

LIBRARY
THE ARMOR SCHOOL
FORT KNOX

41-131

NIGHT OPERATIONS

(Reinforced Infantry Battalion)

LIBRARY
US ARMY ARMOR SCHOOL
FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY 40121

March 3, 1948

MILITARY MONOGRAPH

TITLE: Night Operations

SCOPE:

1. To bring out the detailed planning and coordination necessary to accomplish a night operation.
2. The importance of a thorough reconnaissance to:
 - a. Gain accurate and precise information of the location, strength, dispositions and habits of the enemy.
 - b. Verify the nature of the terrain to be traversed. Locate the exact position and effectiveness of natural and artificial obstacles.

Prepared by: Charlie G. Talbot
(Name)

Lt. Col. Inf
(Rank)

NIGHT OPERATIONS

Night operations have been employed by military leaders for centuries, but they have never been used as frequently as daylight operations. In the past, maximum use of concealment of darkness have been made to shift reserves, relieve units in contact, and for general reorganization. However, the advantages of night operations over the same operations conducted during daylight have not been fully utilized.

Detailed planning, daring, and the unorthodox are the keynotes of a successful night operation. These were exemplified by General Washington at Trenton on the night of 24-25 December 1776:

"General Washington, with 2,400 men, crossed the Delaware at night to deliver a surprise attack on the roistering Germans under command of Colonel Rahl occupying Trenton. The crossing and subsequent attack was successful in that 40 enemy were killed, roughly 1,000 prisoners taken, and the American loss was two killed and three wounded. This was a master stroke, and like most great military coups, it was economical of lives and material." ¹

Also by Napoleon at Wagram in 1809:

"Under the cover of 150 heavy guns, Napoleon forced a crossing of the Danube during darkness. At nine in the evening of July 4, 1809, the artillery opened on Aspern and Erling, and 2,500 grenadiers landed opposite Enzersdorf and stormed that village. A tempest was raging. The bridges were laid; and by nine in the morning, three corps were in line on a 6,000-yard front facing northeast. The Austrian Army was hastily formed on a new front. Napoleon's second crossing of the Danube challenges comparison with all passages of rivers in the face of a powerful enemy." ²

The lack of detailed planning and information of the enemy's organization and dispositions will invariably result in failure. An excellent example of this is the attack made by General Longstreet on General Hooker

1. Shaw and Vistal, 175 Battles, p. 94.

2. Ibid, p. 137.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Shaw and Vistal, 175 Battles, p. 94.
2. Ibid., p. 137.
3. J. C. F. Fuller, Decisive Battles of the USA, p. 276-277.
4. Pacific Warfare Board Report, "Night Operations Against the Japanese", No. D-69, 21 Sept. 1945.
5. Sixth Army, Combat Notes, (Restricted) "Night Objective," Vol. 10, Final Edition, p. 60.
6. USAFFE Board Report No. 230 B, 9 June 1945.
7. Ibid.

at Wauhatchie, Tennessee during the Civil War:

"On the night of the 28-29 October 1863, Longstreet made a night attack on Hooker at Wauhatchie which was easily repulsed. The Federals were assisted by their mules which took fright and stampeded toward the enemy, who in their turn broke and fled, imagining that a cavalry charge was upon them. By 4 A.M. on the 29th the battle was over, and the 'Cracker Line' was never again disturbed." 3

Prior to the birth of the infantry-tank team, the use of stealth in night operations, especially in the night attack, was stressed. With the addition of speed, fire power, armor protection, and shock action of the tank, stealth gave way to aggressiveness. This loss of secrecy justifies firing an artillery preparation prior to the attack at night. Since the use of tanks to support infantry in a night operation is somewhat dependent upon the nature of the terrain to be traversed, the use of stealth must still be depended upon in certain situations. A great majority of night operations conducted by units in the Pacific Theatre were characterized by secrecy and stealth. This was particularly true prior to the Philippines Campaign.

"Operations in the Philippines have presented a more normal picture as conceived by training doctrine, resulting in a marked increase in our employment of troops at night. This transition to offensive night activity can be attributed to the following factors:

1. Open terrain, not densely wooded, affording a relatively good road net and our first opportunity for long range observation.
2. Dry weather, which has greatly enhanced mobility of troops and vehicles.
3. Existence of better maps and improved aerial photography, due mainly to the lack of heavy jungle growth.
4. Availability of excellent guerrilla guides.
5. Confidence and combat experience of our troops.

3. J. F. C. Fuller, Decisive Battles of the U.S.A., p. 276-277.

6. Occasional inadequate preparation by the enemy for defense against night attack. (Inaccurate and uncoordinated fire, loss of control, poor communications and insufficient security)." 4

It is my belief that the following statement made by a platoon sergeant during the Philippines Campaign reflected the thoughts of the majority of combat troops who participated in the island-hopping campaign of the Southwest Pacific Area:

"The 33rd Infantry Division had Baguio as its final objective," said a platoon sergeant from the 123rd Infantry Regiment. "Late in February 1945, we captured a Japanese document which stated that American troops were daylight fighters, and that we invariably stopped our tactical activities and dug-in each night before darkness. In some ways this was true, for we always did have a reluctance for night movement in the jungle, but the Japanese didn't figure that the main reason we sat tight was because we could catch more of them that way. Up here in Luzon the terrain and situation were different. All we needed was a good set-up." 5

An excellent example of how an infantry battalion (reinforced) made use of the "set-up" was demonstrated by a battalion of the 130th Infantry Regiment, during the night of 18-19 March, 1945. During the night the 1st Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment (reinforced), was motorized and moved under concealment of darkness nine miles to capture the town of Bauang and the tactically important Bauang bridges to the south. The operation consisted of a motor march to within 4,000 yards of the objective, a lightly defended river crossing, and an attack of an enemy-held town and the high ground to the northeast and east overlooking the town and bridges. The two 500-foot

4. Pacific Warfare Board Report, "Night Operations Against the Japanese",

#D-69, 21 Sept. '45.

5. Sixth Army, Combat Notes (Restricted), "Night Objective", Vol. 10, Final Edition, p. 60.

steel and concrete bridges were found prepared for demolition with picric acid and explosive similar to composition "C". Two 200-pound aerial bombs were also found wired to the north bridge.

During the period when the Sixth Army was attacking south, east, and north out of the Central Luzon Plain, I Corps had as part of its mission the capture of the Cagayan Valley and the approaches thereto. The 33rd Infantry Division with its left on the Lingayen Gulf coast, and its right on the Agno River, had as its mission the capture of Baguio.

Intelligence reports stated that the enemy was evacuating San Fernando (north), moving south along the coastal highway to Bauang, then east to Baguio. The 1st Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment (then at Aringay) was ordered to capture Bauang, seize the two bridges to the south (intact), and the high ground to the northeast and east overlooking the town; thereby blocking the only escape route then open to the enemy for his evacuation of San Fernando and vicinity.

The battalion commander was given ample time in which to plan the operation. Supporting units were immediately made available. These were:

Cannon Company, 130th Infantry Regiment

One platoon, 33rd Infantry Division, Reconnaissance Troop

One platoon, Company A, 775th Tank Battalion (attached)

1st platoon, Company C, 108th Engineer Battalion (combat)(attached).

