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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 35TH INFANTRY REGIMENT
(25TH INFANTRY DIVISION) ON GUADALCANAL IN THE ATTACK AND
REDUCTION OF THE GIFU STRONG POINT, 10-25 JANUARY 1943
(GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Machine Gun Platoon Instrument Corporal)

Type of operation described: REGIMENT IN THE
ATTACK IN JUNGLE TERRAIN

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

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INTRODUCTION

The first offensive ground action of the United States in World War II occurred on the morning of 7 August 1942 when the First Marine Division, Reinforced, began "Operation Pestilence" in the Guadalcanal - Tulagi area. (1)

The decision to attack in this part of the British Solomon Islands group was brought about by two facts: (a) the U.S. victory at Midway, which had set the stage for offensive action on our part; and (b) the steady progress the Japanese had been making down the Solomon Islands chain, which was necessary to the defense of their large base at Rabaul, New Britain, as well as to the possibility of continuing their expansion to the south and southeast. Added to this was the knowledge that the Japanese were very busy in building a new, large airfield on the island of Guadalcanal which was expected to be completed by the middle of August. (2) These facts, combined, clearly indicated the most logical area to be attacked.

After the initial naval bombardment, the Marines landed in the vicinity of Lunga Point without a shot being fired from the shore. (3) (See Map A) Full advantage was taken of this situation and the attacking force moved rapidly inland. Henderson Field, primary objective of the operation, was secured on D plus 1. (4)

For almost two weeks the enemy on shore proved to be more of a nuisance than a menace, and no major counterattack had been launched against the beachhead. (5) On 18 August 1942, Japanese reinforcements

(1) A-4, pp. 5,6, A-6, p. 21; (2) A-5, p. 35; (3) A-5, p. 38;
(4) A-5, pp. 38,42; (5) A-5, p. 49.

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began arriving on the island. One of the first units to land was the Ichiki Detachment, over 1,000 strong, which was met and almost completely destroyed by the Marines at the Tenaru River on the night of 20-21 August.

(6) On the night of 12-13 September, the Kawaguchi Detachment, a force of 5,000 which had landed earlier in the month, attacked Edson's Ridge, just south of Henderson Field, resulting in the "Battle of Bloody Ridge".

Once again the Japanese were unsuccessful and suffered very heavy casualties. Japanese forces along the Matanikau River to the west attacked the Marine line with tanks on 23 October and were repulsed with heavy losses. (7) On 25 October another attempt was made by the enemy to take Henderson Field from the south. This time the 164th Infantry Regiment of The Americal Division, reinforced by the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Marines, held its ground and the attack failed. This was the first action of the U.S. Army on Guadalcanal. (8)

Detail summary

Following the failure of the last attack on Henderson Field, the bulk of the Japanese forces in the area moved to the high ground in the vicinity of Mt. Austen. From here they had observation on the airfield and at the same time a strong defensive position. Our lines were consolidated along the Matanikau River with a perimeter defense surrounding Henderson Field and other vital installations which, by mid-December, included two fighter strips completed and one other under construction. (9)

(See Map A)

After 14 November, when seven out of eleven of their transports were sunk during an attempted landing, the Japanese continued to reinforce their Guadalcanal garrison by transporting personnel and supplies on destroyers, landing them at night. Neither side attempted any large scale attacks, and a stalemate developed which was to last until the early part of January 1943. (10)

(6) A-5, p. 52, A-6, p. 21; (7) A-6, p. 21; (8) A-6, p. 21; (9) A-6, p. 22, A-2, p. 20; (10) A-6, p. 22.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

By the time the first elements of the 25th Division landed on Guadalcanal in early December, U.S. forces had been increased by the arrival of other new units. Among them were the remainder of the Americal Division, the 8th Marines and the 147th Infantry Regiment. On 9 December 1942, the First Marine Division left Guadalcanal and Island Command was turned over to Major General Alexander Patch, then Commanding General of the Americal Division. (NOTE: The Island Commander and the XIV Corps Commander were the same person, Major General Patch) With the arrival of the 8th Marines, the Second Marine Division had two units on Guadalcanal, the other being the 2nd Marines which had come ashore in the initial landing with the First Marine Division. The one remaining regiment of the Second Marine Division, the 6th Marines, did not arrive on the island until 4 January 1943. (11)

Most of the units on Guadalcanal prior to the arrival of the 25th Division, had been there for some time and were in a weakened condition due to jungle combat and disease. (12) Units in contact were having a very difficult time taking ground because of the nature of the Japanese defenses. Machine gun nests and snipers abounded in the many gullies and ravines to the front, and each yard gained was costly.

