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MILITARY MONOGRAPH

TITLE: SUPPLY PROBLEMS OF THE LEYTE CAMPAIGN

SCOPE: Operations of the 12th Cavalry Regiment on Leyte Island, The Philippines, during the period 20 October, 1944 to 29 December, 1944.

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Norvell R. Stark

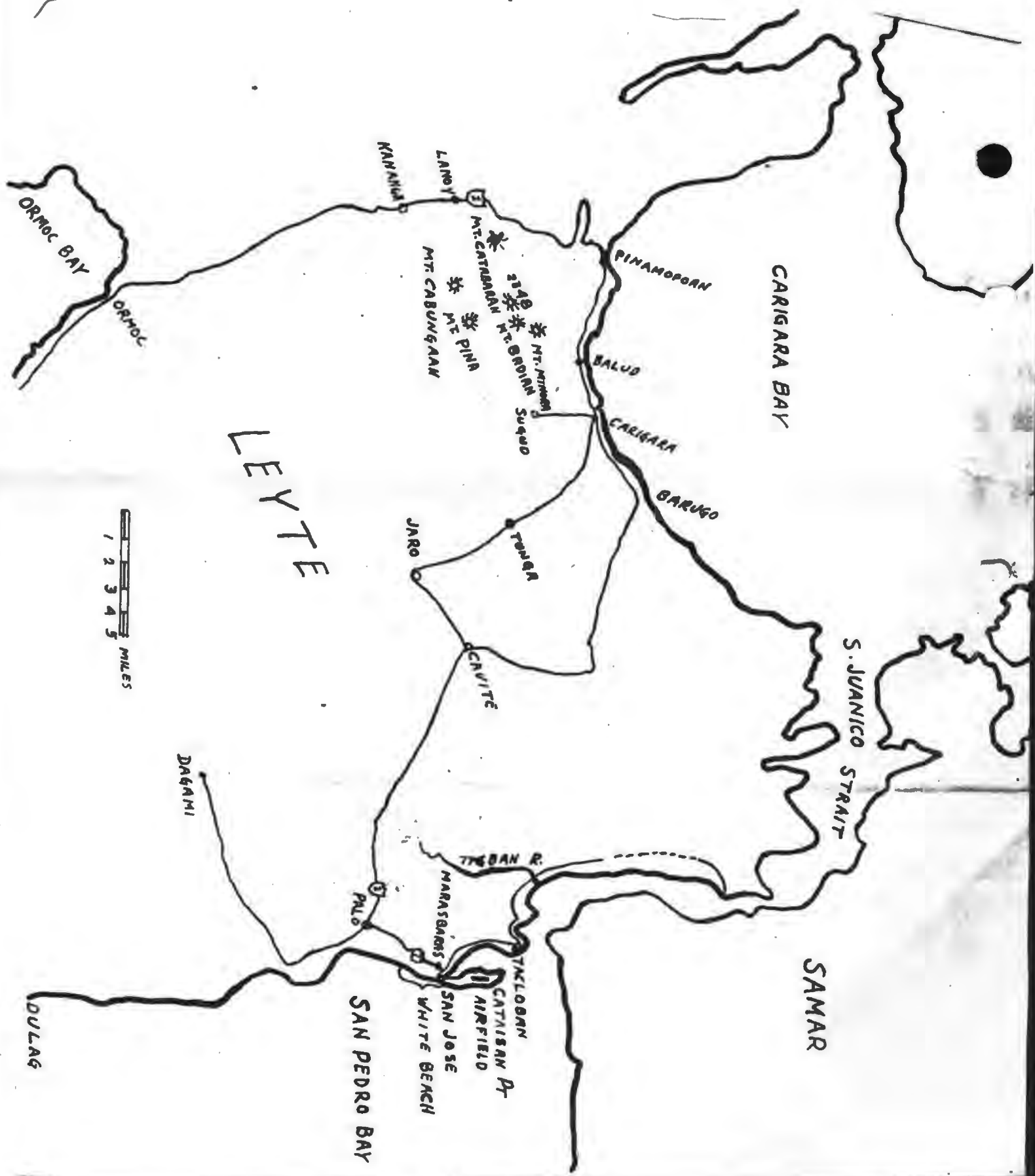
Prepared by: Norvell R. Stark
(Name)

Major Cavalry
(Rank)

FOREWORD

The basis for this monograph was the personal experiences of the writer while serving as Regimental Supply Officer of the 12th Cavalry Regiment. However, much of the factual data as to dates and events were obtained from field notes made by Lieutenant Colonel Wyllys Terry, Jr., who was S-3 of the 12th Cavalry Regiment throughout the Leyte campaign. Reference was also made to "The 1st Cavalry Division in World War II", compiled by Major B. C. Wright, Historian of the 1st Cavalry Division.

