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Remarks by General
Merrill.



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REMARKS BY BRIGADIER GENERAL FRANK D. MERRILL, DURING A CONFERENCE HELD AT AGF HQ.
20 SEPTEMBER 1944

1. PATROLLING. With regard to patrolling we used mounted horse patrols extensively, even in areas which were not especially good for mounted patrols. I found in many instances that the foot patrols just couldn't do the jobs required. After seeing the results obtained many times, the infantry battalion commanders desire at least a mounted platoon in each battalion. In connection with our use of mounted patrols we found that due to the greater speed attained they could set up their radio and take the time to send decent and adequate messages, whereas with our regular infantry foot patrols, for good communication results, you have to send signal corps personnel with it. The mounted patrol can set up its radio quickly, take advantage of its mobility and make the little time that is lost at times pay off in good communications.

2. USE OF HORSE CAVALRY. We are now arriving in country where horse cavalry could be used to great advantage. The type of country now being approached is sparsely wooded areas or lightly wooded hills. Roughly, it is the same way when you get into China - good open rolling country which is just what is needed for rapid envelopments and getting behind the Japs. It is the type of country which permits mounted troops doing the job much faster and better than dismounted troops. It might be of interest to know that General Stilwell asked for an entire cavalry division (mounted) about a year and a half ago. In general, we ran into some situations in which you could not employ horse cavalry, mounted, but in those situations the requirements were for dismounted troops with pack transportation. Then you have the choice of dismounting the horse cavalry - which it is very capable of doing - or adding enormous amounts of pack animals and equipment to infantry formations and taking a long time to train it. It is known that after all of the time taken for training, they are not doing what horse cavalry would. In the open country horse reconnaissance went well. As a matter of fact we made an effort to use horse cavalry for reconnaissance troops of the mountain division. We had 4 platoons of the pack type with full communications included. Our reconnaissance sort would be invaluable. I had no Tables of Organization at all for animals. I secured what I could, at one time having over 140 animals. We used these animals on some of our long marches. When we first started to use them the infantry battalion commanders didn't think too much of the idea but after a few of the trips, especially when we were about halfway through a march, they were certainly glad we had them and all wanted to know if I couldn't get more. Animals also provided a good means of messenger service. In all, we used dismounted troops on three major envelopments. Two of these could have been made by mounted troops and saved much physical hardship on the men to say nothing of the difference in time which could have been gained.

3. DETAILS OF AN OPERATION. (See Sketch No. 1, attached). The Chinese had for sometime been carrying out operations against the Jap fortified positions as shown on sketch. The Japs had been in there for about 18 months and were dug in pretty strongly. The Chinese were having difficulty with their operation and at this time it was decided to send us in to assist with the job. We started our march from here (indicated on sketch) around the Japanese right flank to here (Point A); we pulled a feint here and left 40 mounted men back to make plenty of firing noise to deceive the Japs and with the main body continued on making a 26 mile march to this point (Point B) where we engaged the enemy in a big fight and successfully accomplished our mission. We blocked two roads and all other adjacent

trails. I then moved my 3d battalion to this area and we had quite a fortunate stroke of luck at this point (Point C). We moved in, tapped the Jap main telephone lines and listened in on their orders. The Japs ordered a withdrawal across the river and 48 hours later started crossing the river at this point (Point D). My 3 battalions were located here while the bulk of the Jap division was coming south to cross the river. I was weak in men, but my weakest point was in trying to move them around. This is where we could have done twice as good a job with mounted troops. I could have gained something in here but due to the fact my men were so tired and on foot, I couldn't maneuver them as I desired and had to be content with the job we had already done. We got about 4500 Japs in this engagement - in one small area we counted 435 bodies. At one point in the river where the Japs were crossing we had 36 machine guns sited on them - you can imagine how many we got at that spot. The water in this area actually "ran red".

4. DETAILS OF AN OPERATION. (See Sketch No. 2, attached.) The Japs were here in very heavily fortified positions. We knew they were pretty strong at these points as they had been organized in this area for over a year. The defense positions were really good ones. We went into the area for action with one American battalion, one Chinese infantry regiment and one Chinese battery (pack). We also sent in two other American battalions - these outfits put in a good roadblock here (A & B). The Jap general reserve for the area was in KAMAING. While this operation (movement to A) went off without incident - it couldn't have been done by horse troops - the other part (movement to B) of the action would have been a soup for mounted troops. One battalion in this force (the one which moved to point B) marched 75 miles in three days over bad country. While the reserves here (KAMAING), I shoved a skeleton force over the trails leading to them at KAMAING. It put out light blocks on the trails here (indicated positions on sketch at Point C) and then settled down to watch what was happening. We had another piece of good luck during this operation as one of the men captured a Jap Major. We found out then that two of the reserve battalions were moving on the north trail south of C and that they had instructions to get to D and attack the flank of the Chinese 5 days later. My decision then was to pull back to E. I had two batteries of 105s and a regiment of 75s but I realized I did not have enough power to stay in there. I pulled out and got back and blocked this two battalion affair. This action was a good example of the lack of mounted troops when they were so much needed. We could have done a much better job with mounted troops. My real difficulty in this action was getting from B to E (sketch) before the Japs did. We got to E and they hit us three hours later from the trails from the south. We attacked these battalions and chased them back. Later we drove the Japs out of the area. We made a couple of envelopments during the action but with mounted troops could have done a more successful job. This holds true for several other instances in the theater.

