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ARMOR IN OPERATION FORAGER

A RESEARCH REPORT PREPARED

BY

COMMITTEE 8, OFFICERS ADVANCED COURSE

THE ARMORED SCHOOL

1948 - 1949

MAJOR RAYMOND T. CHAPMAN

MAJOR WILLIAM L. BLAKE

MAJOR EDWARD W. MARKEY

MAJOR LESTER B. JOHNSON

CAPTAIN JOHN R. BARCLAY

CAPTAIN JOHN R. MITCHELL

CAPTAIN WILSON N. BOYLES

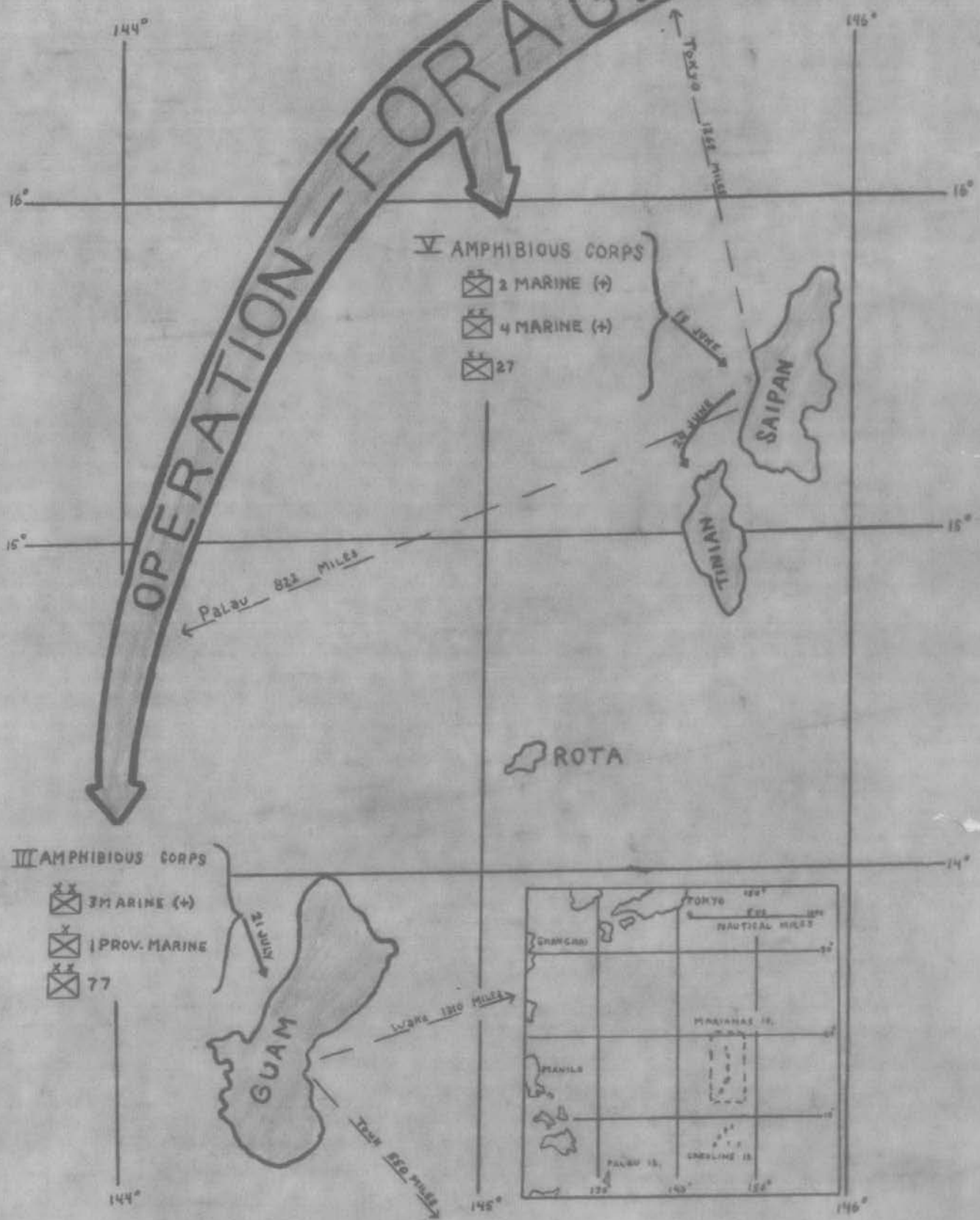
CAPTAIN RICHARD D. HEALY

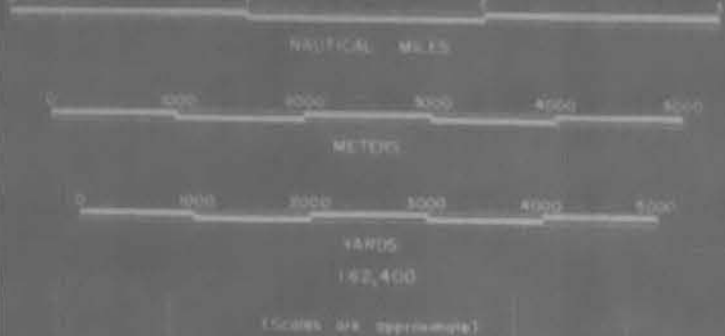
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FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY

MAY 1949

ARMOR IN OPERATION FORAGER





SAIPAN ISLAND
MARIANAS GROUP

PRINCIPAL ROAD ————
OTHER ROAD - - - - -
TRAIL

RAILROADS ————
UNIMPROVED AIRFIELD ————
AIRFIELD ————

HEIGHT
Feet - 1000

FIG 1

P R E F A C E

The purpose of this study is to collect all available facts pertaining to the use of Armor in Operation FORAGER, to determine and compare the techniques involved in the detailed planning, training, logistical support and subsequent execution of these plans. This report will be a discussion of armored support of Infantry units in island warfare with particular emphasis on examples of deviation from established principles. These island assaults under study are primarily Marine Corps operations. Marine armored units were employed alongside separate armored units of the Army. Even though this study is concerned particularly with the role of Army armored units it will be necessary to present in lesser detail the picture of Marine participation in order to set forth the role of Army armor in true perspective. The data on which this study is based was obtained from personnel having firsthand knowledge of the operations, from after action reports and from publications of individual authorities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On 15 June 1944, nine days after Allied Forces had landed in NORWANDY, a seaborne assault force landed on SAIPAN ISLAND, MARIANAS GROUP, bringing American Forces 1,100 miles closer to the Japanese homeland. What were the considerations affecting the decision of the High Command which set off this new series of amphibious assaults in the Western Pacific? What roles would armor play in this new operation given the code name FORAGER? A study of the planning for and conduct of the assaults of SAIPAN, TINIAN and GUAM will provide the answer. The purpose of this study is to set forth the techniques employed by commanders of armored units in solving the difficult problem of Armored support of Infantry units in island warfare.

In January 1944, the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, Admiral Nimitz, issued the overall plan for the year, which called for an attack by midsummer on the ISLAND of TRUK, heart of the Japanese defenses in the Pacific. Located in the CENTRAL CAROLINES, TRUK guarded the Southern and Eastern approaches to JAPAN. By the middle of March, however, plans for the assault of TRUK were abandoned. Abandonment of these plans was partially justified after a series of carrier strikes had exposed the vulnerability of this base.

The decision to by-pass Truk was not arrived at overnight. The seizure of the Marshalls and MacArthur's drive along northern New Guinea had effectively flanked that great base; had provided us with bases from which it could be kept neutralized and from which we could mount an attack against it should we so desire. But it had not been cut off from the homeland and its intermediate bases. Troops and supplies still could be poured in.¹

The final determining factors which enabled the high command to select the MARIANAS as the next objective were:

- (1) Truk would be absolutely and irrevocably cut off;
- (2) We would be established firmly in the enemy's intermediate defense line;
- (3) We would have air bases within heavy bomber range of Tokyo itself.²

Hence, the MARIANAS ISLANDS supplanted TRUK as the next objective. Planning for the capture of SAIPAN, TINIAN and GUAM, the key islands in the group, was commenced.

For the over-all task of capturing the MARIANAS (Operation FORAGER) the High Command designated two task forces, the III and V Amphibious Corps.

The chain-of-command was unique and somewhat confusing, although it worked out excellently. The plan called for division of the whole force into two groups under single over-all command: the Northern Group (V Amphibious Corps, Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith) to attack Saipan, and, when the situation warranted, to stage a shore-to-shore assault on Tinian; and the Southern Group (III Amphibious Corps, Major General Roy S. Geiger) to attack Guam. The Marine Corps at this time had no echelon in the field higher than an amphibious corps; yet here was a situation where two amphibious corps must operate together under a single over-all command which, according to book, simply did not exist. The problem was met by forming two separate staffs within the V Amphibious Corps: one designated "Blue Staff," to assume over-all command, the other, "Red Staff," to command the Northern Group. At the outset, Lieutenant General H. M. Smith assumed the post of Commanding General of each of these staffs, which looked confusing on paper but worked out well enough inasmuch as for some time the Northern Group was the only one in action.³

The Northern Group was given the title Northern Troops and Landing Force (NTLF); similarly, the Southern Group was designated STLF.

The III Amphibious Corps consisted of the 3rd Marine Division and the 1st Marine Brigade; the V Amphibious Corps consisted of the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions and the 27th Infantry Division (Army). In general area reserve was the 77th Infantry Division still in HAWAII.

Details of the operation were worked out during the first two weeks of April at General Smith's headquarters in HAWAII. Amphibious exercises were conducted in the Hawaiian area for the troops of the V Corps, and in the GUADALCANAL area for the III Corps. Both exercises culminated in full scale dress rehearsals in each area.

In broad outline the plan for Operation FORAGER called for V Corps to hit SAIPAN on 15 June. Three days later, and providing all went well on SAIPAN, General Geiger's III Corps was to assault GUAM. This latter attack was postponed on 16 June until further notice. Reason for the delay was to soften the Japanese defenses on GUAM by naval gunfire and to make certain troops of the Southern Force would not be needed to reinforce the SAIPAN operation. Actual date of landing on GUAM was 21 July 1944.

As soon as SAIPAN was secure the V Corps was to assault TINIAN. This assault on TINIAN had the distinction of being the first shore-to-shore operation of the Pacific campaign. It actually was launched on 24 July 1944 by troops which had been relieved by the lessening opposition on SAIPAN. It was supported by naval vessels as well as the artillery emplaced on SAIPAN.

Participation of armored units in Operation FORAGER involved Marine Armor along with separate Armored units of the Army. There were relatively few Army amphibious and land tank battalions which took parts in assaults on these islands. A total of 2 (minus) land tank battalions, 1 amphibious tank battalion and 3 amphibious tractor battalions participated in one or more of the landings.

ARMY

SAIPAN

762nd Tank Bn. (Minus A and C Cos.)
D Co. 766th Tank Bn.
708th Amphibious Tank Bn.
715th Amphibious Tractor Bn.
773rd Amphibious Tractor Bn.
534th Amphibious Tractor Bn.

TINIAN

534th Amphibious Tractor Bn.
715th Amphibious Tractor Bn.
773rd Amphibious Tractor Bn.
708 Amphibious Tank Bn.

GUAM

706 Tank Bn.

Marine Armored units outnumbered Army Armored units in the operation. A total of 2 (plus) land tank battalions, 6 amphibious tractor battalions, and 2 amphibious tank battalions participated.

MARINE

SAIPAN

4th Tank Bn.
2nd Armored Amphibian Bn*
2nd Amphibious Tractor Bn.
5th Amphibious Tractor Bn.
10th Amphibious Tractor Bn.
(Minus Co. A)
Co. C, 11th Amphibious Tractor Bn.

TINIAN

4th Tank Bn.
2nd Armored Amphibian Bn.*
2nd Amphibious Tractor Bn.
5th Amphibious Tractor Bn.
10th Amphibious Tractor Bn.
(Minus Co. A)
Co. C, 11th Amphibious
Tractor Bn.

GUAM

3rd Tank Bn.
Tank Co. (Sep), 4th Marine Regt.
Tank Co. (Sep), 22nd Marine Regt.
1st Armored Amphibian Bn. *
3rd Amphibious Tractor Bn.
4th Amphibious Tractor Bn.
11th Amphibious Tractor Bn. (Minus Co. C)
Co. A, 10th Amphibious Tractor Bn.

* A Marine Amphibious Tank Bn.

Analysis of the above information reveals the ratio of
Army Armor to Marine Armor participating:

<u>TYPE UNIT</u>	<u>ARMY</u>	<u>MARINE</u>
Land Tank Bns.	2 (Minus)	2 (Plus)
Amphibious Tank Bns.	1	2
Amphibious Tractor Bns.	3	6

In order more clearly to understand a study of the role of armor in this operation, a brief recapitulation of the "tools" available to the commander is necessary. The type army tank Battalion employed was composed of a Hq. and Hq. Co., a Service Co., 3 medium tank Cos., one light tank Co. and a medical detachment. The medium tanks used were M4Als mounting 75 mm guns; the light tanks were M5Als mounting 37 mm guns.

An army amphibious tank Bn. consisted of a Hq., Hq., and Service Co., 4 amphibious tank companies and a medical detachment. Principal combat vehicle of the amphibious tank company in this operation was the LVT (A) (See Appendix III, Fig. 12), of which there were 18 in each company. The armament of this vehicle consisted of one 37 mm gun and three cal. .30 machine guns.

The primary means of transporting assault troops and supplies in these landings was the amphibious tractor battalion. This unit was organized into a Hq, Hq and Service Co., three Amphibious tractor companies and a Med. detachment. Workhorse of this unit was the LVT (See Appendix III, Fig. 13), of which there were 39 in each company. Armament consisted of one Cal. .50 and three Cal. .30 machine guns.

These armored units, although few in number, were employed decisively in Operation FORAGER. Let us now turn to a more detailed study of their actions on SAIPAN, TINIAN and GUAM.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

¹Major Frank O. Hough, USMCR, The Island War, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1947), p. 220.

²Ibid, p. 221.

³Ibid, p. 222.

CHAPTER II

ARMOR ON SAIPAN

NTLF (Northern Troops and Landing Forces) composed of the United States V Amphibious Corps, which was made up of the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions, the 27th Infantry Division and attached Army, Navy, and Marine Corps troops, opened the Marianas Campaigns by an assault on the ISLAND OF SAIPAN.¹

In the initial planning it was thought that the campaign would be over in about 10 to 15 days. However, due to the enemy's fanatical defense planned to utilize the rough terrain, the island was not declared secure until 9 July. At this time there were many Japanese troops holding the northern part of the island. Some minor action was necessary against them until the middle of August.

The Target and The Enemy

In order to appreciate the tactical problems involved throughout this operation one must have a working knowledge of the terrain which so highly favored the defense of the fanatic Japanese. The island is irregularly shaped with its long axis running northeast and southwest. It is approximately 12 miles long and 5 miles wide. (See Fig. 1). A mountain ridge extends from MARPI POINT at the northern end of the island southward for about ten miles. There the rugged ridge drops off gradually to the foothills which lead to the southern cliff lined shoreline. Two peninsulas extend eastward, NAFUTAN and KAGMAN. MT.

TAPOTCHAU, the highest point, is 1,555 feet above sea level. It is located approximately in the center of the island. The terrain east of MT. TAPOTCHAU, sloped down abruptly to an open area which was from 600 to 1000 yards in breadth. This area became known as Death Valley to the troops of the 27th Division during their drive to the North. To the east of Death Valley the terrain was rough hills and ridges. The cliffs in the area around MARPI POINT are two to three hundred feet high. The southern part of SAIPAN is mostly plateau bordered by ridges and hills. The best landing beaches are on the western side of the island. MAGICIENN BAY at the southeastern part of the island offered good landing sites but was discarded as an area for landings after initially being chosen. Reefs enclosed and protected the beaches located on the western side. All the principal towns are on the western coast. The three major towns at the time of the landing were CHARAN KANOA, GARAPAN, and TANAPAG. Normally about 28,000 civilians (approximately 90% Japanese) occupied these towns and a few small villages scattered about the island. Primary military objectives were the three airfields on the island: ASLITO AIRFIELD, the largest, was on the southern part of the island; the CHARAN-KANOA strip on the west coast; the third strip at the north end of the island. The road net in the southern part was very good, however, the other roads were very poor except for the coastal roads. One improved road that ran from FLORES POINT across the mountains north of MT TAPATCHAU and then southeast was considered good according to SAIPAN standards.

NTLF intelligence stated that a captured "Outline of the Defensive Plan of the Northern Marianas Force" dated 20 May, 1944, disclosed "apprehension of a red attack at any time," and acknowledgement that "we will complete our field positions by the first ten days in June and thereafter we will rapidly construct permanent positions ... in strategic places and ... complete strong field positions (which will make seizure points a backbone) by the middle of August." ... this same document disclosed that the MARIANAS and BONIN ISLANDS were considered as a final defensive position of the homeland. It is also interesting to note that Vice Admiral Nagumo, Commander of the Japanese Central Pacific Fleet, in one of his orders stated on 14 June, "It is a certainty that the enemy will land in the MARIANAS group either this month or next."² The American forces landed the next day. Considering that we found incomplete fortifications and gun positions, and the proposed constructions that had not been begun it is certain that we gained the strategic surprise.

Army intelligence had estimated that by the end of May 44, that there were about 15,000 troops on SAIPAN with 10,000 each on GUAM and TINIAN. The latest estimate, after it was learned that SAIPAN had been reinforced in addition to survivors from our submarine attacks on troop ships being landed there, raised the number to approximately 30,000. This estimate was later proved to be correct.

Enemy Order Of Battle

The Japanese were pushed back toward their homeland incurring the loss of one island after another. The continual heavy drain on their shipping forced the Nips to organize new type divisions (Island Divisions) for the island defense during the coming period of operation. The division contained three combat teams based generally on the standard infantry regiment. However, one of the teams was strengthened if thought necessary. The total strength of an island division was 13,600 but labor troops were usually added to raise the total to about 17,000.

Several differences existed between the standard and island division. There was no infantry group headquarters in the island division. The sea-transport unit replaced the transport unit of the standard division. Units normally under division control were placed under regimental control. There were no cavalry, reconnaissance, nor tank regiments as in the standard division. The island division did contain a tank company. A regimental tank unit was added if the division was to strengthen one of its combat teams as mentioned above. The division gun company was expanded to include 70 mm howitzers, anti-tank guns, and in some cases 75 mm mountain guns. There were heavy machine guns in each company organic to the island division.³

The following enemy units were known to be on SAIPAN:

- a. 43rd Div. (Inf) - In May 1944, the bulk of this division was identified on SAIPAN.

- b. 47th Independent Mixed Brigade - was activated on SAIPAN in April 1944, from the 1st Expeditionary Unit.
- c. 14th and 17th Independent Artillery Mortar Battalions.
- d. 25th AA Artillery Regiment.
- e. Yokosuka 1st Special Naval Landing Force.
- f. 55th Guard Force.
- g. Added to this group identified units were many small miscellaneous elements such as construction units.

Prior Planning

The Expeditionary Troops operation order was received by NTLF on 26 April and the mission assigned was "To land on, seize, occupy, and defend Saipan; then be prepared to seize TINIAN (an adjacent island about 3 miles to the south) on order."⁴ On 27 April the NTLF issued proposed plans and the divisions and subordinate units then their plans as soon as possible.

In the final plan the southern end of the western shore had been chosen as the landing beaches (See Fig. 2). Sixty five hundred yards of beach was divided into 4 beaches designated as, from north to south, Red Beaches 1, 2, and 3; Green Beaches 1, 2, and 3; Blue Beaches 1 and 2; and Yellow Beaches 1, 2, and 3. No landings were planned on Red 1, Green 3, or Yellow 3. The two Marine Divisions were to land abreast; the Second Division on the left on Red Beaches 2 and 3 and Green Beaches 1 and 2; the Fourth Division on the right on Beaches Blue 1 and 2 and Yellow 1 and 2. Army amphibious units were attached to the two Marine

Divisions. They were to land half of the assault troops on the beaches. 393 Amphibious Tractors (LVTs) and 140 Amphibious Tanks (LVT(A)s) were to form the assault waves. The Army units were to furnish 200 tractors and sixty eight amphibious tanks. 719 amphibious vehicles were to support the entire operation and the Army units were to furnish 367 of this number.

The 27th Infantry Division was to be the floating reserve for the operation and originally planned to be used only if necessary. Attached to the Division was the 762nd Tank Battalion (less Companies A and C) consisting of B Company, medium tanks, and D Company, light tanks, plus D Company of the 766th Tank Battalion. This provisional tank battalion was commanded by Major Aldon M. Hoffman. The 27th was to be prepared to support the Marine Divisions on SAIPAN, to seize TINIAN, or to assist the southern attack force in the seizure and holding of the beachhead of GUAM. The plan received by NTLF directed that SAIPAN was to be seized at all cost even though it necessitated the abandonment of the GUAM operation should it be necessary to use the GUAM troops on SAIPAN. Prior to 12 May, sixteen plans had been developed for the possible use of the division on the three islands, 12 plans pertaining to the SAIPAN operation; 2 for TINIAN, and 2 for GUAM. Before the Division arrived at the target area these plans were augmented by 6 more to meet anticipated conditions...⁵

Rehearsal

The 27th Division and its attached units loaded its first ships on 14 May. The limitation on the number and type ships prevented the division from being combat loaded. Originally the division had intended to take an entire medium tank battalion but the ship problem limited them to taking the Battalion Headquarters, a Service Company and three tank companies. These units composed the 762nd provisional Tank Battalion. Several ships carried part of the ammunition load in order to have the seven days of fire for all units. Each type of supplies was loaded into LSTs so that if certain types of supplies were in demand these ships could be unloaded quickly.

From 18 May through 19 May a rehearsal was held on the east coast of MAUI. The D-Day bombardment was carried out on the island of KAHOO LAWE because MAUI is inhabited. The rehearsal was executed according to schedule. The most emphasized parts of the training was the ship-to-shore control of the LVTs and communications necessary. After the rehearsal all units of the 27th Division and attached units returned to PEARL HARBOR and SCHOFIELD BARRACKS for the final preparation before embarking for the target area.

Enemy Defense Of Saipan

It was necessary to obtain the latest information on the defense of the areas in the vicinity of the proposed landing beaches. "Fleet Marine Forces" troops made landings and limited reconnaissance during the three nights prior to D-Day.⁶

The strategic location of SAIPAN had led our high command to decide to seize SAIPAN at all costs, even if necessary to delay the TINIAN or GUAM operations of Operation FORAGER. In addition to the land defenses on SAIPAN it was possible for the enemy to concentrate an offensive or defensive air force on the island from other island groups. Also they could provide shore base air cover and support for a surface fleet operating within air combat range.⁷

The United States Navy was five times stronger than the Japanese Navy. It could challenge the Japanese with planes and ships even though SAIPAN was only 1500 miles south of TOKYO and was a strong part of the inner-oceanic defense of JAPAN.⁸

The Japanese doctrine considered the shortage of men and fire power the basic problem of the coastal defense. The enemy could choose his landing sites and hit the area in force at his selected time. The defender was forced to dissipate his forces in order to cover all likely landing sites. The Japanese considered two ways to solve this problem. An all out attempt could be made to prevent the landing, or a large mobile reserve could hit the forces after their landings. Also it was planned to combine these two solutions by defending the likely landing areas and by keeping a large mobile reserve to cover the unlikely landing areas.⁹

The Japanese used both types of defense on SAIPAN. It was planned to destroy the landing forces on the southern and eastern shores and TANAPAG HARBOR area by strong shore defenses. A mobile force was held in reserve to counter landings on other beaches.

Also the plan was unique considering they used well emplaced and sited field artillery pieces. However, the Japanese did not have adequate prime movers for rapid displacement of their artillery.¹⁰

We can say in general terms that the planned defenses were very incomplete. Our rapid advance in seizing the Gilberts and Marshalls had antiquated the Japanese timetables.

After action observers reported that not a single anti-aircraft gun or coastal gun position was actually complete. Three 140 mm guns were still loaded on railroad cars. Twenty-three 120 mm dual purpose were in cosmoline. Thirty-six dual purpose guns were in the Garapan Naval Ordnance Depot.

The Japanese had spent much time on dummy installations and camouflage. They were well constructed and emplaced in logical positions. In many cases they deceived photo interpreters and forward observers.

The Japanese used a lot of concrete fortifications on the island. There were very few steel emplacements. However, the amazing consideration is that these fortifications were not camouflaged. They were easy for the naval support to destroy.

Sixteen 105 mm howitzers and thirty 75 mm field pieces were emplaced on high ground and on the reverse slope approximately 3000 yards southeast of the landing beaches. 3,000 yards east of one of the beaches was a battery of 150 mm howitzers sited for direct fire. Thirty-nine 75 mm, eighty 105 mm and

twelve 150 mm pieces were found emplaced on SAIPAN to counter our landings.

To The Target

The movement of the groups to the target was staggered. The 4th Marine Division, Group 1, sailed on 29 May. Group 2, which included elements of the 2nd Marine Division and the NTLF Headquarters sailed on 30 May. The LSTs loaded with LVTs had sailed on the 25th. Accompanying them were the assault elements of the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions. The force gathered at ENIWETOK between 7-10 June. The tractor groups left ENIWETOK 7 June for SAIPAN. The remainder of the force departed 10 June.

Preparatory Fires

During the movement to SAIPAN by the naval striking force, one plane from an enemy reconnaissance flight was shot down. Due to the task force being discovered the combined air and naval strike was moved up one day ahead of schedule. From D-3 through D-Day an intense air raid and naval bombardment was placed on the island. The air strikes on SAIPAN went according to schedule. It was estimated that approximately 150 enemy planes were destroyed. On 15 June, D-Day in the early morning after the air strikes, naval gun fire bombarded the shore and served to drive the enemy back and disperse them initially to enable our troops to move in. The beaches were defended but for the most part the enemy was forced to abandon many strong fortifications and retire to higher ground. Still many small pockets of resistance remained

which created much confusion and havoc among the first waves of the assault troops.

D-Day (15 June 1944)

Early in the morning of D-Day, the transports rendezvoused for the ship-to-shore movement by the landing craft and amphibious tanks. The ships assigned to a diversionary movement moved into position at a point northwest of TANAPAG HARBOR at approximately 0600 hours. They attempted to mislead the enemy to believe that a landing was about to be made in that area. It was believed that this movement would cause the Japanese to move their reserve to meet this threat. The movement did cause the enemy to hold one Infantry Regiment in reserve north of GARAPAN to meet the landing threat.