The contributions of Lieutenant Colonel Wyllys Terry, Jr. and Major B. C. Wright are deeply appreciated.



LEYTE

CARIGARA BAY

S. JUANICO STRAIT

SAMAR

ORMOC BAY

ORMOC

DULAG

DAGAMI

SAN PEDRO BAY

WHITE BEACH

SAN JOSE

AIRFIELD

CATAISAN Pt

TKLOBAN

TOBAN R.

MARASBANS

PALO

CARUETE

JARRO

TOBA

CARIGARA

BARUGO

BALUD

PINANOPORAN

MT. CABUNGAAN

MT. PINA

2148

MT. GROUN

SUGAO

MT. MINBUN

LANOY

KANAOK

SUPPLY PROBLEMS OF THE LEYTE CAMPAIGN

INTRODUCTION

In the War Room of an APA (assault transport) anchored in Seeadler Harbor, The Admiralty Islands, Brigadier General William C. Chase was briefing the commanders and staffs of his 1st Cavalry Brigade Combat Team. The date, October 11, 1944. The 1st Cavalry Brigade Combat Team was composed of the following elements:¹

Headquarters and Headquarters Troop 1st Cavalry Brigade.

12th Cavalry Regiment.

5th Cavalry Regiment.

Troop A, 8th Engineer Squadron.

Company A, 44th Tank Battalion.

Company B, 85th Chemical Battalion (4.2 Mortars).

302nd Reconnaissance Troop (less 2 platoons).

1st Collecting Company, 1st Medical Squadron.

19th Portable Surgical Hospital.

1st Section, 39th Quartermaster War Dog Platoon.

As General Chase commenced his final briefing, the attention of the assembled Army and Naval officers was directed to an enlarged map of Leyte Island, The Philippines. The substance of General Chase's briefing was as follows:

Leyte Island has been selected by General MacArthur as the

1. Major B. C. Wright, The 1st Cavalry Division in World War II.

p 71.

place of entry for the return of United States Troops to the Philippines. Sixth Army Assault troops will land on the northeastern beaches of Leyte 20 October 1944. The landing force for this invasion is composed of the XXIV Corps, with the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions, and the X Corps, with the 1st Cavalry Division and 24th Infantry Division. The XXIV Corps will land to the south of the X Corps.

The 1st Cavalry Division, commanded by Major General Verne D. Mudge, will land at "White Beach", seize the beachhead in its zone of action, capture Tacloban and Tacloban Airrome on the nearby Catalson Point Peninsula, destroy hostile forces in the Tacloban Valley, and establish control over San Juanico Strait to permit the access of light naval vessels to the Samar Sea. It will also maintain contact with the 24th Division, protect the right flank of the Sixth Army, and defend all occupied areas.

The 1st Cavalry Brigade will land regiments abreast, the 5th Regiment on the left, 12th Regiment on the right, and will attack east to Highway Number 1; the initial objective. This highway runs north and south and generally parallels the beach about 2000 yards inland. The 5th Regiment will maintain contact with the 24th Division on the Brigade left flank and the 12th Regiment will maintain contact with the 2nd Cavalry Brigade on the right flank.

After final details of the plan had been coordinated between the staffs and with the Navy, General Chase closed the conference with his famous expression, "Move in on 'em!"

Now let us join the 12th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team, commanded by Col. John H. Stadler (later Brigadier General), with headquarters aboard the APA "Harris" in Seeadler Harbor.

The Regimental Combat Team consisted of the following units:

- 12th Cavalry Regiment.
- Troop A, 8th Engineer Squadron (less one platoon).
- Company A, 44th Tank Battalion.
- Reconnaissance Platoon, Headquarters Troop, 1st Cavalry Brigade.

1. Wright, OP Ctt p 74.

Company B, 85th Chemical Battalion (4.2 Mortars).