5. Notes.

a. American. The American regiment changed the whole attitude of the Chinese and got them to fighting. They really got into good shape after witnessing the Americans because the Chinese don't like to lose face by not doing as well as the Americans. General Stilwell would rather have one regiment of infantry than thousands of liaison officers or planners. The Chinese pay little attention to liaison officers. All our wounded were evacuated by air; there being no case when I didn't get them out.

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b. Chinese. The two Chinese regiments engaged in the area hadn't fought since 1942 but four days after their arrival in our area they performed as well as some of the boys we trained.

6. General Merrill concluded by stating that the Army Ground Forces training doctrines were sound and had been proven sound in combat. What is needed is sound basic training. Applied with common sense there is no difficulty in adapting it to conditions in CBI.

During a later discussion General Merrill made the following comments of interest to Army Ground Forces:

1. Pack artillery would be in great demand in large operations in North Burma due to the difficulty in transporting heavier artillery into and within the area.

2. Personnel which he had received from the United States and from the Caribbean without combat experience has performed generally better than personnel received from other divisions with previous combat experience. (General Merrill attributed this to superior basic training of the personnel received from the United States and from the Caribbean.)

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The following
image(s) may be of
poor quality due to
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SKETCH No. 1

LEDO

SHINGBWIYUNG

MA INK KWANG

KUMYENGA

Where some
Japs
escaped

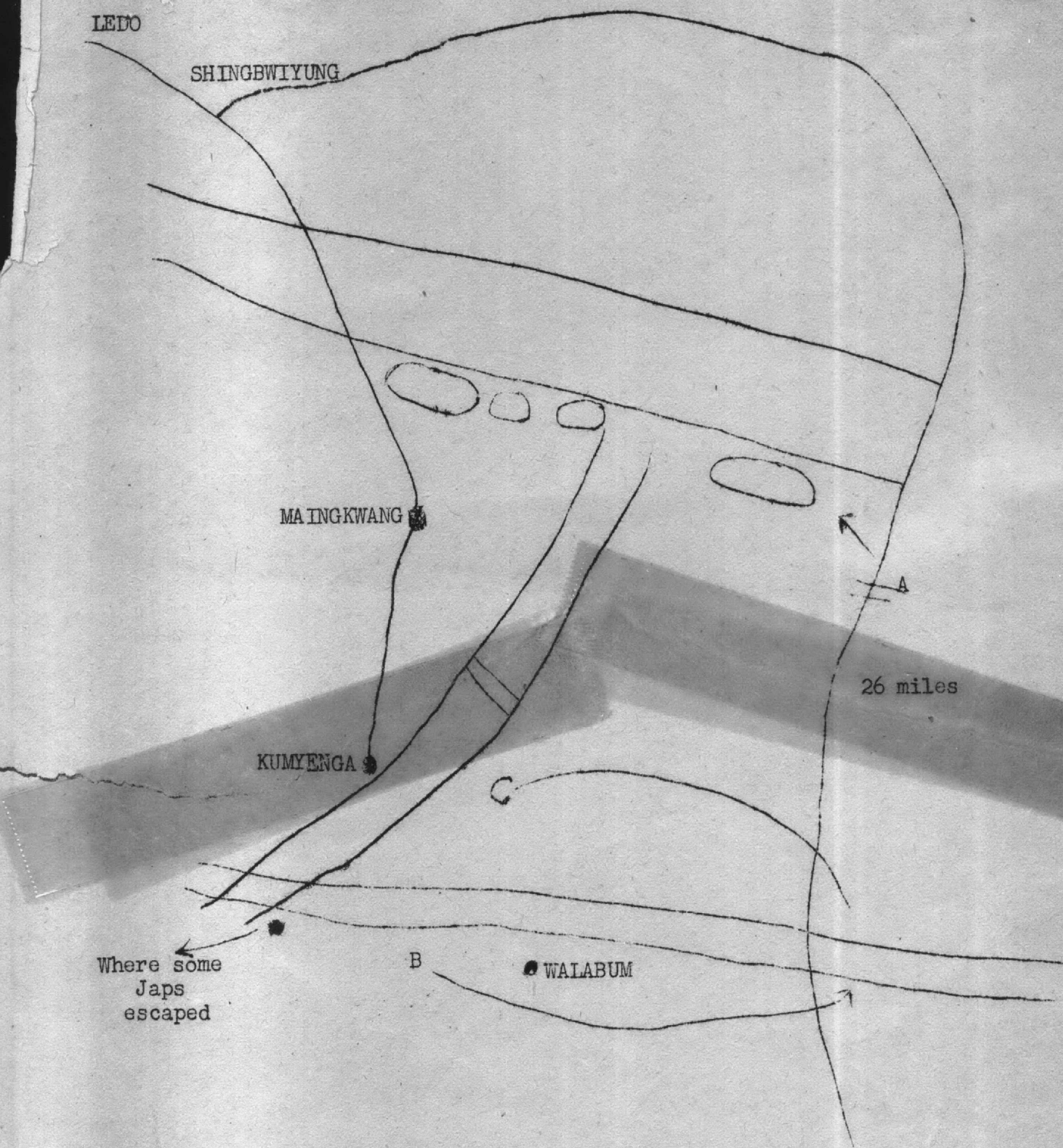
B

WALABUM

26 miles

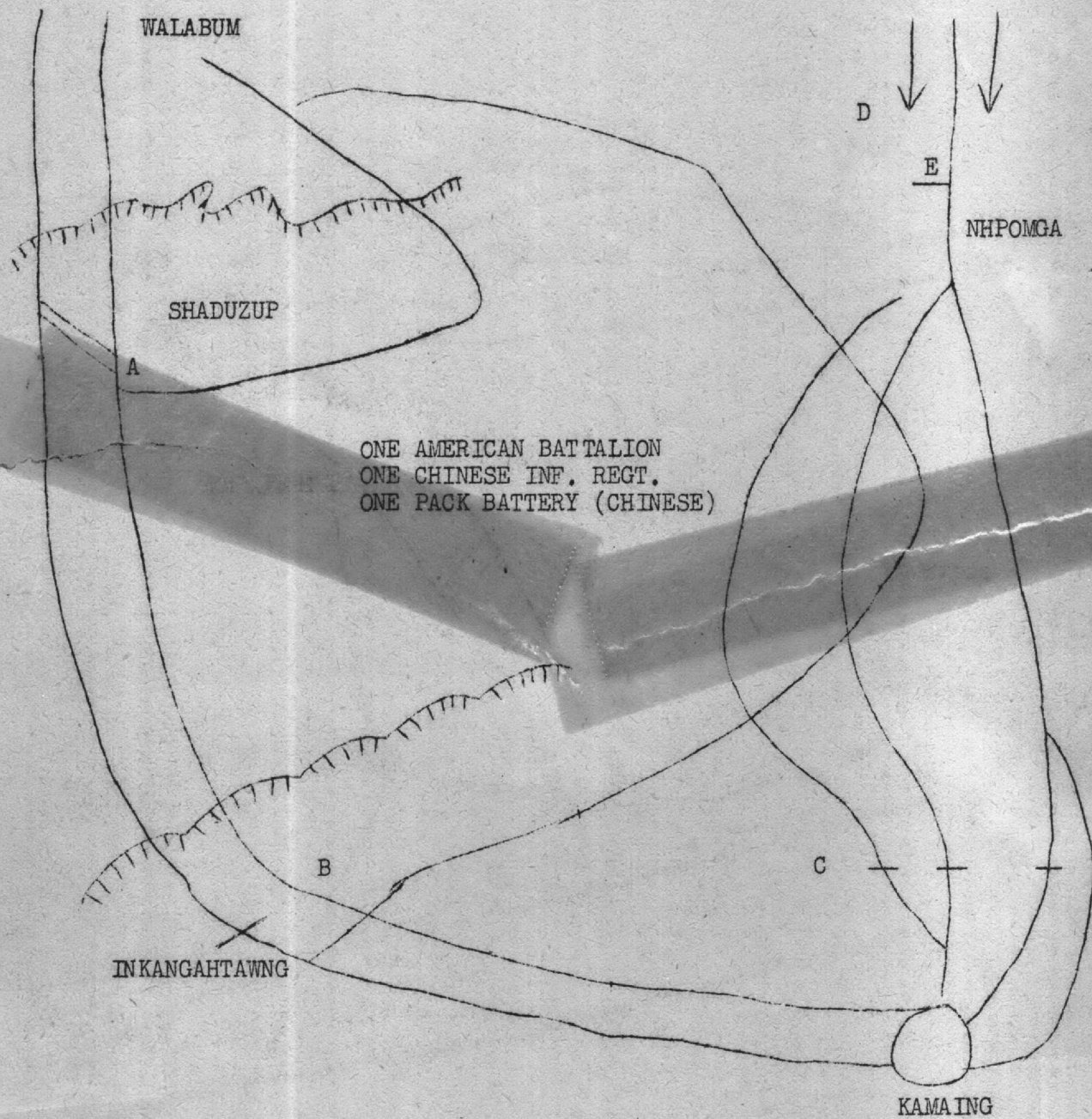
Sketch No. 1

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SKETCH No. 2



Sketch No. 2

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DISSEMINATION DIVISION
G-2 Section

HEADQUARTERS ARMY GROUND FORCES
Army War College
Washington 25, D. C.

Remarks by Brig. Gen. F.D. Merrill.

SUBJECT: Report, ~~Army Ground Forces Board~~

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