

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING DIVISION  
GENERAL INSTRUCTION DEPARTMENT  
THE ARMORED SCHOOL  
Fort Knox, Kentucky

ADVANCED OFFICERS CLASS #1

DATE 10 April 1948

MILITARY MONOGRAPH

TITLE: AIRBORNE OPERATION ON CORREGIDOR

SCOPE: 2d Bn 503d RCT Operation on Corregidor Island,  
16 February 45 - 2 March 45.

41-26

Prepared by Lawrence S. Browne  
(Name)

Captain, Cav.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AIRBORNE OPERATION ON CORREGIDOR

MAP: 1: 12500 CORREGIDOR ISLAND

PARACHUTE MAINTENANCE IN THE PACIFIC

PHOTOS TAKEN D-DAY SHOWING TERRAIN AND EQUIPMENT

## AIRBORNE OPERATION ON CORREGIDOR

Stand up and hook up! Check equipment! Six O.K. Five O.K. Four O.K. Three O.K. Two O.K. One O.K.--Stand in the door! Go! This was CORREGIDOR nine o'clock of the morning 16 February 1945. Life seemed very simple then, atomic energy, supersonic speed, bacteriological warfare had not yet come of age. My job was S-3, Second Battalion 503d Prcht. Inf. We had left the states October 1942, and for two and a half years had been training with minor interruptions. Starting from NORTH QUEENSLAND in AUSTRALIA our travels covered PORT MORESBY, MARKHAM VALLEY, CAPE SUDEST, HOLLANDIA, NOEMFOOR, LEYTE, MINDORA, and at this point my story begins.

Our spirits were high, the climate good, and the chow--fair. You couldn't ask for much more. The situation was ideal, we had just made a wide end run on the Japs and now held a jumping off spot for LUZON. While our landing on MINDORA was unopposed it was interesting as it was our first and only experience under enemy naval shelling.

As our air activity increased we realized the pending operation (LUZON) was drawing closer and of course there was no doubt in anyone's mind as to who would spearhead the attack. In fact, the war in the South Pacific was being fought by some engineers, a few air Corps boys, and the 503d Prcht. Inf. Of course "Tokyo Rose" often spoke of other units, but this was just enemy propaganda, although she seemed fairly accurate at times.

The days passed rapidly and the intensity and tempo of our training increased accordingly. This was to be the big show. LUZON and then back home. The latest latrine rumor had the operation scheduled five days away, and still no orders or even training directives that would indicate a future operation for us. Maybe the Japs were preparing to surrender? At last news. Col. George M. Jones, our commanding officer, informed us to have details ready by morning and report to the air strip, we were to help prepare a new airborne unit just recently arrived from the states for the coming operation. This was the last straw, for two and one half years we had been experiencing the same thing. It seemed as though we had been alerted for every little patrol and skirmish since BUNA GONA days, but at the last moment our mission would be called off. At least we were conditioned for situations such as this. We were in C 47s over LUZON alright, dropping equipment to the fighting troops below. It is needless to say our morale was not the best, but this also had been conditioned to disappointments. In a few days our spirits were up again, a rumor from Air Corps had it we were to jump on a small island and it was to be the real thing. Then one evening Col. Jones informed us we were to begin preparing for a pending mission and to plan our training so as to be ready by the 14th of February.

## COORDINATING PLANS

The next several days went fast, too fast almost. The last few days were spent getting our equipment ready, studying air photos, sand tables, and holding conferences planning the operation.

It is interesting to note the amount of coordination necessary for a mission such as this. Conferences began on 6 February at Sixth Army Headquarters, at XI Corps Headquarters on the 7th, and on the flagship of the Commander, Amphibious Group Nine on the 8th. The conference aboard the flagship was attended by: the Commanding General, 54th Troop Carrier Wing; the Commander, Seventh Amphibious Forces; the Commander, Cruisers Seventh Fleet; the Commander, Amphibious Group Nine; G-3, XI Corps; A-3, Fifth Air Force; the Commanding Officer, 503d RCT; the airborne Liaison Officer, Sixth Army; and staff officers from the preceding staffs. While this was taking place the jump masters of each plane had a chance to fly over the target as B-24s were making strikes on LUZON and CORREGIDOR was in their line of flight so it was possible to do this without arousing suspicion. The Air Corps had begun softening up CORREGIDOR 24 January 45 and during three weeks the Fifth Air Force conducted a total of 696 sorties and the 13th Air Force 316 B-24 sorties dropping a total of 3,128 tons of bombs. On the 13th of February the Navy with five cruisers, six destroyers, and PT boats began shelling installations.

## ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION

When the Air Force first began their strikes the crews reported intense AA fire and photo interpretation listed the AA defense as seven heavy, eighteen medium, and ten light positions and estimated a larger number hidden in caves. Attempts to land General Krueger's Alamo Scouts and Philippine guerillas on the "Rock" failed. The following terrain analysis and enemy situation was given by G-2.

"Corregidor Island's position at the mouth of Manila Bay separates the entrance into channels; the N channel 2.2 miles wide between the island and the southern shores of Bataan Peninsula; the S channel six miles wide, between Corregidor and the shores of Cavite Province. The Island of Corregidor lies on an East-West axis. The bulbular portion is approximately 2,500 yards in diameter; it is bounded by cliffs and rises to a height of more than 500 feet. The tail of the island extends eastward from a gap wherein San Jose is situated for a distance of 3,000 yards; before narrowing to a point about 200 yards in width and turning to the south. The principal portion of this tail formation averages approximately 500 yards in width, and its ridge line is lower than the western part of the island. There are few level spots on the island whose terrain varies from small areas of low gradient to bounding cliffs. Most of the surface is covered by heavy low tropical vegetation. Remains of Pre-war American installations are at present all over the island. The enemy has not used Kindley air strip and it is overgrown with grass and secondary growth.