The 132nd Infantry Regiment, Americal Division, had slowly moved westward across Hills 30 and 31, and after a tough fight succeeded in taking Hill 27, a fanatically defended strong point in the Japanese defense setup on Mt. Austen. The 3rd Battalion, 182nd Infantry Regiment, Americal Division, was on a ridge approximately 1,000 yards north of the 132nd Infantry, and the gap between the two units was covered by fire and patrols. The possibility of enemy movement down the draw between Hills 31 and 42, as a means of attacking rear elements of the 132nd Infantry along Wright Road, (11) Personal knowledge, A-2, p. 22, A-5, pp. 77, 78; (12) A-2, p. 19.

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Dep. Regt?

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was eliminated by a block placed in the ravine near the left (east) flank of the 3rd Battalion, 182nd Infantry. (13) Their right (west) flank was tied in with the 2nd Marines at the Matanikau River. The 8th Marines, on the right (north) of the 2nd Marines, extended the line to the beach. Hill 56 was occupied by the Americal Division Reconnaissance Squadron. (See Map B)

With the arrival of the 25th Division, the corps commander had under his control a fresh, though untried, unit capable of great physical effort. While in Hawaii, in addition to manning the island defenses after the Japanese blow of 7 December 1941, numerous training maneuvers and exercises had been conducted. Prominent among these were amphibious landings, jungle operations, and combat problems. Efforts were made to increase the physical stamina of the individual soldier and much emphasis was placed on the development of team work among the various units. The mental attitude of the men had gradually changed from defensive to offensive and by 25 November 1942, the division was declared ready for combat. It was just exactly what was needed in order to make the hard attack necessary to break through the Japanese defenses and drive the enemy from the island. In order to obtain the result desired, however, it would be necessary to commit the division before the men became sick with malaria and other tropical diseases. (14)

The corps commander lost no time in making his decision and the division was given its mission in a Letter of Instructions, Headquarters XIV Corps, dated 5 January 1943. In brief, the 25th Division was to:

(a) contact the enemy; (b) envelop his south flank; (c) reduce the strong Japanese position in the Mt. Austen - Hill 27 area; and (d) seize the corps objective, 3,000 yards to the west. (15) To assist the division in carrying out its mission, the 3rd Battalion, 182nd Infantry, Americal

(13) Personal knowledge; (14) A-6, p. 17; (15) A-1, p. 4.

no map ref.

Division Reconnaissance Squadron and 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines were attached. (16)

In order to appreciate to any extent the mission that the 25th Division had been assigned, it is necessary at this time to consider the terrain and weather. The island itself is nearly 100 miles long and about thirty miles wide at its widest point. In the central portion of the northern coast the land is relatively flat, and here are located the coconut plantations and the airfield. Farther inland, the flat coastal land gives way to the very rugged foot hills of the mountains which run almost east and west through the center of the island. The tops of these hills are usually bare except for grass which grows about thirty to forty inches high. These grassy areas are called "Sabanas". (17) On either side of the hills are deep draws containing the small streams of the drainage system, and very thick jungle which extends up the sides of the draws fifty to two hundred yards. Farther to the west, rugged mountains are the dominating features. Over most of the island a thick mat of tropical growth exists. In some places the sun cannot be seen at noon and in order to move, trails must be cut almost every step of the way.

20 maps ref.

no table who maps ref.

→

20 maps this?

The weather, as in most of the South Pacific area, is hot and humid with rain more or less a daily occurrence. Along the coast and on the hills, at the right time of the year, a brisk tradewind makes the heat bearable and almost comfortable. Down in the deep ravines and damp jungle, however, men soon become infected with a skin disease, commonly known as "the crud" or "jungle rot". Also to be considered were malaria, dysentery, dengue fever and beri-beri. Although U.S. troops had no trouble with beri-beri, the other three put many men out of action and in the hospital just as surely and effectively as battle wounds. It later developed that the Japanese had more trouble along these lines than our forces. (18)

(16) A-1, App. VI; (17), (18) A-2, p. 19.

