which had fallen into hostile hands, knocked out three of the enemy tanks and annihilated approximately three hundred Japanese troops. By their valor, determination and sustained fighting spirit, the intrepid officers and men of the 3rd Battalion, 10th Marines, had succeeded in breaking the enemy's last desperate effort to oppose the seizure of Saipan, thereby hastening the conquest of this strategically important base. Their gallant defense of a vulnerable position in the face of overwhelming disparity adds new luster to the traditions of the United States Naval Service."

All personnel attached to the 3rd Battalion, 10th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, on July 7, 1944 are hereby authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

JAMES FORRESTAL,

Secretary of the Navy.



SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

APPENDIX XI

Distinguished Unit Citation

The 105th Infantry Regiment (less 3d Battalion and Company G) and the Spears Detachment, 762d Provisional Tank Battalion, attached, are cited for exceptionally outstanding performance of duty in combat against the enemy at Saipan, Marianas Islands, on 7 July 1944. The regiment attacked north toward the village of Makunsha on the west coast of Saipan, against increasing enemy resistance. At dawn on 7 July, this unit was subjected to one of the greatest Japanese mass attacks attempted in the Pacific Theater. The 1st and 2d Battalions fought furiously, as the enemy, attacking in great numbers and with fanatical fury, penetrated the combined perimeter defense and inflicted overwhelming casualties on the units. Forced to yield, the survivors of that fierce assault formed successive defensive positions and continued to engage the attacking forces. These units, faced with a dwindling supply of ammunition, water, and medical supplies, fought off incessant enemy attacks throughout the day. Meanwhile the Japanese drive had carried on to the regimental command post where it was completely stopped and contained by the determined stand of Regimental Headquarters and Special

Units. Every available man engaged in the action. Through the courage, tenacity, and endurance displayed by all ranks, this unit and its attachment, suffered severe casualties, repulsed the powerful assault launched by a numerically superior enemy and contributed materially to the defeat and destruction of the Japanese forces at Saipan. The conduct of the 105th Infantry Regiment (less 3d Battalion and Company G) and the Spears Detachment, 762d Provisional Tank Battalion, attached, throughout the battle reflects great credit on itself and is in keeping with the highest traditions of the armed forces of the United States. (The foregoing citation supersedes the citation made previously to a subordinate unit for action included in the above-cited period, and does not constitute an additional citation authorizing the wearing of an Oak-Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Unit Emblem to personnel of Headquarters Company, 105th Infantry Regiment, cited in paragraph 4, section VII, General Orders 45, War Department, 1946, which is rescinded.) [General Orders No. 49, Department of the Army, 14 July 1948.]

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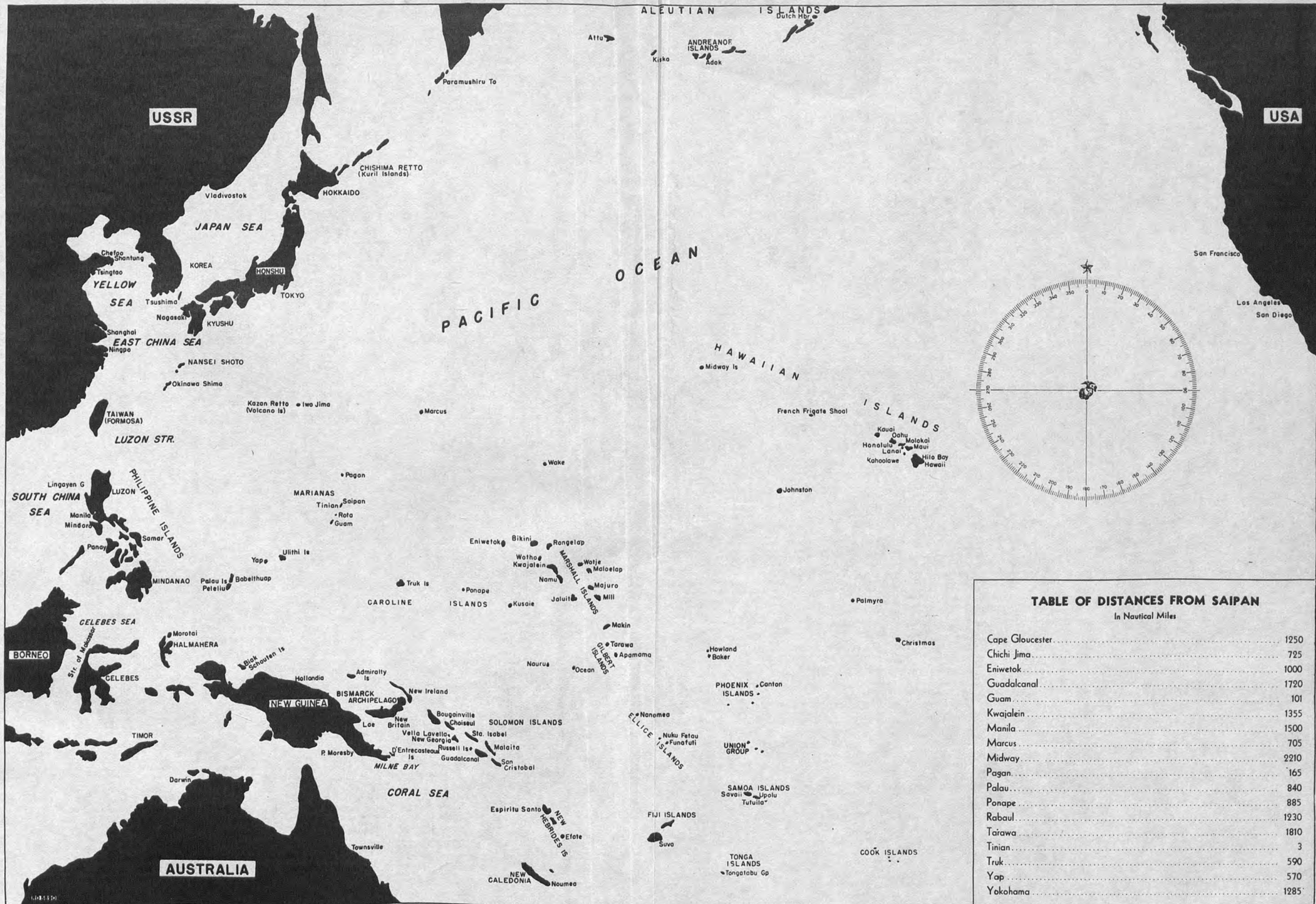