RECONNAISSANCE

The battalion commander ordered a reconnaissance party consisting of the battalion S-2 and a guerrilla guide to reconnoiter the battalion assembly area and the crossing site (selected from an aerial photograph), to locate

enemy positions guarding the bridges, locate any security elements the enemy may have south of the river, and determine, if possible, the time of ebb-tide (seizing the bridges intact necessitated having elements of the battalion cross the river by fording in order to reach assaulting positions), since this time would be an important factor in determining the time of attack. To accomplish this, it was necessary for the reconnaissance party to remain in the vicinity of the bridge on the south side of the river for two nights and one day. During this time they were forced to move frequently to avoid being discovered by enemy patrols. Also, it was discovered that during the first night there was very little activity in the town, but during the second night there was considerable activity in the town; and between 2400 hours and 0400 hours an estimated 300-400 troops entered the town from the north. This corroborated information received from a local inhabitant who stated that every other night there were "many soldiers in town." Further ground reconnaissance was forbidden. However, an aerial reconnaissance was made by the battalion commander, heavy weapons company commander, and the three rifle company commanders. The aerial reconnaissance proved to be very helpful, especially for the rifle company commanders, who were assigned sectors of the town to clear, and portions of the high ground beyond the town, as their objectives.

PLAN OF ATTACK

Upon completion of the reconnaissance it was found that very few changes of the tentative plan (made from a map and aerial photograph study) were necessary. The most important change was to set up the date from the 19th to the

18th, hoping to find the objective defended only by its designated troops, which was estimated to be company strength, supported by two tanks.

Since seizing the bridges intact depended upon surprise, secrecy, and stealth; only the foot elements of the battalion were moved into the assembly area. The remainder of the battalion (vehicles) and attached unit's vehicles were to remain in the rear assembly area (Aringay) and arrive in vicinity of the crossing site on a time schedule.

The march from the assembly area to the attack position had to be made in single file across rice paddies (very uneven ground, difficult marching even in daylight.) The plan called for Company A, Battalion headquarters (command group), heavy weapons company, engineer platoon, Company C, Battalion headquarters company (-), and Company B in that order. Upon arrival in the attack position the heavy weapons were placed in position to support the crossing and assault of the town.

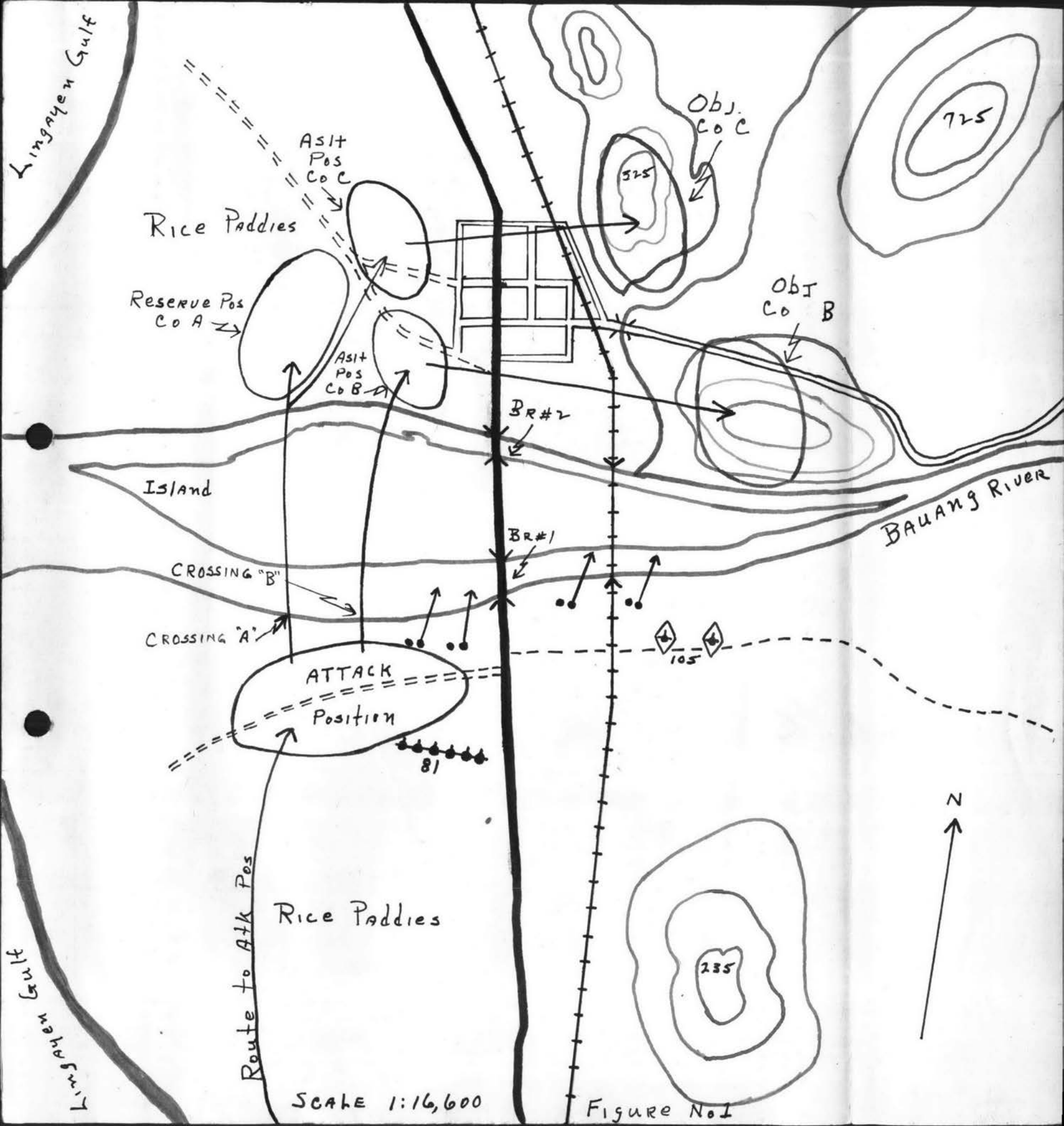
The crossing was to be made at two different points about 300 yards apart. The plan was for Company A to cross at point "A" and take up positions to cover the crossing of the assault companies, and protect the left flank and rear of the assault echelon during the assault of the battalion objective. Company C, the left assault company, was to cross at point "A" fifteen minutes after company A had cleared the near (south) bank. Company B, the right assault company, followed by battalion headquarters command group was to cross at point "B" simultaneously with Company C. Both assault companies were to take up positions, then assault their respective objectives on signal. The engineer platoon was to infiltrate across bridge No. 1

(after ascertaining there were no trip wires to set off the demolition) and move along the west side of the road embankment to the south end of bridge No. 2. They were to place a section of machine guns in position to cover the far side of the river and suspected enemy positions along the far bank protecting the bridge. A team of three men for each bridge were to disarm and remove the demolition. The movement of the engineer platoon was to start thirty minutes after the two assault companies started to cross the south fork of the river, allowing thirty minutes for the engineers to get in position. This would give the assault companies one hour to cross the river and get into position to launch the assault. This was based on the assumption that the rifle companies would gain the far bank undetected. (See Figure 1.)

The reconnaissance platoon (with M8 scout cars) was to precede the motor column by five minutes from the present assembly area (Aringay) to the new assembly area; thereafter to protect the rear and right flank of the battalion by keeping the road from Caba to the Bauang River open. Also, to be prepared to cross the bridges on order, and with one section of light tanks reconnoiter highway No. 9 as far east as Naguillian. (See Figure 2.)

The light tank platoon was to arrive at the river at H + 100, be prepared to cross the bridges on order, and go into positions initially to block the highway to the north (under the supervision of the reserve company commander). (See Figure 2.)