DIVISION SITUATION AND PLAN OF ATTACK

Immediately upon receipt of the Letter of Instructions from XIV Corps, reconnaissance was begun in the division zone of action. Due to the lack of suitable maps, aerial photos were studied and commanders, including most of the battalion commanders, were flown over the area. This gave them definite knowledge of the nature of the terrain over which they were to operate. (19)

The division's right (north) boundary ran generally along the northwest fork of the Matanikau River and although no southern boundary was assigned, operations in that direction were limited by the Lunga River. *no maps ref.* The Matanikau River, with its several branches, flows generally north across the division zone of action and divides the area into several sections. That portion of the area between the northwest fork and the southwest fork is dominated by a hill mass, known as "Galloping Horse" because of its peculiar shape. Between the southwest and southeast forks are Hills 43 - 44, known as the "Sea Horse". From Hill 43, the higher of the two hills, the Japanese had good observation into our positions, particularly that portion of the line held by the 3rd Battalion, 182nd Infantry. The area east of the Matanikau River is dominated by Hill 27, a part of the Mt. Austen hill mass. (20) (See Map C) The entire area over which the division was to operate was crisscrossed by deep ravines, streams of various sizes, and jungle that would have made any military operation extremely difficult, even without the presence of the Japanese.

*Why these
points to the
west have been
chosen?*

Although the enemy in this area had been subjected to terrific punishment both from Mother Nature and our troops, he tenaciously held his ground until killed. His pillboxes held out to the last man and snipers continued to take their toll. It was plain to see that an attacker would be forced to pay in blood and lives for any success.

(19) A-1, p. 5; (20) A-1, pp. 5,6, Personal knowledge.

Japanese forces in the division zone consisted of the 124th and 228th Infantry Regiments. Both of these units had been in action for some time on Guadalcanal and also in Malaya, Burma, Java and the Philippines. The 124th Infantry was located in the area bounded by Hills 27, 31, 42, 23 and 44, while the 228th Infantry was in the area bounded by Hills 43, 44, 50 and 53. (21) (See Map C) Whether or not the untried 25th Division could defeat these weary, but combat wise, units remained to be seen.

Inasmuch as the Matanikau River and the surrounding high ground constituted a formidable obstacle, a frontal attack across this area would be extremely difficult. Realization of this fact and his knowledge of the situation materially influenced the division commander's decision to maneuver.

The 27th Infantry Regiment, with the Americal Division Reconnaissance Squadron attached, was to pass through the lines of the 2nd Marines, attack "Galloping Horse" from the north, and seize and hold the division objective within its sector. (NOTE: The division objective and corps objective were the same.) It was also to be prepared to assist the advance of the 35th Infantry. The 35th Infantry Regiment, with the 25th Division Reconnaissance Troop attached, was to make its main effort on its south flank initially, seize Hill 44, and then continue the attack to seize and hold the division objective within its sector. It was to relieve the 132nd Infantry on the night of 8-9 January and protect the division left (south) flank during the operation. The 3rd Battalion, 182nd Infantry, operating under division control, was to move forward to Hill 42, establish a line from there to the vicinity of Hill 50, and set up a block in the valley to prevent the possibility of Japanese escape to the north. It also had the mission of protecting the Division Artillery positions to (21) A-1, p. 14, A-2, p. 22.

Unit should be named on map e/

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where?
the rear. The 161st Infantry Regiment was to be in reserve. The time of attack was set at 0635, 10 January 1943, and was to be preceded by a thirty minute artillery preparation and a fifteen minute air attack. It was expected that Japanese forces in the division zone would be contained in three large pockets to be created by the attack. (22) (See Map C)

35TH INFANTRY SITUATION AND PLAN OF OPERATION

Arriving on 17 December 1942, the 35th Infantry was the first element of the 25th Division to land on the island. Transports were unloaded quickly, and when this was accomplished the unit was placed in perimeter defense. The day following the division's receipt of the Letter of Instructions from corps, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 35th Infantry were relieved from perimeter defense in order that they might begin their movement to the attack position. The 1st Battalion was relieved on 7 January. No time had been allowed for further training, but valuable knowledge and experience was gained by the commanders and the men while planning and operating with the numerous security patrols required on perimeter defense. (23)

At 1600 on 7 January, Colonel Robert B. McClure, commander of the 35th Infantry Regiment, issued his attack order, pertinent extracts of which follow:

"1. The enemy is believed to occupy Hills 43 and 44 with perhaps a defensive position west of Hill 27. Enemy capabilities are believed to be generally defensive, with infiltration by small groups armed with automatic weapons.

2. * * * * *

3. The 35th Infantry will attack at 0635, 10 January, in its sector as follows:

a. 1st Battalion -- Regimental Reserve. *— where*

(22) A-1, pp. 6,7, App. VI; (23) A-6, pp. 22,27.

b. 2nd Battalion -- To hold the line now held by the 132nd Infantry, to maintain constant contact with the enemy on its front and to contact the 182nd Infantry on its right.

c. 3rd Battalion -- To advance south of Hill 27, seize and hold Hills 43 and 44." (24)

where?