Estimated enemy strength on Bataan 12,410 of which 3,300 are combat troops. Breakdown of location and strengths are as follows: ZIGZAG ROAD 3,000, BALANGA 60, BAGAC 300, BAGAC-PILAR ROAD 3,000, CABCABEN-MARIVELES 5,000, ORANI 250, LIMAY 800. On Corregidor captured documents establish the presence of the 3rd Bn 22 FA Regt (less than one Battery) armed with 150mm guns and totalling approximately 500 men. Total estimated enemy strength is computed at 850. This is considered a minimum. Armament consists of pre-war guns repaired and put in firing condition. Two 12 inch guns, two 10 inch guns (disappearing),

two six inch guns (disappearing) one 3 inch gun (fixed) two 3 inch AA guns (mobile) two 37mm guns, six 75mm guns of Japanese manufacture."<sup>1</sup>

With this information and recent air photos, planning began.

First the DZ's and if any one decision could be termed the most important this was it. There were two possibilities: First on Topsides there were two small clearings about 250 by 150 yards surrounded by wrecked buildings, splintered trees, and shell craters. The clearings themselves were littered with chunks of steel concrete and other debris. Second possibility was on the tail of the island, here there was an abandoned air strip overgrown with vegetation with no visible enemy installations. This air strip was about 3,000 yards from our main objective. This was the decision to make: TOPSIDES of the "Rock" there were two possible DZ's, the largest about 300 by 150 yards. On the eastern tail of the island was an abandoned air strip about 700 yards in length. If the DZ's on top side were used it would mean jumping six men at a time and flying at trail. On the tail of the island it was possible to concentrate more of a mass which is advisable in airborne operations. Looking at the situation from this respect one might choose the air strip as the DZ. This is the point to emphasize. Against prepared positions, supported by artillery or armor, jump on or in center of your objective. A good comparison here might be that of an amphibious landing. If troops debark from landing craft two or three hundred yards from shore and that distance is traveled under

---

1. Intelligence Annex to 503d RCTs Field Order, dated 13 Feb. 45.

enemy fire, at the best the situation is difficult. Likewise if paratroopers land any distance from their objective that period of organization on landing is when the enemy with his artillery and mortars do the most damage. If airborne troops try to slug it out at long range they are at a disadvantage; in close they have the advantage.

#### PLANNING

The DZ's chosen for this mission were on TOPSIDES and in general the plan was as follows: To drop the 3d Bn reinforced with mission of securing the drop area. Upon being relieved by the 2d Bn, support the Amphibious landing. First lift, 51 C-47s take off from SAN JOSE, MINDORO 0715 16 February over target 0830. To consist of the following elements: 3d Bn 503d, Det Hq. 503d, 161st Eng Co, Det Hq Btry 462d FA Bn, Btry A 462d FA Bn (75mm How), Plat Btry D 462d FA Bn (.50 Cal MG). Second lift, 51 C-47s take off 1100 16 February over target 1215. To consist of the following: 2d Bn 503d, Det Hq 503d, Sv. Co 503d, Plat Btry D 462d FA Bn (.50 Cal MG), Btry B 462d FA Bn (75mm How). Third lift, 43 C-47s, take off 0715 17 February, over target 0830, to bring the remainder of the RCT. Fourth lift, (Resupply) 12 C-47s, to begin on completion third lift. Twelve C-47s were allocated for daily resupply. 3d Bn, 34 Inf. Regt mission was to land vicinity South Dock 1030 Hr contain and destroy enemy forces on the tail and in MALINTA HILL area, secure a beachhead for supply and evacuation and assist the 503d in establishing road communication between beach and TOPSIDE. The winds during this period are generally east winds with velocities of 15 to



25 m.p.h. with occasional strong gusts on Topsides. Because of the small DZ's and wind, a flight pattern of two columns of single planes in trail, one column over each DZ, making two or three passes was used. To realize the maximum effectiveness of airborne troops they should be employed by surprise and in mass. We were hoping for surprise but due to limitations and restrictions of our DZ, doubt if the term mass would apply in this operation. Instead of dropping six hundred men at one time, we were dropping six.

By the evening of the 15th February everything was set for the operation. Last minute checks on the sand table and final instructions had been given. The time left could be spent on our individual problems, checking weapons, looking our chutes over, putting a few extra rounds of ammunition in our pockets and finally going down to the river for a bath. There was nothing to do now but relax and go over in your mind the plan of action for tomorrow. If there was any way to measure the effort put into our training it would be shown tomorrow. That evening we had a movie in our area, one that was of added interest because it was a recent captured Japanese film showing the fall of CORREGIDOR and surrender of General Wainwright. The film showed the Nips making their Amphibious landings, scaling the cliffs and defeating the American troops in close combat. The film was very graphic in showing the superiority of the Japanese soldier over our troops. There was little comment after the movie, but we were all thinking along the same lines. It would be a different story tomorrow.

## EXECUTION

The weather was ideal and standing in the door of the plane looking out it seemed as though you were witnessing a well rehearsed play and the stage was being set for the final dramatic act. B-24s from the Fifth Air Force had hit the "Rock" with 260 pound fragmentation bombs between 0747 and 0759. One minute after the B-24s left B-25s bombed and strafed the southern half of the island and A-20s bombed and strafed our drop area. Below us in the glassy smooth waters of MANILA BAY were the Amphibious force circling out from MARIVELES. It was easy to pick out each boat from the feathery white wake behind it. As the last A-20s cleared the drop zone the first C-47 approached the field. The time was 0830 and the timing had been perfect. This was it, no last minute changes now. Had the situation been estimated correctly? Were the Nips along the water line manning their guns preparing themselves for that amphibious force? Had our Navy and Air Force driven them underground, and how quick would they react? We would know the answers soon.