The 1st cannon platoon (with 105 mm howitzer S/P) was to arrive at the river at H + 90, go into firing positions to support the assault of Company B



SCALE 1:16,600

Figure No 1

by firing direct fire on targets of opportunity, and to neutralize several caves on that company's final objective, with openings facing the river. Also, to be prepared to cross the bridges on order; and with a rifle platoon from the reserve company, clear the coastal highway north as far as Paringoo. (See Figure 2.)

The cannon company (-) (with 105 mm howitzer S/P) was to support the attack by indirect fire, under supervision of the direct support artillery battalion commander. This gave the infantry battalion and equivalent of four batteries of artillery in direct support. The battalion of artillery plus cannon company (-) was to move into position under concealment of darkness and be ready to support the attack by H hour. (See Figure 2.)

Communication on the near side of the river would not present any problem, except that communications with regiment would not be established until after the assault was launched, because of the necessity of radio silence and the inadvisability of attempting to lay wire across country at night. Prior to the assault the use of messengers would be the only means used. The signals to launch the assault were:

1. Pyrotechnic (green star cluster), to be fired by the engineer platoon leader to signify that the demolitions had been disarmed.
2. Enemy fire on the engineers while disarming or removing the demolitions. These signals were also used to bring fires of the battalion heavy weapons to bear on their assigned target areas. (The target areas and initial firing data for both the mortars and heavy machine guns were determined by a study of a map and an aerial photograph. The maps and aerial photograph

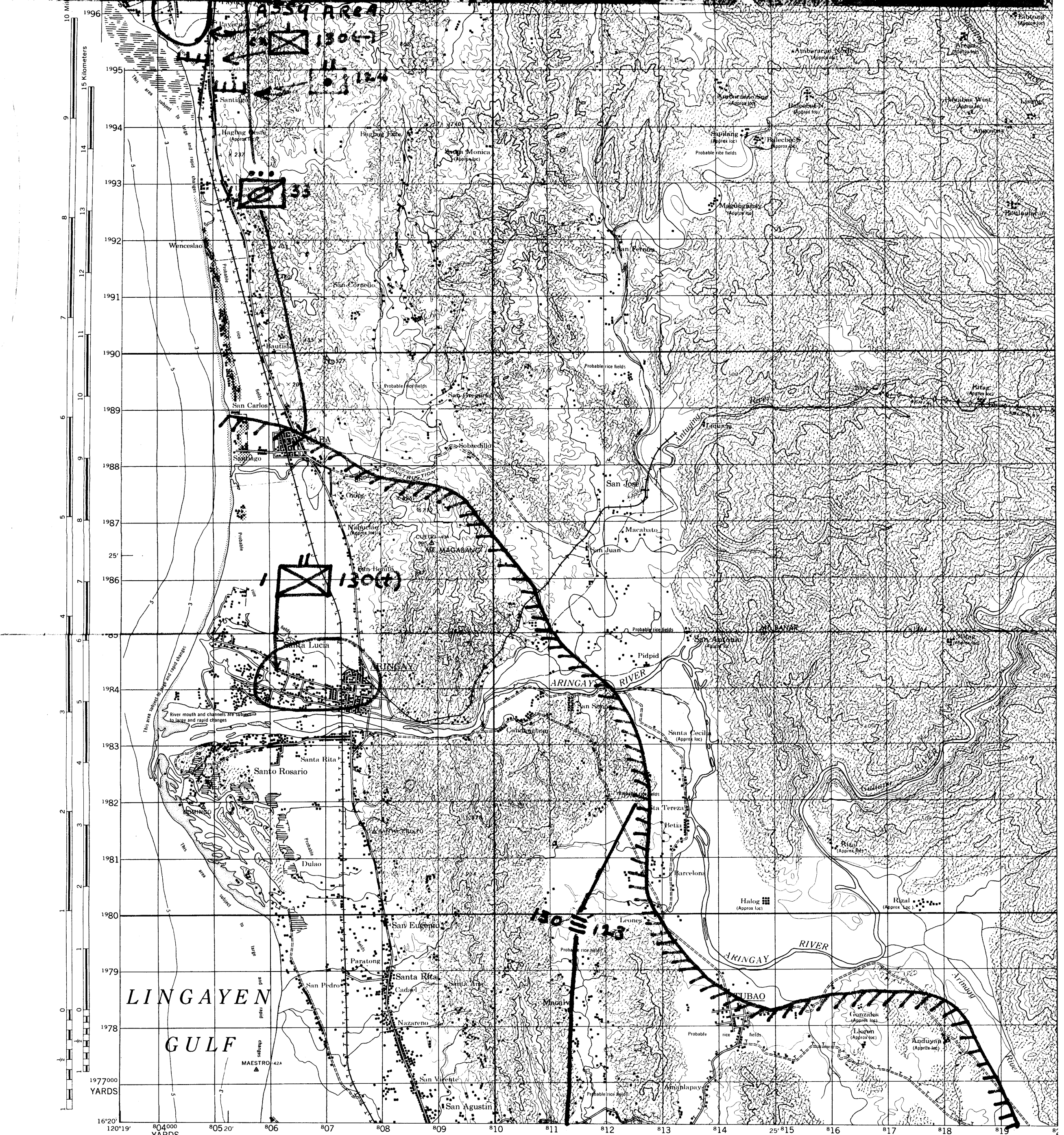
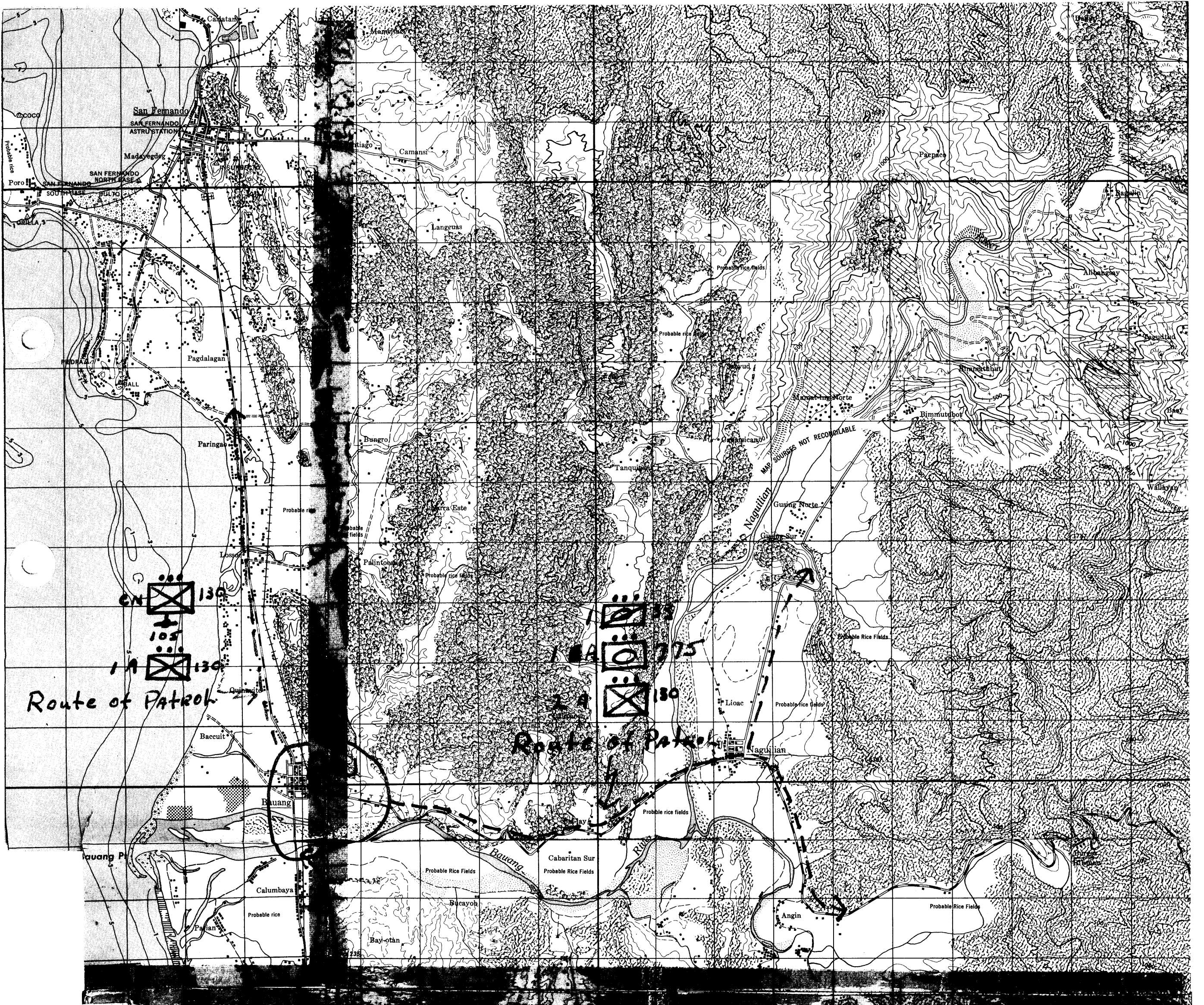