Prior reconnaissance and a study of aerial photos of the 3rd Battalion's zone of advance revealed that a high wooded hill to the southwest of the "Sea Horse" actually was a part of the same hill mass, and that the two were connected by a narrow ridge. This high wooded hill was designated as objective Number 1, Hills 43 and 44 being the final objective. (See Map C) Reconnaissance also revealed that a trail would have to be blazed through the dense jungle in order for the battalion to accomplish its mission. (25)

Naturally, secrecy was required in a move of this type, and at about 0200 on 8 January, the 3rd Battalion along with E and F Companies, which had been ordered to take a back trail to Hill 27, moved out into the jungle. Companies G, H and 2nd Battalion Headquarters Company were to infiltrate directly into the 132nd Infantry lines. The 25th Division Reconnaissance Troop, attached to the 2nd Battalion, was to join them in the line later. (26) At 0300 on 9 January, the 1st Battalion moved to a position in rear of the 3rd Battalion which was located near a grassy ridge approximately 800 yards southeast of Hill 27. (See Map D) It was prepared, initially, to assist either the 3rd or the 2nd Battalion. By nightfall all units were in position for the attack the next day. (27)

THE ATTACK ON THE "SEA HORSE"

On the morning of 10 January, the 3rd Battalion moved out into the jungle in a column of companies. I Company had been left in the bivouac area so as not to disclose to the Japanese that the battalion had moved, (24) A-1, p. 69; (25) A-1, p. 73; (26) A-1, pp. 70,79; (27) A-1, p. 70.

and thus to give added assurance that the important element of surprise would not be lost. Arrangements had been made for I Company to follow, as battalion reserve, upon relief by the 1st Battalion at 0800.

K Company led the battalion generally southwest for about 1,000 yards, then swung west and northwest, reaching a high ridge overlooking the southeast fork of the Matanikau River at noon. From here two patrols were sent out to look for routes forward to the objective which could now be seen. When the patrols returned to the battalion's position, it was learned that two routes existed which appeared to lead to the objective. The patrol which had gone to the west found a faint trail that led to the west. The patrol which had moved to the northwest found a trail that crossed a deep ravine and also discovered a small Japanese supply party halted in a bivouac area in the ravine, apparently unaware that American troops were close by. The battalion commander ordered K Company to attack and destroy the enemy group, and at the same time he ordered L Company to continue the advance on the parallel trail. (See Map D) It was now about 1300 and I Company, having been relieved at the bivouac area by the 1st Battalion, had rejoined the battalion and was ordered to be prepared to assist either company in its attack.

Both companies pressed home a vigorous attack. K Company moved down into the ravine, completely surprised the supply party and wiped it out to a man. It then continued to advance across the draw and, against scattered resistance, moved up on the high ground designated as objective Number 1. The Japanese quickly organized and launched a counterattack in an attempt to reopen their supply trail but it failed. At 1700 the gulch was secured by I Company. ? where

L Company had continued to move to the west, and had made contact with K Company when it came out of the ravine. Both companies were located on the high ground south of the "Sea Horse", L Company on the left.

(See Map D) Further attack on Hill 43 was not conducted because of darkness.

In the meantime, the 1st Battalion, following the 3rd, had contacted I Company in the ravine. During the night of 10-11 January, the gulch was secured by I Company on the west slope and A Company on the east. (28)

As previously pointed out, the 2nd Battalion occupied the sector known as the Gifu Strong Point, formerly held by the 132nd Infantry. This meant that the battalion had approximately 2,000 yards of front to take care of. The lines were made even thinner by the loss of about twenty per cent of the battalion strength, mostly Headquarters Company personnel, who had to be used on supply missions for the battalion. (29) The battalion strength had been increased, however, by the attachment of the 25th Division Reconnaissance Troop.

The strong point located on the western slope of Mt. Austen, between Hills 27 and 31, was infested with Japanese pillboxes and snipers, and was covered by dense jungle. The pillboxes themselves were well constructed, expertly camouflaged, mutually supporting and usually contained one or more machine guns protected by snipers. (30)

In accordance with its assigned mission, the 2nd Battalion sent strong combat patrols forward to feel out the enemy defenses and to prevent him from giving too much attention to his right flank, thus increasing the surprise of the 3rd Battalion's attack. The patrols advanced only a few yards from their own lines when they immediately ran into trouble. Although one or two machine gun positions were knocked out, the patrols were forced to withdraw to their own lines due to the increasing intensity of enemy fire. A tank was requested for use in assisting in the reduction of the pillboxes, but none was available. The action of the 2nd Battalion had been successful, however, as evidenced by the complete surprise enjoyed by the 3rd Battalion. (31)

(28) A-1, pp. 70, 71, 73, 74; (29) A-1, pp. 79, 97; (30) A-1, p. 83, Personal knowledge; (31) A-1, p. 80.