At about 0700 hours the LVTs were beginning to leave their mother LSTs. The LVTs moved toward the line of Departure which was about 5,000 yards from the shore. The cargo carriers were loaded with assault troops and supplies. The amphibious tanks were to furnish the personnel and cargo vehicles as much protection as possible by firing their weapons as they moved toward the beaches. At 0750 H-Hour, which had previously been planned as 0830 hours, was moved back to 0840. This change was made in order to allow the boat waves to have adequate time in forming.

The landing teams were formed from left to right as follows: 2nd and 3rd Bns, 6th Regt, and the 2nd and 3rd Bns, 8th

Regt, of the 2nd Marine Division; and 2nd and 3rd Bns, 23rd Regt, and 1st and 2nd Bns, 25th Regt, 4th Marine Division. The amphibious tanks made up the first wave forming at the line of departure. Amphibious tractors that followed the tanks were loaded with troops and supplies. Naval guide boats marked the line of departure. The tanks moved on line with them and the succeeding waves fell in behind them.

According to the general plan, naval preparation fires would lift prior to the actual landing on the beaches. Supposedly as the amphibious tanks and troop loaded tractors neared the shore the shock action of a large number of these vehicles would extend the neutralization long enough to permit the first troops to move inland while remaining on the vehicles and secure the initial objectives of high ground. If this could be successful the following assault battalions would have an area in which to land and deploy for the continuation of the attack. Later waves would leave the craft at the beaches and mop up the by passed resistance.

The two amphibious tank and six tractor battalions, Army and Marine, that supported this landing of the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions are listed on page 4, Chapter II. The 773rd Tractor Battalion landed troops behind the tanks on the two Yellow Beaches. Marine Tractor Battalions landed troops on Blue Beaches behind the 708th Battalion tanks. Marine tanks were used on the Red and Green Beaches. A Marine Tractor unit landed troops on the Red Beaches. The 715th Tractor Battalion landed troops on the Green Beaches.

The 534th Tractor Battalion was completely reorganized to meet the requirements of the ground units. It was divided among the four Blue and Yellow Beaches. Mainly it landed reserve troops and artillery reconnaissance parties for the 4th Marine Division and the 27th Infantry Division.

Some of the first LVTs to debark waited at the line of departure for thirty minutes, others had only a few minutes to wait. At 0815 the assault troops in LVTs crossed the line of departure. They were supported by spearheads of amphibious tanks. The tactics of our command, in view of the limited nature of the beach defense, was to effect an amphibious blitzkrieg from the ships offshore to a dominating ridge line one mile inland. Heretofore, in all island invasions, troops had been debarked at the water's edge and left to fight their way inland on foot. "The plan which involved perfect coordination and no little daring would be the first of its kind in the history of amphibious warfare." 11

By 0840 hours all of the assault waves of both divisions were ashore. The first waves met little fire from the enemy but the following waves took a terrific beating from enemy artillery and mortars. As it was originally planned the 4th Division was to capture the town of CHARAN-KANOA and the beaches toward the south to NAFUTAN POINT then go up the eastern half of the island. The 2nd Division was to land on the beaches below GARAPAN and then make a wheeling movement and move up the western half of the island in coordination with the 4th Division. (See Fig. 2).

Within thirty minutes after the first wave hit the shore there were nearly 8,000 troops ashore. It was planned to keep the first waves mounted in the LVTs in the drive to the O-1 line but several units were dumped out on the beach and some forced to leave the vehicles and fight the enemy at hand. Units in the middle of the 4th Division's line were able to reach the O-1 line by 1040 but the CT 23 met trouble on its left flank near CHARIN KIMO. On the right the LT 1/25 (Landing Team, 1st Bn, 25th Regt) was pinned down by heavy enfilading fire. The first waves of the 2nd Division were carried off course and landed north of their zones. It was necessary for the LT 2/8 on the right flank to land on Green Beach 1 instead of Green 2 as originally planned. After the landing it was then necessary for LT 2/8 to turn and attack both to the east and south. It was not until the next day that contact was made between the LT 2/8 and the LT 2/23 of the 4th on the right. Combat Team 6 landed to the left of its planned beaches and was practically on the O-1 line. Both of the reserve regiments of the two divisions came ashore later on D-Day. CT 24 was to protect the left flank of the 4th division. CT 29 reinforced CT 8 by placing one company in line.

Every one of the seven hundred and nineteen vehicles employed in scheduled assault waves were debarked from LSTs D-Day morning. This reflects the competent maintenance and excellent supervision by Amphibian Tractor and Tank Battalions. Approximately 98% of assault LVTs and troops were landed on the beaches in the scheduled assault waves... The time of the waves landing was approximately the time planned... Variations were caused by the irregularities of reef and width of the lagoon. In general the time of landing

of assault troops was as perfect as could have been desired... Much difficulty was experienced in the surf and some LVTs were overturned.¹²

At the end of the first day's operation, the hoped for rapid movement to the objective had not been accomplished. A much needed beachhead had been firmly established. Now it was a matter of moving inland with coordinated attacks supported by the artillery and heavy weapons. It was very difficult to determine the location of the enemy lines. The one thing that the divisions feared most was the inevitable Japanese counterattack. Some of the units had driven as deeply as 3,000 yards earlier in the day but dangerous gaps existed. The troops were pulled back to a maximum penetration of 1500 yards in order to straighten out the lines and establish a strong defense for the night.

Events of 16 June

At 0600 on June 16 (D plus 1) the ships bearing the 27th Division arrived at the transport area, about 20 miles east of SAIPAN. At 1500 the ships anchored off FLORES POINT and TANAPAG HARBOR. Orders had been received during the afternoon for the 165th and 105th Regimental combat teams to land on Blue Beaches above and below CHARAN KANOA. The troops began to debark from the transports at 1748 hours and the first men of the division waded ashore at 2230 hours.¹³

In order to follow the use of Army tank units on SAIPAN first we must understand the plan for the initial use and movement of the 27th Division into the line that had been established

by the two Marine Divisions on D-Day. At approximately 1400 hours the 165th RCT was ordered to land on the beaches at night with the battalions in column. The advanced CP of the division was to accompany this landing. The division's medium artillery was to land at night and be attached to corps artillery. The 165th RCT was to go into the line on the extreme right and be attached to the 4th Marine Division (See Fig. 3). After all of the units of the 27th were landed the 165th would revert to the 27th's control and all three divisions would attack to the east to take ASLITO Airfield. The 165th was carried in landing craft after dark. It took approximately four hours to get the unit to the beach due to the distance and because no previous reconnaissance of the route had been permitted by the landing craft personnel.

Only one platoon of light tanks were unloaded on this day but they were not taken to the beaches until the next day. (17 June).

Events of 17 June

The divisions medium artillery Battalion and two of the Light Battalions had landed and were in place by 0545 hours. Altogether there were twelve battalions of Light and Medium Artillery for corps support. The 165th RCT attacked along with the 4th Marine Division during the morning. By 1015 hours they had moved approximately 1000 yards toward their objective. It was intended that the 165th should take ASLITO Airfield during the day. To continue the report we will deal with the 762nd

provisional Tank Battalion in support of the 27th Infantry Division's various and assorted missions in their part of the battle for SAIPAN.

During this day's action the 165th was supported by the tanks of Lt. Louis Fleck's platoon from D Company, 766th Tank Battalion. Ironically Lt. Fleck was the first Army Tank platoon leader to land on SAIPAN and a few days later the first to be killed in a fight with enemy infantry. Fleck's tanks supported the 1st Battalion with his first action at approximately 0830 hours. A problem which is inherent with an amphibious action is vividly brought out by Fleck's platoon's search for ammunition. At 1630 hours his tanks withdrew from the line to look for ammunition on the beaches. It was not until about 0200 hours the next morning that they found the ammunition for their tanks. Finally they obtained it from a Marine dump on the beach.

During the day another platoon of Company D, 766th Tank Battalion, Lt. Ganio with 3 tanks, came ashore and moved into the line. One of their first missions was to carry ammunition and rations up to the infantry lines. This was typical of the manner in which the infantry was to be supplied throughout the campaign.

The other platoon of Company D, 766th Tank, Lt. Sillex's Platoon, was landed near CHARAN-KANOA during the day. Only three tanks were in this group when they landed. They moved into the lines at dusk and supported the 1st Battalion, 165th. Their first mission was to assist in providing a perimeter defense. During

the day the other two tanks had landed but were unable to reach the platoon before dark. The 105th had been placed in the line on the right of the 165th. The light tanks of Company D, 762nd Tank Battalion landed and moved up to support the 105th. Lt. John Phalon's tank platoon landed on Green Beach 2 at 1300 hours. After aiding the Marines in that area by destroying a machine gun nest he moved south to support the 3rd Battalion, 105th.

Lt. William Dorey, who was probably the outstanding tank unit commander during the battle for SAIPAN, landed his platoon on Green Beach 3 at the northern edge of CHARAN-KANOA. They proceeded to move south to support the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry which was at Yellow Beach south of the town. Three tanks of Lt. Bullock's section were not able to land that evening because of an air raid on the ships in the landing area. Bullock's second section of two tanks joined Dorey's platoon at Yellow Beach.

To summarize the tank support situation at the end of the day: 13 tanks of Company D, 766th Tank Battalion and 11 tanks of Company D, 762nd Tank Battalion were in support of the 105th and 165th RCTs, respectively. This made a total of 24 light tanks ashore.

Enemy air and naval craft approached the task force during the evening of the 17th. The convoy lifted anchor and put out to sea in evasive action. Several tanks of Company D, 762nd Tank Battalion, some troops of the 105th Infantry and the 106th Infantry

together with the Medium tanks of Company B were still aboard the convoy. The 106th Infantry with a medium tank company attached had been scheduled for another landing, possibly on GUAM or TINIAN.

Events Of 18 June

The 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions attacked at 1000 hours with the 27th Division attacking at 1200 hours. The 165th RCT reverted to control of the 27th Infantry Division. With the 27th Division in line the 4th Marine Division would be able to swing and drive to the northeast as soon as the MAGICIENNE BAY area was secured.

During the afternoon the V Corps with three divisions abreast in the line moved forward. The 165th was on the right of the 105th. Company B, 1st Battalion, 105th, assisted in taking the airfield. Company D, 766th Tank Battalion supported the 165th. Company D, 762nd Tank Battalion supported the 105th.

The attack was launched at 1200 hours and Dorey's tanks moved ahead of Company B, 1st Battalion, 105th, across the airfield. It appeared that this sector was undefended and the tanks were practically unopposed. However, artillery fire from NAFUTAN POINT forced the tanks to withdraw to the positions held by Company B, 105th. Finally, about 1600 hours, the tanks and infantry of both the 165th and 105th were able to move in and secure the airfield.

The 165th supported by the tanks continued to make gains during the afternoon but did not reach the **MAGICIENNE BAY**. It was forced to slow down its right flank movement in order to maintain contact with the 105th. Determined resistance prevented the 4th Marine Division from reaching **MAGICIENNE BAY** during the day.

One of the misuses of tanks occurred on this day. Dorey's tanks were returning to the rear for ammunition and supplies. They were stopped and assigned a mission of hunting out a Japanese sniper which the infantry could not locate. This mission certainly interfered with the tankers obtaining ammunition and rest.

Events Of 19 June

The attack continued toward **MAGICIENNE BAY** and **NAFUTAN**. At 0730 hours the 27 th Division moved out in the attack. The 165th left flank was in contact with the 4th Marine Division on the north. The Marines were determined in their attempt to reach the bay. The remaining parts of the Marine line remained approximately the same as that which had existed earlier in the morning. The center of the 165th was able to reach the bay. A gap occurred between the right flank of the 165th and the 105th. This gap was partolled by the 165th. Upon return of the convoy to the island the 106th Infantry was ordered to move ashore on this day and become corps reserve.

Phalon's tank platoon supported the 3rd Battalion, 105th. They spent the day knocking out machine gun nests along the coast in the vicinity of **CAPE OBIAM**. Generally, the advance followed

the railroad which was a few hundred yards in from the coast.

Dorey's tanks were to support the 1st Battalion, 105th in its attack along a ridge south of ASLITO Airfield. During the morning the battalion suffered heavy casualties in repeated attacks to seize the ridge. However, at this time the tanks had not joined this battalion. The tanks of Dorey's platoon had been diverted the previous day from obtaining fuel and ammunition in order to destroy a Japanese sniper. They had been delayed in arriving to support the 1st Battalion because they could not get their needed ammunition until the morning of 19 June.

The attack of the 165th was supported by Lts. Fleck's and Ganio's light tank platoons. East of ASLITO in the vicinity of the railroad tracks several enemy strong points were knocked out by Fleck's tanks. Continually during the day the tanks brought up supplies and evacuated the wounded for the Infantry. "Time and time again throughout the Saipan Campaign the tank did yeoman's service in evacuating infantry wounded and in bringing up food and water when there was no other way that this could be done."¹⁴

During the evening the first medium tanks of Company B, 762nd Tank Battalion came ashore. Lt. Williams' platoon was landed on Yellow Beach 3 below CHARAN-KANOVA by LCTs at about 1615 hours.

Events Of 20 June

At 0700 hours the 27th Division had taken over the zone of the 25th Regiment, 4th Marine Division on the north. The 27th Division was given this zone in order to broaden its division front and to narrow the front for the 4th Marine Division. The 27th Division planned a coordinated attack against NAFUTAN. Two battalions of the 165th and one battalion of the 105th which was attached to the 165th made the main effort. The attack was to jump off at 1200 hours. A 20 minute artillery preparation was to precede the attack. The light tanks supporting were to lead the Infantry. The other battalion of the 165th was to mop up on the shore of MAGICIENNE BAY generally in the area which had been taken over from the 4th Marine Division.

The attack was launched according to schedule with the tanks breaking trail for the infantry. In the attacks during the campaign the tanks were used at times to precede the infantry and at other times to follow. Often the presence of tanks drew heavy artillery and mortar fire. Dorey's tanks led the 3rd Battalion, 165th in the area to the southeast of ASLITO. The platoon was broken into its two organic sections and each supported an infantry company. The tanks forced the Japanese to withdraw from several anti-tank gun positions but in the movement failed to destroy the weapons. Later the next day when we pulled our lines back, the Japanese reoccupied the positions and in later attacks they had to be destroyed. This lesson was bitterly but quickly

learned by both the tankers and infantry. All day 20 June, Japanese defensive fighting was very determined and fanatical. It was difficult for the tankers to spot the positions or any enemy troops. Actually very few Japanese were seen but there was evidence of great numbers in the front lines.

To the south of MAGICIENNE BAY, Lt. Sillex's platoon worked hand-in-glove with the 2nd Battalion, 165th. The fighting was now approaching the base of NAFUTAN (See Fig. 2). The terrain was becoming increasingly difficult for tank movement. Most of this action consisted of flushing the Japanese out of caves. Lt. Fleck's platoon supported the 1st Battalion, 165th Infantry northwest of MAGICIENNE which contained the approaches to DEATH VALLEY, the area slightly south and east of MT. TAPOTCHAU. (See Fig. 1.) At about 1730 hours Lt. Hitchner's platoon of medium tanks were put ashore at the Yellow Beach south of CHARAN-KANOA.

Before continuing the operation of the 27th Division supported by the light tanks in the conquest of NAFUTAN PENINSULA, we should consider the terrain that lay ahead for these units. The passage down the peninsula was a valley enclosed by very steep ground. The high ground on both the left and right was covered with heavy brush which created excellent cover for enemy gun positions. At times during the fighting in this valley, the brush towered above the tank periscopes.

Events Of 21 June

The two Marine Divisions held their ground and prepared for an attack the following morning. The 165th Infantry cleaned out the resistance point on the upper shore of MAGICIENNE BAY. The 27th Infantry Division was to continue its attack on NAFUTAN. The job was given to RCT 105 less the 2nd Battalion which was placed in corps reserve.

Lt. Dorey's platoon supported Company C, 1st Battalion, 105th. The first tank advance was made about 1130 hours. The infantry failed to advance with the tanks. Again the tanks made a movement forward but for some reason the infantry did not advance. At 1600 the infantry advanced with the tanks and secured the objective. It was probably a lack of coordination between the infantry units that limited the earlier advances.

The other light tanks of the battalion were active in furnishing general tank support to the infantry units around MAGICIENNE BAY and to the north. At the close of the day all the army tank units were ashore on SAIPAN.

Lt. General Holland M. Smith in command of the Expeditionary Forces apparently believed that the fighting in the southern part of the island was almost finished. Evidently the situation on NAFUTAN was not understood. It was not clearly recognized by higher headquarters that most of the Japanese had withdrawn to NAFUTAN and had fortified this area in considerable strength. The 27th Infantry Division, less one battalion was ordered to withdraw

from the southern sector to be placed in corps reserve. The 2nd Battalion, 105th was to be placed under Corps control for the mission of cleaning up NAFUTAN POINT. Only Dorey's platoon was out working with 2nd Battalion, 105th.

Events Of 22 June

Due to the 27th Division going in to reserve, most of the tank units were obtaining much needed rest and maintenance on their vehicles. In the attack on the 22 June the two Marine Divisions had almost reached the O-5 line. The tentative plan by the corps for the 23rd was to have the 27th Division take over the center of the line in order to reduce the 4th Marine Division's zone. The 27th Division planned to employ the 106th and 165th.

The warning order arrived giving H hour as 1000. The division order was prepared and disseminated to the troops prior to the receipt of the final corps order which arrived about midnight and prescribed the O-6 line objective. Consequently the division order prescribed a division limited objective. There is reasonable question as to whether or not the corps allowed the division adequate time to prepare for the attack and move its troops and artillery forward to make the main effort.¹⁶

To return to the scene of the action in the rugged NAFUTAN terrain and the combined tank-infantry operation to clear the point. The 2nd Battalion now had a front of approximately 3,000 yards of dense underbrush lousy with Japanese positions in front of them.

It, Dorey's platoon of light tanks continued to help the Infantry in destroying the enemy strong points. It was the practice for the tanks to go ahead of the infantry and knock

down the tall brush. Then they would halt and wait for the infantry to move up to them before continuing.

Events Of 23 June

Continuing down the NAFUTAN VALLEY at first appeared likely to be a very easy operation. On this day Dorey took his platoon on a raid down the entire length of the peninsula. They fired into the brush along both sides of the valley. Initially Dorey had begun the run in order to investigate a source of firing which appeared to be friendly. Later it was found that the road down the valley was heavily mined but the tanks fortunately did not detonate any of them. Probably this was because that the enemy used improvised mines and detonators. During this raid Japanese actually came out of their positions and climbed upon the lead tanks but were shot off by the other tanks in the column. Heavy enemy mortar fire and lack of accompanying infantry forced the tankers to withdraw up the valley. After the first raid the tanks supported Company F and destroyed a machine gun position which the infantry could not reach without suffering heavy losses. The infantry had suffered seven casualties in trying to knock out the gun. The platoon of tanks for a second time made a similar raid into the enemy position down the length of the valley. Actually the tanks were penetrating the strong defensive positions of the enemy. After the infantry moved down the valley they counted several hundred enemy dead.

The tank action on this day was outstanding. It was daring but it was well planned, and the tanks had lady fortune on their side. It was a dangerous operation. The tanks were on the very heart of the enemy stronghold, surrounded on all sides by numerous hostile troops, subject to heavy mortar and anti-tank fire as well as equally grave dangers posed by mines and Molotov Cocktails grenades. The tanks were so far in front of the Infantry that they could not have received help from them.¹⁷

Turning our attention back north to the action in the vicinity of DEATH VALLEY the 4th Marine Division was guiding the 27th Infantry units into the line. On 22 June, the 165th closed in its assembly area; the 106th had arrived in its assigned area on the 21st. This early arrival allowed the 106th adequate time for reconnaissance but undoubtedly the 165th did not have time to make a thorough daylight reconnaissance. During the movement to the line of departure from the assembly area the 165th took the wrong road and was following the 106th.

The tank-infantry action during the 27th Division's drive up the middle of the island was probably the toughest fighting of the campaign. The terrain was very difficult in their zone.

During the day the infantry was not able to make much progress in the attack. It was evident from the enemy resistance that the 27th Division was hitting at his well established main line of resistance. In this attack Lt. Fleck's light tank platoon was attached to Company A, 1st Battalion, 165th Infantry. The tanks went out in front of the infantry to investigate enemy machine gun positions along the road. These positions were very effective in holding up the infantry advance. Lt. Fleck moved out to reconnoiter

the terrain to the front while he dispatched his second section to destroy the machine guns. Fleck's tank moved deeply into enemy territory well ahead of friendly infantry and was easily destroyed by a Jap ambush. All but one crew member were killed.¹⁸

During the night the tanks helped the infantry consolidate and hold their positions. The enemy continued throughout the night to make small but fierce counter attacks in each regimental zone.

Events Of 24 June

Corps order for operations was essentially a continuation of the attack of 23 June. The 27th Infantry Division was to make the main attack on its left over very difficult terrain. The Japanese defended the high ground. The ground between the 106th right and 165th left flank was fairly open and covered by Japanese machine gun and mortar fire.

Lt. Dudley Williams' platoon of medium tanks saw its first day of action while supporting the 165th. During the day most of its action was in the general area of Lt. Fleck's ambush of the day before. Somehow the tanks following the infantry at this particular time lost contact with them. Williams' first section of three tanks were ambushed and only the courageous action and excellent gunning of the other tanks behind Williams saved him from the same fate.

The 2nd Battalion, 165th, also had the support of the light tanks of Lt. Ganio's platoon but in reality they spent most of the morning searching for Fleck's knocked out tank. During

the afternoon he aided the battalion in repelling an expected counter-attack. Lt. Sillex's platoon supported the 1st Battalion, 165th but this support amounted to evacuating wounded.

At the entrance to DEATH VALLEY, so aptly named by the 27th, the 106th was meeting tough resistance. Lt. Hitchner's and Lt. Lansford's platoons of medium tanks were supporting the 106th in its drive into the valley. Hitchner supported Company K. Lansford supported Company L and was given the job of clearing out some Japanese positions along the cliffs at the left of the entrance to DEATH VALLEY. After a full day's action only two tanks of the two platoons were left fit for combat as a result of enemy action and much needed tank maintenance. These two tanks stayed in the line that night to aid the infantry.

Not to forget NAFUTAN, Dorey's platoon continued to support the 2nd Battalion, 105th during the operation. Companies F and G were on the line. Very close cooperation between the tanks and infantry enabled the tanks to destroy several enemy gun positions. The infantry pointed out these positions with tracers. Lt. Bullock's first section of three tanks came up in the evening to replace Lt. Dorey's first section. This arrangement of relief was to enable the tanks to receive maintenance. The rough coral wore a set of tracks down to the pins in a couple of days. It had been planned by Dorey to retrack one tank a day, but time was not available.

Events Of 25 June

In the drive to the north the attack was a continuation of the previous day's advance. The 2nd Marine Division captured MT. TAPOTCHAU after 10 days of difficult fighting. The 4th Marine Division on the right finished cleaning up and securing most of KAGMAN PENINSULA. The 27th Division found the movement forward very difficult. It appeared that the 106th and 165th were hitting the positions that had been organized to oppose our landings on brown and purple beaches. Purple beaches in vicinity of TANAPAG had not been used.

The tank action on this day was not unlike that of the past few days. Sillex's platoon supported the 3rd Battalion, 165th. Lt. Williams with two tanks, supported 2nd Battalion, 106th. Also Lt. Bullock with his light tank platoon supported the 106th. Both platoons were sent forward to find the infantry and made three attempts in vain. The tanks were to have supported the 106th in an attack down the valley past some cliffs that had been holding them up from advancing. This attack was to move out at 1630 hours. The tanks tried a fourth time to find the infantry but were forced to withdraw at 1630 hours by heavy anti-tank gun fire.

The 762nd Tank Battalion Headquarters Company and Headquarters Section of Company D, 766th Tank Battalion arrived on SAIPAN. The battalion headquarters were set up about two thirds of the way across the island toward MAGICIENNE BAY from CHARANKANOA. This late arrival had been caused by the Japanese Naval threat in the First Battle of the PHILLIPINE SEA.

On NAFUTAN PENINSULA the action was very slow. Resistance was stubborn and difficult to overcome. Lt. Phalon's light tank platoon had reported to Lt. Colonel Jensen commanding the 2nd Battalion, 105th Infantry, on the 24th. Phalon had been committed to support Company F. The tanks were given credit for knocking out many Japanese machine gun positions, mortars, and dual purpose guns.

Events Of 26 June

At 0730 hours the three divisions were in the attack again to the north. The 2nd Marine Division made only small gains. Part of the division strengthened its position on MT. TAPOTCHAU. The 4th Marine Division had fairly easy going but failed to reach the objective. The 27th Division in the center of the line, met stubborn enemy resistance and made very little progress. Later in the day, the 165th Infantry on the right part of the 27th Infantry Division, was attached to the 4th Marine Division in order to shift its zone of action slightly to the right to take advantage of the ridge line. It was successful and moved along for awhile with the 4th. Failing to reach O-6 line, the 4th Marine consolidated its position and waited for the other two divisions to pull abreast.

Orders from the 27th Infantry Division placed the 762nd Tank Battalion in division reserve for the attack at H-hour. During the day the tank platoons working either as a unit or sections supported the infantry in their limited advance.

The infantry and tank action continued to attempt to break through the enemy resistance on NAFUTAN. Phalon's platoon of light tanks moved ahead of the infantry in order to flush the Japanese as if they were coveys of quail. Cannister ammunition proved extremely valuable for this type action when attempting to knock out positions placed in the brush or among the coral boulders.

Both Lt. Dorey and Lt. Phalon returned on the evening of the 26th to Battalion Headquarters. That night not a single Japanese was killed by the infantry battalion on the line. However, the remaining Japanese slipped through the lines and created confusion all over the lower third of the island. One small outpost reported to have seen a column of about 300 Japanese pass its position. About 500 Japanese that made the breakthrough were killed during the night by patrols from the 25th Marine Regiment in reserve in vicinity ASLITO over the lower third of the island.