Figure No. 2

Scale 1:50,000

1977000
YARDS

120°19' 80°40'00" YARDS
A.M.S. S712

First Edition (AMS 1), 1944; revised (AMS 2), 1944.

Prepared under the direction of the Chief of Engineers by the Army Map Service (IN), U. S. Army, Washington, D. C., 1944. Compiled from Luzon, 1:31,680, Office Dept. Engineer, Phil. Dept., No. 214B, 1915 (Rev. and bridge revision, 1941); Vol. 1, Commission of the Census, Commonwealth of the Philippines, 1939; USC&GS Chart 4209, 1924 (Special Printing 43-8/31); P. Is., 1:200,000, USC&GS, No. 4, 1935; Communication Map of the P. Is., 1:400,000, HQ, M. I., Phil. Dept., CM 14-2, 1927 (Tel. and Tel. corrected to 1940, AMS). Stereo compilation by USGS from oblique photography, May 1944. Hydrography compiled from 1902-1903 surveys by USC&GS, 1944.

LEGEND

Roads: Surfaced, All weather, Regularity Maintained.	Woodland; Logged off Area
Partly Surfaced, Dry weather, Irregularly Maintained.	Bamboo; Brushwood or Low Tropical Growth
Other Dry weather Road or Track	Banana or Abaca; Palm, Palmetto or Coconut
Trail from Sources Prior to 1920	Orchard; Plantation
Road Under Construction, 1941	Tropical Grass; Vineyard
Railroads: Single Track 3'6", with Cut and Fill	
Double Track 3'6", with Station	

Scale 1:50,000

1 0 1 2 3 Miles

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 Yards

CONTOUR INTERVAL 100 FEET

POLYCONIC PROJECTION
APPROXIMATE LUZON DATUM

ONE THOUSAND YARD PHILIPPINE POLYCONIC GRID
THE LAST THREE DIGITS OF THE GRID NUMBERS ARE OMITTED

NOTE: OFFICERS USING THIS MAP WILL MARK HEREON CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS WHICH COME TO THEIR ATTENTION AND WILL DIRECT TO THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Single underline denotes municipal capital

APPROXIMATE MEAN DECLINATION 1944
FOR CENTER OF SHEET
ANNUAL MAGNETIC CHANGE 1" INCREASE

were very clear and accurate.)

The time of attack presented the greatest problem for the battalion commander. The success of the operation depended upon two factors:

1. The degree of success of the engineers in accomplishing their mission.
2. The ability of the rifle companies to gain the far side of the river and get into assault positions undetected.

The battalion S-2 with the assistance of the guerrilla guide and two local inhabitants determined that both forks of the river, though approximately 400 yards in width, could be forded by the average height man at waist depth at this season of the year. The distance to be traveled and the nature of the terrain to be traversed by the assault companies made an attack during the early hours of darkness impractical. The battalion commander reasoned that if the bridges were to be seized intact, it would be necessary to assault the town prior to daylight. With daylight at approximately 0500, it was decided to cross the line of departure (near bank of river) at 0315. This should put the assault companies in position approximately thirty minutes prior to daylight. This should also give the engineer platoon time to disarm the demolitions. With these two factors in mind, the preceding plan was adopted.

CONDUCT OF THE OPERATION

The approach march was conducted without incident and was undetected by the enemy. The guerrilla guide met the battalion at the assembly area and reported that the enemy had established a warning post approximately 800

yards south of the river. It was then necessary to change the route to the attack position to avoid detection by the enemy warning post. This was done with little loss of time, and a detail from the heavy weapons company took care of the enemy group after it was too late to give any warning.

The rifle companies reached the far bank undetected, moving between the enemy positions guarding the north end of the bridges and a suspected position approximately 1,000 yards west of the bridges. This latter position was found to be prepared but unoccupied. The two assault companies were in position by 0430. The heavy weapons, having been placed in position upon arrival in the attack position, were ready to deliver their supporting fires by 0345.

The engineer platoon, having discovered no trip wires on bridge No. 1, began infiltrating across at the prescribed time. They succeeded in getting the section of machine guns in position to cover disarming and removal of the demolitions. The demolitions had been disarmed, and the three-man team was in the process of removing one of the aerial bombs when the enemy suddenly decided something was amiss and began spraying the bridges with machine gun fire from positions in the near edge of town. This was the signal everybody had hoped would not be given, but had expected. The exact locations of the enemy weapons covering the bridges were easily picked up. They were momentarily silenced by our heavy machine guns located on the south bank of the river, firing at a range of approximately 1,200 yards. This fire was not very effective, and the enemy opened fire again. However, by this time the 81 mm mortars from positions near the south bank were able to neutralize

those particular positions which allowed the engineers to withdraw across the river.

The assault was launched upon signal and the assaulting companies overran the surprised and disorganized enemy; and shortly after dawn, the town and two bridges (intact) were in our hands. While the enemy was still demoralized, the attack continued against the high ground commanding the town. The objective of the right company was honey-combed with caves, giving the enemy maximum protection and excellent fields of mutually supporting fire. It was necessary to seal up each cave entrance. With direct 105 mm cannon fire from the right flank, and assistance by fire from the left company (which had gained its objective with little resistance), the assault teams (a flame thrower team, demolition team, automatic rifle team, and several riflemen) were able to work their way up to each cave entrance and completely destroy the occupants. This was a very slow process, and it was not until 1000 that this objective was secured.

The reconnaissance platoon, assigned the mission of reconnoitering the road east as far as Naguilian, was augmented by a platoon of infantry, one section of light tanks, and an artillery forward observer. The cannon and infantry platoon, assigned the mission of clearing the coastal highway leading to the north, was not changed. These two groups pushed out shortly after 1000 on the 18th and, encountering small isolated groups of enemy, completed their missions by nightfall.