2nd Collecting Platoon, 1st Medical Squadron.

1st Section 39th Quartermaster War Dog Platoon.

271st Field Artillery Battalion in direct support upon its arrival in the Division Artillery Area.

It is this regiment that we will follow through the Leyte Campaign, a campaign which for this unit not only involved fighting a tenacious and fanatical enemy, but also a battle against typhoons, incessant rain, bottomless mud, and terrain as rugged as ever encountered by fighting men. These unfavorable conditions combined to produce tremendous logistical problems, a factor which had to be considered by the Commanding Officer in his tactical planning. The problems of supply and evacuation encountered by the 12th Cavalry in this campaign provide an excellent example of how logistical considerations may exert greater influence in the conduct of an operation than enemy action.

PART ONE

THE LANDING PHASE

On 12 October 1944, the convoy containing the Regimental Combat Team sailed from Seadler Harbor. At daybreak on 20 October the mountains of Leyte were clearly visible; also clearly visible was a mine entangled in the port paravane of the "Harris". While the "Harris" was maneuvering to dispose of the mine, those aboard could see the flash and smoke of the guns of the battleship and cruisers

as they bombarded the landing beaches. In spite of the time consumed in disarming the mine, the first wave of the 1st Squadron hit the beach promptly at 1000 (H Hour) unopposed except by a small amount of rifle fire. A wide, deep antitank ditch was encountered about 100 yards in from the beach, but this was soon breached by the attached engineers and did not present too much of an obstacle. After a pause for reorganization, the forward movement was resumed only to encounter a deep swamp about 300 yards inland. No trail around the swamp could be located in the 12th Cavalry zone so the troops continued the advance through the waist deep swamps and flooded rice fields. However, this swamp effectively prevented movement of any vehicles from the beach. Movement of unit vehicles laterally along the beach was also impossible due to landing of adjacent units and the twisting antitank ditch coursing along the beach. After obtaining clearance, the attached engineers commenced construction of a road to the north through a coconut grove to connect with the San Jose - Tacloban Road in the 2nd Brigade zone. The Regiment, continuing the attack through waist deep mud and water, reached the Brigade objective at 1600. Fortunately the expenditure of ammunition had been very light and each man was carrying two days rations so resupply the night of 20-21 October was unnecessary.

The 8th Engineers continued their road construction throughout the night and at 21100 October completed their difficult task of providing an exit from the beach, which unbottled the attached tanks

and regimental supply and communication vehicles. The 12th Cavalry rear echelon was established in the vicinity of Marasbaras on Highway Number 1 from which point resupply to the regiment was accomplished.

The evening of 23 October found the 12th Regimental Combat Team occupying the high ground Tigban River to Hill 943, which lay to the west of Tacloban and to the south of Anibong Bay, when orders were received placing the regiment in corps reserve and ordering it to assemble just south of Marasbaras. The movement to the assembly area by truck and by marching was commenced at 240800 and was completed by 241145.

At 241230 a warning order was received for the regiment to be prepared to relieve the 1st Battalion, 19th Infantry, in Palo and vicinity on 25 October. The afternoon of 24 October was spent in reorganizing and reequipping the troops, and the conduct of reconnaissance by Col. Stadler and his staff in preparation for the next move. By 1600 the last elements of the regiment had closed, and as then constituted the Regimental Combat Team consisted of the following:

12th Cavalry Regiment.

Company B, 85th Chemical Battalion (4.2 Mortars).

Troop A, 8th Engineers Squadron (less one platoon).

2nd Platoon, 1st Collecting Company.

Antitank Platoon, Headquarters Troop 1st Cavalry Brigade.

Thus ended the first phase in the participation of the 12th

Cavalry in the invasion of Leyte Island. Supply and evacuation during this phase could be said to be normal. Although some rain was received during this period the roads held up well except the strip from San Jose to the junction with Highway Number 1. Considerable effort on the part of Corps Engineers was required to keep this road to the Army supply points on the beach passable. Evacuation of wounded over the rough mountainous terrain presented the most difficult aspect of the supply situation up to this point. For example; A Troop, commanded by Capt. E. L. Keeth, was counterattacked by the Japs on Hill 943, incurring several wounded casualties. It was necessary to lower the wounded from this precipitous hill by the use of ropes tied to litters, it being impossible to carry them down in the usual manner.