Events Of 27 June

The attack continued with the three divisions abreast. The 4th was late in moving out but met very little resistance and advanced 2,000 yards to the O-6 line by 1630 hours. The 165th had not made so much advance so the 4th stopped. It was necessary for the 4th to defend a 2,000 yard front as well as a 2,500 yard flank between them and the 165th. The 2nd Marine and 27th Divisions made practically no advance on their fronts.

The tank battalion had supported the attack at 0530 hours. Three platoons of Company D, 766th, supported 165th in its action with the 4th Marine Division. Two platoons of medium tanks, Company B, 762nd, and two platoons Company D, 762nd, were attached to 106th.

The platoon of light tanks supporting the 165th on the left moved out to the front during the advance. They received heavy anti-tank fire but only one tank was lost. Lt. Sillex's tanks supported the battalion on the right next to 4th Marine but met very little opposition.

The light and medium tanks supporting the 106th ran into considerable anti-tank fire. One light tank and one medium tank were hit and knocked out. Three medium tanks threw tracks and could not be repaired on the spot because of the intense enemy small arms fire. One medium tank was overturned. The area at the upper end of DEATH VALLEY was fairly open. In this area the 3rd Battalion of the 106th was stopped by fire from well concealed positions. The tanks were sent up and the firing ceased. However, when the tankers dismounted to get a better look for the positions, the Japanese opened up with everything in the book. Invariably the Japanese would fire on a tanker whenever he would show himself, whereas, many times they would hold their fire against the infantry.

The infantry and tanks were able to sweep down NAFUTAN PENINSULA to the point. There was no opposition and it appeared that all the enemy that had been able to walk had joined in the

break through of the night before. Those that were wounded or unable to make the break through had committed suicide.

Events Of 28 June

The fighting was against many unseen and unknown Japanese positions. Only small gains were made by the 2nd Marine Division and 27th Infantry Division. The 4th Marine continued to improve its holding positions and patrolled a 1000 yards to the front without meeting any strong positions or resistance.

The 27th Division was able to advance only a few hundred yards. The drives of the 106th and 165th were reinforced by tanks. The tanks as usual, arrived at the infantry command post at about 0530 hours for their assignments and in many cases to be led to the infantry front line positions. Two platoons of light tanks went to the 106th. Lt. Bullock's platoon of light tanks supported the 165th in their drive. The heaviest fighting again was at the upper end of DEATH VALLEY in TAPOTCHAU GAP. The effort to break through failed with heavy losses, both in infantry and tanks.

The 165th met strong resistance from enemy machine gun and mortar fire. One of the tanks in Bullock's platoon was damaged by anti-tank fire. Several others used up their fuel and had to withdraw. Lt. Hitchner was evacuated for combat fatigue and his platoon commanded by Lt. Gordon McQuain replaced Bullock's platoon and assisted in Bullock's withdrawal. Guffey's platoon and Ganio commanding Fleck's old platoon also reinforced the infantry.¹⁹

Events Of 29 June

The 2nd Marine Division on the left and the 27th Division in the center met heavy resistance over the rough terrain in their zones. Very little ground was taken during this day's action. The 4th Marines on the right side of the line continued to hold and patrol to the front without much opposition.

The 27th, supported by tanks, continued to try to push through the enemy resistance in the TAPOTCHAU GAP and the hills to the northeast. In the 106th zone of advance, Lt. Gordon McQuain's tanks were able to destroy an enemy tank, one field piece and several machine gun positions. Finally his tank struck a mine. It was also hit by a 47 mm shell, however, little damage was done.

Lt. Guffey's tank platoon aided the 2nd Battalion, 106th. In the attempt to destroy an enemy tank, one tank struck a land mine and was immobilized. Later another tank was hit by fire from an anti-tank gun. Also Lt. Sillex's light tank platoon supported the 2nd Battalion. They met fairly light resistance early in the attack but later in the afternoon heavy mortar fire forced them to withdraw and to give up the hard won position along CHARAN-DANSHI MT.

Lt. Lansford's platoon of medium tanks supported the 2nd Battalion, 165th during the day, and helped the infantry take several strongly fortified positions among caves.

Events Of 30 June

The over-all picture of the action is about identical to the action that occurred on the preceding two days. The two divisions on the left were making very little progress. Although this slow movement would indicate to the reader that very little action took place it was a much different picture to the tankers and infantry in the 27th Division.

"June 30 is a date that all army tank men who were on SAIPAN will long remember. On that date they suffered their greatest loss in killed and wounded of any single day during the entire operation."²⁰

Since the 165th had not been able to keep up with the left flank of the 4th Marine Division on the right the gap still existed. Lt. Ganio's platoon of light tanks helped Company K, 165th, to establish contact with the Marines. During the day, Captain Ward, Company B, Company Commander, came up to the 3rd Battalion with water and rations. Meanwhile Ganio lost two tanks from anti-tank gun fire. Captain Ward with a platoon of medium tanks aided in an attack for the hill, but was driven back by heavy anti-tank gun fire after losing a tank.

Lt. Williams worked with the 3rd Battalion, 105th, which was committed in the line. Later in the day Lt. Phalon's and Lt. Dorey's platoons helped the 3rd Battalion. Phalon's tanks participated in an attack by Company K, 3rd Battalion during the afternoon but even the heavy tank fire was unable to eliminate

all of the many machine gun positions that the Japanese had emplaced utilizing the concealment of the heavy foliage and cane fields in this area.

Events of 1 July

At last the enemy resistance was crumbling and the attack was moving to the north to the outside of DEATH VALLEY to swing slightly to the northwest toward TANAPAG HARBOR. The 4th Marine Division met very little resistance in its 1,500 yard drive to the north. The 27th Division met slight resistance initially but was able to advance about 600 yards during the day. The 2nd Marine Division met practically no resistance, but there were some by-passed pockets of enemy resistance that required cleaning out.

From now until the securing of the island the units of the 762nd provisional Tank Battalion had about lost their platoon organizations. Because of the number of tank losses and major maintenance repairs it was necessary to establish a tank pool. This enabled the headquarters to assign tanks to platoon leaders for their assigned daily missions to meet the requests in support of the infantry.

Dorey's and Lansford's tanks worked with the 3rd Battalion, 105th. The action was that action so typical of a day of tank support on SAIPAN which the tankers had been accustomed to expecting and then finding.

Ganio and Guffey with their assigned tanks aided the 1st Battalion 106th in evacuating wounded. Later Guffey was given the mission of helping the battalion take a small hill. In the afternoon Guffey was ordered to accompany the infantry battalion in an advance. Guffey protested that the tanks were not in condition to accomplish the mission due to maintenance difficulties. The attack was made and two tanks were lost from anti-tank gun fire.

Captain Ward helped the 2nd Battalion, 106th during the morning. In the afternoon he supported the 1st Battalion, 106th. To jump from support of one unit to another was not uncommon.

Events Of 2 July

The 2nd Marine Division in its advance toward TANAPAG HARBOR was running into more difficulty from isolated pockets which were composed of some very deliberate strong points. The division was approaching GARAPAN. The 27th Division had better luck than they had experienced for the past few days. The 4th Marine Division continued its attack against practically no opposition probably limited only by the slow progress of the two divisions on its left which were having to overcome stubborn enemy resistance.

Ganio and Sillex with groups of light tanks supported the 3rd Battalion, 165th, in an advance of 600 yards northeast of CHARAN-DANSHI. This was a very difficult and almost impossible area for tank operation.

Events Of 3 July

The 2nd Marine Division had taken GARAPAN and was now driving into TANAPAG HARBOR. The 27th Division was swinging around and now overlooking TANAPAG HARBOR. The 4th Marine Division was continuing its drive straight to the north.

The action was really soft for the tankers compared to the past days of fighting. At hand was the mission to continue the advance in support of the infantry in order to crush the final Japanese resistance. The survivors occupied positions in the ravines leading down to the coastal plains around TANAPAG.

Captain Ward's tanks supported the 1st Battalion, 106th, along with Lt. Bullock's tanks. Probably Captain Ward's tanks saw more action than any others on this day. Due to the platoons of his company, operating over a wide front with different units there was little work that he, as a company commander, could do. Therefore, Ward took turns along with his platoon leaders in taking out platoons to support the infantry action. This action of Ward's greatly helped the morale of his unit.²¹

Events Of 4 July

By the end of this day the 2nd Marine Division completed its hard drive and now held GARAPAN and TANAPAG HARBOR. The 27th Division had moved into FLORES POINT and reached the beach. The 4th Marine Division had completed a 3500 yard drive in three days. The front lines formed a salient into the enemy lines with the 4th Marine Division holding the greater part of the line.

The zones of the 2nd Marine and 27th Divisions had petered out into the sea. (See Fig. 3)

In the drive for FLORES POINT there was a coordinated attack launched at 1300 hours. The 2nd Marine Division on the left, the 1st Battalion, 106th in the center, and the 2nd Battalion, 106th on the right moved according to schedule. Phalon's, Dorey's and Lansford's tank units supported the attack by preceding the infantry. Only slight resistance was encountered.

Events of 5 July

The forces were shaping up for the final drive to the north. The 2nd Marine Division was pulled from the line and assembled in a bivouac near GARAPAN. Preparation for their action on TINIAN was their next mission. The 4th Marine Division and 27th Infantry Division were continuing the attack to the north.

The boundary which had divided the northern half equally among the two divisions for the advance was now changed. The 4th Marine boundary was projecting the left flank to the west coast to a point about half way between FLORES POINT and MARPI POINT. (See Fig. 2). This was done so that some of the enemy might be cut off and left in a pocket. If successful, this action would block those in front of the 27th Infantry zone of advance. The advance of the 4th Marines during the next few days was fairly easy. However, the 105th of the 27th Division was advancing up the plain into the strong enemy resistance. This fanatical opposition caused a slow advance for that flank. The 165th on the

right flank advancing up the higher ground was making the division's main advance but hit stubborn resistance.

Events Of 6 July

On the 6th it was planned for Lansford's medium tanks to work with the 1st Battalion, 105th. Lt. Williams, Lt. Ganio and Lt. Dorey supported the 2nd Battalion, 105th. Captain Ward with medium tanks was to go to the 1st Battalion, 165th Infantry. However, it had now become normal for plans to be changed at the last minute due to unexpected Japanese actions and strong unknown positions that were encountered after the attacks jumped off.

The 105th was advancing up the coastal plain. This area was heavily mined and defended with a series of networks of dug-outs and trenches. These had been constructed to meet our landing had it come in the likely TANAPAG HARBOR area. There was a good coastal road but the area off the road in many places presented marshy terrain if the tanks attempted to cross.

On the morning of 6 July, Williams' tanks had supported 2nd Battalion, 105th. The tanks were given the mission to advance down the railroad track near a prominent road junction. The attack began at 0715 hours. After advancing for about 15 minutes the tankers found themselves in a mine field. Strong anti-tank fire covering the minefield stopped the advance. The infantry could not advance because of the machine gun fire well placed on this area. The tanks had to withdraw.

Captain Ward's medium tanks supported Company A, 165th. During the day the resistance became very stubborn. The platoon was caught in an enemy pocket, lost 2 tanks; several men were wounded. Many courageous acts were performed by the tankers while evacuating the wounded tank crews.

At the end of the day's fighting on the 6th the front line of the 27th Division ran from the coast at a spot a mile north of TANAPAG HARBOR eastward to the hills. The 105th was along the coast. There was a gap in the line to the east between the 105th and 165th. The 165th was occupying the high ground for their defense. The gap in the line was along the eastern sector of the plain just short of the sloping ground leading up to the 165th. The 106th was in reserve back along the coast.

Events Of 7 July

At 0445 hours, the 24th Regiment of the 4th Marine Division received a BANZAI attack but disposed of it killing about 400 Japanese before they could break through the line. During the night the 105th had been hit with a small counterattack but easily repulsed it. However, at about 0510 hours the 105th which had pushed the line about a half mile ahead of the 165th received the main effort of an all out do or die Japanese BANZAI charge in the area extending from MATULSKA to TANAPAG HARBOR. There were 5000 screaming and shouting Japanese crazed with sake and using anything possible for a weapon. This attack overran the 1st and 2nd Battalions in about 25 minutes and then drove down the coast to the rear.

The tanks had been withdrawn to the rear after the end of the day's fighting on the 6th for re-supply. At 0530 hours the tank liaison officer at the 27th Division headquarters notified the tank battalion headquarters about the breakthrough. This was the first information that the tankers had received regarding the situation at the front.

Plans had been made the evening before to send three tank platoons to the infantry early in order that they could get out to the different units before their attacks began. So when the call came to the tank battalion headquarters the tank platoons were ready. Lt. Guffey and Lt. Phalon with light tanks and Lt. Lansford with medium tanks were moving to the 105th CP at about 0545 hours.

The tanks were given the mission of driving through to the 1st and 2nd Battalions which had been overrun during the night. Nothing was known about the condition of the unit or their dispositions at this time. In the ensuing action several tanks were lost but hundreds of the "saked-up" Japanese were killed.

In the advance forward the woods ahead of the tanks were filled with Japanese on the move. This was explained to Colonel Bishop, the Regimental Commander, by the tank liaison officer, Lt. Spears, but it was so necessary to reach the cut-off infantry that the tanks were ordered to go through regardless. As the tanks advanced they did not fire because in the hazy light at this hour of the early morning the crews could not tell the difference between the enemy and American soldiers and they were afraid of

shooting up the cut-off battalions.

One tank in Guffey's platoon lost a track from a Japanese placed magnetic mine. Another tank ran off the road and bellied up. When the Japanese saw the golden opportunity to get the bellied tank that was out of action a hundred Japanese led by several officers headed for it. The two tanks that had accompanied the disabled tank had been forced to withdraw. Only the arrival of Lt. Lansford's four medium tanks on the scene saved the tank and crew. Lansford's platoon destroyed the rest of the Japanese that the light tank crew could not see. This type of fighting continued throughout the day.

Repeated attempts were made to reach the trapped infantry battalions during the morning but with no success. Finally about 1500 hours they made contact with the infantry. Lansford's platoon finally reached the surrounded battalions but did not stay long. The infantry could not or would not follow them out. During the action of the afternoon the tanks escaped from several almost tragic situations but suffered several casualties among the crews. The 105th lost 406 men that were killed and 512 men that were wounded. Practically the entire two battalions were wiped out. Later in the afternoon Lansford's and Phalon's tanks were sent to the support of the 106th which had been committed. When the tanks withdrew about 1730 hours and returned to the regimental CP the men learned that they would have to remain at the front during the night. The line extended from the beach for

about 500 yards east to the edge of the hills. The tanks were placed with the 1st and 2nd Battalions in the line with only 50 yards between each tank. Ten tanks stayed in the line throughout the night.

Events Of 8 July

At about 0400 there were hundreds of Japanese still moving about but the expected counter-attack had not materialized during the night. During the day all available tanks were in the front lines. Many Japanese were killed, however, not as many as the day before. It appeared that the Japanese showed themselves desirous of being killed. Many were observed taking their own lives. The BANZAI cry of "Seven lives for our Country" had backfired on the Japs.

The 2nd Marine Division started relieving the 27th Infantry Division about 1000 hours. All the troops except the 165th Infantry was to be relieved as of this date. All the tanks had withdrawn by 1400 hours and returned to the tank battalion CP by Division order.

Events Of 9 July - 30 July

On 9 July General Holland M. Smith declared SAIPAN secure. The battle for the island was officially over but much fighting and heavy mopping up remained to be done in the northern part. During this period the tanks were given the much needed maintenance. The units were rested and outfitted as

best as possible. One medium tank and three light tanks were retrieved from the battlefield and repaired. On 30 June the 27th Infantry Division, minus 165th Infantry, which had been pulled out of the line for intended operation on TINIAN, but not needed there, was given the mission of cleaning up on the northern part of the island. Two companies of the 762nd Tank Battalion were to support the division.

Events of 31 July - 5 August

In the succeeding days to 5 August most of the tank units saw action in the mop up. However, this action was easy compared to that of the preceding days of the campaign. At 1200 hours, 5 August, the tank battalion was released from the division and told that it would load and leave SAIPAN that day or the next. All vehicles were loaded that night and early the next morning aboard LSTs and the USS Kenmore. They bade farewell to the misery of SAIPAN at 1730 hours but carried away unforgettable memories of blood and steel.

Statistics

The 762nd provisional Tank Battalion lost 17 M5 type light tanks and 5 M4 type medium tanks during the campaign. When the 27th Infantry Division went into reserve on the 8th of July there were 15 light and 10 medium tanks available for use. The maintenance personnel were continually retrieving and re-conditioning many tanks lost during the action.

The tank battalion had 18 men killed and 57 men wounded in action. Thirteen men were injured in action. This gives a total of 88 casualties out of the provisional battalion strength of approximately 250 men.

34,300 gallons of gasoline were consumed by the tanks during the campaign.

The ammunition expended during the campaign shows that the light tanks fired much more than the medium tanks. HE and cannister were employed more than any others. Very little smoke was used.

<u>75 mm</u>		<u>37 mm</u>	
HE	2,204	HE	24,000
AP	46	AP	9,000
WP	160	Cannister	18,900
Shrapnell	205		

<u>30 Cal</u>		<u>45 Cal</u>	
Light Machine Gun	3,750,000	Pistol & Submachine Gun	12,900

Summary

SAIPAN was our first strike at the enemy final land perimeter of inner island defense of the Japanese homeland. To lose control of this land mass was a great blow to the Japanese military and government high level planners.

Our move to the target area in the large convoy supported by a strong armada of U. S. Navy was inviting the Japanese Imperial

Fleet to its "coup de grace." At this time the U. S. Navy was at least five times stronger than the fleet forces the Japanese could muster in this area.

The amphibious assault landing on the island was made without incurring more than the usual number of expected problems. The newly conceived tactical plan of supporting the landing assault troops carriers with amphibious tanks integrated into the assault waves proved to have much merit for enabling the troops to get ashore without receiving great amounts of direct fire. In addition, the use of the amphibious tanks to move inland and support the attempt to get a foothold, prior to landing of land tank units, was new in our island warfare conduct but proved to be sound in principle.

The establishing of the beachhead was done in much the same manner as for operation on other island campaigns. It was necessary to commit the corps reserve element, 27th Infantry Division, into the line prior to the time initially thought would be necessary. The land light tank units were placed in the line as quickly as possible to give the infantry increased attacking force.

The push inland against the strong Japanese defensive positions was typical of previous island operations. It was necessary to use the maximum number of troops and infantry that the terrain would permit. Very few reserves were held out after the first few days of the campaign. The drive was slow and

required detailed coordination during the attacks. Often it was necessary for units to slow down and wait for adjacent units to pull abreast and fill the gaps that had developed during the advance. The Japs always sought and used to their advantage any gaps between units on the line.

Small unit action supported by tanks was normal. Often the tank unit integrity was completely lost and each tank would carry out support missions assigned or requested by its accompanying infantry troops. Armor was not used in great quantity during the campaign due to the limitations of shipping space and the terrain of the island. The tanks had to follow the roads or valley flats. This was a great restriction to maneuver, however, the tank mounted cannons and machine guns rendered the infantry support fire power that could not be normally hand carried into these areas. The tanks' shock action was a big factor in helping the infantry gain superiority needed for the attacks of fortified positions such as found throughout the island of SAIPAN.

Conclusions

1. Coordination.

After the invasion of the island of SAIPAN it was again realized that an amphibious landing involves mistakes and mishaps regardless of how thorough or well planned the operation may be. To place the units of "The Queen of Battle" and the supporting tanks on hostile shores requires good communications and super coordination.

2. Supply.

a. If the tanks are to continue the much needed support to the infantry during the attempt to hold and expand the beach-head, ammunition and fuel must be landed early in the operation. This problem was well pointed out on SAIPAN when the tanks had to leave the front lines and look for ammunition in the different supply dumps along the beach.

b. The tanks must be allowed to leave the front lines before dark in order to move back to the rear to resupply with fuel and ammunition. This will permit the tanks to be on the line early in the morning to jump off with the infantry and thus increase their attacking strength and ability in securing the objectives.

3. Technique.

Tanks should not be diverted from a major mission to flush a sniper. This is not an economical use of the fire power that could be available to the attacking infantry troops.

4. Training.

Tank-infantry teams should be allowed to train together prior to combat. This develops mutual respect and knowledge of the limitations and capabilities of both.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

¹ Major James B. Bartholomes, Operations of 773d Amphibious Tractor Battalion (attached to 27th Infantry Division) In Operation on Tanapag Plains, Saipan, 7-8 July 44 (Student monograph, Armored School).

² Campaigns For The Marianas, a monograph prepared by the U. S. Marine Historical Division, p. 5.

³ Japanese Defense Against Amphibious Operations, pamphlet prepared by War Department Military Intelligence Division, (Special Series No. 29, February 45). pp. 31-32.

⁴ Campaign For the Marianas, a monograph prepared by the U. S. Marine Historical Division, p. 2.

⁵ Lt. Col. John Iemp, Observers Report on The Marianas Operation (Forager), dated 11 July 1944. p. 2.

⁶ Statement to writer from U. S. Marine Officer, Major Fenton Durand, Commander 2nd Marine Amphibious Tractor Battalion.

⁷ The Campaigns of The Pacific War, report prepared by the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific) Naval Analysis Division.

⁸ Shugg and DeWeerd, World War II, (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1946) pp. 278-280.

⁹ Japanese Defense Against Amphibious Operations, pamphlet prepared by War Department Military Intelligence Division (Special Series No. 29, February 45). pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Six Marine Corps Correspondents, Uncommon Valor, (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1946). pp. 129-131.

¹² Marianas Phase I (Saipan), LUT Report, report prepared by Headquarters, Northern Troops and Landing Force, dated 26 July 44.

¹³ Captain Roy E. Appleman, Army Tanks In The Battle For Saipan (War Department Historical Section) p. 11.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 19.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 20.

¹⁶ Lt. Col. John Iemp, Observers Report on The Marianas Operation (Forager) dated 11 July 44. p. 15.

¹⁷ Captain Roy E. Appleman, Army Tanks In The Battle For Saipan (War Department Historical Section). p. 52.

¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 43-46.

¹⁹ Statement made to writer by Captain Gordon E. McQuain (1st Lieutenant, medium tank platoon leader, Company B, 762nd Tank Battalion, Saipan).

²⁰ Captain Roy E. Appleman, Army Tanks In The Battle For Saipan (War Department Historical Section). p. 66.

²¹ Statement during interview made to writer by Captain Gordon E. McQuain (1st Lieutenant, medium tank platoon leader, Company B, 762nd Tank Battalion, Saipan).

SAIPAN
PROGRESS OF THE ATTACK



LEGEND

- - - 27 INF DIV
- 2 MAR DIV
- _____ 4 MAR DIV

FIG # 2

SAIPAN
 SHOWING DIVISION BOUNDARIES
 AND PHASE LINES

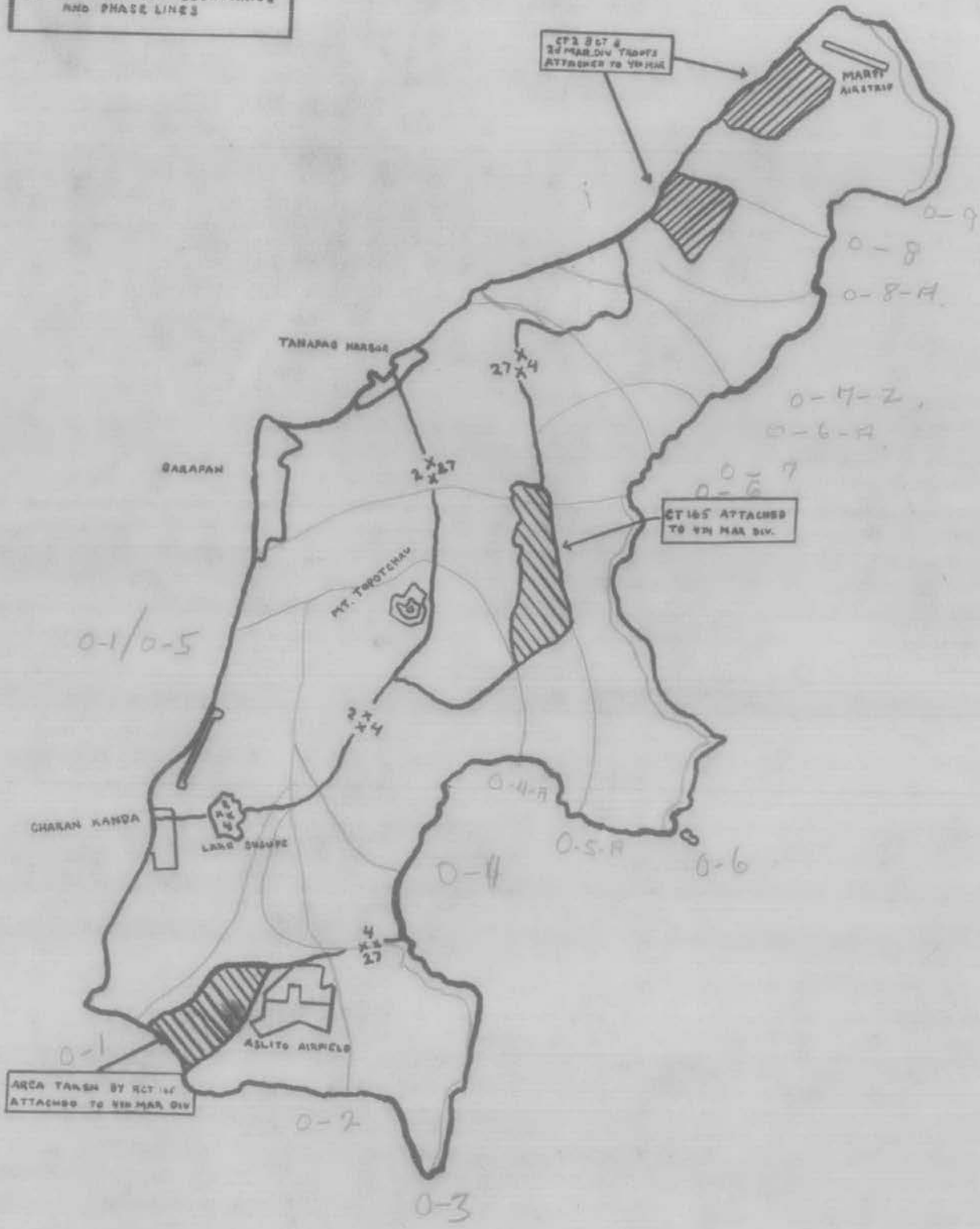


FIG 3

CHAPTER III

ARMOR ON TINIAN

During the planning phase of Operation FORAGER, it had become evident that SAIPAN could never be really secure until TINIAN, which was $2\frac{1}{2}$ to three miles south of SAIPAN, was captured. Moreover, the relatively flat terrain of TINIAN offered one of the great strategic prizes of the MARIANAS Campaign; namely, sites for half a dozen 8,500 foot runways from which B-29s could fly to bomb JAPAN.