The entire operation went according to plan. The night approach march was quiet, orderly, and well regulated; and in spite of a long cross-country

move by a reinforced battalion in single file, and the accompanying maneuver which included crossing a stream approximately 400 yards wide to secure the two bridges, the enemy was surprised. The extent of the success of this night operation is reflected in the casualty totals for the battle. Enemy casualties were 284 killed, one captured. Our casualties were three killed, three wounded.

CONCLUSIONS

1. A well-planned night operation is less costly in lives, equipment, supplies, and time than are similar daylight operations.
2. Terrain is one of the most important factors affecting the success of night operations.
3. Valuable information of enemy strength, dispositions, and habits can be obtained by the employment of night reconnaissance parties.
4. Friendly activity, both day and night, must be carefully planned and strictly controlled to avoid tipping your hand to the enemy.
5. Thorough reconnaissance, detailed planning, and thorough briefing of all leaders are essential. Reconnaissance will often be limited to a study of the map or an aerial photograph, or to a long-range visual reconnaissance from an observation post. The value of an aerial reconnaissance by as many of the subordinate leaders as possible, must not be overlooked.
6. Training doctrine, as presently taught, is sound; and field manuals and other training material on night operations adequately cover the subject.
7. Proper control and coordination of plans down to platoon level, is vital.

8. The plan for the defense of the objective, to include patrolling forward of the objective after capture, must be worked out in detail before the attack. The who, what, where, when, and how cannot be ignored. Defensive fires must be planned to box in the objective in the event of a counter-attack.

9. Maneuvers should be avoided if possible; however, with detailed planning, thorough briefing, and a dependable communication system, plus strong leaders and a few resolute and determined men in the lead, the usual fire and maneuver can be successfully employed.

10. Orders must be simple, concise, and absolutely clear. All leaders must know the objective, direction of attack, formation, exact mission, signal for assault, action in case the enemy is not surprised, location of rallying points, action upon carrying the position, and means of identifying friendly troops.

11. All troops should be thoroughly trained in all aspects of night combat. In the future, we may expect night operations to be as commonplace as day operations. Therefore, in order to be able to successfully employ the technique of night combat, we must emphasize night operations in our future training programs. It is desirable that, in any future conflict, we have units as thoroughly trained in night combat as in combat by day. To accomplish this, troops must train many hours under blackout conditions and must participate in all possible combinations of combined arms in night operations. Tanks, infantry, artillery, and engineers must train together, each with a desire to develop maximum means of efficient cooperation and coordina-

tion in night operations. "Every man in combat, whether he be a combat soldier in the front lines or a member of a service unit in the rear areas, must be trained and mentally prepared for night operations." ⁶ "Everyone must be impressed with the fact that, first of all, he is a soldier" ⁷ and as such, he must have the necessary training and intestinal fortitude to pick up a weapon of destruction and close with the enemy and capture or destroy him.

12. Finally, as in most successful operations, simplicity is the keynote.

6. USAFFE Board Report No. 230 B, 9 June '45.

7. Ibid.

NIGHT OPERATIONS

(Reinforced Infantry Battalion)

March 3, 1948

MILITARY MONOGRAPH

TITLE: Night Operations

SCOPE:

1. To bring out the detailed planning and coordination necessary to accomplish a night operation.
2. The importance of a thorough reconnaissance to:
 - a. Gain accurate and precise information of the location, strength, dispositions and habits of the enemy.
 - b. Verify the nature of the terrain to be traversed. Locate the exact position and effectiveness of natural and artificial obstacles.

Prepared by: Charlie Y. Talbot
(Name)

Lt. Col. Inf.
(Rank)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Shaw and Vistal, 175 Battles, p. 94.
2. Ibid., p. 137.
3. J. C. F. Fuller, Decisive Battles of the USA, p. 276-277.
4. Pacific Warfare Board Report, "Night Operations Against the Japanese", No. D-69, 21 Sept. 1945.
5. Sixth Army, Combat Notes, (Restricted) "Night Objective," Vol. 10, Final Edition, p. 60.
6. USAFFE Board Report No. 230 B, 9 June 1945.
7. Ibid.

NIGHT OPERATIONS

Night operations have been employed by military leaders for centuries, but they have never been used as frequently as daylight operations. In the past, maximum use of concealment of darkness have been made to shift reserves, relieve units in contact, and for general reorganization. However, the advantages of night operations over the same operations conducted during daylight have not been fully utilized.

Detailed planning, daring, and the unorthodox are the keynotes of a successful night operation. These were exemplified by General Washington at Trenton on the night of 24-25 December 1776:

"General Washington, with 2,400 men, crossed the Delaware at night to deliver a surprise attack on the roistering Germans under command of Colonel Rahl occupying Trenton. The crossing and subsequent attack was successful in that 40 enemy were killed, roughly 1,000 prisoners taken, and the American loss was two killed and three wounded. This was a master stroke, and like most great military coups, it was economical of lives and material." ¹

Also by Napoleon at Wagram in 1809:

"Under the cover of 150 heavy guns, Napoleon forced a crossing of the Danube during darkness. At nine in the evening of July 4, 1809, the artillery opened on Aspern and Erling, and 2,500 grenadiers landed opposite Enzersdorf and stormed that village. A tempest was raging. The bridges were laid; and by nine in the morning, three corps were in line on a 6,000-yard front facing northeast. The Austrian Army was hastily formed on a new front. Napoleon's second crossing of the Danube challenges comparison with all passages of rivers in the face of a powerful enemy." ²

The lack of detailed planning and information of the enemy's organization and dispositions will invariably result in failure. An excellent example of this is the attack made by General Longstreet on General Hooker

1. Shaw and Vistal, 175 Battles, p. 94.

2. Ibid, p. 137.

at Wauhatchie, Tennessee during the Civil War:

"On the night of the 28-29 October 1863, Longstreet made a night attack on Hooker at Wauhatchie which was easily repulsed. The Federals were assisted by their mules which took fright and stampeded toward the enemy, who in their turn broke and fled, imagining that a cavalry charge was upon them. By 4 A.M. on the 29th the battle was over, and the 'Cracker Line' was never again disturbed." 3

Prior to the birth of the infantry-tank team, the use of stealth in night operations, especially in the night attack, was stressed. With the addition of speed, fire power, armor protection, and shock action of the tank, stealth gave way to aggressiveness. This loss of secrecy justifies firing an artillery preparation prior to the attack at night. Since the use of tanks to support infantry in a night operation is somewhat dependent upon the nature of the terrain to be traversed, the use of stealth must still be depended upon in certain situations. A great majority of night operations conducted by units in the Pacific Theatre were characterized by secrecy and stealth. This was particularly true prior to the Philippines Campaign.

"Operations in the Philippines have presented a more normal picture as conceived by training doctrine, resulting in a marked increase in our employment of troops at night. This transition to offensive night activity can be attributed to the following factors:

1. Open terrain, not densely wooded, affording a relatively good road net and our first opportunity for long range observation.
2. Dry weather, which has greatly enhanced mobility of troops and vehicles.
3. Existence of better maps and improved aerial photography, due mainly to the lack of heavy jungle growth.
4. Availability of excellent guerrilla guides.
5. Confidence and combat experience of our troops.