At 0635, 10 January, the 3rd Battalion, 182nd Infantry, sent two platoons of I Company to secure Hill 42, and at 0830 contact was made with the right flank of G Company, 35th Infantry on Hill 31. A block was established in the draw between Hills 31 and 42 to prevent Japanese movement in that direction. L Company, ^{182nd Inf.} on the right of the line, established a block across the ravine between Hills 47 and 50. K Company was in the center of the line on the west slope of the ridge connecting Hills 42 and 47. (32) (See Map D) Removal of the heavy machine gun section which was part of the block in the ravine near the battalion's left flank was not started until the attack had jumped off. The slope of the ravine was so steep that the only way the guns could be brought up was on a pulley which had been erected for the purpose of bringing up water. This operation was time consuming and as a result, these weapons, normally attached to I Company, did not arrive on Hill 42 until almost noon. The remaining daylight hours were used to consolidate positions and to prepare for the counter-attack expected that night. No counterattack developed, however, and except for scattered firing and a few exploding grenades, the night of 10-11 January was rather quiet. (33)

Should not mention

not on Map D.

may be clear?

On the morning of 11 January, the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 35th Infantry, which had spent the night in the jungle south and southeast of Hill 43, continued the attack to take the "Sea Horse". I Company, relieved in its position in the gulch, remained in battalion reserve. K Company moved north toward Hill 43, L Company moved northwest on a ridge to protect the left flank of the battalion, and the 1st Battalion occupied the positions held by the 3rd Battalion during the night. L Company, attempting to move west around Hill 43, ran into resistance about 150 yards out and was stopped. (34) In the meantime, K Company's advance had been delayed by stiff enemy resistance. After a vicious fire fight this was overcome (32) A-3, p. 3, Personal knowledge; (33) Personal knowledge; (34) A-13, 11 Jan, p. 1.

by which unit?

and K Company resumed its advance, overrunning the objective at about 1600. I and K Companies were quickly placed in position on the "Sea Horse" and contact was made with members of the 161st Infantry who were manning a *where* → block in the ravine between Hills 44 and 50. (35) The encirclement of the 124th Japanese Infantry was now complete. (See Map D)

Across the valley on Hills 42 and 31, more patrols and the continued probing for weak spots in the enemy's defenses were the order of the day. *for 3rd Bn 152d*
(36)

Although it had no direct bearing on the outcome of the operation, an event took place on Hill 42, simultaneously with the capture of Hills 43 and 44 that is worthy of mention here. Troops on Hill 42 had received information to the effect that the reason the 35th Infantry was moving west in the jungle, south of Hill 27, was to flush the enemy out of their positions and then push them east toward prepared positions on Hills 31 and 42. Consequently, when the "Sea Horse" was taken and the men began to come out of the jungle, the troops on Hill 42, thinking they were Japanese, prepared to take them under fire. The various gunners, however, hesitated to fire because the identification was not positive. After a tense minute or so someone said, "Don't shoot, it's the 35th!" Members of the 3rd Battalion, 35th Infantry, never knew how close they had come to being casualties by fire from a Browning heavy machine gun. (37)

toward obj?
map ref?
On 12 January, the 1st Battalion was ordered to continue the attack to the west. Four days and several stiff engagements later the 1st Battalion reported that it was on a high ridge overlooking the Matanikau River, later identified as the division objective. Inasmuch as the action of that battalion takes it beyond the scene of operations covered by this monograph, details of the action will not be discussed here. (38)

2nd Battalion action during 12 January consisted of an attempt to

(35) A-13, 11 Jan, p. 3; (36) A-1, p. 80, Personal knowledge; (37) Personal knowledge; (38) A-1, p. 71.

advance its line deeper into the Gifu Strong Point between Hills 27 and 31. One company actually did move 300 yards forward, but it was forced to withdraw when the company on its left was hit by a counterattack and thrown back, leaving a gap in the lines. After the gap had been closed, combat patrols attempted to knock out individual pillboxes. Intelligence at this time indicated that there were about 450 Japanese in the area between Hills 31, 27, 43, and 44

In the 182nd Infantry's block between Hills 42 and 31, a short round landed during the firing of one of the many artillery concentrations, causing several casualties. This block was removed temporarily and the draw was covered by a section of machine guns. (39)