TABLE OF DISTANCES FROM SAIPAN
In Nautical Miles

Cape Gloucester	1250
Chichi Jima	725
Eniwetok	1000
Guadalcanal	1720
Guam	101
Kwajalein	1355
Manila	1500
Marcus	705
Midway	2210
Pagan	165
Palau	840
Ponape	885
Rabaul	1230
Tarawa	1810
Tinian	3
Truk	590
Yap	570
Yokohama	1285

PROPERTY OF

C.2

HISTORICAL BRANCH, G-3

HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS

PLEASE RETURN TO ROOM 3129





THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting
the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to the

FOURTH MARINE DIVISION, REINFORCED

consisting of: Division Headquarters; Division Special Troops; Division Service Troops; 23rd, 24th, 25th Marines; 20th Marines (Engineers); 1st JASCO; 534th and 773rd Amphibian Tractor Battalions (Army); 10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion; Company "C" 11th Amphibian Tractor Battalion; 708th Amphibian Tank Battalion (Army); VMO-4; 2nd Amphibian Truck Company; 14th Marines (Artillery); 311th and 539th Port Companies (Army); Detachment 7th Field Depot; 1st Provisional Rocket Detachment, V Amphibious Corps; Detachment, Air Warning Squadron #5; 4th 105mm (Howitzer) Corps Artillery, V Amphibious Corps; 14th Marines (Artillery), (less 3rd and 4th Battalions); Headquarters, Provisional LVT Group, V Amphibious Corps; 2nd Armored Amphibian Battalion; 2nd and 5th Amphibian Tractor Battalions; 715th Amphibian Tractor Battalion (Army); 1341st Engineer Battalion (Army); 1st Amphibian Truck Company; 2nd Tank Battalion; 1st and 2nd Battalions, 10th Marines (Artillery) and the 1st Provisional Rocket Detachment, for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For outstanding performance in combat during the seizure of the Japanese-held islands of Saipan and Tinian in the Marianas from June 15 to August 1, 1944. Valiantly storming the mighty fortifications of Saipan on June 15, the Fourth Division, Reinforced, blasted the stubborn defenses of the enemy in an undeviating advance over the perilously rugged terrain. Unflinching despite heavy casualties, this gallant group pursued the Japanese relentlessly across the entire length of the island, pressing on against bitter opposition for twenty-five days to crush all resistance in their zone of action. With but a brief rest period in which to reorganize and re-equip, the Division hurled its full fighting power against the dangerously narrow beaches of Tinian on July 24 and rapidly expanded the beachheads for the continued landing of troops, supplies and artillery. Unchecked by either natural obstacles or hostile fire, these indomitable men spearheaded a merciless attack which swept Japanese forces before it and ravaged all opposition within eight days to add Tinian to our record of conquests in these strategically vital islands."

For the President,

James Forrestal

Secretary of the Navy