3. J. F. C. Fuller, Decisive Battles of the U.S.A., p. 276-277.

6. Occasional inadequate preparation by the enemy for defense against night attack. (Inaccurate and uncoordinated fire, loss of control, poor communications and insufficient security)."⁴

It is my belief that the following statement made by a platoon sergeant during the Philippines Campaign reflected the thoughts of the majority of combat troops who participated in the island-hopping campaign of the Southwest Pacific Area:

"The 33rd Infantry Division had Baguio as its final objective," said a platoon sergeant from the 123rd Infantry Regiment. "Late in February 1945, we captured a Japanese document which stated that American troops were daylight fighters, and that we invariably stopped our tactical activities and dug-in each night before darkness. In some ways this was true, for we always did have a reluctance for night movement in the jungle, but the Japanese didn't figure that the main reason we sat tight was because we could catch more of them that way. Up here in Luzon the terrain and situation were different. All we needed was a good set-up."⁵

An excellent example of how an infantry battalion (reinforced) made use of the "set-up" was demonstrated by a battalion of the 130th Infantry Regiment, during the night of 18-19 March, 1945. During the night the 1st Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment (reinforced), was motorized and moved under concealment of darkness nine miles to capture the town of Bauang and the tactically important Bauang bridges to the south. The operation consisted of a motor march to within 4,000 yards of the objective, a lightly defended river crossing, and an attack of an enemy-held town and the high ground to the northeast and east overlooking the town and bridges. The two 500-foot

4. Pacific Warfare Board Report, "Night Operations Against the Japanese",

#D-69, 21 Sept. '45.

5. Sixth Army, Combat Notes (Restricted), "Night Objective", Vol. 10, Final Edition, p. 60.

steel and concrete bridges were found prepared for demolition with picric acid and explosive similar to composition "C". Two 200-pound aerial bombs were also found wired to the north bridge.

During the period when the Sixth Army was attacking south, east, and north out of the Central Luzon Plain, I Corps had as part of its mission the capture of the Cagayan Valley and the approaches thereto. The 33rd Infantry Division with its left on the Lingayen Gulf coast, and its right on the Agno River, had as its mission the capture of Baguio.

Intelligence reports stated that the enemy was evacuating San Fernando (north), moving south along the coastal highway to Bauang, then east to Baguio. The 1st Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment (then at Aringay) was ordered to capture Bauang, seize the two bridges to the south (intact), and the high ground to the northeast and east overlooking the town; thereby blocking the only escape route then open to the enemy for his evacuation of San Fernando and vicinity.

The battalion commander was given ample time in which to plan the operation. Supporting units were immediately made available. These were:

Cannon Company, 130th Infantry Regiment

One platoon, 33rd Infantry Division, Reconnaissance Troop

One platoon, Company A, 775th Tank Battalion (attached)

1st platoon, Company C, 108th Engineer Battalion (combat)(attached).

RECONNAISSANCE

The battalion commander ordered a reconnaissance party consisting of the battalion S-2 and a guerrilla guide to reconnoiter the battalion assembly area and the crossing site (selected from an aerial photograph), to locate

enemy positions guarding the bridges, locate any security elements the enemy may have south of the river, and determine, if possible, the time of ebb-tide (seizing the bridges intact necessitated having elements of the battalion cross the river by fording in order to reach assaulting positions), since this time would be an important factor in determining the time of attack. To accomplish this, it was necessary for the reconnaissance party to remain in the vicinity of the bridge on the south side of the river for two nights and one day. During this time they were forced to move frequently to avoid being discovered by enemy patrols. Also, it was discovered that during the first night there was very little activity in the town, but during the second night there was considerable activity in the town; and between 2400 hours and 0400 hours an estimated 300-400 troops entered the town from the north. This corroborated information received from a local inhabitant who stated that every other night there were "many soldiers in town." Further ground reconnaissance was forbidden. However, an aerial reconnaissance was made by the battalion commander, heavy weapons company commander, and the three rifle company commanders. The aerial reconnaissance proved to be very helpful, especially for the rifle company commanders, who were assigned sectors of the town to clear, and portions of the high ground beyond the town, as their objectives.

PLAN OF ATTACK

Upon completion of the reconnaissance it was found that very few changes of the tentative plan (made from a map and aerial photograph study) were necessary. The most important change was to set up the date from the 19th to the

18th, hoping to find the objective defended only by its designated troops, which was estimated to be company strength, supported by two tanks.

Since seizing the bridges intact depended upon surprise, secrecy, and stealth; only the foot elements of the battalion were moved into the assembly area. The remainder of the battalion (vehicles) and attached unit's vehicles were to remain in the rear assembly area (Aringay) and arrive in vicinity of the crossing site on a time schedule.

The march from the assembly area to the attack position had to be made in single file across rice paddies (very uneven ground, difficult marching even in daylight.) The plan called for Company A, Battalion headquarters (command group), heavy weapons company, engineer platoon, Company C, Battalion headquarters company (-), and Company B in that order. Upon arrival in the attack position the heavy weapons were placed in position to support the crossing and assault of the town.

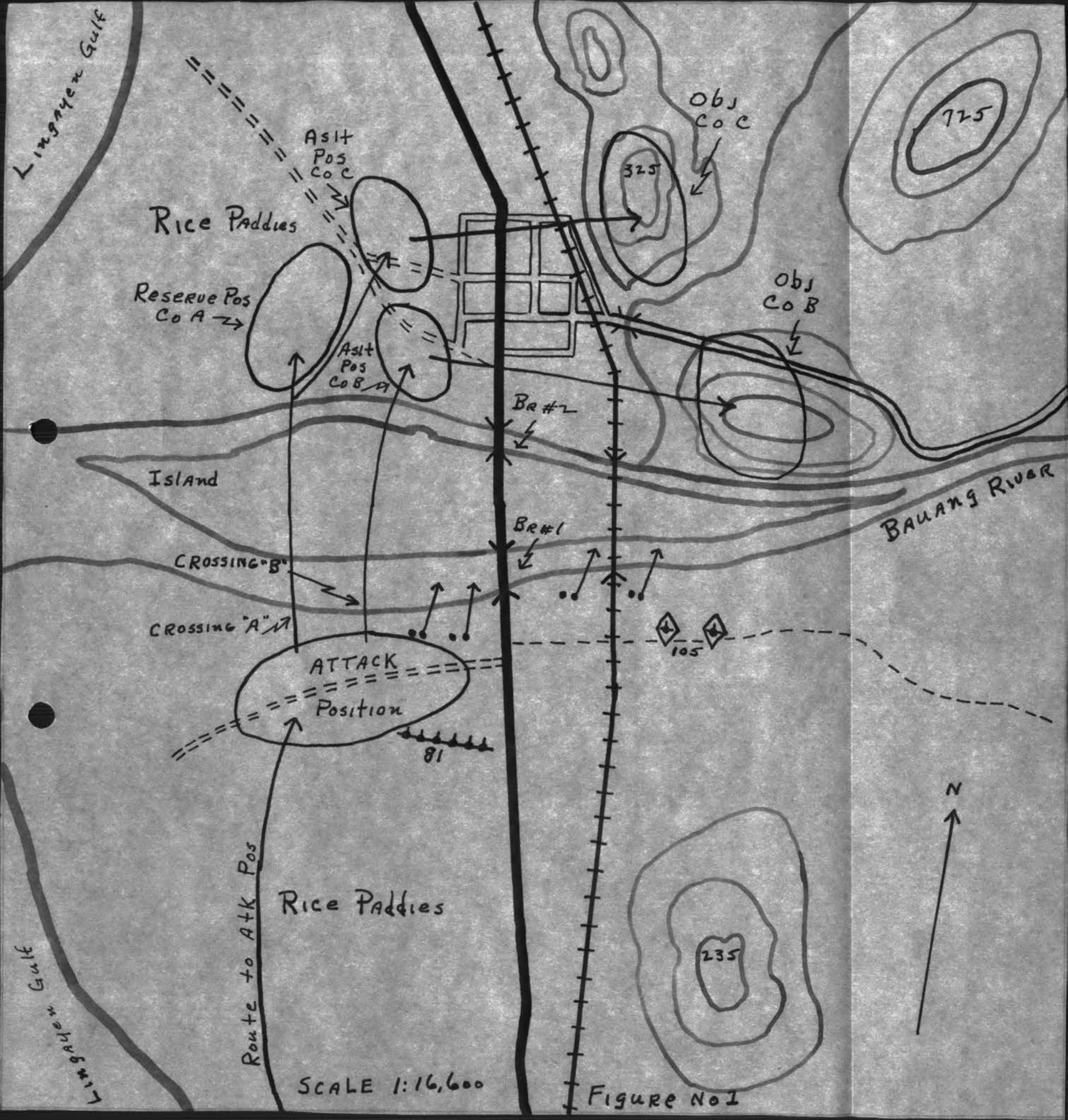
The crossing was to be made at two different points about 300 yards apart. The plan was for Company A to cross at point "A" and take up positions to cover the crossing of the assault companies, and protect the left flank and rear of the assault echelon during the assault of the battalion objective. Company C, the left assault company, was to cross at point "A" fifteen minutes after company A had cleared the near (south) bank. Company B, the right assault company, followed by battalion headquarters command group was to cross at point "B" simultaneously with Company C. Both assault companies were to take up positions, then assault their respective objectives on signal. The engineer platoon was to infiltrate across bridge No. 1