*shown to
label in
mags*

Because it had been necessary to cut loose from their supply lines in order to make their enveloping maneuver, the supply status of the troops on the "Sea Horse" was rapidly becoming critical. Available to the Regimental S-4 for supply operations were about 200 native bearers. Initially, these had been adequate to keep the regiment supplied. As the 1st and 3rd Battalions moved farther into the jungle, more and more natives were needed to keep them supplied. Finally it reached the point where the natives could not carry their load in and get out again during daylight. Consequently, it was decided to move the native camp and the supply point to a new location along the Matanikau River. At least one day would be required to move the camp and supply point, however, and in the meantime, the troops needed the supplies. G-4 was requested to make arrangements to have supplies air dropped to the men on the "Sea Horse". (40) This request was granted, and on the morning of 12 January, and again on the 13th, two B-17 bombers delivered rations and ammunition, using the large open area of Hill 44 as the drop zone. (41) Of the total supplies dropped, about one-third went to the enemy, most of the ammunition was damaged and could not be used,

(39) A-13, 12 Jan, p. 3, 4, Personal knowledge; (40) A-1, p. 97;

(41) Personal knowledge.

and about twenty-five per cent of the rations were destroyed. These losses had been anticipated, however, and were compensated for by dropping more supplies than were actually required. (42)

The 3rd Battalion of the 182nd Infantry also had a supply problem. In order to get supplies to its right company in the block near Hill 50, a combination of motor vehicles, boats and natives were used. Troops in the vicinity of Hill 42 were fortunate in being able to extend Marine Trail out to the reverse slope of the hill. With just a little improvement, jeeps were able to use it, and troops in the area received two hot meals nearly every day they remained in that position. (43) (See Map D)

ATTACK ON THE STRONG POINT

On 13, 14 January, activity of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions and the 3rd Battalion, 182nd Infantry, continued to be vigorous patrolling. These patrols, a more or less daily routine, were seldom that in operation. Quite often they were ambushed and succeeded in returning to their own lines only after a bitter fire fight. On the other hand, combat patrols were used to reduce individual strong points by attack from the flank or rear and were very successful.

An attack by the 2nd Battalion was planned to jump off the morning of the 15th. All companies, except E Company in reserve on Hill 27, were to push to their respective fronts about 500 yards, converge, and then continue across the low ground to join the 3rd Battalion on the "Sea Horse".

At 0720, 15 January, preceded by mortar preparation, the attack began. (44) Almost immediately strong resistance was met and the attacking troops were pinned down by heavy enemy fire. Small groups were able to advance but they, too, soon halted when it became apparent that contact with units on the right and left was not going to be gained. Anti-tank Company,

(42) A-13, 12 Jan, p. 2, and 13 Jan, p. 1; (43) A-10, p. 3, Personal knowledge; (44) A-13, 15 Jan, p. 1.

attached on 14 January and placed in the center of the line between G and F Companies, ran into a swarm of pillboxes a few yards in front of its line and received heavy casualties. G Company had succeeded in advancing about 100 yards but had been stopped by heavy enemy fire. F Company had fared no better than the others. E Company was committed in an attempt to relieve the pressure on the other companies but was not successful. As the afternoon progressed it became increasingly evident that the attack would not succeed, and at 1700 the companies, badly mauled, were ordered to withdraw to their original lines. Throughout the day litter bearers and casualties alike were shot down as evacuation was attempted. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that the Gifu Strong Point had lived up to its name, and they had the casualties to prove it. (45)

On the afternoon of the 15th, a loud speaker was set up on Hill 43 and broadcasts were made to the trapped enemy telling them to surrender or suffer the consequences. If these broadcasts had any effect upon the determined attitude of the Japanese to fight to the last man, it was not readily apparent. (46)

Based on the previous day's experiences, another attack plan was made on 16 January. The strong point itself was to be subjected to a terrific artillery bombardment, a line was to be secured connecting Hills 42 and 27 and pressure gradually increased around the entire strong point. In connection with this plan, E Company was moved from its position on Hill 27 and placed in bivouac on Hill 30. It was to move to a draw near Hill 42 the following morning and then follow I Company, 182nd Infantry, which was to secure a line from Hill 42 south to a little knoll near a deep gully. A reinforced platoon from G Company was to secure a line from Hill 27, north, to the south side of the gully across from I Company. (47)

Jump-off time was to be immediately following the artillery concentrations (45) A-1, p. 8; (46) Personal knowledge; (47) A-1, pp. 83,84.

on the morning of the 17th. Another attempt was made to weaken the dogged determination of the defenders in the strong point by broadcasts from Hill 31 telling the Japanese the same thing as the one previous; surrender or be blown to bits. Again, the results were negative. (48) On the 17th the attack was delayed and another broadcast was made, using the same approach and with the same result. About noon, the entire 2nd Battalion line, less that portion on Hill 27, was withdrawn to positions some 300 yards to the rear, and five artillery battalions, four 105mm battalions and one 155mm battalion, began registration. Due to the close proximity of the troops to the area in which the fire was to be brought down, this took almost two hours. At 1430, artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire began to beat up the strong point and continued for two hours, ceasing at 1630. (49)

Immediately upon completion of the firing, the troops reoccupied their original lines and another broadcast was made to the Japanese. They were told that they had until 1800 to surrender and that they could approach our lines without fear of being shot. U.S. troops in the vicinity were cautioned to make sure that this promise was kept. As before, the men were not bothered with the evacuation of prisoners.