Notwithstanding his reduction and defeat on SAIPAN, the Jap continued to strengthen his defenses of TINIAN. He had had five weeks in which to perfect this bastion against the onslaught of the Yankees, while at the same time, he was losing SAIPAN. The morale of the Nips on TINIAN was high as this island, which was part of the present outpost of the Japanese Empire, was to be held at all costs.

This treatise will present the role of the 4th Marine Division tanks on TINIAN, but will not discuss the action of the 2nd Marine Division on this island.

Intelligence (See Fig. 4)

Prior to the invasion of TINIAN, a preliminary beach reconnaissance of the island was made in four phases: (1) a reconnaissance of Yellow Beaches and of Beach White One was made on the night of 10-11 July, and revealed the presence of mines and a relatively high surf present off Yellow Beaches,

but White Beach One was found to be good although very narrow; (2) the reconnaissance of Beach White Two was made the following night, (11-12 July), and determined that the beach was generally suitable, but there were fissures along the edge of the outer reef as well as large boulders, and vertical or undercut limestone cliffs on portions of the beach which furnished obstacles to passage of LVTs; (3) the morning of Jig minus one was used to make a reconnaissance of the reef off TINIAN TOWN; (4) planned demolition work on Beach White Two on the night of Jig minus one with the purpose of destroying boat mines known to exist on the beach and to blast out boulders flanking the beaches were unsuccessful due to a squall scattering the floats loaded with explosives.¹ It is to be noted that all night reconnaissance and night demolition missions were conducted without apparent discovery by the enemy. Such missions were carried out with destroyers standing by to give supporting fires if such became necessary. These missions found that Beach White One and Two were narrow and rough, and had meager exits but that they could be used for the landings. We thus secured information concerning the landing beaches without permitting the enemy to become cognizant of our plans relative to the exact spot of the invasion.

Reconnaissance and captured documents indicated that the landing sites in the vicinity of TINIAN TOWN consisted of fixed defenses. Every small beach in the area was heavily defended by rifle and machine gun emplacements and pill boxes. The beaches were also heavily mined. There was evidence of 70 and 75 mm

howitzer emplacements on the TINIAN TOWN beach with a field of fire covering TINIAN TOWN HARBOR. A covered 75 mm gun position that was located on the cliff south of TINIAN TOWN was sighted to cover Blue Beach, but its field of fire was very limited. It is apparent that the Japs expected us to land in the vicinity of TINIAN TOWN. (See Fig. 4).

Inland, the terrain became rough, being formed of coral outcroppings covered with heavy undergrowth and strewn with coral bundles, and permitted only limited routes of egress from the beaches, which were mere paths or trails. It was noted that the western side of the island slopes gradually toward the shore, a considerable portion of the slope being in the lowland region. A ridge connecting the hills in the northern and southern parts of the island runs close to the eastern shore, making the eastern slopes very steep; gentle ridges radiate from the peaks.² The highest elevation on the island is MT. LASSO which is 564 feet. The lowlands are mostly clear, and planted in sugar cane; the terrain was admirably suited to the use of tanks. An excellent road net was in existence.

Enemy Order Of Battle

The following units of the Japanese Armed Forces participated in the action against the United States on TINIAN:

- a. 50th Infantry Regiment, including three infantry battalions, an artillery battalion, and miscellaneous unit attachments.

- b. 1st Battalion 135th Infantry Regiment, composed of headquarters platoon, three companies, and a battalion mortar platoon. This battalion was attached to the 50th Regiment.
- c. 29th Division Field Hospital Detachment.
- d. Tank Company, 18th Infantry Regiment (12 light model 1935 tanks).
- e. 56th Naval Guard Force. This unit is believed to have had under its jurisdiction the 82nd and 83rd AA Units and the 233rd Construction Unit.
- f. Administrative Command of 1st Air Fleet, Rear Admiral KAKUDA, Commander in Chief.
- g. 523rd Naval Air Group, later known as the 302nd Air Group, consisting of some 600 men.
- h. Parts of the 343rd, 261st Naval Air Groups.
- i. Added to this group of units were many small miscellaneous elements such as airbase and construction units.

The enemy force on TINIAN totaled approximately 9,000 of whom 5,000 were Army and 4,000 Naval personnel.³

Prior Planning

Following the defeat of the Japs on SAIPAN, the plan of the Commanding General, Northern Troops and Landing Forces calling for the 4th Marine Division to invade TINIAN was to be put into operation. The first step was to commence the neutralization of this island with artillery fire of the thirteen battalions of the XXIV Corps Artillery, which could fire on TINIAN from their

positions on the southern tip of SAIPAN; these fires were to be supplemental with naval gunfire and fighter aircraft bombardment. The invasion itself was to be made by the 4th Marine Division, which was to embark in landing craft and LSTs to make the initial landings, while two regiments of the 2nd Marine Division aboard APAs would make a feint in front of the strongly fortified beach at TINIAN TOWN.⁴ Next, the 2nd Marines were to stand off in support and come in when the situation on the beaches warranted, to assist in the drive down the island. As a reserve there was to be the Sixth Marine Regiment on SAIPAN which was to be brought over as soon as LSTs became available; the 27th Infantry Division, also on SAIPAN, was alerted to serve as Corps Reserve should the necessity arise. Immediately after landing on Beach White One and Beach White Two, the 4th Marine Division was to push rapidly inland about 2500 yards to the O-1 line, which included the first high ground that commanded the landing area; preparations were then to be made for an offensive in the direction of MT. LASSO.

The scheme of landing the 4th Marine Division, followed by the 2nd Marine Division and 6th Marine Regiment, contemplated that each division, with its organizational equipment and initial supplies, would be landed in one day. By the end of the third day, a sufficient reserve of ammunition, water and rations could be landed to support the assault operations inland. The principal logistical problem seemed to be the inability to provide the troops with the necessary supplies and motor transportation over the

narrow beaches; on Beach White One, the beach area usable for passage of amphibious tractors and vehicles was about 60 yards in width, whereas Beach White Two was 160 yards in width but only the center section of some 65 yards was traversable. In order to alleviate this situation, detailed plans were made to provide various expedients to assure landing of at least some of the tanks during the early assault phase when their support would be needed most urgently. LCTs were to transport the tanks because this type craft could beach on rough edged reefs which were definite obstacles for LCMs. It was planned to load one LCT in each group assigned to the assault Regimental Combat Teams with engineer equipment, and bulldozers, so that this equipment could be used to make a passage for the tanks. To further expedite the logistical situation, the Navy planned to construct pontoon causeways on the beaches within 24 hours of landing; in addition, nine special ramps were to be placed in the low ledge area of the landing beaches for the landing of vehicles.⁵

To transport the invasion forces from SAIPAN to TINIAN, a provisional LVT Group and two amphibious truck companies (DUKWs) were attached to the 4th Marine Division for the initial landing attack, (See Tables 1 and 2).

TABLE 1
CRAFT WITHIN A PROVISIONAL LVT GROUP

LSTs - 37	LSDs - 2	LCTs - 15
LCMs - 88	LCVPs - 100	LVT (A)s - 88
LVT (2)s & (4)s - 450		DUKWs - 132

TABLE 2
NUMBER AND TYPE CRAFT REQUIRED TO TRANSPORT A RCT

LSDs - 1	LSTs - 10	LCTs - 4
LCMs - 18	LCVPs - 30	
Vehicles -		
LVT (2)s - 92	LVT (3)s - 44	
LVT (A)s - 34		

The above allocation provided for the embarkation, and preloading in LVTs or DUKWs, of all combat elements of the division plus certain essential support units. Four LVTs were allocated to assure the landing of essential light vehicles and equipment, such as Jeeps and 37 mm guns. Thirty of the LCMs assigned to the Support Group were to be preloaded with the 2nd Tank Battalion and these were to be embarked in the second trip of the two LSDs. All other craft and vehicles were to be moved on the first trip.⁶

Some of the special problems associated with the landing plans were:

1. The landing of all Battalion Landing Teams of the Assault Regimental Combat Teams had to be on as rigid a time schedule as beach conditions would permit.
2. It was necessary to debark all personnel and equipment of the assault RCTs on the beaches without delay, thereby keeping the beaches free for the receipt of more supplies and troops.
3. The landing of supporting tanks and half tracks had to be made at the earliest possible time consistent with a reasonable assurance of getting them ashore and inland without blocking the beach areas.
4. The landing of the four 75 mm Pack Howitzer Battalions to afford direct support for the assault inland was to be made as soon as a minimum beachhead had been secured so as to permit this deployment.
5. Positive measures had to be taken to prevent congestion on the beaches and reef from stranded landing craft or vehicles; a means of doing this would be to land only such type vehicles as could land and traverse the beach successfully.⁷

From the tactical factors involved, and the inherent natural difficulties of the landing area, it was apparent that the success of the operation would depend on the rapid landing of all essential combatant personnel and equipment on Jig-Day.

The formation of assault waves was deemed necessary and, accordingly, the three leading BLTs (Less such attachments as tanks, half tracks, which could not be embarked in LVTs) were to be formed in the following manner: the leading battalion landing team that was going in on Beach White One was organized into seven waves; the BLT following it was organized into four additional waves. Each personnel wave consisted of eight LVTs for the units landing on Beach White One, whereas on Beach White Two sixteen LVTs (eight for each BLT) were employed. Eleven waves were to be landed on Beach White One in sixty-five minutes, and the eight waves for Beach White Two were to be landed in forty-eight minutes. This plan gave one personnel LVT for every 25 yards of landing area. According to this arrangement, 3500 assault personnel and their equipment would be placed ashore in about one hour.

The Reserve BLTs of the two assault RCTs were launched preloaded and no transfer from landing craft to LVTs was necessary. This condition made these units available for landings immediately behind the assault echelons if the situation ashore permitted and the plans of the RCTs provided for this contingency. These units were to be formed and ready on their respective lines of departure by H-Hour. All tanks were to be preloaded in LCMs except one company of medium tanks, reinforced by light tank flame throwers which were to be loaded in three LCTs. The thirty tanks of the 2nd Tank Battalion were to be moved to TINIAN in the

second trip of the LSDs. All other tanks were scheduled for movement on the first trip, 36 in the two LSDs, and the remainder directly in LCMs and the three LCTs. Those in the LSDs were to be launched, and together with the others that had moved separately, were to be in designated assembly areas behind their LD by H-Hour, prepared to land on either or both beaches on order. The necessity of landing these units behind the assault BLTs as soon as possible was recognized, but it was also realized that they were the most difficult piece of equipment to land without blocking the beach areas. Detailed plans were made to provide various expedients to assure landing of at least some of the tanks during the early assault phase when their support would be needed most urgently.

The Assault Of The Beaches

The assault landing on TINIAN was supported by a very heavy concentration of shells, bombs and rockets. There were ninety-six 105 mm Howitzers, thirty-six 155 mm Howitzers, and twenty-four 155 mm guns, all of which were emplaced on SAIPAN, contributing to this Hades of TNT. Supplementing these fires were two battleships, one heavy cruiser, and four destroyers, which delivered fire in support of the landings by lying to in assigned stations, close to the beaches and the boat lanes. This artillery and naval gunfire preparation was lifted at 0628 so that the fighter aircraft could bomb and strafe the beaches. The troops were scheduled to land about 0745, 24 July.

In addition to the softening up of the beaches by the artillery, navy, and air strikes, thirty (30) LCIs supported the landings with rocket and 40 mm gunfire. Part of the LCIs led the assault waves to the beaches. The remaining LCIs moved towards the beaches outside the boat lanes and delivered close support fire on the flanks, north and south of the landing area from USHI POINT to FAIBUS POINT. It is interesting to note that only one LCI was hit; sporadic enemy gunfire into the boat lanes was ineffective. To supplement the LCIs, amphibian tanks were used to lead the assault waves to within 300 yards of the shore. Then they pulled to the flanks and supported by fire the landing of the infantry from the landing ships and craft.

The assault plan to land Regimental Combat Team 24 in column of battalions on White Beach One (the northern beach), and the 25th Regimental Combat Team on the larger Beach White Two (with two battalions abreast and the third battalion in support, and RCT 23 in division reserve) was put into effect shortly after 0700 on 24 July 1944.⁸ The leading waves of LVT (A)s maneuvered as planned and the first personnel waves (2d waves) landed simultaneously on both beaches about 0750. This landing of the assault waves was executed with excellent control and precision. The troops immediately debarked and pushed vigorously inland against light resistance to establish a beachhead. All elements of the leading Battalion Landing Teams (BLTs) had completed landing by 0820. There were no LVT casualties on White One and all personnel landed

in good fashion. On Beach White Two, three LVTs were destroyed by mines resulting in some casualties to personnel. The damaged vessels were quickly removed from the beach areas so as not to obstruct the landing of the following units.

While the Assault BLTs were landing, the Reserve BLTs of both Assault RCTs were being formed behind the line of departure and both were ready to land at 0815. By the time the assault BLTs had completed landing, the difficult terrain inland and increased enemy resistance had somewhat slowed the advance. There was some congestion immediately inland from the beaches. However, reports indicated a steady advance was being maintained and the beach conditions remained favorable, so both assault RCTs commenced landing their Reserve BLTs.

All elements of both RCTs were ashore by 1010, and the entire organizations of RCT 24 and 25 were established ashore by 1430 on Jig Day. The four battalions of pack howitzers were landed by 1635 on the first day.⁹ Thus artillery fire support was at hand to soften the points of strong resistance. An excellent beachhead had been established by dark on invasion day.

The light opposition to the landings at Beach White 1 and 2 was undoubtedly due to the destruction of all known dangerous enemy batteries and installations in the vicinity of this area by the artillery, naval gunfire and aerial bombardment that preceded the invasion. It can be stated, however, that the light resistance was due in no small measure to the demonstration in force of a mock

landing that was made at SUNIARRON in the southern part of the island, where most of the defenses were concentrated - this feint was successful in diverting the enemy from making a defense of his northern beaches, namely, Beach White 1 and 2.

Tank Attachments To The Regimental Combat Teams

The Fourth Tank Battalion, Fourth Marine Division, did not fight as a battalion unit in the Battle of SAIPAN. The tactical elements of this organization were assigned as normal regimental combat team attachments, i.e., Company A plus the 1st platoon of "D" (light tank) Company was attached to RCT 25, Company B plus the 2nd platoon of Company D was attached to RCT 24, and the third medium tank company, Company C, plus the third platoon of Company D was attached to RCT 23. Headquarters and Service Company, plus Company D minus detachments was a part of the Division Support Group. All attachments remained in effect until after the island was secured.¹⁰ The action of each tank company and the RCT to which it was attached will be presented as a complete campaign, then the other RCTs and their attached tank companies will likewise be presented.

Tank Employment By Regimental Combat Team 25 (See Fig.5)

Company A, 4th Marine Tank Battalion was launched in 19 LCMs from an LSD during the landing on TIMIAN, so as to arrive at a rendezvous area 1000 yards west of the LST area at H-Hour. The presence of mines and congestion on Beach White Two (See Fig. 4 and Fig. 5) made necessary the landing of but one tank at H plus 3.

It took 45 minutes from the time the LCM reached the coral reef until the tank was on the beach. All tanks of this company were landed one at a time, and it was not until H plus 7½ that the entire company was ashore (approximately 1700) but there had been no loss of tanks in the landing. The tank units were landed on order of the RCT Commander; RCT 25 having landed with 2 BLTs abreast, each Battalion being in a column of companies, earlier in the day. By this time (1700) on Jig Day (Invasion Day) the front lines of RCT 25 had advanced inland approximately 1000 yards with the regimental right flank resting on the west coast and the left flank physically tied in with RCT 24 on the left. In the first tank action on TINIAN, two tanks of Company A's, 3rd platoon, supported the attack of BLT 2-25 to the O-A line. One of these tanks was knocked out of action by rifle fire that pierced its radiators. The attack halted at dusk on the objective. Defensive positions were established for the night; the tanks went into an assembly area that was located about 500 yards inland and between the Assault BLT and the Reserve BLT.

The lines, having been consolidated for the night, RCT 25 settled down to await the expected counter-attack. Enemy artillery fire fell in the sector with monotonous regularity throughout the night. At about 0200 on Jig plus 1, a determined counter-attack was launched in this zone by the Japs who used tanks in support of their infantry. The friendly infantry handled the Nips until dawn when the 2nd platoon of Company A, with its tanks,

led BLT 3/25 in repulsing the counterattack that was already in progress. This platoon also led Company K of BLT 3 to make contact with RCT 24 on its left. Numerous enemy troops were encountered and annihilated by 75 mm and machine gun fire delivered by the tanks. The tank-infantry team of BLT 3 destroyed four of five enemy tanks in this action. The scheme of maneuver for the action, for the remainder of the day, was determined by the precipitous circular cliff line to the immediate front of the RCT. In order to continue the attack successfully, it was necessary to employ all three of the Regimental BLTs. The RCT plan called for the center BLT (2/25) to hold facing the cliff line, containing the enemy to its immediate front. BLT 1/25 relieved BLT 3/25 on the Regimental left prior to 0900 with orders to continue the attack at 1000 around the left of the cliff line to Objective O-1. BLT 3/25 was ordered to attack at King Hour (1000) around the right or western slopes of the cliff and secure O-1. Upon reaching the higher level contact between BLT 1/25 and 3/25 was made mutual.¹¹ After being resupplied, BLT 2/25 was led by the 2nd platoon of Company A to the O-1 line against light resistance. The momentum was retained by the 1st tank platoon leading BLT 1/25 which passed through BLT 3/25's left flank and drove on to the O-1 line. These tanks led the infantry with real gusto and poured a great deal of fire into the caves which were located on the high ground to their right flank. (The two remaining tanks of the third platoon remained in the company's assembly area.) From this position, gun flashes were observed coming from the high ground 900 yards to their front, with the shells hitting 400 yards

to their rear. The tanks immediately went into action and put the enemy guns out of action with their 75 mm fire. Following this action, which took place about 1700, all tanks and personnel returned to the company assembly area by 1845. During the day's operations, the tank company commander and executive officer, along with the reconnaissance personnel with a radio jeep, worked with the two assault BLT commanders. This setup afforded the maximum control and communication between the infantry and tanks.

On Jig plus 2, the 2nd platoon of Company A (tanks) was attached to BLT 3/25, and its first platoon was attached to BLT 1/25. They supported the attack of the battalions to the regimental objective which included MOUNT LASSO, a distance of 1500 yards from the line of departure. Although no enemy personnel were sighted, the tanks were used to fire high explosive shells against designated targets. Upon reaching the objective, the tanks were used to cut down cane fields in order to make fields of fire for the infantry's final defensive line for the night. The tanks were released at 1815 to return to their just reward - the company assembly area - for the night. It was a day that saw the enemy devoid of opposition, other than small pockets of resistance.

The 1st and 2nd platoons of Company A of tanks led their respective BLTs in an advance of 1000 yards to the O-4 line. There was no enemy encountered during the action that the RCT saw on this day - Jig plus 3.

The 1st and 2nd platoons were again attached to BLT 1-25 and 3-25 for the operations on Jig plus 4. The 3rd platoon was attached to BLT 2-25 and went into position on the Regimental Combat Team's (RCT 23) right. The tanks led the advance of the RCT to the O-5 line, and advance of 3500 - 4500 yards. Only scattered resistance in the form of snipers and light machine gun nests were encountered. The flame throwers burned some Nips out of the brush and caves. The enemy used infiltration tactics to harass our troops. The tanks and flame thrower tanks crushed and burned the cane fields so as to make fields of fire for the infantry's night defenses.

Company A maintained its platoon attachments to RCT 25 and led the infantry attack on Jig plus 5 from O-5 to the O-6 line. (An advance of 1800 yards). The 2nd platoon, attached to BLT 3-25, met resistance from enemy nests and riflemen in the open fields as well as in the cane fields. The enemy used A-T mines as a makeshift obstacle, which knocked out one light tank. The only other vehicle loss was a medium tank which threw a track. The remaining tanks delivered fire on the enemy positions until they were neutralized. The light tanks were used to make contact with the 2nd Marine Division near the radio towers. The flame throwers did some effective work in burning the cane fields and Nips. The tank company returned to its assembly area at 1600.

Jig plus 6 saw the platoons of this Company attached as on the previous day. The tanks led RCT 25 at 0745 in an attack to the O-7 line, an advance of about 3000 yards. Some mines were encountered, but the engineers disarmed them. Upon reaching the O-7 line, enemy artillery increased in intensity and was located as coming from high ground, 1800 yards to the front. The tanks, together with artillery, naval gunfire, and air, delivered fire into these enemy gun positions. RCT 25 was relieved by RCT 23 at 1700. Company A, 4th Tank Battalion, then went into Division Reserve along with RCT 25.

Company A remained in Division Reserve on Jig plus 7, and was located in an assembly area 500 yards in rear of the front lines. No Company tanks operated on this day.

The last day of operations, Jig plus 8, on TIMIAN, found the 3rd platoon of Company A, 4th Tank Battalion attached to Company C. It worked with BLT 3-25 in mopping up isolated centers of resistance. Two tanks were hit with magnetic mines, knocking out one engine of one tank, and killing the tank commander of the second tank as the mine was placed on the commander's hatch. Both tanks managed to return to the safety of our lines. The other tank platoons of Company A did not operate.¹² Company A's (4th Marine Tank Battalion) action on TIMIAN was characterized by excellent liaison, reconnaissance, and cooperation with the infantry. This tank - infantry coordination produced victories over the enemy on terrain excellently suited for tank operation.

Tank Employment By Regimental Combat Team 24 (See Fig. 6)

RCT 24, to which Company B of the 4th Tank Battalion was attached, was designated as the left assault combat team of the Division. With its main effort on the right, the RCT's mission was to seize O-1 within its zone of action. Then, on Division order, it was to advance within its zone and seize the most favorable ground along O-2 from which it could assist RCT 25 and cover the landing area. It was to protect the Division's left flank, reorganize on O-2, and prepare for further operations.¹³

Company B with 14 tanks and one platoon of Company C with four tanks, was loaded on the LSD-1. The liaison group was loaded on an LST with the 24th Marine Headquarters. The reconnaissance group was loaded on an LST with the Headquarters of the 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines to land with that unit and determine the possible use of Beach White One to land tanks.

The landing of RCT 24 was successfully made against strong enemy opposition and most adverse terrain features. Beach White Two proper was extremely limited (frontage 165 yards) necessitating the landing of personnel over a coral reef and a four to eight foot coral ledge at the edge of the water.

Company B and its accompanying platoon, was disembarked on J Day from the LSD-1 and proceeded to the assigned LCM area, arriving there at H plus 15. The Company Commander proceeded to the White One control boat and stood by there for further orders. The tanks were ordered in and all landed successfully on Beach White One

after fording $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 feet of water for 25 yards at H plus 3 hours. Company B formed in a dispersed area at Point A (See Fig. 6). A platoon of four flame throwers and two M5 A1s joined this unit at the dispersal area and remained attached for the remainder of the operation.

After the landing, the attack, supported by 8 medium tanks, was continued from Point B to O-1 line at Point C. Two flame throwers and one M5A1 tank were used against the enemy in caves and brush (at Point D), (See Fig. 6), near the beach on the left flank, which was holding up BLT 1-24. But 2nd Battalion of RCT 24 was moving forward with little resistance except small arms fire. At approximately 1600 the O-1 line was reached by all elements except those on the extreme left flank, where continued heavy resistance prevented the advance. Stubborn enemy groups still hold out in caves near the water's edge, and LVTAs were employed from the water on the left to fire into these caves. Flame throwers were used in the brush at 1630. BLT 3-24, which had been held in reserve, was ordered forward to fill in a gap between BLTs 1-24 and 2-24 along the O-1 line. Units then dug in for the night. The C. O. of RCT 24 ordered the eight medium tanks to remain in the front lines to augment the defense against the expected counter-attack. Two of the eight tanks covered the 2nd Battalion and six tanks protected the 1st and 3rd Battalions. Shortly before dark, BLT 1-8 landed as Division Reserve and went into an assembly area in rear of BLT 2-24.

The expected counterattack hit RCT 24 at about 0300 on Jig plus 1; one drive struck the RCT left flank which was anchored on the coastline, and proved to be the more serious of the two drives. The fierceness of the fighting in this sector gave evidence of this. The other drive, which was more or less secondary in nature, struck on the RCT right flank initially. Later this drive shifted to the left of the RCT 24 sector. The enemy counterattack on the left flank continued until approximately 0545, when it appeared to be breaking under the coordinated fires of our infantry weapons and supporting artillery. At this point, one platoon of medium tanks was moved from the front line position on the west and proceeded to Point E to repel the counterattack. The situation appeared to be well in hand by 0700, and it became evident that the enemy had suffered heavy losses. LVTAs were again used along the beach area in mopping up the scattered enemy groups that still remained.

There was little enemy activity during the night in the center of RCT 24's sector, which was occupied by BLT 3-24.

The attack to line O-2 jumped off at 1000 on Jig plus 1. The advance was led by tanks and progressed at a fairly rapid pace. The formation was as follows: BLT 3-24 was on the left and in contact with RCT 8. BLT 2-24 was on the right and in contact with RCT 25 and BLT 1-24 was in RCT reserve. The 1st platoon of tanks of Company B supported the 1st Battalion of RCT 8 in this attack to the north along the beach. By 1500, our front line units

had reached the O-2 line, BLT 2-24 having been supported in the assault by a platoon of medium tanks. A gap had developed on the left flank, however, during the later stages of the advance to O-2, and in order to reestablish contact, it was necessary to commit BLT 1-24 between BLT 3-24 and RCT 8.