(after ascertaining there were no trip wires to set off the demolition) and move along the west side of the road embankment to the south end of bridge No. 2. They were to place a section of machine guns in position to cover the far side of the river and suspected enemy positions along the far bank protecting the bridge. A team of three men for each bridge were to disarm and remove the demolition. The movement of the engineer platoon was to start thirty minutes after the two assault companies started to cross the south fork of the river, allowing thirty minutes for the engineers to get in position. This would give the assault companies one hour to cross the river and get into position to launch the assault. This was based on the assumption that the rifle companies would gain the far bank undetected. (See Figure 1.)

The reconnaissance platoon (with M8 scout cars) was to precede the motor column by five minutes from the present assembly area (Aringay) to the new assembly area; thereafter to protect the rear and right flank of the battalion by keeping the road from Caba to the Bauang River open. Also, to be prepared to cross the bridges on order, and with one section of light tanks reconnoiter highway No. 9 as far east as Naguilian. (See Figure 2.)

The light tank platoon was to arrive at the river at H + 100, be prepared to cross the bridges on order, and go into positions initially to block the highway to the north (under the supervision of the reserve company commander). (See Figure 2.)

The 1st cannon platoon (with 105 mm howitzer S/P) was to arrive at the river at H + 90, go into firing positions to support the assault of Company B



by firing direct fire on targets of opportunity, and to neutralize several caves on that company's final objective, with openings facing the river. Also, to be prepared to cross the bridges on order; and with a rifle platoon from the reserve company, clear the coastal highway north as far as Paringoo. (See Figure 2.)

The cannon company (-) (with 105 mm howitzer S/P) was to support the attack by indirect fire, under supervision of the direct support artillery battalion commander. This gave the infantry battalion and equivalent of four batteries of artillery in direct support. The battalion of artillery plus cannon company (-) was to move into position under concealment of darkness and be ready to support the attack by H hour. (See Figure 2.)

Communication on the near side of the river would not present any problem, except that communications with regiment would not be established until after the assault was launched, because of the necessity of radio silence and the inadvisability of attempting to lay wire across country at night. Prior to the assault the use of messengers would be the only means used. The signals to launch the assault were:

1. Pyrotechnic (green star cluster), to be fired by the engineer platoon leader to signify that the demolitions had been disarmed.
2. Enemy fire on the engineers while disarming or removing the demolitions. These signals were also used to bring fires of the battalion heavy weapons to bear on their assigned target areas. (The target areas and initial firing data for both the mortars and heavy machine guns were determined by a study of a map and an aerial photograph. The maps and aerial photograph

SAN FERNANDO

CR 130
1A 130
Route of Patrol

1 33
1A 775
2A 130
Route of Patrol

Nanguilian

Baculo

Assy Pos
CR 130
124
33

LINGAYEN GULF

CABA

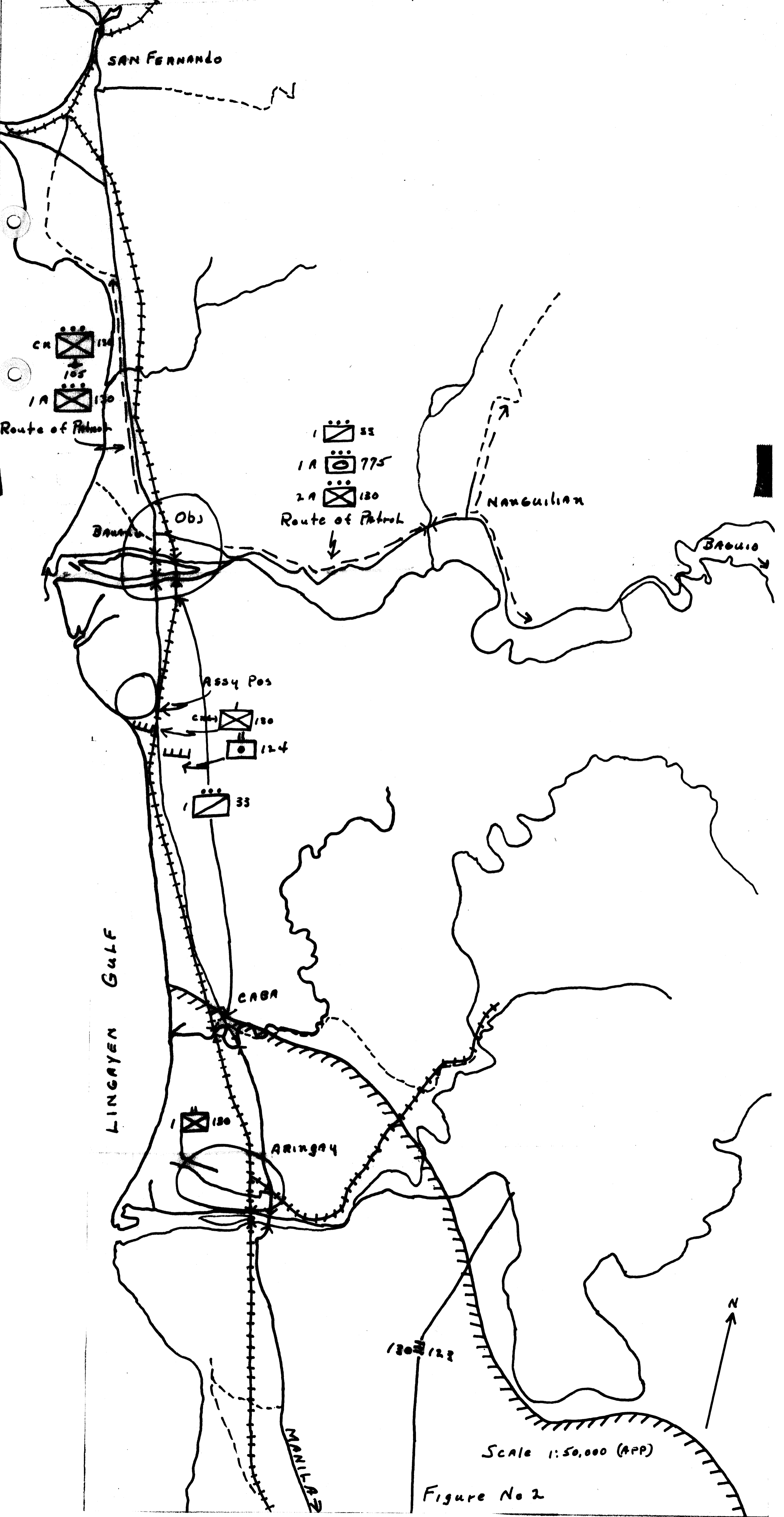
130
ARINGAY

MONTEAZ

130 122

Scale 1:50,000 (APP)

Figure No 2



were very clear and accurate.)