PART TWO

CROSSING THE LEYTE MOUNTAINS

From 25 October until 3 November the 12th Cavalry was employed under X Corps control to assist the advance of the 24th Infantry Division. On 3 November, the regiment reverted to control of the Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Brigade.

While Sixth Army troops were destroying the Jap forces in the east of Leyte, the enemy, although suffering staggering losses of their reinforcing troops at sea at the hands of our aircraft, were able to land 20,000 troops at Ormoc on the west coast to reinforce those garrisons already in position in the Ormoc Valley and in the

mountains separating the Ormoc Valley from the Leyte Valley. It appeared that our hardest fight of the campaign was still ahead and this certainly proved to be the case.

On 8 November, the 12th Regimental Combat Team less 2nd Squadron and elements of Service Troop, was in bivouac a mile west of Carigara. The 2nd Squadron, commanded by Major Matthew W. Dikeman, was in position at Sugud, three miles south of Carigara. Service Troop (less) was moving from Marasbaras to Barugo. B Company, 35th Chemical Battalion had previously reverted to Brigade control. This was the situation when a Brigade order was received about noon directing the 12th Regimental Combat Team to be prepared to attack the enemy in the high ground west of Leyte Valley. Accordingly, Col. Stadler issued a tentative attack order for 9 November which stated that the Regimental Combat Team would seize and hold the high ground Mt. Pina - Mt. Badian. The 2nd Squadron reinforced to assault from its Sugud perimeter; 1st Squadron to move to Sugud and be prepared to assist the attack of the 2nd Squadron.

About mid-afternoon a heavy rain accompanied by high winds began to fall. By nightfall the tropical storm had reached typhoon proportions which grew worse during the night and made traffic on the roads impossible except by foot. The night of 8-9 November will live long in the minds of all the 12th Cavalry for about 2200 at the height of the storm orders were received to put the attack plan into effect. The 1st Squadron reinforced, commanded by Lt. Col. Roland Reuvenz, moved at once into the teeth of a howling typhoon to march the five

miles to Sugud. The regimental command post opened at Sugud at 090715, leaving the rear command post with the regimental communications vehicles and the service troop maintenance section in the old bivouac area and immobile due to the mud. At 090800 the 12th Cavalry attacked as planned. Later in the day after the storm was over, Lt. Col. Gines Perez, Regimental Executive Officer, realizing it would be several days before any vehicles could be extricated from the mire in the old bivouac area west of Carigara, moved the essential headquarters personnel to Sugud by marching, and established the rear command post at this point. A forward supply point was also being established at Sugud by the Regimental Supply Officer.

The road from Carigara to Sugud was bordered on each side by flat rice fields the entire distance. This road which had not been intended to support anything heavier than water buffalo carts began to break down with the passage of the first few supply trucks and artillery pieces. From Sugud, which lay at the base of the steeply rising mountains, only very poor foot trails led to the west and these did not extend far. The 8th Engineer Squadron, commanded by Major Leon Gibbs, was at once committed by Division to the task of maintaining the Carigara - Sugud Road and to opening a supply route from Sugud to the front lines to the west. Reconnaissance was also initiated immediately to locate better terrain affording a more dependable supply route, but by this time even the coastal highway west was beyond repair. In spite of the Herculean efforts of the engineers to maintain the Sugud road, it was impassable to wheeled vehicles by the

evening of 11 October. It was impossible to obtain drainage of the road as it was practically the same level as the flooded rice paddies on each side and rock dumped on the road to provide a base would soon disappear in the bottomless mud. Not only did these secondary roads or trails go out with the coming of the rains but the main arteries also began to give way under the terrific pounding of the Sixth Army's advance.

The supply situation of the 12th Cavalry and its supporting artillery, as well as the right flank troops of the 5th Cavalry which had been committed on the left of the 12th Cavalry, was fast becoming desperate. It was apparent that in order to supply the troops in the mountains some means of transporting supplies across the sea of mud and up the steep mountains must be found at once. At this point American inventive genius and Philippine loyalty came to the fore to save the situation.