At nightfall, all units, including tanks, dug in on a line generally along O-2. The left flank was tied in with RCT 8 in the vicinity of USHI POINT Airfield. The right flank was tied in with RCT 25. One platoon of the Division Reconnaissance Company was attached for the night and was employed as a combat outpost covering an important road junction near the RCT right flank. The only activity during the night was a brief skirmish between an enemy patrol and the combat outpost manned by the attached Division Reconnaissance Company.¹⁴ On Jig plus 2 the Tank Platoon of the 2nd Battalion led an attack to the base of MT. LASSO at Point F. BLT 1-24 and BLT 3-24 were relieved in their zones of action by elements of the 2nd Marine Division and BLT 2-24 was attached to RCT 25 as of 0730. The RCT (less BLT 2-24) then reverted to Division Reserve and moved to an assembly area in the general vicinity of Point X. BLT 2-24 and its Tank Platoon was relieved in its lines by the 2nd Marine Division and went into reserve with RCT 24. This occurred at 1000 on Jig plus 3. Normal maintenance was conducted on all tanks. The company remained in the dispersal area (Point G) for the night.

Mopping-up operations, in the Division Reserve areas, were commenced by RCT 24 about 1000. LVTAs, tanks, demolitions, and flame throwers were employed in cleaning out the caves and heavy undergrowth. Some intelligence material and enemy weapons were found, but few enemy were encountered. It soon became apparent that the enemy had almost completely evacuated the beach-head area. Mopping-up operations were completed at approximately 1540.

On Division order RCT 24 (less BLT 2-24) moved into an attack position between RCT 23 and 25 on Jig plus 4 (28th July) after approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ days of rest and reorganization. The attack jumped off from Point H at 1300 with RCT 23 on the right of RCT 24. The advance was made initially in columns of BLTs with BLT 1-24 in assault preceded by one tank platoon of Company B, 4th Tank Battalion (Marines). The attack was across the air strip to Point I. As the advance progressed however, the expected gap between RCT 24's left and RCT 25 developed and as pre-planned, BLT 3-24 was committed on the left of BLT 1-24, in order to maintain contact. The advance was rapid; only slight resistance was encountered, and the objective, O-6 (A) was reached, at 1730.

With the seizure of O-6 (A), RCT 23 had been pinched out on the Division right flank and reverted to Division Reserve. This placed RCT 24 on the Division right flank, its right on the coast, with RCT 25 on the left. Contact was maintained with RCT

25 and lines were consolidated for the night along O-6 (A). By order of the C. O. RCT 24, all tanks of Company B protected the 24th CP during the night of 28-29 July.

The attack continued at 0700 on Jig plus 5 with RCT 24 and 25 abreast, RCT 24 on the right. BLTs 1/24 and 3/24, each with one tank platoon attached, were abreast, BLT 1/24 on the right. BLT 24, which had reverted to RCT 24's control at 0600 followed in reserve. The Headquarters section of Company B (tanks) positioned itself between the attacking battalions. Tanks led the advance, from Point I to Point J. No resistance was encountered until 0900 when the O-6 line was reached. Units reorganized on O-6 and the advance was continued. At approximately 0930, BLT 1/24 ran into a well organized and camouflaged enemy strong point at Point K. This area contained well concealed and dug in positions and had to be overrun twice by tanks. The tanks and infantry overran the position and the advance was again progressing rapidly by 1300. A gap developed between BLT 1/24 and BLT 3/24 which was plugged at 1500 by committing one company from BLT 2/24. At 1525, orders were issued to dig in on the most advantageous terrain in the vicinity of the front lines at that time. Contact was established on the left with RCT 25. The tanks were released at 1730 and returned to the dispersal area for the night.

RCT 24 jumped off at 0745 on Jig plus 6 with BLT 1/24 on the right with its flank on the coastline. BLT 3/24 was on the left and maintaining contact with RCT 23. BLT 2/24 followed in RCT reserve. The tanks (14 medium tanks, 4 flame throwers, and

two M5Als) operated under Company control while leading the attack from Point J. Little resistance was encountered initially, but after the attack had progressed about 600 yards the left flank of BLT 1/24 was stopped by heavy machine gun and rifle fire from the face of a cliff at Point L, which ran parallel to the direction of the advance. This resistance was knocked out by medium tank fire and flame throwers. LVTAs assisted in the reduction of these caves. One of our tanks was knocked out by enemy artillery fire while in this area. At 1000, BLT 2/24 was committed in a column of companies, between BLTs 1/24 and 3/24, in the vicinity of the cliff line. When the advance continued at 1100, BLT 2/24 was assigned the mission of following the assault and mopping up.

In the meantime, BLT 3/24, attempting to maintain contact on the left with RCT 25, which had continued forward, had become echeloned well forward. Contact was lost within the unit because of an over-extension of its lines. As a result, a gap developed temporarily within BLT 3/24.

The advance continued through TINIAN TOWN which was reached at approximately 1420. That town had been thoroughly reduced by naval gunfire, artillery, and aerial bombardments. Only one Jap soldier was found there. Some fire, believed to have come from enemy tanks in the distance, fell in the right of RCT 24's sector, but did no damage. It is to be noted that the beaches in the vicinity of TINIAN TOWN which had been considered as a possible landing site for the invasion of TINIAN, were very heavily mined.

The O-7 line, south of TINIAN TOWN, was reached by 1700; contact was established by RCT 24 on the left with RCT 23 which had passed through and relieved RCT 25 in its zone of action. Reorganization then took place and the lines were consolidated for the night. The tanks returned to the dispersal area to rearm, refuel, and subsequently assembled in the Reserve Battalion area at Point L for the night.

The morning of Jig plus 7, following a night of no enemy activity, found RCT 24 attacking at 0830 with BLTs 1/24 and 3/24, abreast; BLT 1/24 continued along the coastline. BLT 2/24, in Division Reserve, but under RCT 24 control, followed the advance at 600 yards. Contact was maintained with RCT 23 on the left. Tanks led the advance and ran into heavy resistance and mines along the beach at Point M. It was necessary to use flame throwers to burn the caves at Point N; in this same area, the engineers removed 45 mines in an area 30 yards long on the road. Terrain did not permit by-passing the mined area. The right flank elements continued to advance until about 0945 when resistance and light artillery fire slowed down the march. At 1000, the right Company of BLT 1/24 received a local counter-attack near the beach area. The enemy counter-attack was defeated and the resistance was overcome by 1100. One Company of BLT 1/24 was left to mop up in the rear, and the advance continued. Dense undergrowth and occasional enemy groups in the rugged terrain made progress on the right very difficult. The flame thrower tanks were used to burn out caves and heavy underbrush.

BLT 3/24 encountered only sporadic sniper and machine gun fire on the RCT's left until about 1600, when machine gun and rifle fire from the ridge line to the left front halted BLT 3's advance. One infantry platoon and two tanks attempted to secure the left flank at Point O, and met with an enemy counter-attack in that area. The infantry withdrew 100 yards to consolidate their lines, leaving the two tanks which were in the assault, uncovered long enough for the enemy to swarm over one tank. Fortunately the enemy used no magnetic AT mines or explosives, thus permitting these tanks to escape damage. Infantry and tank fire drove away the Japs. The tanks and half-tracks that were employed in overcoming this resistance were hampered by the road leading to the high ground being mined. The engineers were called up to clear the road of mines. Further advance being deemed inadvisable, orders were given to dig in on the most favorable terrain in the vicinity of the front lines at that time. Contact was established with RCT 23 on the left, and positions were consolidated for the night. All tanks were released at 1815 for the night and assembled at Point P, where they were rearmed, refueled and had maintenance performed on them, supplies having been brought forward from the dispersal area.

On Division order, the attack was continued at 0800 on Jig plus 8 (1 August). RCT 24 was on the right and RCT 23, on the left. Disposition of units within the RCT was the same as the day before. BLTs 1/24 and 3/24 were abreast, BLT 1/24 on the right. BLT 2/24 was still in Division Reserve. The assault was led by tanks whose

movement was greatly retarded by dense brush and rocky terrain. Because artillery support was impractical in such restricted area, fire support was obtained from the tanks, half-tracks, and 37 mm guns. Resistance was limited to isolated enemy groups which fought stubbornly from caves, crevasses, and other natural terrain features. The tanks led the assault from Point Q to Point R where terrain in the RCT zone of action was of a palisade-like nature, being comprised of three distinct levels which stepped down from the highest point along the cliff line to the sea. The lines were readjusted within the RCT and all three BLTs were placed abreast. BLT 3/24 occupied the high ground on the RCT left, BLT 2/24, which had been released to RCT 24's control at 1300, occupied the center level and BLT 1/24 remained on the lowest level, its right flank on the coastline. After the adjustment had been made, the advance continued at 1500, swinging from a southward to an easterly direction around the tip of the island. The LVTAs were now able to move into the water across a beach which had been cleared of mines and a few were employed by BLT 1/24 to fire into caves at the water's edge. Many POWs, the major part of whom were civilians, were now being turned in. Intermittent enemy machine gun and rifle fire continued, but to a lesser degree than before. The advance continued slowly, and at 1855 on Jig plus 8 (1 August) Tinian was officially declared secured, all organized resistance having ceased. Lines were consolidated along the general line designated Point S on the map at 1800, and BLT 3/24 was in contact with RCT 23. The tanks returned to a forward assembly area

at Point P for the night. Naval gunfire, provided star shell illumination for the night on a larger scale than heretofore.

Mopping up operations were continued, commencing at 0700 on Jig plus 9 (2 August). One platoon of tanks remained at Point S until 1300 in support of the elements that were sweeping the area. All flame throwers, light tanks and demolitions were used effectively against caves and grass covered coral pits in the area Point T. No organized resistance was encountered, but fire was received during most of the day from scattered enemy elements in all sectors. As per custom, large numbers of civilians, who were in hiding with the enemy soldiers, complicated mopping-up operations in the same manner as they had on SAIPAN. However, by 1430, RCT 24 had accomplished complete coverage of its zone of responsibility on TINIAN. A line was formed, generally along Point S for the night and contact maintained with RCT 23. The light tanks remained at an assembly area at Point U, for the night. The remainder of the tank Company assembled at Point V. Additional star shell illumination was requested for the night.

Scattered fire was still being received from "holed up" Japs on Jig plus 10 (3 August) necessitating the continuance of the mopping-up operations. Flame throwers, tanks and demolitions were again used against these isolated resisters. The light tank platoons remained in support of the 2nd Battalion, RCT 24 until 1700 when they were released. The tank Company reverted to Battalion control at 1600 this date. Large numbers of civilians

and soldiers were being induced to surrender.

RCT 24 received orders from the Division to move into an assembly area in the north-control portion of the island, at Point W to await relief and evacuation. This movement was in progress from 1400 to 1700. A composite Battalion comprised of one company from each BLT, was left in the RCT 24 zone of responsibility, on the southern end of the island. This composite battalion was attached to RCT 23, and was assigned the mission of final mopping-up and the burial of our own and enemy dead.

Company B, 4th Marine Tank Battalion, normally operated with one platoon attached to each of the two assaulting BLTs and held the third platoon in reserve. The tanks normally led the infantry attacks and were very effective in destroying enemy who were dug in, concealed in the high cane fields or located in caves. The Commanding Officer of RCT 24 often ordered the tanks to be used on the front lines at night against the recommendations of the Tank Company Commander.

Tank Employment By Regimental Combat Team 23 (See Fig 7)

RCT 23, the Division Reserve, planned on landing its three BLTs in column; BLT 2 leading, followed in order by BLT 1 and BLT 3. The plan for the assault on TINIAN prescribed the landing of troops from LSTs preloaded with LVT (2)s and LVT (4)s in groups of 17 per LST. A total of 103 LVT (2)s and LVT (4)s were assigned for the use of RCT 23. (See Table 3).

TABLE 3

	<u>LVT (2)</u>	<u>LVT (4)</u>	<u>LCVP</u>	<u>LCM</u>	<u>LSD</u>
RCT Hq. & Sp. Gp.	7	9	14		
BLT 1	32	7	6		
BLT 2	32	8	5		
BLT 3	32	8	5		
Half-Tracks				5	
Tanks					2

In order to accomplish the landing of all transportation and equipment, two trips of the LCVPs and LCTs were required.

RCT 23 was prepared to execute a landing on either Beach White One or Beach White Two. The preferred plan was the landing on order at Beach White Two and pass through RCT 25, or pass through the right elements of RCT 25 and continue the attack to O-A line.

BLT 2/23 hit Beach White Two in five waves (See Table 4)

TABLE 4

<u>Waves</u>	<u>Landed</u>
1	1401
2	1409
3	1415
4	1420
5	1430

Company C of the 4th Tank Battalion was attached to RCT 23 for the TINIAN Operation. As this RCT was the reserve regiment it was decided that one platoon of tanks was to be attached to and loaded on an LSD with Company A, so as to be landed on Beach White Two. Another platoon was attached to Company B which was to land on Beach White One. The 3rd platoon was put aboard LCTs plus Company Headquarters which would land when ordered on whatever beach proved most satisfactory for tanks.

Company C's platoon with Company B was the first to land on TINIAN. It landed on Beach White One which was so narrow that 19 LCMs had to pull up to the beach, discharge their cargo and withdraw one at a time. Thus, over an hour was consumed in unloading the LCMs. Each LCM came to within 15 yards of the beach which made it possible for the tanks to get ashore with no difficulty, the water never being over 3 feet in depth. Company A of tanks with the attached platoon, landed right behind Company B on Beach White One. Prior to the landing, of the tanks on Beach White 1, a bull-dozer got ashore and built a road from the beach inland. This road enabled the tanks to get off the beach with no difficulty.

Before landing, the C. O. of RCT 23 instructed the commanding officer of Company C to assemble his tanks at a previously designated assembly area, which was just inland and south of Beach White Two, in order to join a proposed attachment with BLT 2/23. All the tank platoons of Company C reached the assembly area, which was still in front of the front line perimeter established by the two assault regiments, by about 1630.

The attack jumped off after 1630 with the assault companies of BLT 2/23 and the assembly area which they had just left came under very heavy fire from machine guns at almost point blank range. Practically the whole battalion of RCT 2/23 was pinned down by the intense fire. Due to the heavy underbrush, woods and sugar cane that made up the area, it was almost impossible to locate the hostile guns. This company's tanks including the platoon initially left in reserve, cruised through the entire area during the hour in which BLT 2/23 was pinned down. The tanks finally flushed out some enemy machine guns which caused the fire to lift sufficiently for BLT 2/23 to dig in and organize defenses for the night. As it was rapidly getting dark, all plans for a continued advance were postponed till the next morning. The infantry of BLT 2/23 dug in and organized defenses for the night, following which the tanks withdrew to an area between BLT 2/23 and BLT 1/23, and also dug in for the night. Approximately 200 yards behind the front lines, RCT 23 was in columns of battalions with BLT 2/23 being in contact with BLT 2/25 at O-1, BLT 1/23 disposed along the coast for protection of this flank and BLT 3 assembled in division reserve north of O-1. It is important to note that positions were well established for the night, particularly that contact with adjacent units was good.

A strong Jap counterattack was launched against RCT 23 before dawn on the night of 24 July, with BLT 2/23 bearing the brunt of it. About 250 Japs were killed, and five enemy tanks knocked out. Enemy artillery was active. Shortly after daylight (0600)

on Jig plus 1, 25 July, two tank platoons cruised over the area generally in front of the lines of BLT 2/23 with the deliberate purpose of killing any live Japs left over from the pre-dawn counterattack. A large number of such Japs were sent to the land of the Emperor, but one dead Jap apparently was carrying a bangalore torpedo when killed. This was detonated as a tank went over it, blowing six blocks off the left track. This tank crew stayed with the iron wagon, firing their guns at targets of opportunity. After this phase of the day's operations was completed, a tank retriever from Able Company helped the crew of the damaged tank to repair it on the spot. During the same action, a Nip who had been amongst a group of enemy dead, suddenly got up as the tanks passed him and succeeded, before he was shot down, in placing a magnetic mine against the side of one tank. As per custom, a tank's sides were covered with lumber as an anti-magnetic mine measure. Yet, somehow, this tank was the exception to the rule. The detonation of the magnetic mine caused a leak in one of the fuel tanks and the explosion blew all the fuel out of the tank of the auxiliary generator without actually springing a leak or doing the generator any other damage. At about 0900, the tanks withdrew to their assembly area of the previous night in order to rearm preparatory to an attack to the 0-2 line that was to start at 1000. In the meantime, BLT 1 was mopping up the areas along the coast as far back as the beach.

Shortly before 1000, the RCT 23 assembly area received fire from several high velocity field guns. It was observed that the gun flashes came from the south along the top of the ridge that was RCT 23's O-2. The tanks took those artillery gun positions under fire, which fires were subsequently supplemented by an air strike and an artillery concentration. Following this effective reduction of the enemy guns, the attack got going with two battalions of RCT 23 in the assault, each battalion being preceded by a platoon of six tanks. Actually the first and second platoons, which were the tank platoons involved, consisted of only five tanks each, but a tank from the third platoon was attached to each of the other platoons, giving them a total of six tanks apiece, and leaving the remaining tanks of the third platoon in company and RCT reserve. This attack was characterized by excellent tank-infantry cooperation, a fact that was later true of all our attacks on TINIAN. In the case of each platoon, a line of five tanks was out about 15 yards in front of the infantry, while the platoon leader was in the middle of the first line of the infantry in the control tank. An infantry officer generally a company commander, walked beside each control tank and was always in direct communication with the platoon leader inside the tank, by means of the tank radio telephone that had been installed on the back of each tank. Meanwhile, the tank company C. O. rode in a radio jeep following the right battalion, always staying with that battalion's C. O. The Tank Company Commander had contact with both tank

platoons via his TCS radio and also had contact with the C.O. of RCT 23 via the tank liaison officer. The latter person also had a TCS radio and always remained with the C. O. of RCT 23.

When BLT 2 passed to Division Reserve BLT 1 relieved it in position and continued the attack against light opposition through heavy cane fields and dense underbrush. At approximately 1500, the attack reached its objective, where numerous dugouts were located. Here the tanks fired considerable amounts of HE into the dugouts. After almost every hit, several enemy would run out only to be shot by infantry and tank small arms fire. O-1 was seized at 1637. The infantry units dug in. Thereupon, the tanks returned to their assembly area of the previous night, refueled, re-armed and prepared to remain there that night. The RCT Commander ordered the tanks to withdraw each night to positions behind the front lines and in the general vicinity of the RCT 23 C.P. BLT 3/23, which had been in support of BLT 1 during the attack, moved up and relieved the left elements of BLT 1 and occupied positions on a line abreast for the night. Defenses were well established and coordinated.

The attack on Jig plus 1 made it apparent that five tanks were not sufficient to adequately cover a battalion front of the yardage assigned. Sugar cane on TINIAN limited observation to a few yards ahead or to the side. Thereafter, all tanks were committed in action with no reserve being held out. The fronts were so wide that amphibian tanks were called upon to support the tanks during the advance of the next three days.

During the night of Jig 1 - Jig 2, some bands of Nips infiltrated our lines but were forthwith sent to their eternal maker. Morning saw BLT 1 making a short advance by independent action at 0600, to seize ground for a favorable LD and to straighten out the line for continuation of the attack. The 1st platoon of Company C tanks supported this preliminary attack over difficult terrain - an attack made by the right flank Company of RCT 23. Now the entire RCT 23 was able to jump off from the same LD at the start of the general Division advance. The attack to seize O-3 crossed the LD at 0800 with BLT 1/23 and BLT 3/23 abreast, BLT 1 on the right, BLT 1 had half the tanks of the first platoon, plus 2 LVTAs with its right flank Company, and the 2nd platoon plus 2 LVTAs supporting the balance of this right battalion. The 3rd platoon, and the balance of the 1st platoon and two LVTAs supported BLT 3/32, which was the left Battalion. Forward progress was slowed by the thick cane fields and the densely wooded areas along the coast. The tempo of advance was increased by the employment of a platoon of flame thrower tanks which were attached to Company C during operations that morning. Two of the fire spitters were attached to the right flank company as its operation was aided by the terrain and was essentially a mopping-up operation. The other flame throwers were held in reserve and, together with the half-track ammunition carriers, followed the tank company commander who accompanied the company commander of the right battalion. Hereafter, the half-track ammunition crew rearmed all tanks at the front,

thus eliminating the need for withdrawal of tanks in order to re-supply. The attack continued in the same formation with BLT 2, upon being relieved from Division Reserve, supporting the attack by mopping up the rear areas as the attack progressed. Objective O-3 was secured by 1201, and at 1300, following a hasty reorganization, the push continued to seize the most favorable ground in the vicinity of O-4. The Jap resistance was light, being made up principally of machine gun and sniper fire from cane fields and wooded areas. The good terrain in the region of O-4 was secured by 1430 with all positions being consolidated on the commanding ground. After the defensive line had been laid out for the night, the tanks spent about 45 minutes knocking down the sugar cane from a distance of about 500 yards to the front of these positions, thereby clearing fields of fire for the infantry. Thereupon the tanks happily returned to the vicinity of the RCT Command Post to refuel, rearm, and remain for another night.

The attack continues on Jig plus 3 (27 July) at 0950 with RCT 25 attacking on the left and running into no resistance. O-4 was taken at 1050, and BLT 1 and 3 immediately sent patrols forward of the O-4 line to a limit of 1000 yards. The patrols reported no activity to the front of the BLTs. Because of the late hour, it was decided to consolidate for the night, and plans were made for the continuation of the attack on the 28th of July.

BLT 1 was on the right, BLT 3 to the left, and BLT 2 was assigned the mopping up job for the attack that took off from the line of departure, (which was O-4), at 0700 on Jig plus 4 (28 July). There was excellent coordination of the attack along the entire 2500 yard front. The advance was led by tanks which were closely supported by the infantry against very light resistance to take Objective 5 at 1232. During this action RCT 24 had passed through the left elements of BLT 3/23, thereby narrowing the front of RCT 23; which change made necessary an adjustment in the boundary between the two assault BLTs. Following the lateral coordination between RCT 23 and 25, the advance continued from O-5 with the mission of seizing Objective 6A. This advance was characterized by the employment of knee mortars by the Japs which gave the infantry a rough time until the tanks either overran the Nip positions or flushed them out into the open so that the infantry could practice marksmanship. The reduction of the mortars spirited the tank lead assault BLTs to take the east-west airstrip in RCT 23's zone at 1420, and subsequently Objective 6A was seized at 1651. Upon reorganization on the objective, RCT 23 passed to division reserve and continued mopping up the area. It also patrolled the coast line in the zone of action. The day's activity was highlighted by the adoption of the "Blitz" or "Breakthrough" vehicle loading system, which consisted of troops riding on tanks and half-tracks that blazed paths through the cane fields, overran strong points to reach a point 7300 yards from that morning's line of departure.

RCT 23 and Company C tanks rested on Jig plus 5, but relieved elements of RCT 25 on Objective 7 commencing at 1600 on Jig plus 7. The positions were organized for the night during which an absence of the Yellow Race was noteworthy.

An Operation Order number 16-44 was issued at 0530 for the continuance of the attack at 0830. It was preceded by heavy air and artillery preparation on the high ground to the front. The assault troops leaped the LD at 0833 with BLTs 2 and 1 abreast, with BLT 2 on the right and BLT 3 in reserve. The attack continued until contact was lost with the 2nd Marine Division on the left which had not come up on a line abreast as planned. Everything had been progressing nicely against little opposition until the now exposed left flank of BLT 1 was pinned down by enemy machine gun and mortar fire from the cliff line on the left flank and a town in the 2nd Marine Division zone of action which was located 600 yards to the left rear of RCT 23's left flank. Not only was the infantry kept close to the ground but the tank platoon, which had been advancing in front of the right battalion of RCT 23 with its left flank along a tree line that paralleled the route of advance, came under close range of high velocity AT fire for the first and only time on TINIAN. Two medium tanks were hit. The left flank tank received 6 hits in rapid succession - one of which penetrated the turret but the balance of them failed to come through before the tank backed off about 15 yards to a defiled spot. The tank commander believed that the enemy AT gun

was in the cliff to the left front, and proceeded to mark the location by firing 2 smoke shells at the cliff, bracketing the area that held the gun. A heavy concentration of tank fire, rockets, artillery and naval gun fire was then poured into that area. With cessation of the concentration, the tanks resumed the advance, with a new tank on the left flank. This lead tank was followed by the first medium tank that had been hit a few minutes before. As the new lead tank reached the spot where the first tank had been hit, it received six very rapid hits, three of which penetrated, wounding the tank commander, gunner and loader. However, this time, both the first and second tanks to be hit spotted the enemy gun about 30 yards to their left beyond the tree line. The second tank to be hit immediately threw a smoke shell in front of the gun while the first tank to be hit maneuvered around behind the gun, knocking it out and killing with machine gun fire, approximately 20 Japs who ran out of the gun emplacement. Before knocking out the gun, the tank received its 7th hit, which glanced harmlessly off the front slope plate.

This enemy gun was a 47 mm AT gun, located in a concrete emplacement enclosed on 3 sides and on top, with the open side facing away from the tree line. The gun fired from a small aperture facing the tree line. The fire lane, which ran perpendicular to the tree line and the route of advance, was only about ten yards wide where it crossed the tree line.

Following the obliteration of the AT gun, the attack was resumed. Progress was made towards the high ground and cliff area

in the zone of action, but at 1745 BLT 2 on the right was held up by a strong pocket of resistance just north of line O-7a. This right Battalion was being led by a tank platoon when it ran into a heavily mined area that was under light enemy small arms fire. The Engineers went to work to clear lanes through the field for each tank of the platoon; two engineers walked in front of each tank removing the mines as they were encountered, but suddenly, very heavy small arms fire was received from a trench running directly across and perpendicular to the route of advance and located about 20 yards from the tanks. This fire pinned down both the infantry and the engineers. Then all the tanks took the trench under fire and one tank was ordered to move up to the end of the trench to fire down the length of it. This tank appeared to be in a sector of the area that was least heavily mined and it was thought that it might, if care were used in driving, negotiate the 15 or 20 yards to the end of the trench. The tank moved up, firing on the trench as it advanced, but when it was about five yards from the trench, it hit a mine. The tank's suspension system was shattered, and the tank commander driver and assistant were injured. The Nips now appeared like vultures to swarm down upon the disabled tank and its crew, but the other tanks immediately laid down devastating fire, which either killed, wounded, or pinned down the "rising sunners". At this point, another tank pulled up directly behind the disabled tank and took aboard its crew who entered the rescue vehicle via the escape hatch. All the tanks continued to shell the area, and since the Japs continually endeavored to set up machine guns in the disabled tank,

the other tanks took the damaged tank under fire and destroyed it; thus they denied the protection of its armor to the enemy.