## THE DROP

Conversation had ceased in the plane, the only sounds you could hear were the steady roar of the engines. Stand up and hook up! Check equipment! Stand in the door! Go! A rush of air, a roar of motors, and then a soft silky silence as our chutes blossomed out. CORREGIDOR was 400 feet below and after getting oriented, distinguished "A" field below, the jump had been perfect. Or had it? Within a few seconds the DZ had passed beneath and a few feet below were the guns of

of Wheeler Btry. By this time had pulled one riser down almost to the silk to gain a more rapid descent. The next instant hit the ground. Doubt if you could have picked a better spot on the entire island. Had landed in a bomb crater about ten feet deep, my chute was over the edge of the cliff and I was struggling to get out of the harness. ( A quick release type harness would have been a big help on this operation. Since then the Army has developed a satisfactory quick release type harness which should prove invaluable in the future. One of our aid men landed on Wheeler Btry and was bayoneted before he could get out of his harness.) During the next several days Wheeler Btry was to become one of our toughest fights. After getting out of my harness, began crawling towards Wheeler Btry with the idea of getting to the DZ as quickly as possible. At this time the Japs were not occupying this position. While deciding whether to go around the side of Wheeler Btry or through it, rifle fire began to hit near this location. Didn't know whether it was friendly or enemy but as the fire increased decided it was best to get under cover. About this time heard some movement over the side of the cliff and in a few seconds several Arty men crawled over the edge. They had been in the same plane as myself and had been carried over the cliff. There were six of us now and we headed towards "A" field. Below and to the right of Wheeler Btry came across four Arty men setting up a .50 Cal MG, five of the men dropped off here to help man the MG. About a hundred yards from here at the west end of the E/M barracks found Major Kline, CO of our Arty Bn, unconscious on the ground. An aid man was giving

first aid. We had been in the same plane, only he had jumped on the second pass. Wasn't much we could do except move the Major to a more sheltered spot and send back a stretcher. About that time mortar fire began falling fairly close so we moved on. The last I saw of Major Kline the aid man was sitting by his side trying to keep the flies off his wounds and out of his mouth.

#### ON CORREGIDOR

Reported to Colonel Jones, CO of the Rock Force, about 1000 Hr. Gave him what information we had gathered, and as the 2d Bn was to take over from the 3d Bn in a few hours headed for the 3d Bn C.P. The two DZ's were secured and the main effort at that time was giving support to the Amphibious landing. Arrived at the 3d Bn C.P. about 1030 Hr and found S/Sgt. Scales, my operations sgt., making an overlay of their dispositions. Spent a few minutes here, then with S/Sgt. Scales headed back to the Regt'l C.P. Met Col. Jones near the C.P. and with S/Sgt. Scales accompanied the Colonel to a point near the 3d Bn C.P. where we could see a portion of the Amphibious landing near South Dock. The Amphibious troops were receiving a small amount of Arty fire from the Jap guns in caves. The Japs had mined the beaches extensively and during this phase a number of vehicles were lost. Looking at the Amphibious landing from our position there seemed to be a small amount of congestion resulting from these land mines.

The time now was about 1200 and the 2d Bn was due at 1215, sent S/Sgt Scales back to "A" field to put some pannels out as a guide for

their jump, the wind seemed to be a bit stronger at this time. In a few minutes the first planes were in sight and as though prearranged the wind subsided a little.. During the second lift a number of planes were taken under fire and we suffered a small amount of casualties in the air from enemy fire. The total number KIA by enemy, just prior to or on landing was eight. Even with an enemy that has been alerted casualties from small arms fire are surprisingly few during the drop. The remainder of the day was spent organizing our positions and recovering equipment. Our casualties had been high (10.7%) but less than anticipated. During this initial phase a group of paratroopers had been carried over the edge of the cliff, while making their way up to TOPSIDES ran into some Nips in an O.P. near BREAKWATER POINT. The Japanese Commander, ITAGAKI, with some of his staff was directing the action from this spot. In the fire fight that followed ITAGAKI and most of his staff were killed. This isolated action could have influenced the retaliation which did not materialize soon as expected.

Our first night was fairly quiet and early next morning began a systematic cleanup of our area. By night fall of the second day (17 Feb.) we were feeling quite confident. On the morning of the 18th the 1st Bn took over our southern sector, it was now possible to concentrate more effort in the northwest sector. We began with Wheeler Btry, we had taken it twice before, this time we would keep it. The position was so located that air strikes were ineffective so we had to rely on our organic weapons. Our first attempt, made by one platoon of Infan-

try from F Co supported by eight 75mm How's, two 81mm mortars, four 60mm mortars, and LMG and rifle fire from the remainder of the company, failed. Our casualties, one platoon leader KIA and seven men WIA. Our next attempt was successful and made without casualties by a platoon from D Company led by Lt. Gifford. This action set the pace for the day, it was now 0730 and by 1600 we had taken the following positions: Battery Wheeler, a Jap O.P. on WHEELER POINT, Battery Cheney, Battery Smith, Battery Grubbs, Battery Way and all the dominating terrain in our sector. We had used three air strikes by P-47s using 500 pound demolition bombs and napalm. On each objective we used one platoon or less to attack supported by rifle fire from the company, 75mm How's, 81's, and 60mm mortars. The 75's were fired at ranges from 400 to 600 yards, using AP, HE and WP. This WP was really the stuff for keeping the Nips underground. As the last round was on its way the platoon leader making the attack was notified by sound power phone and the 75's augmented by our 81's began placing WP and HE on all high ground thus screening our objective. Earlier in the morning we had learned that if the attacking troops delayed even for a few seconds after the Arty fire lifted the Japs would be in their positions again. For this reason we were using sound power phones in lieu of 536 radios even though the range was never over 800 yards. During the preparatory firing, three or four men with Tommy guns would work their way within hand grenade distance of the objective and on the last Arty round would follow up with WP grenades and rush the position, covering for the remainder of the platoon or squad.

If the caves and emplacements were such they could be closed, demolition crews were sent in. It was impossible to seal up all openings, especially the large American constructed gun batteries.