A platoon of LVT (4)s (amphibious tractors) from the 826th Amphibious Tractor Battalion was placed in support of the 1st Cavalry Brigade operation by the Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division. This platoon was employed to carry supplies from Carigara to Sugud across the three mile lake of deep, soupy mud. It was found that the amphibious tractor was ideally suited for this work and was the only vehicle that could operate under these conditions. The 12th Cavalry S-4 established a rear supply point and message center at the Carigara - Sugud road junction at a point readily accessible to the LVTs. The 8th Engineers constructed a drive-in from the main road that would

accommodate three 2½-ton trucks, and alongside this, constructed a dock area by floating empty gasoline drums in the muck and covering them with corrugated sheet metal to form the floor. The rear echelon message center was housed in a stilted nipa shack which happened to be at the site. Through this terminal was to pass all supplies and personnel going to the 12th Cavalry front for the next six weeks.

The problem now was to move supplies from the forward base at Sugud to the front line troops in the mountains. This problem was solved by appealing to the Mayors of Carigara, Baruganorte, Tungga and Jaro to obtain Filipino civilians to carry supplies under soldier escort from Sugud to the using troops. Casualties were to be evacuated on the return trip. Available assistance in procuring civilian labor was rendered by the 1st Cavalry Brigade S-4, Major E. A. Bozarth, and the Division Civil Affairs Officer, Lt. Col. Charles C. Young. They would arrange through Philippines Civil Affairs Units (PCAUI) to have civilian laborers assembled at pick up points in each town and the Regimental Supply Officer would send transportation to carry them to Carigara where they would transfer to LVTs for Sugud. The same handling procedure in reverse was necessary to get these people to their homes at night. To meet minimum supply requirements initially, it was necessary to employ 150 to 200 native carriers a day. Lt. Col. Perez, Regimental Executive, organized the carrying parties and dispatched them from Sugud.

The divisional supply points were in Tacloban, thirty miles away

over a road that permitted a top speed of ten miles an hour. To maintain adequate supply levels and transport workers required the transportation platoon drivers to work 24 hours a day; a terrific strain on both men and vehicles. Later the Division supply points were located at Tunga, which relieved the situation considerably.

By 14 November the operation of the 12th Cavalry had developed into two separate operations; one for each squadron. The 1st Squadron was attacking west toward Mt. Catabaran and Mt. Cabungaan against the resistance of small groups of Japs. The greatest impediment to this advance was the jungle covered mountains which arose to fog enshrouded peaks of 2300 to 2400 feet. The incessant rain and fog resulted in practically zero visibility for days at a time. About 80 men from E Troop of the 2nd Squadron was protecting the 1st Squadron supply trail. The 2nd Squadron (less) had run into stiff resistance from well organized and dug-in positions in the Mt. Badian - Hill 2348 Sector. The remainder of the regiment was held in a position to support either squadron.

The 8th Engineers had succeeded in opening a trail up the steep, muddy hills from Sugud about 2000 yards west which enabled one tractor drawn battery of the 271st Field Artillery Battalion to displace forward to support the attack of the 1st Squadron.

To get supplies to the 1st Squadron in their present position was now an all day march for the pack train over trails so steep and slippery that two men were required for each carton of rations or ammunition package. Since the trip could be made only one way during

hours of daylight, the carriers had to spend the nights in the perimeter of the 1st Squadron, or at best, the perimeter of the forward command post. To maintain minimum daily supply requirements under these conditions required the employment of three to four hundred Filipinos a day. For this back breaking and dangerous work, the Filipino received one peso a day. It is not at all surprising that the natives were anything but anxious to associate themselves with the rigors of the 12th Cavalry's supply system. Despite the vigilance exercised by our soldiers escorting the trains, many of the loads were dumped along the trail and the carriers disappeared into the jungle to make their way home.

On 15 November the 1st Squadron was able to advance another 300 yards, or to state more correctly, up another 300 yards, extending the thin thread of a supply line by that much. 300 yards may not seem to the reader as much of an advance, but it must be borne in mind that not only was the enemy opposing any advance, but that the movement was up a very steep mountain through jungle and slippery mud. Men were literally pulling themselves up the side of the hill by grasping tree roots, vines and mutually assisting each other. It was difficult for an unencumbered person to move through this terrain, and extremely so for men carrying crew served weapons, supplies, and a pack. Visibility became worse as the altitude increased due to fog which stayed at or near ground level most of the time.