The forward movement of BLT 2 was halted north of line O-7a for the night. Elements of BLT 2 less one company remained in this area to contain the hostile groups, and to prevent infiltration into the rear areas during the night. The tank platoon stayed with the containing infantry elements until their defenses were set up, and thereupon withdrew to join the balance of the tank company for the night. The other company of BLT 2 was sent around through BLT 1's zone of action to gain a position on the high ground. BLT 3, less 1 company, moved to the rear of BLT 1 on the high ground to tie in defenses for the night; the remaining company of BLT 3, maintained its position on the low ground for the protection of the left flank and to contain Japs that still remained in the gap between the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions. BLT 3/25 was in division reserve and was assigned to RCT 23 and remained in position on the low ground. Units on the high ground established a perimeter of defense with flanks bent back and anchored on the cliff line. Patrols from units of BLT 3/23 which was on the high ground were unable to contact or locate any elements of the 2nd Marine Division on the Battalions left. Positions on the high ground were well established for the night, but on the low land hostile groups still remained active in caves in the cliff line in the rear areas. One company of BLT 3/25 was moved to the vicinity of 515 D to contain the Nips in that spot. The remainder of BLT 3/25 stayed in position for the protection of tank attachments which had assembled on the

low ground. There was persistent sniping fire and some attempted infiltration by Japs who were disposed of.

RCT 23 received an order at 0400 to attack at 0800 on Jig plus 8 (1 August) to seize Objective 8. Unit commanders received an oral order from the RCT commander at 0600. Prior to the jump off, BLT 2, by independent action, cleaned out the pocket, at a point just north of line O-7a by excellent tank, infantry, artillery coordination and the work of the engineers in the removal of the mine field in order to establish a clear and safe passage on the road to the high ground in the RCT zone of action. Another adjustment, prior to the attack was the shifting of lines between BLT 1 and BLT 3 by lateral action, to seize O-7 A which was to be used as their LD. The attack at 0800 was strongly resisted along the entire line by heavy machine gun and sniper fire. But by 1045, BLT 2 had overcome resistance in the pocket, cleared the mined area and made safe the movement of tanks and vehicles to the high ground. Concurrently, BLT 1 took hill 540 at 1145, overcoming moderate enemy resistance. The momentum was retained by both BLT 1 and 3, which continued to attack from O-7A in the face of machine gun fire from cane fields and tree lines in the zone of advance to reach the line of farthest possible advance by 1715. This point was a cliff line perpendicular to the front and overlooking the sea on the east coast. It was now necessary to reconnoiter routes to the low ground in front of the cliff and along the coast. Patrols found the avenues of approach to the low ground to be honeycombed with caves and deep fissures which

were occupied by the enemy. The situation obviously called for dismounted infantry action that was to be slow and tedious. Therefore plans were made to sit tight for the night. In accordance with this decision, one company of BLT 2 was kept in the vicinity of line O-7A to maintain safe passage along the road, and the remainder of BLT 2 moved to the high ground and occupied positions on Hill 540 for the night. The 3rd Battalion of RCT 25 went into Division Reserve, and was ordered to clear out the pocket of Japs, at 515 DN in the 2nd Marine Division Zone. The defensive line encountered no trouble during the night.

The rigorous task of cleaning out the caves and recesses commenced on Jig plus 9 (2 August). RCT 23 had BLT 1 cleaning the area below the cliff and along the coast, with BLT 3 mopping up the area on the high coastal plateau, while BLT 2 conducted operations on the lowlands along the west coast and the rear of the RCT's zone. The BLT's were constantly pecked at by snipers, required to dig out or seal up the caves filled with the enemy and to take prisoners. Particularly fertile in PW's was the coastal area. This mopping up also consisted of salvaging equipment, burying our own and the enemy's dead, and also the locating of Jap supply dumps.

Patrol activity continued on 3 August (Jig plus 10) from dawn until 1700 throughout RCT 23's zone. The process of mopping up was slow, due principally to the reluctance of civilians and military to surrender. To illustrate the latter statement, witness: (1) Jap children throwing themselves over cliffs into the ocean; (2) the military grouping civilians in numbers of 15 to

20 and attaching explosive charges to them, blowing them into bits; (3) military and civilians hurling themselves from cliffs into the ocean; (4) soldiers pushing the civilians off the cliffs; (5) mass suicides of the Japs. These destructions of life continued even though public address systems were used to inform the Nips and civilians of the humanitarian treatment which they would receive upon surrender. There were only several hundred PW's taken this day. At the close of Jig plus 10, the PA system was used to inform the enemy that final surrender would be at 0830 on the following day, (Jig plus 11), after which time grenades and explosives would be placed in all caves. By this time all organized resistance had been reduced in RCT 23's zone.

Interpreters used the PA system to request surrender of the isolated enemy groups commencing at dawn on Jig plus 11 (4 August), which together with patrols, brought in a few holdouts by the deadline of surrender that was established at 0900. After the fatal hour was reached, an intensive barrage of rockets, 75 mm fire from tanks, and mortars was laid down on the entire area below the cliff line from 0915 to 0930. As soon as the barrage was lifted, patrols were sent through the areas with grenades, flame throwers, and demolitions to clean out all the remaining hiding places. This concentrated action cleaned up the RCT zone by 1600. Thereupon, the RCT was assigned the responsibility of security and final mopping up of the entire division zone. To aid in the policing and cleaning up, a composite battalion of RCT 24 was attached to RCT 23. This composite

battalion experienced considerable trouble from snipers and infiltrating groups which had not been completely mopped up. The strength of this battalion was increased by 100 men to expedite the mopping up operations, the salvage process, and the burial of its own and the enemy dead.

The mopping up continued from 4 August to 7 August. During this period, BLT 2 was used to locate and destroy snipers along the west coast near the division assembly area with one platoon dispatched to clean out a cave of snipers in the island garrison forces near Tinian Town. Though the 4th Marine Division sector was not completely mopped up, elements of RCT 8, 2nd Marine Division, assumed the responsibility of the 4th's sector on the 7th day of August.

"C" Company, 4th Marine Battalion, participated in heavy fighting and enjoyed marked success. This tank company employed fire and maneuver to outflank enemy AT positions. The tanks were aggressive and gave excellent support to the infantry.

Summary

The use of tanks on the island of Tinian was characterized by: (1) tank-infantry attacks that were excellently coordinated by the Marines, (2) fine tank terrain that contributed to their employment, (3) the presence of one tank company in reserve each day, afforded the opportunity for the performance of maintenance, (4) the use of light tanks equipped with flame throwers against

caves and in mopping up operations, (5) relatively few tank losses, (6) the practice of having the tanks clear fields of fire for the infantry defensive positions before the tanks withdrew to their own assembly area for the night, (7) the tanks usually advancing without firing unless they actually saw enemy personnel or installations or unless requested by the infantry to bring fire to bear on a given area.

Conclusions

One company of fifteen tanks was of insufficient number to adequately cover a regimental combat team's front, which usually was 1000 to 1500 yards in width. This belief is correct when one considers the premise that tanks must always keep within sight of each other. The terrain on Tinian required tanks to remain within 10 or 15 yards of each other for mutual support which gave a front of between 200 to 300 yards for the tank company.

The tanks were generally well employed but the policy of completely withdrawing them from the main defensive positions for the night is believed to be improper from the viewpoint of tactics and morale of the infantry. They should be positioned to go into blocking posts to give supporting fires to the infantry, and still be protected from infiltrating bands of enemy infantry.

The team of combined arms operated with marked success. It was thorough in its planning, and violent in its execution.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

¹Amphibious Operations, Invasion of the Marianas, June to August, 1944, a report prepared by U. S. Fleet Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief. pp. 4-5.

²Physical Geography, O.N.I. 29, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (Division of Naval Intelligence), 11 May 1942 p. 64.

³Fourth Marine Division Operations Report, Tinian, 24 July to 1 August 1944, Annex B, p. 10.

⁴U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters Bulletin No. 243, January 1946, pp. 22-23.

⁵Op. Cit., 4th Marine Division Operations Report, Section III, p. 5.

⁶Ibid, p. 8.

⁷Ibid, p. 8.

⁸Ibid, p. 16.

⁹Frank Olney Hough, The Island War, The U. S. Marine Corps in the Pacific (Phil. and New York: J. P. Lippincott Co., 1947), p. 253.

¹⁰Op. Cit., 4th Marine Division Operations Report, Annex K, p. 3.

¹¹Ibid, R-3 Report, p. 21.

¹²Ibid, Annex K, Section II, Encl D, p. 3.

¹³Ibid, Annex I, p. 5.

¹⁴Ibid, Annex B, p. 1.

TINIAN ISLAND

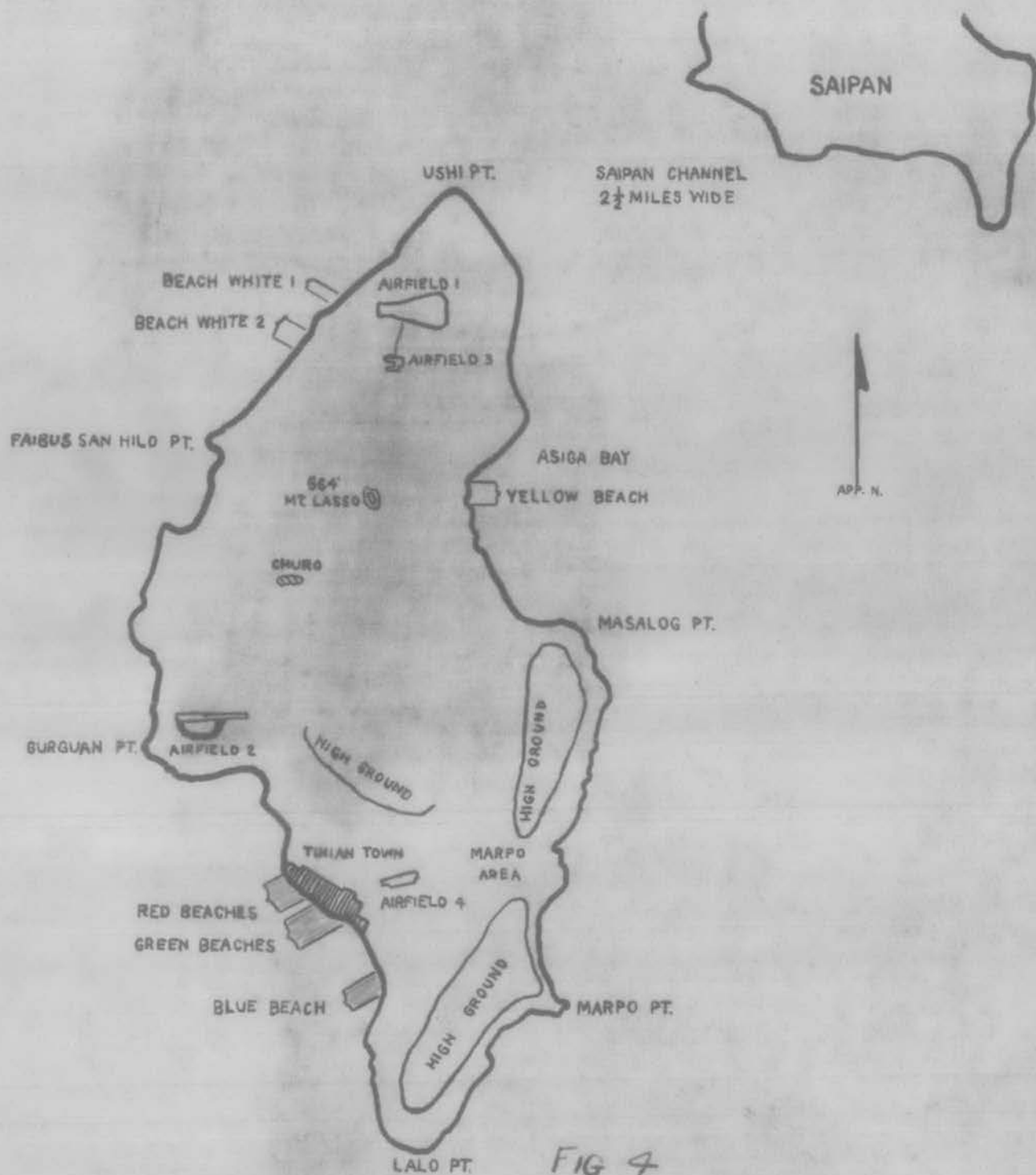


FIG 4

SCALE: 1:125,000



TINIAN

ISLAND

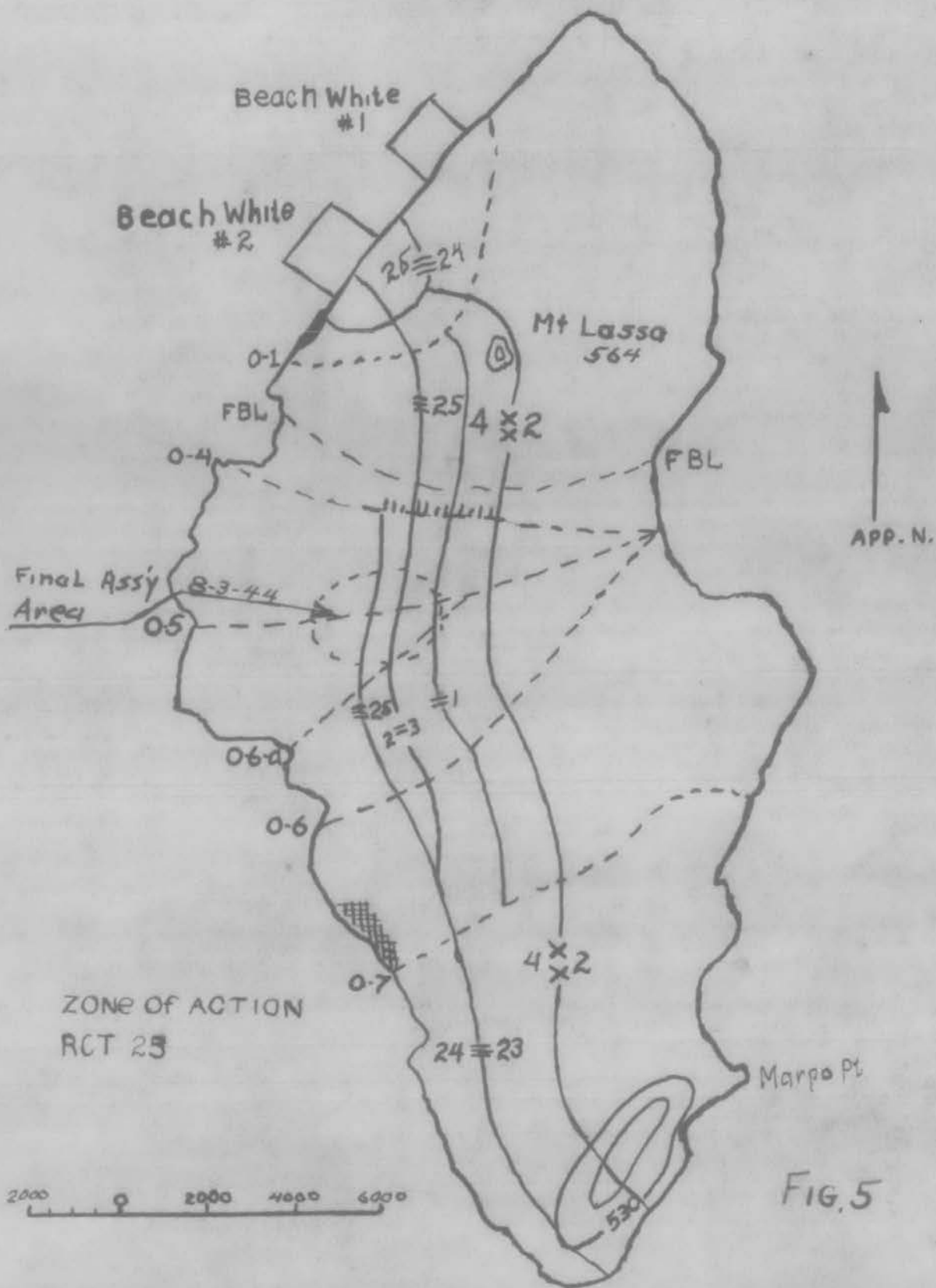


FIG. 5

TINIAN ISLAND

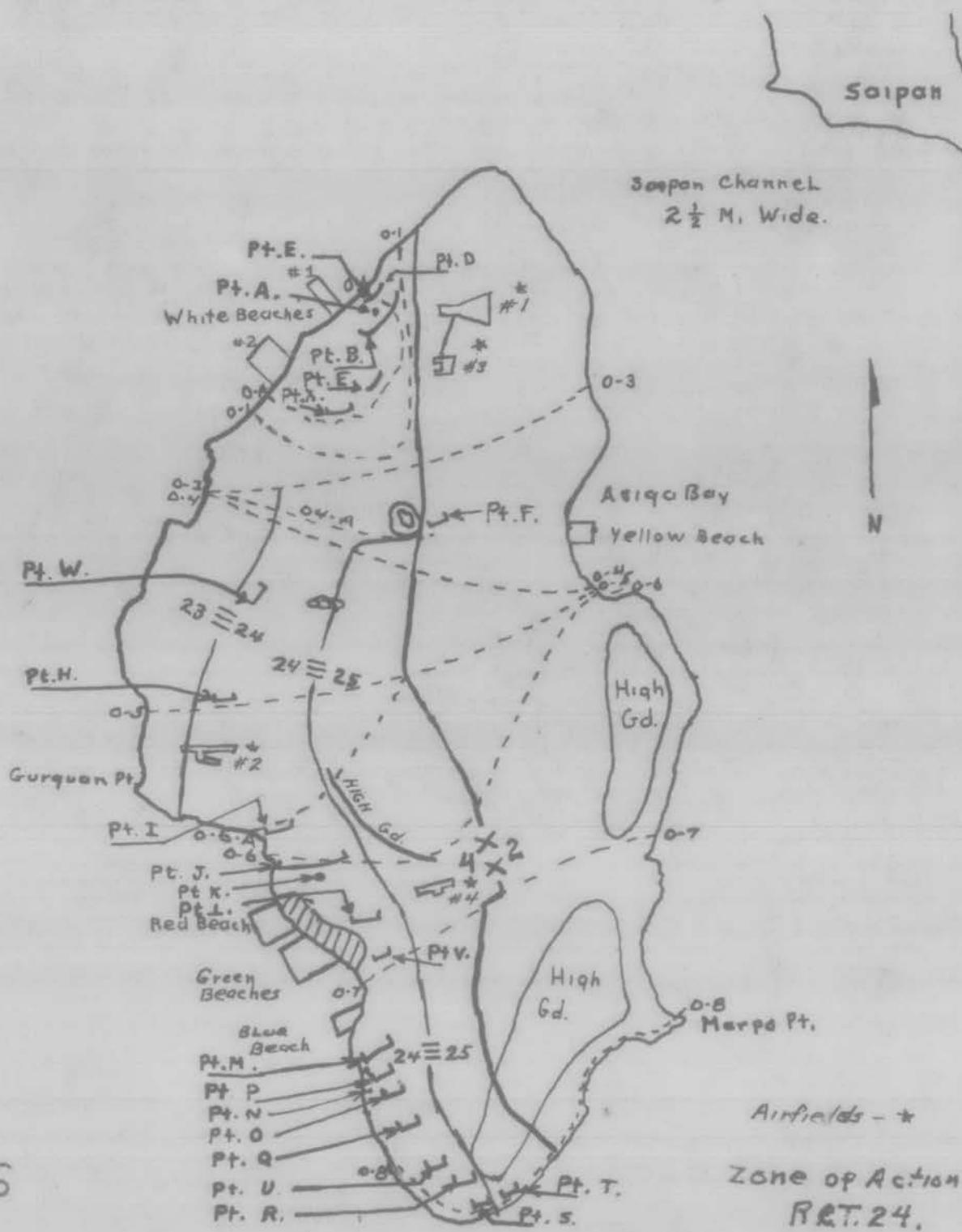


FIG. 6

Airfields - *
 Zone of Action
 RRT.24.

TINIAN ISLAND

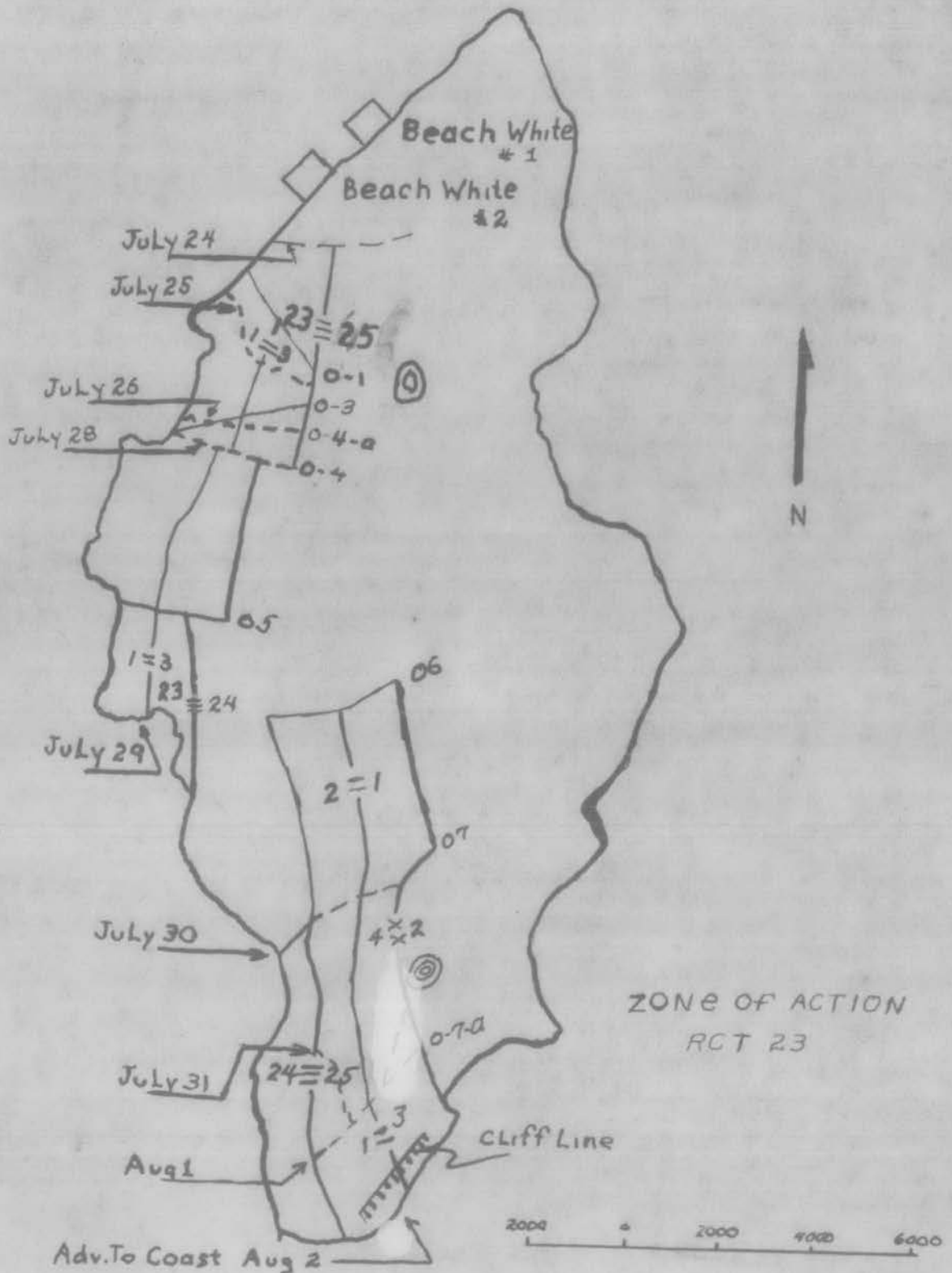


FIG 7

CHAPTER IV

ARMOR ON GUAM

As a part of the study of the use of tanks in operation FORAGER this chapter is devoted to armored tactics and techniques on the island of GUAM. Even though only 32 miles long and 4 to 8 miles wide with an area of 225 square miles, GUAM is the largest island of the MARIANAS. In fact, GUAM has an area equal to the total area of the other 14 islands in the group.

In an attempt to learn how tanks were used in this island battle the activities of the 706th Tank Battalion will be studied. This medium tank battalion was the only Army armored unit on the island. To better understand the armored tactics it will be necessary to consider the general situation and the infantry role.

The Target and the Enemy

Why was GUAM selected as an allied objective for the summer of 1944? To answer this we must go back to the beginning of the allied offensive in the Pacific. The allies moved from Australia north and west through New Guinea and the Bismark Sea while other forces pushed west from Hawaii through the Marshall Islands. Objectives were selected to form a series of supporting garrisons from which air and sea forces could neutralize other Japanese bases. By the spring of 1944 the allies had reached Biak Islands and

forces moving from Hawaii had gained control of The Gilberts and Marshall Islands. This weakened the principal Japanese Fleet Base and aircraft staging center near Truk. Then it was decided to stab deep into the Japanese defenses of the homeland by seizing islands in the Southern Marianas. This would place allied forces 1000 miles farther west, about 1500 miles from Manila and 1600 miles from Tokyo.

In addition to its location, GUAM was important because of its APRR Harbor which would accommodate medium sized vessels, and its landing lanes for seaplanes. In the hands of the Japanese, APRR Harbor served as a base to its southern and central Pacific outposts. The allies wanted this harbor for a subsidiary naval base and the accompanying advantage of denying its use to the Japanese.

The two Japanese airfields on GUAM were particularly desired but even more important were the numerous sites for building new fields from which to strike the Japanese in the Philippines and Japan.

Enemy Order Of Battle

GUAM had been held by the Japanese since December 1941. In June 1944 they were known to have the following units on GUAM:¹

2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment

48th Independent Mixed Brigade

29th Division

54th Independent Guard Unit

38th Infantry

10th Independent Mixed Regiment

The United States III (Marine) Amphibious Corps estimated total enemy strength on the island to be 18,500. The 77th Infantry Division Intelligence estimated about 36,000, including potential capacity of enemy to reinforce the island. It was definitely known that the Japanese had some tanks on the island and there were indications that a large amount of mobile artillery was also present.