#### NIGHT ATTACK

By 1600 Hr 18 February our perimeter extended from James ravine to WHEELER POINT, a distance of about 2000 yards. We had three companies on the line and as a reserve the 81mm mortar platoon, a few cooks, clerks, and supply personnel. Of the 850 Japs estimated by G-2 we had accounted for about 1000. We felt that a night attack was a possibility but a threat we could handle in our present positions. Before dark visited Joe Turinsky at his C.P., he was commanding D Company and was covering the Southwest sector of our perimeter and tied in with the 1st Bn. on our left. His C.P. was located near a Jap made O.P. on Wheeler Point, the key position in our area. Wheeler Battery was about 400 yards south east from this position and still smoking from the action earlier in the day with occasional explosions in the caves below. That night, 18-19 Feb., the Nips executed their first organized attack. It began by explosions in the underground tunnels near Wheeler Battery. About 0200 hour Joe Turinsky called reporting activity near his C.P. and requested illuminating flares. The next three hours the Navy kept the area over Joe's C.P. covered with star shells. Between 0300 and 0400 hour Turinsky called again suggesting a few men be sent out. He was joking about the action and said the Japs were asking him to surrender. Our communication went out while talking and after giving the infor-

mation to Major Caskey, CO of the 2d Bn called the Regimental S-3 reporting the action. By this time there was no doubt as to the seriousness of the attack. A few minutes later Colonel Jones called asking how we were doing, in the middle of the conversation, while telling the Colonel we had the situation well in hand, a Nip lobbed a hand grenade in our C.P. The remainder of the morning was spent organizing a force to reenforce D Company and shortly after daybreak succeeded in reaching D Company. Between our C.P. and D Company's C.P. 150 Japs were killed. On and near D Company's C.P. were about the same number of dead Japs, these troops were identified as Imperial Marines (Endo Force). Following is an after action report of the night 18-19 February.

"On the night of 18-19 February 1945 approximately two hundred of the enemy infiltrated through the perimeter and at about 0400 hours attacked Lt. Turinsky's Company Headquarters and 1st platoon from three directions. Under his leadership this numerical superior enemy force was successfully repulsed until about 0530. A terrific explosion occurred at this time and rained much dirt and debris on the position and caused mal-functioning of many weapons. Lt. Turinsky calmly withdrew the remainder of his force to a Jap constructed emplacement where they received heavy rifle and greande fire until daylight. While directing the fight about daylight, Lt. Turinsky was killed. By this dauntless courage and brilliant handling of his company he denied high ground to the enemy, which if lost, might have endangered the entire task force.

On 19 February 1945 elements of Sergeant Schmittle's company was occupying a defensive position around an observation psot when they were hit by a numerically superior force of enemy. The attack carried the enemy well inside the defense and, due to weapons stoppages and need for reorganization, the unit had to withdraw. On order of his platoon leader, Sgt. Schmittle withdrew his squad which, due to casualties, had only four effectives. Sgt. Schmittle, with utter disregard for his own life took up a dangerous flank position, whence he repulsed several



enemy rushes. He held this position until mortally wounded and without asking or accepting help, crawled to the aid station where he died."<sup>1</sup>

#### REORGANIZE POSITIONS

On the 19th February we pulled in our perimeter to positions closer to the Bn C.P. By this time our supplies were coming up from the beach supplementing our aerial resupply. Being accustomed to small amounts of ammunition it seemed as though our supply was unlimited. The next several days was spent pushing out patrols by daylight and pulling back to our perimeter at night. During the day our artillery and mortar men would stock pile their positions with ammunition and would have a field day during the night. In our sector there were two ravines, Cheney and James. At night we would cover these ravines with our 81 and 60mm mortars and the high ground with 75's. We had found two places where it was possible to get a small amount of water, which was a critical item on the island. These locations were given special attention. During the next few days the Nips made several attempts to infiltrate our positions with plans of knocking out our artillery and mortars, all of these attempts failed. The Japs, unable to organize, fought in isolated groups and the systematic destruction of the enemy followed the pattern so effective the first day with Infantry attacking supported by bazookas, flame throwers, demolitions, artillery, and mortars. Because of the small area it was possible to assemble the company commanders in the evening to plan and coordinate the following days opera-

---

1. General Orders No. 9, Headquarters XI Corps APO 471, March 7, 1945.

tions. Between 16 February and 3 March, a total of 407 sorties were flown in joint air-ground missions on CORREGIDOR. The Air Corps expended 466 500-pound demolition bombs and 55,500 gallons of napalm. The Navy gave us supporting fire along the beaches and cliffs. The cooperation from both Navy and Air Corps was the best. Wherever our mortars and 75's couldn't reach they did the job for us.

#### MOP-UP

The final phase in our sector was clearing the Nips out of caves in the cliffs and along the water's edge. It was seldom we could use our 75's or mortars and the artillery support was furnished by the Navy. The cooperation by the Navy was excellent but the effectiveness of Naval artillery support left much to be desired. The type ammunition, communications, and time lag on shifting fires were a big problem. On Topsides our casualties were small in attacking Jap positions compared with our casualties when attacking positions along the shore and cliffs. The importance of fire support, especially artillery and mortars was clearly shown during this phase. On Topsides we had taken enemy positions one after the other with very few casualties. Now, without our artillery support, our casualties were greater and attacks less successful. An attempt was made to improve our Naval artillery support by going aboard ship. A company commander, Bn Co, and Bn S-3 went aboard to point out targets for the next day's operation. Other than a good meal, shower and a better understanding and respect for the Navy, little was

accomplished. During this trip one Jap PW was picked up trying to swim to BATAAN and a number of others were fired upon using 20 to 40mm guns.<sup>1</sup>

By 23 February organized resistance had ceased in our sector. During this period 164 caves had been sealed, some still containing live Japs. Sealing caves was a slow process due to the number and manner in which constructed, especially was this true with the American-made gun emplacements. It was surprising how well these positions weathered the Jap shelling in 1942 and our bombardment in 1945. Little damage was done to underground installations and most of the powder magazines in the gun positions were still intact. Those left in the final mop-up stage felt as though we were sitting on a powder keg. Every time a grenade or flame thrower was used on a cave you waited a few moments for an explosion.