The regimental command post moved forward 18 November, and occupied a position between Mt. Pina and Mt. Badian while H and Weapons

Troops were left in the rear to protect the supply trail. The 2nd Squadron was still engaged in the bitter struggle for Mt. Badian and Hill 2348.

With each advance the supply situation became more acute. Any farther advance would place the troops beyond a days march by the pack train from the forward supply dump at Sugud. It was apparent that another intermediate base would be required. The procurement and administration of civilian labor was in itself a most serious and major problem and any farther extension of the supply line meant additional Filipinos must be employed. It was estimated that 1000 Filipino carriers daily would be required to extend the supply line another days march.

To meet this serious problem of supply the regimental rear command post was moved forward to the position vacated by the forward command post. Part of the supply section with an SCR 193 radio and two radio operators were left at Sugud to keep the forward dump in operation. The 271st Field Artillery Battalion commanded by Lt. Col. H. D. Wendorf, who had consolidated his battalion in the area initially occupied by its forward battery about 2000 yards west of Sugud, began to support the 12th Cavalry in a manner quite differently from the support usually thought of in connection with artillery. Lt. Col. Wendorf cut his own supply requirements to the very minimum to make tractors and one-ton trailers available to the 12th Cavalry, thereby providing the regiment with a most vital link in the supply chain. Utilizing this tractor-trailer transportation

the Regimental Supply Officer sent tents and kitchens to the regimental rear command post for the establishment of a native camp. Rice and canned fish, procured through PCAU, was prepared by soldier cooks for consumption by the Filipino laborers while in camp. Filipinos were now hired with the expectation that they would remain on the job six days before returning home.

A company of Filipino guerrillas was enlisted to aid in the administration of the camp and to provide additional security to the trains while on the trail. That the natives had a great deal of confidence in the fighting ability of the guerrillas was demonstrated by the sudden drop in absenteeism from camp and trail which had been a great problem before.

Evacuation of casualties under these adverse conditions also presented a major problem. Evacuation of litter patients from the forward aid stations to the division clearing station was a slow and tedious process. Despite the gentle handling of casualties by the sympathetic Filipinos and soldiers, the suffering of some of these brave wounded was no doubt intense during those long hours on the trail. The plight of the wounded and sick was alleviated to a great extent by the attachment of the 19th Portable Surgical Hospital to the Brigade. This hospital became part of the 12th Cavalry rear command post installation. This hospital also cared for the seriously wounded from nearby units of the 5th Cavalry.

Constant exposure to the rain and mud resulted in numerous cases of immersion foot and jungle rot. To take care of these less seri-

ous cases, a rest camp was also established at the rear command post, obviating the necessity of evacuation to Division Rear. As men became sick or too exhausted to be effective in the front lines they were sent back to the unit rest camp where they received treatment, rest, and hot meals of hospital rations. Usually three to four days recuperation would put the man in condition to return to the front lines. While at the rest camp the men would be issued new clothing and equipment. Only the very sick or wounded were evacuated back to the 1st Medical Squadron. This rest camp under the supervision of Lt. Col. Perez was a large factor in maintaining a high state of morale in the 12th Cavalry during this tough operation.

While the 2nd Squadron was attacking Hill 2343 on 23 November, the 1st Squadron was attacking a well dug-in enemy force to the west in the vicinity of Mt. Cabungean. The enemy positions confronting the 1st Squadron were so well concealed that our men actually got on top of them before they were aware of their presence. To reach the enemy positions it was necessary to attack along a ridge only wide enough to allow four men abreast and was covered by dug-in machine guns and mortars. The right side of the ridge was almost perpendicular. A preparation of 1200 rounds was laid down by the 271st Field Artillery, but since most of the positions were on a west slope the artillery was unable to penetrate them. The attacking troops were able to gain only 50 yards in the face of such murderous fire.

Now was the supply situation for the 1st Squadron favorable at

this time. It was a two-days march for the pack train to reach them, and seldom could sufficient supplies be pushed over the tortuous trails to create a reserve. Supplies, especially rations, were usually consumed the day they arrived.