The next morning, 18 January, I Company, 182nd Infantry, moved south to the knoll as previously planned, and G Company's platoon moved north. At 1700 the two units made contact. E Company, which had been following I Company, cut left (east) between Hills 27 and 31, and with complete surprise knocked out several pillboxes before dark. (50) (See Map E)

With the establishment of the line from Hill 42 to Hill 27, the 2nd Battalion's outlook was brighter than at any time since it had occupied the position on 9 January. Now the strong point was completely isolated, and enemy soldiers from other portions of the pocket could not infiltrate (48) Personal knowledge; (49), (50) A-1, p. 84, Personal knowledge.

into the strong point to replace casualties.

On the morning of the 19th, E Company continued the attack. The first line of pillboxes was broken through very quickly and the company advanced against light resistance. By late afternoon, E Company had moved east, into the strong point, approximately 400-500 yards. At this time they were brought under intense enemy machine gun fire originating from a cluster of about twelve pillboxes on a ridge to the front, and further gains were not made. G Company, in the meantime, had sent patrols into the area in an attempt to locate the flank of E Company. This was accomplished and G Company began filling in the gap. (51)

The following day, with E Company more or less fixed in its position by the enemy fire from the ridge, patrols once again entered the scene and succeeded in knocking out several more pillboxes. The patrols' successes were local and limited, and attempts to capitalize on them were frustrated by heavy rain that fell most of the day. (52)

By now, things looked even brighter than they did on the night of the 18th when the strong point had been sealed off. In comparison to gains made by the 2nd Battalion during the period 10-17 January, this latest advance constituted an important success.

Operations to reduce the remaining defenses in the strong point were speeded up by two events. One was the arrival of one light tank on the 21st and the other, a Japanese counterattack on the night of 22-23 January. Plans were made to put the tank to work as quickly as possible and on the 22nd, followed by some fifteen men and an officer, the tank moved out into the jungle, now defoliated[?] by the artillery fire, and proceeded to knock out eight pillboxes in short order. This action relieved some of the pressure on E Company, and a platoon was sent to knock out the resistance which had been preventing that company's advance.

(51) A-13, 19 Jan, p. 5, Personal knowledge; (52) A-1, p. 85.

The Japanese counterattack took place at about 0230 on the morning of 23 January, in the form of a "Banzai" charge. Roughly 100 of the enemy attacked to the east and hit the 2nd Battalion line almost in the center. The fight lasted about twenty minutes, and stopped almost as suddenly as it had begun. A total of eighty-eight Japanese became casualties in this attack and of this number, only three were prisoners. Inasmuch as twenty-five of the casualties were officers, it was felt that this had been a final, one-shot attempt to break out of the trap, and that if further enemy counterattacks developed they would be on a much smaller scale. It was also felt that resistance within the strong point itself would be much weaker since the number of enemy remaining within the position had been considerably reduced.

In order to exploit any advantage gained by the failure of the counterattack, at daylight all companies were ordered to continue with the reduction of remaining Japanese positions. However, when the men got up to move forward, immediate fire was received from the pillboxes. At least one man to occupy each of the positions had been excluded from the counterattack the night before. The tank succeeded in knocking out several more of these pillboxes, but it developed engine trouble and was withdrawn for repairs. Later in the afternoon the tank, having been repaired, continued knocking out pillboxes and all companies began to move forward once again. Advances were made by leaps and bounds and pillboxes were destroyed almost as quickly as they were located. (53) By nightfall, nearly sixty pillboxes had been knocked out and the Gifu Strong Point, as such, ceased to exist. (54)

24 and 25 January were spent in continued patrol activity by all units to eliminate the remaining Japanese and at 1800, 25 January, responsibility for the 35th Infantry's sector was turned over to I Company,

(53) A-13, 23 Jan, p. 1, A-1, pp. 85, 86; (54) A-13, 23 Jan, p. 1, 2, A-1, P. 86.