The AGAT sector was relatively isolated from the more populated areas to the north because of its limited routes of communications. The 38th Infantry in this sector was more or less independent of the rest of the island command. In July the Japanese began to shift their forces to the most vulnerable areas rather than cover the entire island.

Captured documents showed that the enemy considered the central portion of the west side of the island to be the most likely landing area. From AGANA to AGAT Bay it was estimated that the Japanese had about twenty-five 75 mm mountain guns, ten 70 to 90 mm howitzers, two 37 mm guns, 35 machine guns, 25 naval coastal defense dual purpose guns, and numerous rifle pits, trenches and barbed wire entanglements. Photographs taken in

mid-July indicated that they were improving their positions and increasing the depth daily.²

Enemy planning staffs realized that the island defenses would be favored by the off-shore reefs and hills overlooking the landing beaches. It was later learned that the Japanese commanders were ordered to plan to use all available infantry and artillery fires as soon as the invading forces reached the water obstacles thus enabling them to destroy the attackers in the water.

Prior Planning

The mission of seizing GUAM from the Japanese was given to the III Marine Corps commanded by Major General Roy S. Geiger. His force was also known as Southern Troops Landing Force. It was composed of Garrison Forces, 3rd Marine Division and 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. On 6 July, Lt. General Holland Smith, Commander of Expeditionary Forces for the invasion of the Marianas assigned the 77th Infantry Division to the 3rd Marine Corps. The 305th RCT left Oahu to join the force at Eniwetok, the rest of the 77th sailed direct to GUAM. The Corps, with the 305th RCT, left Eniwetok 18 July arriving at GUAM the morning of W-day, 21 July. The troops had been thoroughly briefed enroute. They had carefully studied maps and terrain models of the beaches and hilly wooded inland.

The 706th Tank Battalion was attached to the 77th Infantry Division for this operation. Both the 77th and 706th were entering combat for the first time but they did have the advantage of having trained together in the States.

The III Corps plan for the invasion of GUAM was made in April and May 1944. The plans carried out were basically the same as originally made except for increased preparation by the Navy and a chance for limited reconnaissance as a result of the capture of SAIPAN.

The plan called for a landing north and south of APRA Harbor which would pinch off the OROTE Peninsula. (See Fig. 8). By getting the Peninsula the Corps would get APRA Harbor and the airstrip on OROTE. It was considered impractical to land on the Peninsula itself because of high cliffs and the strong coastal defenses. The most favorable beaches were selected. The northern beaches were at ASA, between ADELUP Point and the TATGUA River. The southern beaches were located in AGAT Bay between AGAT village and BANGI Point. Although these beaches offered the best approaches from the sea they had limited avenues of approach to the interior. This was especially true of the southern beaches. A highway was available paralleling the coast but the mountainous region in the south could only be reached by trails and a few miles of surfaced dirt roads.

The ridgeline extending from ADELUP Point along MT. ALUTOM, MT. TENJO, and MT. ALIFAN to FACPI Point was selected as the final beachline because this ridge commanded both landing areas. The plan was to secure the final beachline before attempting to clear CROTE Peninsula. This action was to be followed by an attack to clear the rest of the island.

The 3rd Marine Division was assigned the difficult job of landing on the northern beaches which were the most heavily defended. It was then to move south to secure and defend the final beachline in its sector.

The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade was to land on the southern beaches and attack north to secure and defend the final beachline in its sector. The 305th RCT was ordered to support the Brigade in this landing.

The 706th Tank Battalion which was attached to the 77th Infantry Division had further attached one medium tank company to each RCT. "A" Company was attached to the 307th RCT, "B" to the 306th RCT, "C" to the 305th RCT. Headquarters and Headquarters Company, and "D" Company (Light tanks), and Service Company were under Division control.³

Preparatory Fires

It was dark on the morning of 21 July (D-Day) when the troop transport and escorting warships, comprising the U.S. III Amphibious Corps, arrived off the one time U.S. Naval Base of GUAM.

At 0530 the 16 inch guns of the Navy started the bombardment. They were joined by the 5, 6, and 8 inch guns.⁴ The big ships moved slowly along with their guns firing on the beaches and hills beyond. At 0830, deliberate shelling of coastal installations stopped and the ships began to fire at the rate of 10 rounds per minute. LCI (G)s moved toward shore to hit the beach with hundreds of rockets.

Carrier based fighter planes joined in the assault and strafed and bombed Japanese defense positions. So overwhelming was American air power that not one enemy plane was seen in the area.

The terrific pre-invasion bombing and shelling leveled the beach area knocking out nearly all Japanese defense emplacements. Not one of the concrete buildings along the beach road was left standing.

D-Day (21 July 44)

Just at daybreak troops of the 3rd Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Brigade began to debark in LCTs and LCVPs to form assault waves. The 305th RCT, 77th Infantry Division was to follow during the first hour and was to remain afloat in the landing craft until called in as support to the Brigade. As the landing craft were loaded with Marines, they moved toward the line of departure and were organized into columns of landing teams for the assault.

Less than ten miles of the coast line of GUAM are suitable for an amphibious assault, and these stretches only at higher stages of the tide. Coral reefs, high cliffs and heavy surf combines to deny most of the shore to landing in any force. The reef continues except for small breaks, fringes the entire island and fills many of the coastal bays. The greater portion of the reef ranges in width from 25 to 700 yards; to the southwest it extends toward Santa Rosa Reef for $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The lower reefs are covered by a few feet of water at mid or high tide, allowing only boats of two foot draft to pass over them. It was necessary to transfer troops from Higgins Boats (LCVP) to LCTs in order to get across the coral reef to the beach. These were special targets of the Japanese emplaced weapons; heavy casualties were caused by direct hits and near hits on these tanks.⁵ In most cases the tanks had to be guided across the reef by men preceding the tanks on foot through the water. Later channels were marked with flags and buoys.

The Japanese used a 63KC aircraft bomb quite extensively in and around the beach area. They were placed in single lines with ten to twelve feet between bombs. All fuses were armed but in almost all cases were not well concealed, the nose of the bomb in some places protruded as much as 18 inches above the ground level. This method of mining the beach was not effective against our tanks or LVTs.⁶

The enemy had placed wire entanglements in the water and on the beaches. However these obstacles were quickly eliminated by the attacking Marines.

The assault elements of the 3rd Marine Division hit the ASAN Beach at 0828. The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade landed at AGAT at 0831.⁷ Machine guns firing from caves near the water's edge were quickly overcome by the advancing forces. Enemy mortars and artillery in the hills put fire on the beaches, air strikes helped silence some of the fire falling in the 3rd Division sector. At AGAT where the enemy had mined the beaches and reefs in depth landing was more difficult. Enemy guns on GOON and BANGI Point sank 20 LVTs and DUKWs as they attempted to cross the reef barrier.

By 0900 Marine land tanks were ashore and in action. The tanks were landed on the reef from LCM (3)s and LCT (6)s without casualties. From the reef the tanks were driven to shore with the aid of guides.

As the Marines pushed inland they came under mortar and artillery fire. They had two spirited counterattacks which they held off assisted by their tanks. By evening the Marines had penetrated inland approximately 2000 yards on a 4500 yard front.

(See Fig. 9)

During the early afternoon the First Provisional Marine Brigade summoned the 305th RCT of the 77th Infantry Division to land for support in the holding of the beachhead against possible counterattack that night and in expanding the area the following day.

The 2nd Battalion of the 305th had transferred to landing craft during the initial phase of the assault landing, and circled in the assembly area until called in at 1300 by the Provisional Brigade. When the Battalion reached the reef they required LVTs to carry them to shore, but they found no craft waiting and had to wade ashore with equipment in water waist deep.

The remainder of the 305th had even greater difficulties in making shore because of a slip-up in coordination and communications between Brigade and Navy. The commanding officer of the 305th RCT received orders to land the two remaining battalions of the RCT. The message was delayed one hour in transmission. It was discovered that only enough craft to land one battalion was available when the order was received. The first battalion debarked and started for the beach, it was held up by the navy boat control officers for more than an hour, because they had not received instructions to allow movement toward the shore at that time. Again the navy control officers had failed to call for LVTs to take the troops over the reef. The men were forced to wade ashore, this time in higher water. They found they had veered several hundred yards south of their planned touchdown, and were intermingled and lost in the early hours of darkness. It was several hours later before they were assembled and organized.

The 3rd Battalion experienced somewhat the same difficulties in debarking and landing. The transport carrying this battalion was ordered 10 to 15 miles out to sea because of a report of an enemy submarine attack. Some of the landing craft were still missing when the transport returned the troops to debark. It was the following morning before the 305th RCT with two platoons of the 706th Tank Battalion attached assembled on the beach as a unit.

Organization Of Armor For Combat

The 706th Tank Battalion, less the two platoons attached to the 305th RCT, remained aboard ships with elements of the 77th Infantry Division during the initial phase of the operation. By 27 July the battalion was all ashore and attached to units of the 77th Infantry Division. The two platoons that landed with the 305th RCT on 21 July were held in reserve until 2 August.

The 706th Tank Battalion was broken into four units. Each medium tank company reinforced was attached to the regimental combat teams for the operation. The companies were reinforced with a reconnaissance section, a mortar squad, and an assault gun squad from headquarters company. Two trucks from the service company were attached to each company for use as supply vehicles. Aid men from the medical detachment were attached to each company. The RCT commander in each case further attached a tank platoon to each of its combat battalions with instructions for the tank platoon to

remain with them for the entire operation. Each company commander with his command tank remained with the RCT commander and acted as a special staff officer. He maintained liaison between the infantry and tank platoons. The company commander also coordinated supplies, maintained tank communications and made recommendations as to the use of the tank platoons. 8

The light tank company remained under battalion control and was available for reconnaissance and fire missions as directed by the Commanding General, 77th Infantry Division. A platoon of this company was later used by the Commanding General for protection of the division command post.

Events Of 23-28 July

During the 23rd and 24th July the beachhead was extended by the Marines, giving the III Corps necessary room for continuing the assault phase. The 3rd Marine Division, completing the occupation of CABRAS Island, had gained command of the north side of the harbor and, on the left flank, had fought up the steep slopes near CHONITO Cliff.

On the 28th July the Commanding General of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade called for tanks from the 77th Infantry Division to give support to the 4th Marine Regiment in their sector, in an attack to link up the Northern and Southern beachheads on the final beachline and to capture the OROTE Peninsula. Five light tanks of Company D, 706th Tank Battalion were dispatched

to the Brigade. The tanks were attached to the 4th Marine Regiment. Two medium tanks from Hq. Company of the 706th Tank Battalion later joined the light tanks to strengthen the Marine attack. Prior to the attack two platoons of the Brigade's medium tanks were shifted to the 4th Marine sector to reinforce the flank units.⁹

The light tanks of Company D moved through the 4th Regiment against the defenses that had held up the Marines. The advance was slow over shell-torn terrain. Fighting was so concentrated that most of the tank fire was directed at positions within ten or fifteen yards of the tanks. The fire of the 37mm gun was effective against reinforced enemy positions at that range. The Marines followed the tanks closely, mopping up positions and protecting the tanks from enemy riflemen and grenades.

The Japanese weakened in the face of the combined operation of the infantry and tanks. Within two hours the 4th Regiment had advanced over 600 yards against what had been heavy resistance from prepared positions in pillboxes and dugouts. In this limited attack the tank platoon of Company D fired about 10,000 rounds of .30 caliber ammunition, 100 rounds of HE, and 20 rounds of canister. The light tanks alone destroyed four pillboxes, numerous dugouts and approximately 250 Japanese. This action was one of the few in which tanks were employed as a unit even of platoon strength.

Events Of 29 July - 5 August

On 29th July the tank platoon again supported the Marines in their attack to complete the capture of the OROTE Peninsula. The army tanks were employed in the same manner as they were the day before and led the attack to the western end of the OROTE airstrip. Without stopping they pushed down the jungle trails to the ocean, thus completely cutting off the peninsula. With this mission completed the tank platoon returned to join the 77th Infantry Division.¹⁰

With the exception of the action of one Platoon of Company D, other elements of the 706th Tank Battalion remained with their respective RCTs and were employed in such roles as breaking trails, route reconnaissance, and battalion reserves. Records indicate that the tanks were not employed as a unit again until 2nd August when the 1st Platoon of Company B was dispatched to assist elements of the 307th RCT which were pinned down by enemy automatic weapons fire. The platoon moved into assault positions and fired into the dense jungle forward of the infantry. The tanks fired on snipers in tree tops, blew up dugouts, and destroyed six houses. It was estimated that the platoon killed 200 enemy infantry.

On the same day Company D, which had now been attached to the 307th RCT for the drive on BARRIGADA, was given a mission to reconnoiter enemy positions south of the town. Fourteen tanks

moved out along the AGANA-FINEGAYAN Road. As the tanks approached Road Junction 306, (See Fig. 10), they drew moderate small arms fire. The crews machine-gunned suspected areas and returned to report they had seen eight Japanese soldiers with a machine gun.

The tanks were again sent on a reconnaissance mission with instructions to go north to MT. BARRIGADA and east of the town. They moved along the same route, passed through BARRIGADA, and turned north up the FINEGAYAN Road without difficulty. Deserted positions indicated that the enemy had planned to defend the town or restrict movement through it. Without incident the tanks moved almost abreast of MT. BARRIGADA more than a mile from the junction. Here the tanks met a group of enemy soldiers hiding behind three trucks that were being used as a road block. The leading tank opened fire on the trucks and personnel with machine guns and 37 mm guns. The trucks were destroyed and 35 enemy killed. The tanks withdrew and returned to BARRIGADA and moved to the east of the town. As the tanks reached a point only a few hundred yards from the town, the leading tank became hung up on a stump and blocked the rest of the column. The dense woods would not permit the other tanks to by-pass the disabled one. As the crews worked to free the tank, the jungle on each side of the road seemed to come alive with Japanese. The enemy opened up with 20 mm machine guns as others crawled forward with grenades to attack personnel

in the tanks. The tank crews brought their 37 mm and machine guns into action and returned the fire driving off the enemy. Most of the enemy filtered back into the woods; only a few of them were killed. The platoon commander reported to headquarters that 150 Japanese were near his position and requested permission to discontinue the mission and return to friendly lines. Permission was granted. The disabled tank was freed from the stump and moved back with the other tanks.

Events Of 6-8 August

After considerable slow going the 77th Infantry Division and the 3rd Marine Division had advanced abreast to the O-4 line on 6th August. (See Fig. 11). Less than one-third of GUAM now remained in the hands of the Japanese. Plans were made for the two major units of the III Amphibious Corps, the 3rd Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Brigade to attack abreast on the 77th's left and push to the north coast of the island. The 77th Division was to make the main effort toward SANTA ROSA. In this attack all units on the island were to be committed except one battalion each of the 77th Infantry Division and the 3rd Marine Division. These battalions were to be placed in Corps Reserve. The general plan of the 77th Infantry Division was a maneuver to make a wide sweep by the left wing while the division pivoted on the right to effect an encirclement of MT. SANTA ROSA. Tanks were to spearhead the attack, closely supported by infantry.

In the 77th Division Sector the 307th Battalion supported by the 706th Tank Battalion (less companies A and B) were to take YIGO, then turn east and push to the slopes of MT. SANTA ROSA, (See Fig. 11). A terrain study showed that fairly good tank country lay ahead. Cultivated fields instead of jungle bordered either side of the FINEGAYAN Road to YIGO and extended to the area east of the town.

General Bruce, Commanding General, 77th Infantry Division, and Lieutenant Colonel Stokes, Commanding Officer, 706th Tank Battalion, worked out plans for the employment of the 706th the day prior to the attack. The plan was for Company D (the Light Tank Company) to advance rapidly into YIGO immediately following the artillery preparation; the mediums of Company C would follow Company D. Company A with the 307th Battalion was to be in general support. Tanks of Company D and C were to reduce the enemy positions at YIGO and then occupy the highground northeast of the village. The hour had been set for 1200 hours.¹¹

At 1145 hours Colonel Stokes received orders to report to the command post of the 307th now located on the FINEGAYAN Road 500 yards behind the line of departure. Prior to reaching the command post, Colonel Stokes heard the artillery open up at 1150 hours and saw troops of the 307th moving into position. Upon his arrival at the command post, he was informed the attack was on. At this time the tanks of the 706th were approximately

a mile behind the line of departure. Colonel Stokes radioed the Company Commander of Company D to move out and execute the prepared plan. When the devastating artillery preparation ceased at 1200 hours, the tanks and infantry were not at the line of departure to advance immediately. They were still on the narrow road leading into the position. The advance of the infantry was held up by the narrowness of the road and by enemy sniper fire. The tanks were having trouble trying to pass the columns of infantry in order to take the lead. The tanks were unable to move off the road due to the jungle on each side. This resulted in vehicles and men moving forward cautiously on the one clogged road.

It was fifteen minutes after the artillery stopped before the light tanks were able to reach the head of the column of troops, 100 yards north of the line of departure and 400 yards from YIGO. The tanks passed through the infantry and moved toward YIGO. The tanks had moved only about 200 yards along the road before they reached an opening in the jungle. The crews spotted several dug in enemy machine gun positions along the road. These positions were overrun by the tanks. The tank platoon moved in an echelon formation in order to cover the open area, which rose to a slight crest on the right. The medium tanks followed along the road. The infantry moved behind the armor to attack dugouts and pillboxes by-passed by the tanks.

The light tanks pushed rapidly to and over the slight crest. As they moved beyond the crest toward their objective, a burst of fire hit the ground near the company commander's tank in rear of the formation. A second round coming from the left of the formation hit a tank on the left of the command tank and disabled it. The crew began to evacuate it. A second later the enemy fire increased and a second light tank was hit and started to burn. The tank crews were unable to locate the source of the enemy fire because of the dense woods and the lack of smoke and flash. The other light tanks moved on at high speed in order to avoid the fire.

When the medium tanks reached the open area, the crews could tell that the light tanks were having trouble, but could not see where the fire was coming from. As they advanced up the slight rise, they too received fire from the left. One of the leading tanks of the group was hit and burst into flames. The crew abandoned the tank just as the ammunition inside began exploding. Another medium near by stalled under the heavy fire and the crew left the vehicle and took cover in a shell hole. Other mediums began moving out of the area. One of them tried to swing to the right out of the line of fire and threw a track. As the other tanks came up, they fired to the left without effect toward the enemy position as they passed toward the battalion objective.

The infantry moved into the area where the stricken tanks were burning and began to attack the positions that had given the

tanks trouble. The enemy was still firing from a pillbox that had been blasted by fire from one of the tanks. A flame thrower man moved to the position and put the searing flame through an opening. The heat was too much for the defenders; as they tried to escape they fell before the fire of the infantrymen. The position in the woods to the left that had harassed the tanks so much was still intact. This position was flanked and knocked out by a platoon of infantry that had been dispatched from the 306th RCT, on the left, to investigate the heavy firing. The enemy in the position were so intent on blasting the tanks to their front that they were unaware of the platoon moving on them through the woods. The platoon found two tanks, an anti-tank gun, two 20 mm guns, six light machine guns and two heavy machine guns almost perfectly concealed from the area to their front, although vulnerable from the rear.

The infantry pushed through the enemy positions and advanced through the village. Upon reaching the highground northeast of YIGO at 1325, they found the tanks waiting. The tanks had pushed through the town with no opposition and had been circling about for forty minutes to prevent infiltrators from closing in on them. There was little sign of the enemy in the area. Whatever the failure of coordination and the lack of communications between the tanks and infantry at YIGO, the Japanese had been routed by the power and shock of the combined assault. This tank-infantry attack was the only army action on GUAM where

more than one tank company teamed with infantry in an assault. This action cost the 706th Tank Battalion two killed, ten wounded and one missing, as well as two light tanks and two medium tanks.¹²

After the attack on YIGO all the tank companies rejoined their parent unit, the 706th, and saw no further action on GUAM as company sized units. On 8th August the 1st Platoon of Company A supported the 3rd Battalion of the 307th Combat Team on its march on MT. SANTA ROSA.¹³ No opposition was encountered.

Summary

The Army tank action on GUAM was mainly that of from one to five tanks used with infantry in the close support role. The Japanese used one or two tanks supported by infantry on three or four occasions. While fighting on GUAM the 706th Tank Battalion destroyed four enemy tanks and had seven of their own knocked out. Of these seven only two were destroyed and these were destroyed by other tanks of the 706th to keep them from falling into the hands of the Japanese. The enemy used some scattered mines which knocked tracks off of two of our tanks.

The 706th Battalion destroyed numerous pillboxes, dugouts, and small buildings during this action. The Battalion was instrumental in killing some 500 enemy personnel on GUAM.

Conclusions

A study of the reports indicate that the use of tanks was very limited on both sides due to the restrictions of terrain. The limited road net and heavy jungle growth nullified any advantage that tanks might have gained from their mobility. However, when tanks could be used with infantry they were very effective in destroying enemy personnel and neutralizing their automatic weapons so our infantry could move.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

¹Guam, Operations of the 77th Division (Washington: U.S. War Department Historical Division, 1946). p. 22.

²Ibid, p. 22.

³After Action Report, 706th Tank Battalion, 4 September 1944, pp. 1-2.

⁴Op. Cit., Guam, Operations of the 77th Division, p. 31.

⁵Staff of the Ninth Marines, The Ninth Marines (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1946) p. 54.

⁶Operation Report, 77th Division, Microfilm (No. 134-909).

⁷Op. Cit. Guam, Operations of the 77th Division, p. 32.

⁸Op. Cit. Operation Report.

⁹Op. Cit., After Action Report, p. 4.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹Op. Cit., Guam, Operations of the 77th Division, p. 121.

¹²Op. Cit., After Action Report, p. 9.

¹³Ibid., p. 10.

ENEMY DISPOSITIONS ON GUAM JULY 1944



- ① 2d Bn. 18th Inf.
- ② 48th Independent Mixed Brigade.
- ③ 29th Div (-)
- ④ 5th Co, 38th Inf.
- ⑤ 45th Keibitak
- ⑥ 38th Inf.
- ⑦ 10th Independent Mixed Regt.

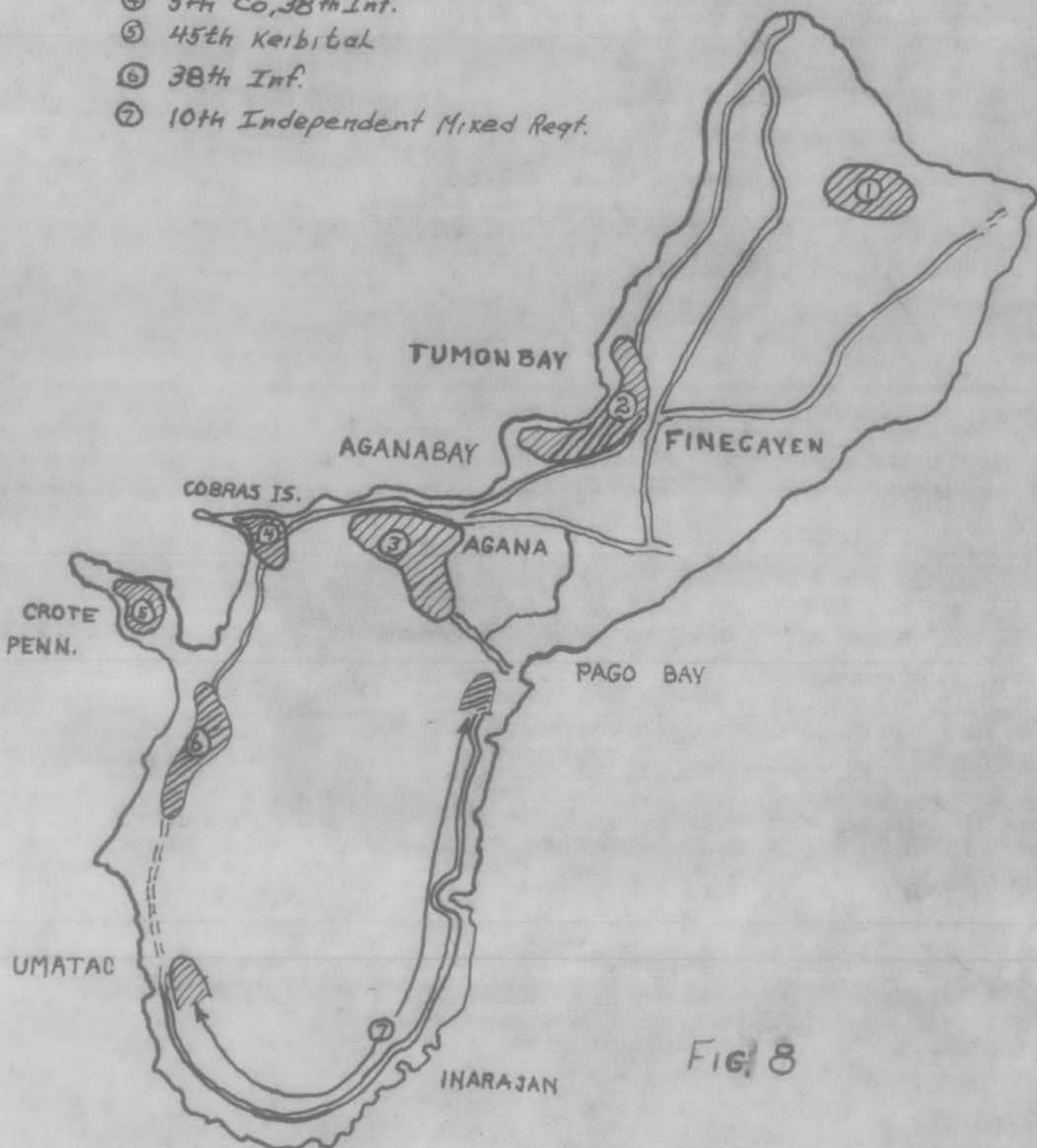




FIG 8

GUAM








RECONNAISSANCE OF SOUTHERN GUAM

28 JULY - 2 AUGUST 1944

 FORWARD POSITION, 28 JULY

 FBL -- FINAL BEACH LINE

PATROL ROUTES

-  A --- ABLE, 28 JULY
-  B --- BAKER, 28-29 JULY
-  C --- CHARLIE, 28 JULY
-  D --- DOG, 28 JULY
-  E --- EASY, 28 JULY
-  F --- FOX, 30 JULY
-  G --- GEORGE, 31 JULY - 2 AUGUST