The time of attack presented the greatest problem for the battalion commander. The success of the operation depended upon two factors:

1. The degree of success of the engineers in accomplishing their mission.
2. The ability of the rifle companies to gain the far side of the river and get into assault positions undetected.

The battalion S-2 with the assistance of the guerrilla guide and two local inhabitants determined that both forks of the river, though approximately 400 yards in width, could be forded by the average height man at waist depth at this season of the year. The distance to be traveled and the nature of the terrain to be traversed by the assault companies made an attack during the early hours of darkness impractical. The battalion commander reasoned that if the bridges were to be seized intact, it would be necessary to assault the town prior to daylight. With daylight at approximately 0500, it was decided to cross the line of departure (near bank of river) at 0315. This should put the assault companies in position approximately thirty minutes prior to daylight. This should also give the engineer platoon time to disarm the demolitions. With these two factors in mind, the preceding plan was adopted.

CONDUCT OF THE OPERATION

The approach march was conducted without incident and was undetected by the enemy. The guerrilla guide met the battalion at the assembly area and reported that the enemy had established a warning post approximately 800

yards south of the river. It was then necessary to change the route to the attack position to avoid detection by the enemy warning post. This was done with little loss of time, and a detail from the heavy weapons company took care of the enemy group after it was too late to give any warning.

The rifle companies reached the far bank undetected, moving between the enemy positions guarding the north end of the bridges and a suspected position approximately 1,000 yards west of the bridges. This latter position was found to be prepared but unoccupied. The two assault companies were in position by 0430. The heavy weapons, having been placed in position upon arrival in the attack position, were ready to deliver their supporting fires by 0345.

The engineer platoon, having discovered no trip wires on bridge No. 1, began infiltrating across at the prescribed time. They succeeded in getting the section of machine guns in position to cover disarming and removal of the demolitions. The demolitions had been disarmed, and the three-man team was in the process of removing one of the aerial bombs when the enemy suddenly decided something was amiss and began spraying the bridges with machine gun fire from positions in the near edge of town. This was the signal everybody had hoped would not be given, but had expected. The exact locations of the enemy weapons covering the bridges were easily picked up. They were momentarily silenced by our heavy machine guns located on the south bank of the river, firing at a range of approximately 1200 yards. This fire was not very effective, and the enemy opened fire again. However, by this time the 81 mm mortars from positions near the south bank were able to neutralize

those particular positions which allowed the engineers to withdraw across the river.

The assault was launched upon signal and the assaulting companies overran the surprised and disorganized enemy; and shortly after dawn, the town and two bridges (intact) were in our hands. While the enemy was still demoralized, the attack continued against the high ground commanding the town. The objective of the right company was honey-combed with caves, giving the enemy maximum protection and excellent fields of mutually supporting fire. It was necessary to seal up each cave entrance. With direct 105 mm cannon fire from the right flank, and assistance by fire from the left company (which had gained its objective with little resistance), the assault teams (a flame thrower team, demolition team, automatic rifle team, and several riflemen) were able to work their way up to each cave entrance and completely destroy the occupants. This was a very slow process, and it was not until 1000 that this objective was secured.

The reconnaissance platoon, assigned the mission of reconnoitering the road east as far as Nagullian, was augmented by a platoon of infantry, one section of light tanks, and an artillery forward observer. The cannon and infantry platoon, assigned the mission of clearing the coastal highway leading to the north, was not changed. These two groups pushed out shortly after 1000 on the 18th and, encountering small isolated groups of enemy, completed their missions by nightfall.

The entire operation went according to plan. The night approach march was quiet, orderly, and well regulated; and in spite of a long cross-country

move by a reinforced battalion in single file, and the accompanying maneuver which included crossing a stream approximately 400 yards wide to secure the two bridges, the enemy was surprised. The extent of the success of this night operation is reflected in the casualty totals for the battle. Enemy casualties were 284 killed, one captured. Our casualties were three killed, three wounded.

CONCLUSIONS

1. A well-planned night operation is less costly in lives, equipment, supplies, and time than are similar daylight operations.
2. Terrain is one of the most important factors affecting the success of night operations.
3. Valuable information of enemy strength, dispositions, and habits can be obtained by the employment of night reconnaissance parties.
4. Friendly activity, both day and night, must be carefully planned and strictly controlled to avoid tipping your hand to the enemy.
5. Thorough reconnaissance, detailed planning, and thorough briefing of all leaders are essential. Reconnaissance will often be limited to a study of the map or an aerial photograph, or to a long-range visual reconnaissance from an observation post. The value of an aerial reconnaissance by as many of the subordinate leaders as possible, must not be overlooked.
6. Training doctrine, as presently taught, is sound; and field manuals and other training material on night operations adequately cover the subject.
7. Proper control and coordination of plans down to platoon level, is vital.

8. The plan for the defense of the objective, to include patrolling forward of the objective after capture, must be worked out in detail before the attack. The who, what, where, when, and how cannot be ignored. Defensive fires must be planned to box in the objective in the event of a counter-attack.

9. Maneuvers should be avoided if possible; however, with detailed planning, thorough briefing, and a dependable communication system, plus strong leaders and a few resolute and determined men in the lead, the usual fire and maneuver can be successfully employed.

10. Orders must be simple, concise, and absolutely clear. All leaders must know the objective, direction of attack, formation, exact mission, signal for assault, action in case the enemy is not surprised, location of rallying points, action upon carrying the position, and means of identifying friendly troops.

11. All troops should be thoroughly trained in all aspects of night combat. In the future, we may expect night operations to be as commonplace as day operations. Therefore, in order to be able to successfully employ the technique of night combat, we must emphasize night operations in our future training programs. It is desirable that, in any future conflict, we have units as thoroughly trained in night combat as in combat by day. To accomplish this, troops must train many hours under blackout conditions and must participate in all possible combinations of combined arms in night operations. Tanks, infantry, artillery, and engineers must train together, each with a desire to develop maximum means of efficient cooperation and coordina-

tion in night operations. "Every man in combat, whether he be a combat soldier in the front lines or a member of a service unit in the rear areas, must be trained and mentally prepared for night operations." ⁶ "Everyone must be impressed with the fact that, first of all, he is a soldier" ⁷ and as such, he must have the necessary training and intestinal fortitude to pick up a weapon of destruction and close with the enemy and capture or destroy him.

12. Finally, as in most successful operations, simplicity is the keynote.

6. USAFFE Board Report No. 230 B, 9 June '45.

7. Ibid.