On the 25 February the 3d Bn 34th Inf was relieved by the 2d Bn 151st Inf. That same day our 1st and 3d Bns were given the mission of clearing the eastern tail of the island, the 1st Bn was to lead the attack. Supported by artillery, mortars, air, Navy and two Sherman tanks the attack progressed rapidly. The Japs attempted a counter-attack in the vicinity of Infantry Point. This force was dispersed before it had time to organize leaving 350 dead Nips. It was obvious

---

1. "During the fight on the island, to this time, (25 February 45) an estimated 5,847 Japs had met their deaths in futile resistance or in suicide explosions. Of these, 1,014 were known to have died as they tried to escape by swimming out to the sea." From "Corregidor of Eternal Memory" by the Combat History Division G-1 Section Headquarters AFWESPAC.

by now the Nips had no hope of winning, and attempts were made by our S-2 to entice the Japs to surrender. Whatever their philosophy or psychology used on their troops regards surrendering it is certainly a trait to admire and at times a very discouraging trait to fight against.

On the morning 26 February, while the 1st Bn held positions on a hill near Monkey Point, the Japs made their final desperate gesture by setting off a large amount of demolition. Where a hill formerly stood it was now a ravine. A Sherman tank was blown 50 yards by this explosion and somehow one man lived out of the tank crew. After this explosion four smaller explosions took place. While the 1st Bn was reorganizing and caring for their wounded, the 3d Bn pushed on down the tail of the island. By late afternoon our mission on CORREGIDOR had been accomplished. MANILA BAY was open to shipping.

#### ARMY AIR CORPS - CLOSE SUPPORT

The final coup d'etat was given by the Army Air Corps. Two C-47s were sent to spray the island with DDT, flies had become a major problem. A funny incident occurred at this time that is worth relating. One morning was with D Company on a patrol along the beach near Rock Point. The beach in this area is not more than two or three feet wide necessitating going single file. We had stopped to investigate four Japs just killed by the lead scouts when this DDT spraying C-47 flew over. A few moments later the C-47 returned, banked over our position, flew seaward, turned and flew towards us a few feet above the water.

As the plane neared the cliff it banked sharply and we could see someone standing in the door. About this time we noticed some small splashes in the water nearby. They were strafing us with a 45 Cal SMG. Our only cover was the water, but if we ventured too far from the base of the cliff any Japs above could spot us. On the third pass one of the men was hit in the stomach by a spent 45 slug--no harm done. As the C-47 was getting ready for another run a BAR man nearby said to Lt. Gifford, "Shall I knock him down this pass Lieutenant?" Gifford shook his head--Have always felt the crew of that C-47 was lucky; with 80 men firing at a C-47 at about 300 yards there is a chance it might have been hit. That was the last pass the C-47 made. The message sent to Bn was: "C-47 strafing us vicinity Rock Point. One man hit in stomach". By the time this message reached the Air Corps it was probably very interesting.

#### SUMMATION

This operation clearly showed that parachute troops could be used under most adverse conditions. Wind velocity 15 to 25 m.p.h.-- DZ 300 by 150 yards--one plane dropping six to eight men per pass-- dropping a total of 2,065 men against an enemy which numbered close to 6,000. Drop casualties ran 10.7% broken down as follows: Injured on landing 203 killed; chute malfunction 3; killed, striking buildings, 2; killed by enemy, just prior to or on landing, 8; missing, 6. Our casualties (503d) for the operation, KIA or DOW 17/48, WIA 17/267, injured 15/316, sick 7/5 totaling 841. Of this, 222 were jump casualties

and 246--the direct result of explosions set off in caves by the enemy. Enemy counted dead 4,773; believed dead in caves or died swimming to BATAAN, 976, 24 PWs with a total of 5,783.

I know of no other operation in the Pacific where amphibious troops were directly supported by parachute troops. While there was little need for this support in the SWPA, except possibly the BUNA-GONA campaign, an amphibious landing presents an ideal situation for a commander to exploit the potentialities of airborne troops. To compare an amphibious assault with that of an airborne landing provides little or no conclusions. The following comparison is offered only to stimulate interest and thought in future use of airborne troops.

"There were 4,836 Japanese and Koreans on Tarawa, of which 2,619 could be counted as combat troops (Navy pre-invasion estimates ran from 2,500 to 3,100). Of the total force 4,690 were killed, seventeen Japanese and 129 Koreans were taken prisoner. Marine casualties were 990 dead and 2,296 wounded in action."<sup>1</sup>

There were 5,783 Japanese troops on CORREGIDOR. 4,773 KIA and 24 PWs. Our casualties (503d) 169 KIA, 284 WIA.

"In the next war, as was coming to be the case in this last one, the excellence of a unit will not be measured by the number of casualties it has sustained. This will, however, be an indication of the weakness of the leadership among leaders of similar units that have performed similar tasks."<sup>2</sup>

- 
1. "Two Marine Battles" by John B. Spore, Infantry Journal, March 1948
  2. Brigadier General Bruce C. Clark, Headquarters A.G.F., Fort Monroe, Virginia.

## CONCLUSIONS

Of the many lessons learned during the CORREGIDOR operation the most outstanding is the necessity for close support and cooperation between Navy, Air Corps, and Ground Forces. Words and phrases such as: mental conditioning--training--leadership--aggressiveness--initiative--imagination--team work--cooperation--esprit de corps--discipline-- becomes very tangible; one should never lose sight of the objective of military training--to insure success in battle.

On this operation every man knew his job and how it fit in with the overall operation. The quality of our enlisted men was of the highest caliber; it was an honor and a privilege to work with such men. Following is a statement by Major General C. P. Hall:

"The performance of the 503d Parachute Infantry RCT in the capture of CORREGIDOR has been recognized by a Presidential Citation which was bestowed upon all members of the organization by General MacArthur. This RCT came under my command upon its landing on CORREGIDOR. I observed it intimately throughout the operation. The job, in my opinion, was the best handled of any that I have seen during my military career. Both officers and enlisted men were thoroughly competent, knew what there was to do and did not hesitate in any instance to close with the enemy and do it. After the landing, the reduction of CORREGIDOR required carefully planned and methodical work.