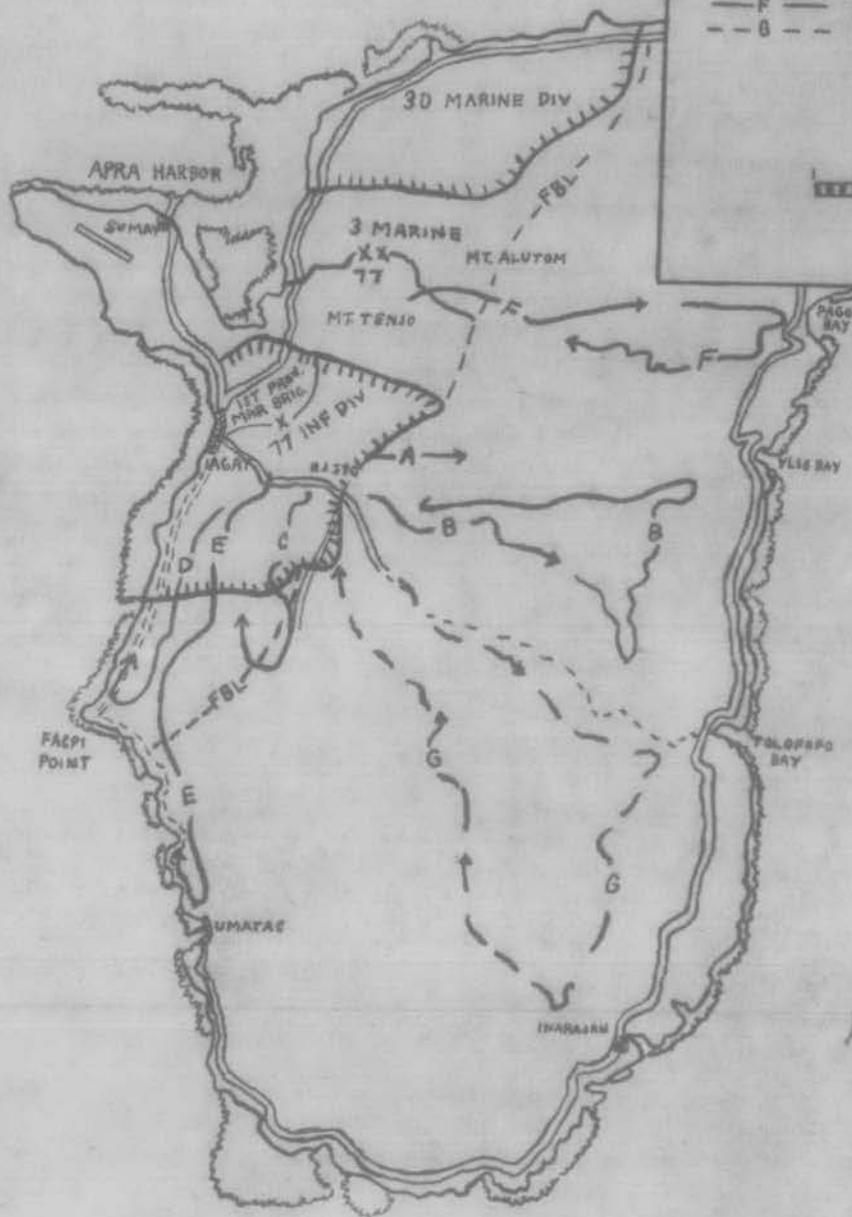
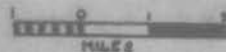


FIG. 9

GUAM

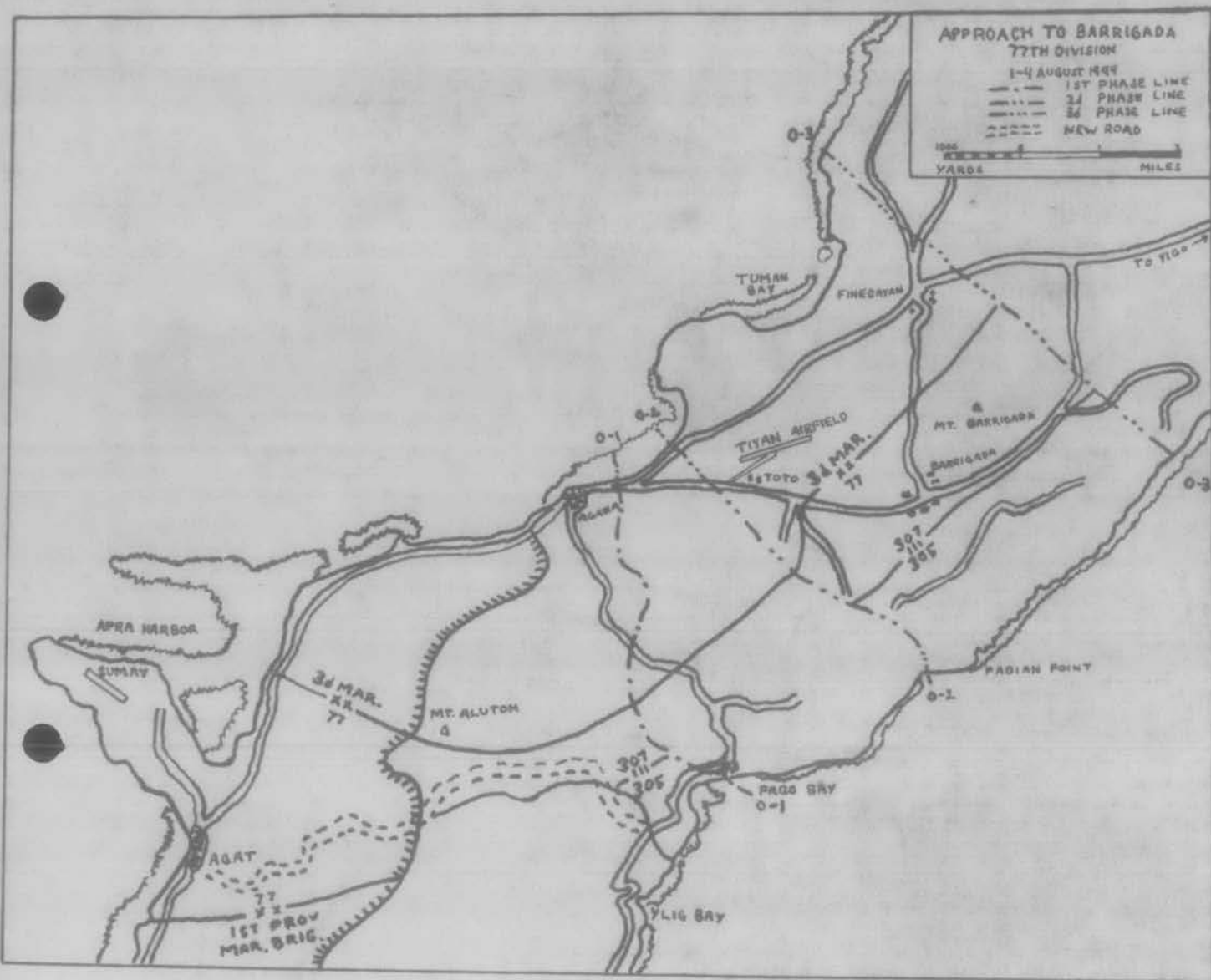


FIG 10

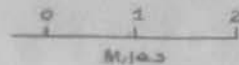
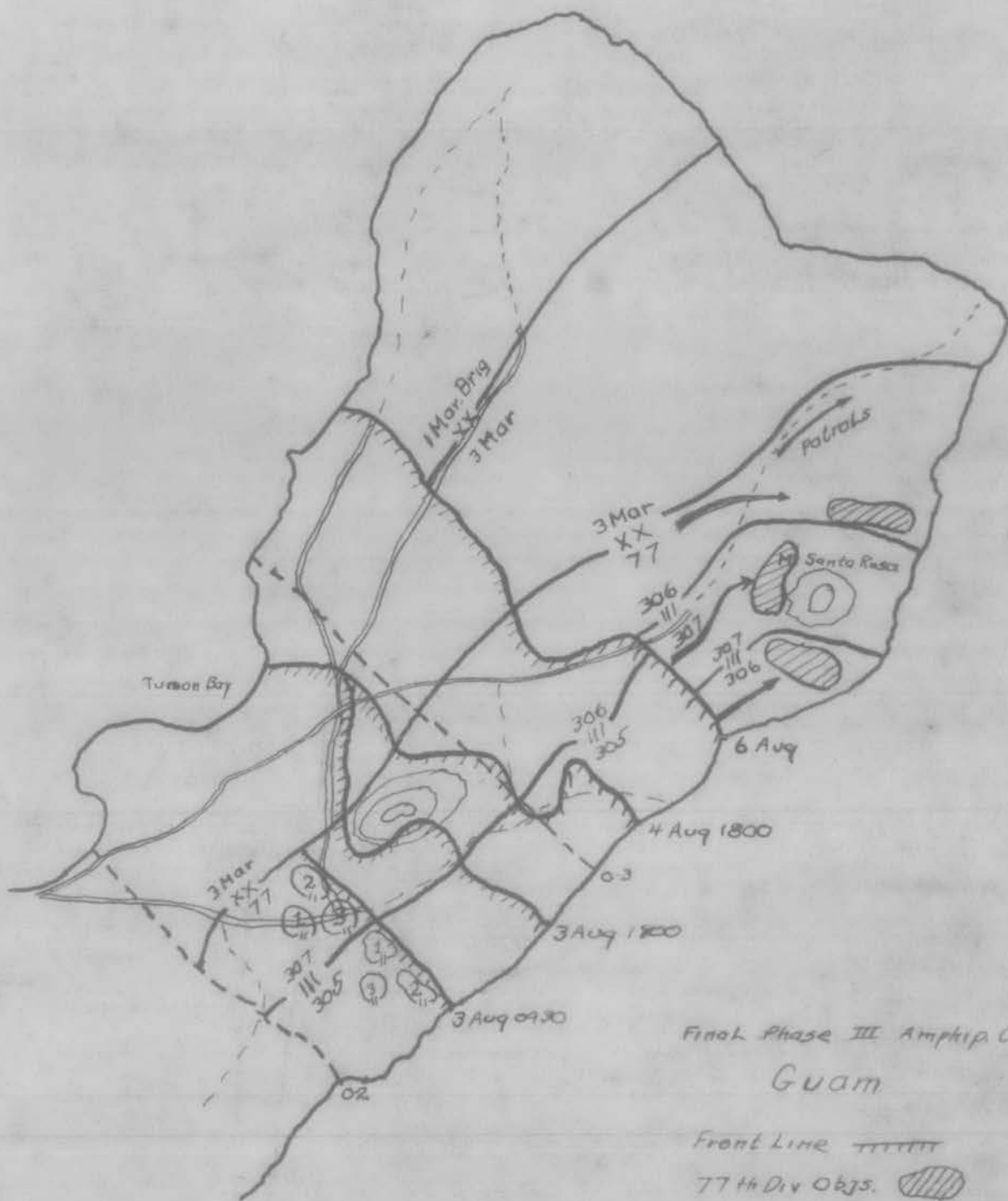


FIG. 11

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The Employment Of Armor In The Marianas

An analysis of the operations on SAIPAN, TINIAN and GUAM reveals that the terrain and the Japanese forced our High Command to plan assaults which were predominantly Infantry. Tanks could not have been used in mass. However, a study of the after action reports shows that even on these typically Infantry jobs Armor played a decisive role. The following are salient points in the employment of Armor in Operation FORAGER.

Only in one instance (on GUAM) was a tank unit of battalion size employed. On this island a terrain study indicated good tank country in the vicinity of YIGO. Consequently, General Bruce, Commanding General, 77th Infantry Division, recognized the opportunity of using the 706th Tank Battalion intact.

In offensive actions on all three of these islands tank companies were generally attached to infantry regiments. In turn, platoons were attached to battalions. As a result, maximum tank support provided for an assault unit which averaged from two to five tanks.

Fire power, mobility and armor protection of tanks were used to good advantage in the destruction of fortified positions, strong points, and automatic weapons. A typical example of this use of tanks occurred on 28 July, 1944 when Company D, 706th Tank Battalion was used successfully on GUAM during cleanup of the OROTE Peninsula.

By the end of the second day's action on TINIAN the tankers found they would be of invaluable assistance to the infantry in helping to clear fields of fire. Tanks were used effectively to trample the tall vegetation. Throughout the remainder of the campaign on TINIAN this technique was used to solve one of the infantry's very difficult problems.

Early in Operation FORAGER resupply and evacuation of casualties were found to be particularly difficult mainly because of the limited road nets on SAIPAN, TINIAN, and GUAM. The mobility of tanks was quickly recognized as a solution to the problem. Consequently, tanks were used to evacuate the wounded and to haul ammunition and other supplies to front line units.

On these islands visibility and fields of fire were particularly restricted at night. This fact, coupled with the close in nature of the fighting at night, made it very difficult for tanks to remain in front line positions during the hours of darkness. Therefore, tanks fought during daylight hours in support of infantry; at night they usually withdrew to assembly areas for resupply and maintenance.

Conclusions

Because of the rugged terrain on these islands it was not feasible to use tanks in mass.

The main role of tanks was close support of Infantry.

Armor was properly employed in the destruction of fortified positions and other strong points.

Clearing fields of fire with tanks was successful due to the lack of effective Japanese anti-tank measures.

Undoubtedly the use of tanks to evacuate wounded and haul ammunition was a solution, but it is felt that these jobs could have been done by other units. This mission used only one of the characteristics of Armor - Mobility. Its fire power and shock action were lost.

This study indicates that more tanks could have been used on these islands. It is believed that the new Infantry Division organization with its battalion of tanks would take care of this need. The organic tank companies with each regiment would also improve the coordination that sometimes was lacking.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX I

GENERAL DISCRPTIONS (Marianas Islands)

Historical Background

Magellan discovered the Marianas Islands in 1521. These islands have belonged to Spain, the United States, Germany, and Japan. A century after Magellan visited the islands, Spanish Jesuit missionaries settled there and Spain exercised a loose control over them. After the Spanish-American War these islands, along with the Philippines, came into the hands of the United States. The United States kept Guam because it was a stepping stone along the route to the Philippines, but returned the remainder of the islands to Spain. Spain immediately sold the Marianas, except Guam, to Germany. Concurrent with the outbreak of World War I Japan moved to occupy these German possessions in the Pacific. During the settlement that followed the World War the Allied Powers agreed to allow Japan to control these islands by mandate from the League of Nations which it did until 1936 when it resigned from the League and openly took possession of the islands.

The Marianas are some of the so-called volcanic islands of the Central Pacific but that designation is incorrect. They have been raised and distorted by volcanic action but are substantially coral. In past geologic ages volcanic action has raised and immersed the coral reefs that have clung about the

sunken volcanic action cones, but there has never been an active crater above the sea and the spread of lava above the coral reefs has been through fissures in the accumulated strata of coral and ocean sediment.

Climatology

The seasonal variation in mean monthly temperature is less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ degrees in the southern islands of the Marianas; it is somewhat greater in the northern islands. The daily range of temperature averages only 9 or 10 degrees; absolute maximum and minimum temperatures are not extreme. The highest temperature recorded at SAIPAN is 89 degrees (in September) and the lowest 67 degrees (in January).

The average humidity varies between 79% and 86%. The diurnal range varies from 20% in April to 10% in December. The lowest humidity recorded at SAIPAN was 43%, in February.

Squalls known as "Churadas" occur occasionally, especially early in the year. Churadas are probably line squalls and it seems that they generally come from the west or southwest.

The driest month is usually April and amounts of rainfall less than one inch have been recorded in all months from January to April. However, 18.6 inches of rain has been recorded at SAIPAN in January, of which nearly 12 inches fell during two successive days. This abnormally heavy rainfall was not associated with a typhoon. Rain is least frequent from February to April when the average number of rainy days per month is 18 or 19. The frequency increases appreciably in May, and from July to October the number of rainy days per month exceeds 25.

Saipan

SAIPAN is roughly twelve miles long, five miles wide and has an area of approximately seventy-five square miles. A chain of mountains crosses the middle of the island in a north-south direction. The eastern side of the range is steep but the western side slopes gradually to flat, cultivated ground. The backbone of the island is formed by a series of peaks. MT. TAPOTCHAU, 1554 feet, is the highest, and is about two and a third miles southeast of MUTCHO POINT and almost in the exact center of the island. Northeast of MT. TAPOTCHAU is a series of hills, among which are four peaks ranging from 720 feet to 947 feet in height. They are for the most part heavily wooded. Between the lower slopes of these hills and the coasts is a comparatively level area averaging 800 to 1000 yards in width. A range of hills, averaging 540 feet in height, extends south of MT. TAPOTCHAU. Toward the southern part of the island the range spreads out, forming a high plateau in the southeastern peninsula. The southern part of the island appears to be flatter than the northern part and has extensive pasture land. Along the southern and western shores there are thick coconut groves and casuarina trees.

Vegetation is plentiful but somewhat stunted, probably due to the shallow top-soil and its coral base. The trees of the island are some types of willows and pines and have never achieved any great height. In the approaches to the mountains

are found tall grass and vines. There is some terracing and sugar cane has been introduced by the Japanese without too much success. The cane grows to a height about half that of cane found on the island of HAWAII. Some banana plants are grown and pineapple is cultivated. Mango trees are plentiful, and there are some limes, coconuts, breadfruit, and papayas. Practically every kind of vegetable with the exception of lettuce can be grown on SAIPAN. There is some cotton, tobacco, and corn grown.

The inhabitants are principally of three groups: Chamorros, Koreans, and Japanese. It is interesting that the Japanese held all the positions of power as well as all the white-collar jobs, ownership of businesses and enterprise, while the Koreans and Chamorros occupied positions little better than that of peons. These Chamorros were descendants of the original inhabitants of the island, and with the exception of a few Germans, were the sole occupants until the Japanese began their occupation. The Koreans were brought in by the Japanese for labor. In 1938 there were 25,000 Japanese, 3,500 natives (almost all Chamorros) and 10 foreigners on the island. Most of the buildings on the island are concentrated in GARAPAN town, CHATCHA and CHARAN-KANOA; in addition, dwellings are scattered throughout the sugar plantations. For the most part these houses were made of wood and tile, although some masonry was used. A narrow-gauge railroad ran from TANPAG through GARAPAN to CHARAN-KANOA, then

across to ASLITO field where it turned north and continued on across KAGMAN Peninsula to the north.

While picturesque from a distance or height, SAIPAN upon closer observation presents a very rough and rugged interior, as was borne out by the difficulty experienced in negotiating the terrain during the fighting.

Tinian

TINIAN lies about two and three-fourths miles southwest of SAIPAN. It is roughly ten and one-half miles long in a north-south direction and has a maximum width of five miles. Its area consists of approximately eighteen square miles. On the north end there is considerable high ground culminating in MT LASSO which is a little over 500 feet in height, but through the center of the island going south, most of the ground lies rather flat and smooth to rolling. Again on the south end there is a high plateau which is surrounded by steep cliffs and escarpments.

The rolling farm land in the center of the island produced mainly sugar cane and vegetables. There is a fair system of roads, particularly a north-south road that leads from TINIAN TOWN to USHI POINT Airfield. A light narrow-gauge railway 38 miles in length, encircles the island, starting from TINIAN TOWN and is used to serve the sugar fields. Before the war there were 14,108 Japanese and 25 natives (all Chamorros) on the island. They were clustered about the town of TINIAN although some lived on the sugar plantations.

The most important industry is the production of sugar. In TINIAN there are two sugar mills, each of which has a daily capacity of 1,200 tons of sugar cane from which 120 tons of sugar is produced. The molasses by-product is converted there into alcohol and a portion of this is further converted into synthetic Scotch whiskey, port wines and four or five other products.

Guam

GUAM is the southernmost island of the MARIANAS and is the largest body of land in the Central Pacific between HAWAII and the PHILIPPINES. It is approximately 34 miles in length, north to south, while the width varies from 5 to 9 miles. Total area of the island is 228 square miles. From just below the town of AGANA to the southern tip of the island runs a wide long ridge, whose highest point is MT. TENJO. This ridge, once a plateau, has now been eroded into numerous gorges, ravines and valleys. The other important peaks of this ridge are ALUTOM, CHACHAO, which are largely masses of sedimentary rock from which the superimposed lava has rotted and fallen away. For the greater part of its length this central plateau of soft reddish clay is treeless except in depths of its gorges and covered only with a coarse grass. It serves as pasture for the village herds. It is possible to progress with some ease north and south along the plateau. To cross the island, however, one must follow the ridges parallel to the drainage system. These ridges invariably end in deep ravines. On the east coast the plateau slopes gradually to heavy jungle; on the west coast below AGANA and as far south as AGAT Bay the treeless ridges break down abruptly to flat level basins. At some places bony cliffs parallel the shore, while at other places long sharp ridges come down like spread fingers almost to the beach. Rivers follow the ravines between these ridges, swollen during the rainy season, almost dry from January to June.

North of AGANA lies a mile or so of cultivated rolling country, which merges into a flat, jungle-covered plateau. In only one or two places have the high cliffs broken down in scooped-out hollows leading to sandy beaches with cocoanut groves behind them. This country has one or two small villages in it and a few rather primitive farms. Near its south end is the low forest hump of MT. BARRIGADA, while further to the north is the bare low ridge of MT. SANTA ROSA. Two roads run north from AGANA, both on the west coast.

About 100 miles of hard-surfaced, two-lane motor road existed on the island in 1940. This type of Class A road, built of a kind of soft coral rock, ran from AGAT northward along the coast through AGANA and beyond MT. MACHANAO. A section of it extended inland and across the island to BARRIGADA, FINEGAYAN, and beyond YIGO. Travel through the interior of southern GUAM depended largely upon trails, some wide enough for bull carts.

According to the 1940 census, there were about 22,290 permanent residents on GUAM, more than half of whom lived in the main city of AGANA. The remainder of the population lived in very small villages; only 8 towns, including AGANA, had more than 500 inhabitants. Many of the natives, called Chamorros, are descendants of the Spanish, Mexican, and Philippine soldiers who occupied the island after 1670, but others have American, British, Chinese, or Japanese forebears who came later and intermarried with the natives. Most of the Chamorros are Catholic,

and almost all of them can speak some English. Although 80 per cent engage in agriculture, their methods are so poor that the staples of their diet have to be imported.

A P P E N D I X II

CASUALTY SUMMARY

U. S. FORCES

	<u>K.I.A.</u>	<u>M.I.A.</u>	<u>WOUNDED</u>
SAIPAN	3126	338	13,160
TINIAN	290	24	1,515
GUAM	1727	22	5,597

JAPANESE FORCES

	<u>CAPTURED</u>	<u>KILLED *</u>
SAIPAN	1810	23811
TINIAN	255	6000 plus
GUAM	77	.10000 plus

* Figures shown are based on unit estimates and may be taken as a minimum.

Appendix III



Figure 12. AMPHIBIOUS TANK (LVT-A)



Figure 13. AMPHIBIOUS TRACTOR (LVT)



LSV



LCT. 6



LVT. 4



LSM



LCMs ON LSD.



LST. Launching LVT



LCVP.



LCM

ASSAULT LANDING EQUIP.

Fig. —

A P P E N D I X IV

Glossary of Terms Used In Amphibious Warfare

(Amphibious Warfare Instructions, U. S. Fleets, USF 6,
Navy Department, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1946)

- AKA The navy symbol for a "cargo ship, attack."
- APA The navy symbol for a "transport, attack."
- BLT Battalion Landing Team. In an amphibious operation, an infantry battalion specially reinforced by necessary combat and service elements; the basic unit for planning an assault landing. A battalion landing team is normally embarked aboard one attack transport or several LST.
Abbrev: BLT
- AK A cargo ship primarily designed to carry freight; it may carry a limited number of personnel.
- Control Officer - A naval officer, designated by the Attack Force, charged with over-all supervision of the ship to shore movement.
- DUKW A 2½ Ton Amphibian Truck, capable of transporting personnel and cargo on water or land.
- LCP (L) Landing craft personnel (large); capacity 30-36 troops or 6,700 lbs. cargo.
- LCP (R) Landing craft personnel (ramp); capacity 29 troops or 6,700 lbs. cargo.
- LCV Landing craft vehicle; capacity 36 troops or 10,000 lbs cargo or 1/4 4 x 4 truck.
- LCUP Landing craft vehicle (personnel); capacity 38 troops or 8,100 lbs. cargo or 1/4 4 x 4 truck.
- LCM (3) Landing craft mechanized mark III; capacity 1 medium tank and 30 troops or 60,000 lbs cargo or 77 troops.
- LCT (5) Landing craft tank; capacity: 3-50 T heavy tanks or 5-30 T medium tanks.
- LVT (2) Landing vehicle tracked; capacity - 6,500 lbs cargo or 25 troops; does not have a ramp.

- LD Line of Departure
- LVT (4) Landing vehicle tracked: capacity 6,500 lb cargo or 25 troops; has a seven foot wide ramp.
- LSD Landing ship, Dock; capacity 3 LCT (5)s, (6)s with 5 medium tanks, or 2 LCT (3)s (4)s with 12 medium tanks, or 14 LCM (3)s each with 1 medium tank or 1500 long tons cargo, or 41 LUTs or 47 DUKWs. Troops: 22 officers; 218 men.
- LSM Landing ship, medium; capacity - 5 medium or 3 heavy tanks (150 tons maximum payload, beaching) or 6 LUTs or 9 DUKWs
Troops: 54.
- LSV Landing ship, vehicles; capacity: 19-21 LUTs (AP 106, 107, none), 29-44 DUKWs, 800 troops.
- LST Landing ship, tank; capacity 2100 tons.
- RCT Regimental combat team; a reinforced infantry regiment, operating as a balance fighting unit of essential arms. The normal ground force ratio is one regiment of Infantry, 1 Battalion of Artillery, 1 Company of Engineers. The organization is not fixed and may be varied to meet the demands of the tactical situation. Abbreviation RCT.
- TCS Team Control Station, Radio.