At 1800 28 November a platoon from C Troop 5th Cavalry reported Japs were attacking them from the north. This report was received with justifiable alarm as it was known that this platoon's position was on the 1st Squadron's supply trail. As a casualty train had just gone over the trail it was not believed the opposition could be strong, so Lt. Col. Benwanz sent a patrol down the trail to assist the platoon of the 5th Cavalry. This patrol had proceeded down the trail about 600 yards when it contacted a body of Japs. A sharp fire ensued but no casualties were suffered by the patrol. Fearful of being cut off during the night the patrol returned to the 1st Squadron perimeter. This was the beginning of the "Battle of Starvation Ridge" which lasted from 1800 28 November to 0800 2 December. In this battle the 1st Squadron 12th Cavalry, and A Troop 5th Cavalry, earned a Presidential Citation for the heroic fight they made in annihilating a large part of a Jap battalion which had succeeded in occupying a position astride the vital supply line.

During the three-day battle, since supply trains were unable to get through to the 1st Squadron, they subsisted and fought on no more than a third of a K ration or portion of a D ration a day. An air drop was made to the 1st Squadron during this period, but owing

to the difficulty of locating the position from the air and the necessity to pin point the drop on a very narrow ridge the drop was unsuccessful, the Japs receiving the bulk of the drop when it rolled down the steep sides of the ridge. The weather, and the fog that continually hugged the ground at this altitude, prevented successful air drops. At times the air would clear enough to permit planes over the position but by the time the planes could take off and climb to the area, the fog would have formed and the colored smoke used to mark the position would mix with the fog over such a large area it would be futile to attempt the drop, and the planes would return to the strip with their desperately needed food, radio batteries and ammunition. The unsuccessful attempts to effect air drops in this dense jungle area emphasizes the necessity for easily located clearings for drop zones before supply by air can be dependable.

While the 1st Squadron was fighting the "Battle of Starvation Ridge", the 2nd Squadron continued their relentless attack on Hill 2348. This objective was taken on 5 December as the last pocket of 60 to 70 Japs were wiped out. Captured documents and equipment indicated conclusively that the force which had held the ground was between five and six hundred men.

The next few days were spent in resting and reequipping the troops. The bitter fighting in heavy rains and on scant rations had been very exhausting. Activity was confined to patrolling by both squadrons, and the movement of the Regimental Forward Command Post

and reserve to a position nearer the 1st Squadron.

In anticipation of further movement to the west with attendant lengthening of supply lines, another native camp and supply relay point under supervision of 1st Lt. Richard B. Callaghan was established near the forward command post. Sgt. Ben C. Hicks of the supply section was sent to this forward base as administrative assistant to Lt. Callaghan. Only tentage and kitchen equipment that could be hand carried was used in the establishment of this camp. Filipinos employed as carriers now numbered approximately 1500, or one native for every soldier in the line.

Let us follow some items of supply from a division supply point to the 1st Squadron. From a division supply point at Tunza, supplies were moved to Carigara where transfer was made to LVT for transporting to the relay supply point at Sugud. From Sugud to the rear command post supplies were moved by tractor and trailer. Carrying parties were organized at the rear command post for movement to the relay station farther west. Here another supply party would take over to finally deliver the items to the 1st Squadron. A minimum of three days were required to move supplies from Tunza to the fighting men on the line. The administrative problem of maintaining such a chain of supply can well be imagined.

Much has been said concerning the detrimental effects of the rains during this period of operations, but, it might be well to state here that certain benefits also accrued. The mud in the rice paddies stayed soft and soupy as long as the rain fell, providing good flo-

tation for the LVTs. Secondly, supply of water for individual use was no problem since it was only necessary to spread a pancho to catch sufficient water. Numerous mountain streams were also at hand in an emergency.

The few days of sunshine experienced in the Leyte Valley during this period produced indications that the continued use of LVTs for supply transport was doubtful unless it continued raining. A day or two of sun would stiffen the mud on top making the going for the LVT very heavy and causing some to stick in the mud. In some instances it had been necessary to hook three LVTs in tandem to loosen one that had become stuck. It was feared therefore that a few days of continuous sunshine would completely break down this method of transport. Also the tractor trail from Sugud to the base camp area had become so bad that tractors were being used in tandem to negotiate parts of this trail. Every trip required the use of winches over the steepest part of the trail.

To prevent the possibility of a breakdown of supply for the reasons stated, the 8th Engineer Squadron had been engaged for a period of about two weeks in the construction of a supply road from Balud south to the vicinity of the base camp. This required some major bridge construction and the hewing of a road out of the east side of Mt. Minoro.