The regimental commander, Colonel George M. Jones, knew his job and the tools with which he had to work. Throughout the operation there was the most careful planning and fine execution of the methodical attack he made to clear the island of Nips. The organization clearly showed that it had been well trained, that its personnel was of a high type and that it was willing and anxious to fight.

I would welcome this organization in any command which I might hold and for any job, ground or airborne."<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Letter to Commanding General, Eighth Army, APO 343, 9 March 45.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Report on "THE CORREGIDOR OPERATION" by Lt. Col. Robert Alexander, CE (prcht).

"THE CORREGIDOR OPERATION" by Lt. Col. Edward L. Jenkins, Air Corps Instructor, Command and General Staff School.

Correspondence and discussion with Capt. Eldon Campbell on Parachute Maintenance.



## PARACHUTE MAINTENANCE IN THE PACIFIC

"Storage of 'Chutes Gordonvale, North Queensland. Stored in specially constructed air conditioned rooms with a temperature set at 70 degrees and with a humidity of 55%. These 'chutes were stored under ideal conditions. In addition, when the 'chutes were packed about 1/8 lb. of naphthalene flakes (a closed fist full) was sprinkled on the canopy. This was done with an eye to the future. The naphthalene off sets dampness during shipment—such as when we transported 'chutes to Port Moresby for the Markham Valley Campaign, and then stored them when making ready for the jump. Up to the time of the jump the Riggers did nothing but perform inspections on the 'chutes. The naphthalene kept the canopies dry and the harness and pack were protected because of the kit bag.

After the operation all parachutes were returned to Gordonvale where they were again inspected. Of the 'chutes used in the operation none were ever again used for personnel drops. Those in good enough condition were converted to equipment 'chutes, and the remainder sent to the Air Forces Depot at Townsville for disposal.

The same procedure, as above, was used when we shipped again for Cape Gloucester operation, and also for the Noemfoor jump.

When we moved to set up at Noemfoor, Dutch New Guinea, the 'chutes were opened (both Main and Reserve), placed in a water-proof bag which was sealed, then into a kit bag, and finally into a wooden shipping box. All parachutes and equipment was shipped by boat.

The storage facilities at Noemfoor included three large uniform buildings which we used for packing and storage. The 'chutes were stored in the wooden crates which had been used in shipment. Napthalene was used in the same amount to protect against dampness setting in.

The move from Noemfoor to Leyte, Philippine Islands, was effected much the same as the one from Australia. Everything would have been fine if the rains had not been so persistent. The result was that we had a great deal of trouble in keeping the parachute equipment dry. In any case it was done--but with a loss of about two thousand parachutes due to water seeping into damaged and broken crates causing the 'chutes to mildew.

The water movement from Leyte to Mindoro, Philippine Islands, was very successful. There were only minor losses, (broken table tops, etc.) The time we had at first (it was extended later) to pack the 'chutes required for the jump was not enough. Had to run 24-hour shifts and was augmented with men from the line companies. Even then 1500 parachutes were drawn from the 11th Abn. When the time was extended had a complete inspection of all 'chutes received from the 11th. We first made an outside inspection, and then an internal inspection, by removing the pack cover and checking the canopy and stowed lines. These inspections resulted in the disposal of about 250 'chutes. Time did not allow us to finish an internal inspection on all the 11th Abn. 'chutes. Orders came to make ready and start issuing.

After Corregidor the same procedure followed, Any parachutes returned were inspected for possible usage as equipment 'chutes. Again, as in the cases of Markham Valley and Noemfoor, the 'chutes used on the jump were never again used for personnel drops.

After our sojourn at Mindoro following Corregidor we prepared for movement to Negros. There the facilities were again very good. The buildings were well suited for our purpose and there were enough of them not to cause us to be cramped.

The storage of 'chutes was effected in the same manner as Mindoro.

#### Average life of a 'chute in the Pacific.

There is no hard and fast rule that can be drawn because of the constantly changing conditions. In combat all that can be employed is complete vigilance--constant inspection--the best possible protection--and a solid system of detailed supervision. Between operations--if the afore mentioned points are employed--the parachutes may be depended upon for the subsequent mission. The point is this--the 'chutes, under no circumstances, should be used for personnel after being returned from a combat drop. Even though some of them may have looked good, it was not my place to take chances with other men's lives.

So, you may draw conclusion that the life of a 'chute is that time up to and including the combat jump--then it's dead.

The number of 'chutes we used while overseas as stated by Col. Alexander is pretty close to right.<sup>1</sup> When we moved to Negros our supply was increased to about 6,000 personnel assemblies and about 2,500 cargo 'chutes--in preparation for another jump--which didn't come.

Our parachutes were obtained from the Air Forces Supply. This was accomplished through normal requisitioning. After Australia a requisitioning system was set up to insure us of being constantly prepared for subsequent missions. In other words, as soon as you received word of a mission you immediately requisition parachute requirements for the second mission to follow. The system worked after it started rolling, plus help from G-4, 8th Army.

In conclusion, the lessons learned overseas, the following are outstanding: In hopping from one base to another keep the unit as mobile as possible, through a prearranged system of strong uniform crates which may be used, not only to conserve shipping space, but which may be used as storage bins upon arrival. Cannot adequately emphasize how important this can be as a time saver.

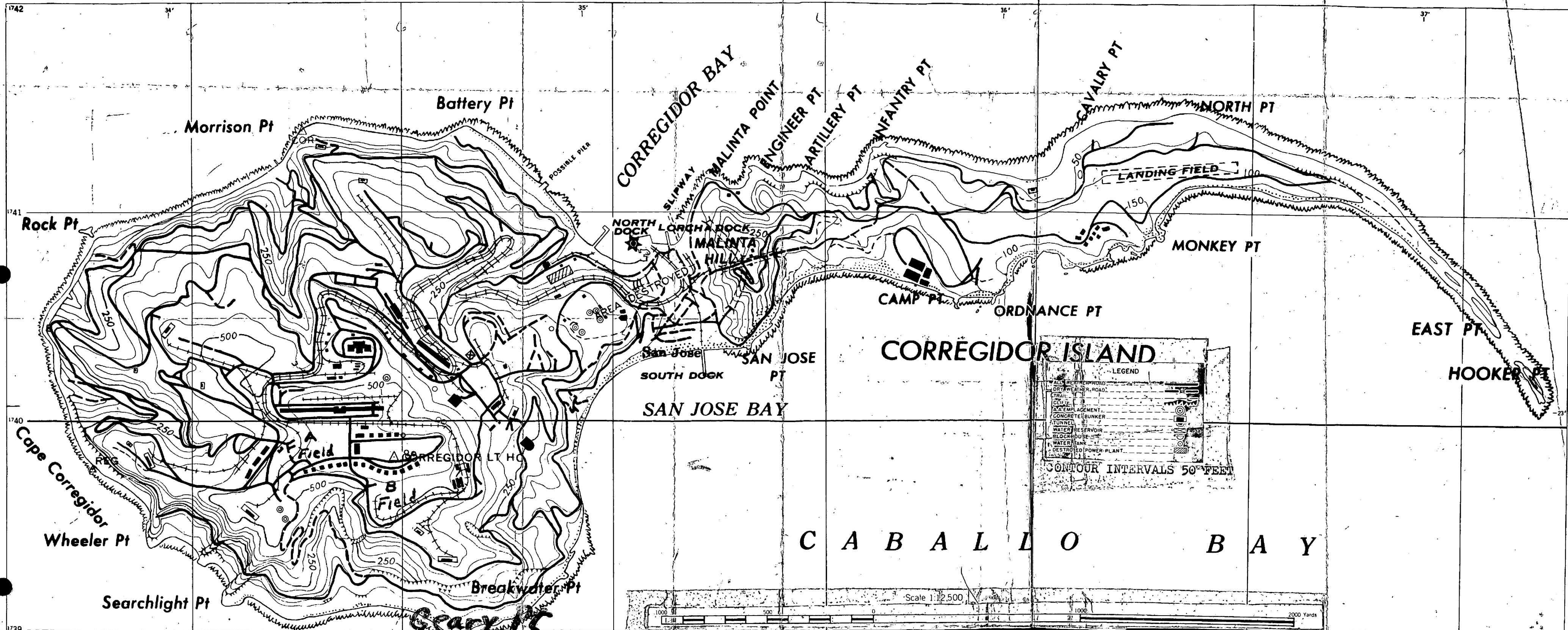
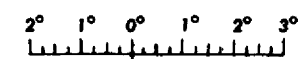
Upon arrival at the overseas station make immediate contact with the Army HQ to explain your requirements in writing in order that immediate action may be taken to procure all parachutes and parachute

---

1. 503d turnover in stock of 15,600 personnel assemblies, 4,200 cargo assemblies. After Corregidor, on hand 3,000 personnel assemblies, 300 cargo assemblies.

equipment necessary for the next operation. It is most important that a complete replacement of equipment be available at all times. This is not to be taken lightly. Figure 100% loss on an airborne Operation. And finally, but not least in importance, be vigilant at all times, cause frequent inspections of the unit, and above all supervise closely--every phase of work."<sup>1</sup>

- 
1. Information obtained from Captain Elden Campbell, Prcht. Maint. Officer, 503d Prcht Inf.