By 11 December the regiment was rested and reequipped. Flame throwers and a large amount of 81mm ammunition had been brought forward. Once more the rugged troopers of the 12th Cavalry were ready

to test the Mip. After a heavy artillery and mortar preparation; the 1st Squadron stormed up the narrow ridge and after furious hand to hand fighting occupied the position so long denied them.

While the regiment was preparing for further movement to the west, the Sugud supply base moved to a position near the base of Mt. Minoro. Supplies were now moved by truck along the sandy beach to Baudhence south to the new supply base, where they were transferred to tractors and trailers which moved them to the camp at the rear command post.

It was fortunate that the 8th Engineer Squadron was able to open the new trail when they did for the going had become so difficult for the LVTs over the old route that collapse of this link in the chain was imminent.

Once again evacuation and care of the wounded had become a major problem. Accordingly, Col. Stadler ordered Lt. Col. Perez to displace forward with the rear command post and 19th Portable Surgical Hospital. Capt. Cooley, Service Troop Commander, took over the operation of the native camp and rest camp.

The 1st Squadron resumed the advance to the west on 16 December, but now they were moving down the side of the mountains to occupy a previously reconnoitered area about 1800 yards east of the barrier of Lanoy. This area was a banana plantation well below the fog line and was especially picked for its excellence as a dropping ground for supplies and for its observation facilities to the west. A successful air drop in this area was accomplished on 17 December. The

supplies thus delivered in 25 minutes by C-47 cargo planes would have required the labor of 300 men three to four days to pack over the mountains. On the same day the remainder of the Regiment (less rear echelon) closed in this area.

Now that the troops were emerging from the mountains into the more open terrain of the Ormoc Valley, air drops could be depended on to maintain supply levels, but the supply trail back over the mountains must be kept open for evacuation of sick and wounded.

The 12th Cavalry received orders 18 December to seize and hold Lanoy. This mission was accomplished on the 19th after very bitter fighting in which the Japs employed point blank 105mm artillery fire against our troops, causing considerable casualties. Col. Stadler was wounded by shell fragments but refused to leave the regiment, remaining instead to lead the 12th Cavalry to final victory.

The regiment continued the attack to the south, capturing Kananga on the 21st. By dark the entire regiment, less rear installations, was assembled at Kananga awaiting arrival of the 77th Infantry Division at the bridge south of the town. Col. Stadler, representing the Divisional Commanding General, 1st Cavalry, and Major General Bruce, Commander of the 77th Infantry, met at the bridge at 0915 22 December. This meeting symbolized the destruction of the Yamashita line.

Another air drop was accomplished on the 22nd which amply supplied the regiment with ammunition and rations. Highway Number 2 from Pinamopan to Kananga was now free of Japs. Supply trucks were able

to negotiate the distance from Carrigara to Finamopon by traveling over the rough coral of the ocean bed at low tide. This was extremely hard on tires and equipment, but by this route rear supply points could be reached in six to eight hours as compared to three days over mountain trails.

To further help the supply situation arrangements were made for the 12th Cavalry to draw Class I, III, and V supplies from the Army Supply Points at Ormoc, which were supporting the 77th and 7th Infantry Divisions.

The most forward supply relay point in the mountains was brought forward to Kananga, while the rest camp, native camp and equipment at the foot of Mt. Minoro was evacuated to Carrigara.

The campaign was officially declared closed as of Christmas Day 1944, but the regiment continued mopping up operations until 29 December. In the final mopping up operation, supply to forward units in some cases was still made by native pack trains, but better weather conditions, less rugged terrain, and the weak opposition of the enemy made this possible without too much difficulty.

CONCLUSION

The supply problems encountered by the 12th Cavalry Regiment in the Leyte Campaign emphasizes the importance and necessity of commanders of all echelons considering in detail the logistical factor in planning any operation. Commanders must also be prepared to cope with adverse conditions affecting supply as well as troublesome fac-

tics of the enemy.

That the 12th Cavalry was able to succeed in accomplishing its missions in this campaign was due in great measure to the Commander's skill in disposing troops in such a manner as to offer maximum protection to a long vulnerable supply line and at the same time retain troops in strength on the line to defeat a stubborn and tenacious enemy. This feat required the ultimate in determination, courage, and leadership.