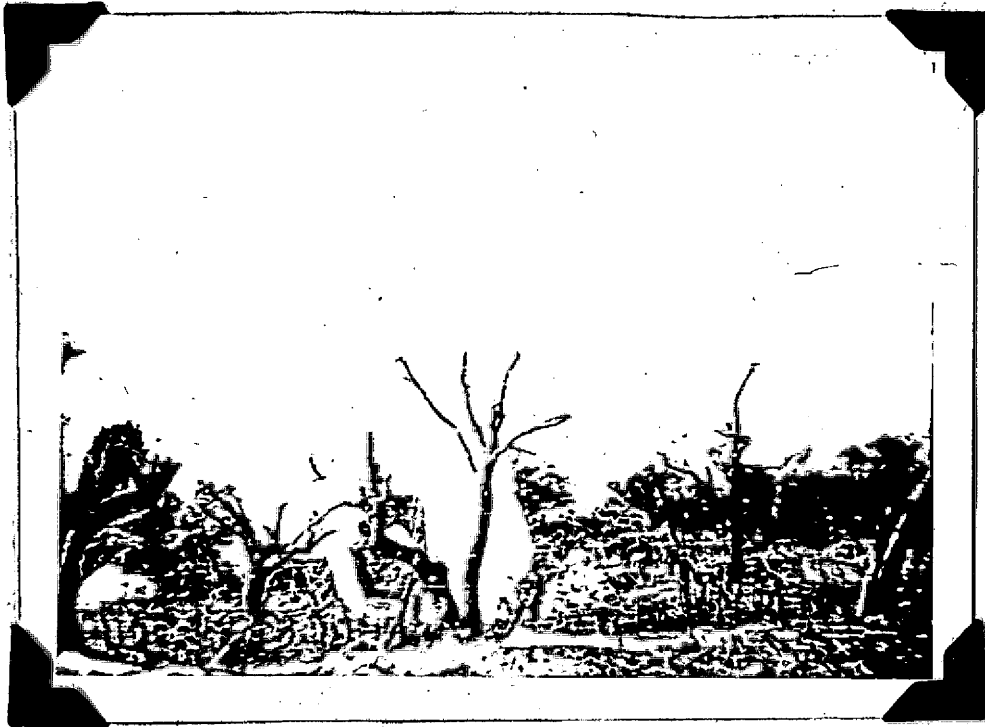




THE DZ's WERE SMALL AND THE CLIFFS STEEP --- SOME GOT WET



"A" FIELD---A BIT ROUGH

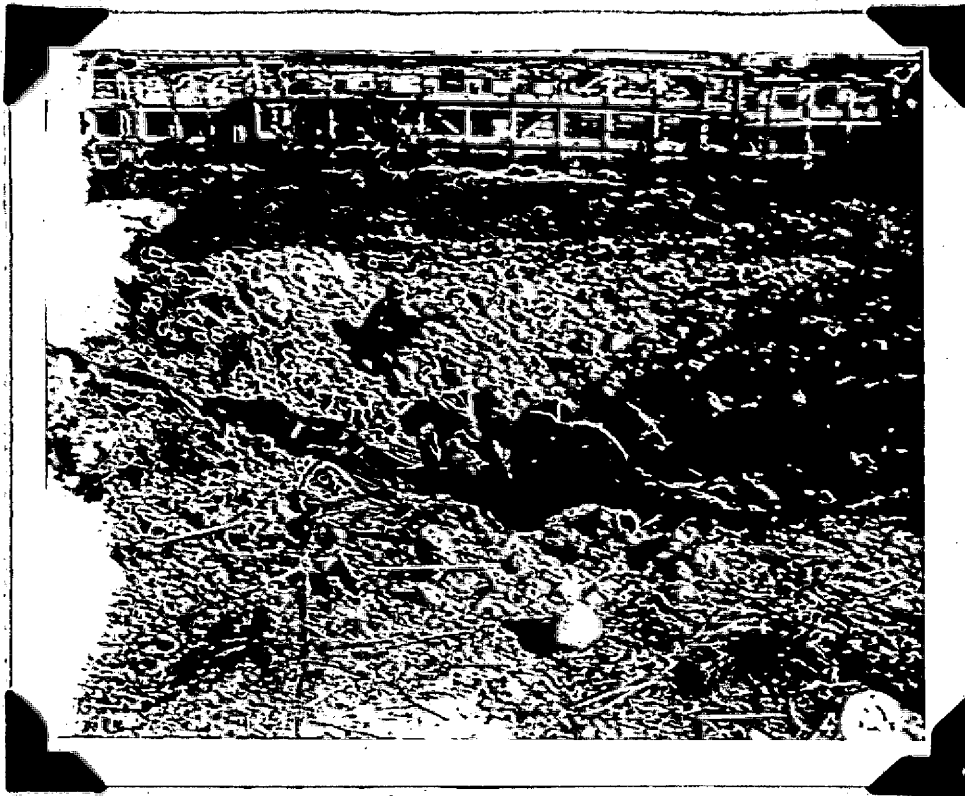


"B" FIELD---NO DIFFERENT





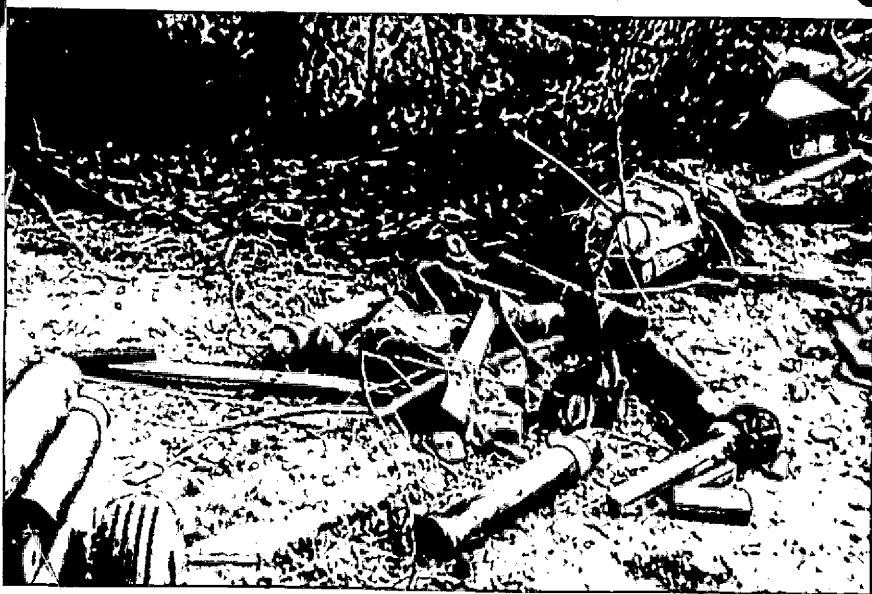
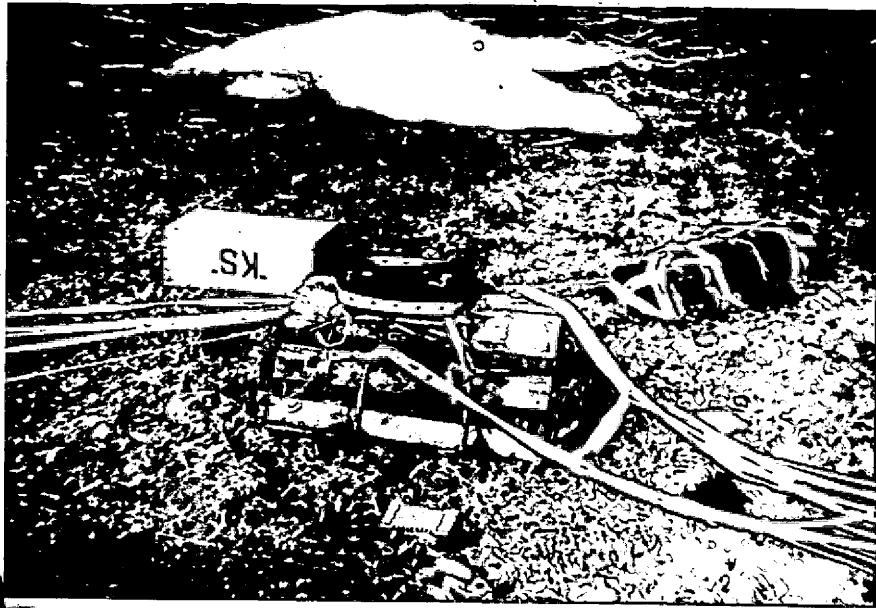
SOME HAD READY-MADE FOX HOLES -----



AND SOME HAD AN EMPTY SWIMMING POOL



RESUPPLY BY AIR --- "KS" RATIONS DROPPED FREE



SOME HAD A ROUGH LANDING