182nd Infantry, which was to continue patrolling the area to ensure that the Japanese did not return. (55)

In order to keep the reader's attention focused on the main action, other activity in the vicinity of the Gifu Strong Point has been forced into the background. It is not intended to decrease the importance of other smaller actions that contributed so much toward the final outcome of the operation. The daily patrols furnished by the 3rd Battalion, on the "Sea Horse", and the 3rd Battalion, 182nd Infantry, on Hill 42, were continuously reducing the strength of the enemy remaining in the pocket by raiding bivouac areas and eliminating individual pillboxes and small resistance groups. Due to these actions, when the strong point itself was finally reduced, mopping up operations in the large pocket had almost been completed.

How? { The 25th Division Reconnaissance Troop occupied positions on Hill 27 during the operation, and was involved almost daily in the numerous smaller skirmishes which took place in that vicinity. It performed its duties in a highly commendable manner and certainly held to a minimum the number of headaches the 2nd Battalion might have had, had this unit not been present.

Once established, the troops in the line connecting Hills 27 and 42 did not play a prominent part in the final reduction of the strong point. Each night, however, small groups of enemy attempted to infiltrate through them and escape to the west. In most cases, these groups were either turned back or killed. (56)

Not shown above { The coordinated efforts of the units involved and the demonstrated initiative of the American soldier had beaten the Japanese at their own game of jungle fighting.

(55) A-1, p. 86, Personal knowledge; (56) A-1, p. 86, Personal knowledge.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The operations of the 35th Infantry clearly demonstrated the effective use of tactical surprise and movement. The march of the 3rd Battalion around the Japanese right flank was a complete surprise to the enemy. This is evidenced by the fact that the vital supply trail which led into the Gifu Strong Point was completely without security at the point where the Japanese supply party was annihilated. This indicated that the Japanese were so certain that an attempt would not be made on their right flank that they could ignore usual security measures. That the enemy chose to counterattack very shortly after the supply trail was cut is evidence that they realized the importance of the trail. This leaves the possibility that the Japanese felt certain that the Americans would not make the arduous march through the jungle to attack their right flank, hence the complete surprise.

Efficient open ↓

Malaria within the 35th Infantry did not present a serious problem. (57) In the 3rd Battalion, 182nd Infantry, however, the story was different. In the hasty attempt to curb the Japanese expansion early in 1942, at least half the members of the battalion were stationed on islands on which malaria was prevalent, without benefit of prior knowledge of the disease or instruction in the mechanics of its prevention. Consequently, quite a few of the men had been hospitalized with it before any preventive measures were taken. Once the men became acquainted with the method of prevention, they were more careful about exposing themselves and most of the men took their atabrine regularly. However, any time the men became fatigued and their resistance lowered, after they had once had malaria, it was almost sure to recur. It was this situation that resulted in a loss of combat efficiency within that battalion. *(not brought out)*

Reconnaissance and study of the terrain by the various commanders
(57) A-1, p. 162.

assisted materially in the final outcome of the operation. As a result of this reconnaissance and study, the rugged nature of the terrain over which the attacking troops were to move was realized. Obstacles were located and possible routes of advance to avoid them were discovered, thus saving the men a needless waste of energy which they would later need to press home a hard attack.

The incident which took place on Hill 42 on 11 January should never have occurred. Had one "trigger happy" individual lost his head, it is believed that a single shot would have been sufficient to start all guns on the hill firing. As the 3rd Battalion, 35th Infantry, was in the open on the "Sea Horse", if firing had started, the casualties probably would have been severe. It was never established just where the information which these men received originated, but certainly the officers and NCO's having knowledge of the information, should have taken steps to check it for accuracy. With this information in the hands of troops who had no previous experience along these lines, that not a single shot was fired is a tribute to the training and the common sense of the men in demanding positive identification before opening fire.

Very often during the attacks on the Gifu Strong Point, contact with adjacent units was lost. This was due in part to the failure of a few individuals to realize the importance of maintaining contact and also to the intense enemy fire. When a strong enemy position opened fire, the attacking force would split and attempt to go around it. In the jungle, visual contact could not be maintained at all times and as a result, some of the men would become separated from the others. One or two individuals finding themselves in this situation and not being able to see anyone to their right or left, would think that they were out there all by themselves and begin to withdraw, and all the time, in some cases, friendly troops would be no more than fifteen to twenty-five yards away.

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not brought out

It is felt that had the loud speakers not been used so often in trying to talk the Japanese into surrendering, the results would have been more satisfactory. After the first attempt, each subsequent broadcast extended the time limit set by the one previous. This gave both the enemy and our own troops the impression that we were not going to live up to our threats. Also, in order to live up to the statements made in the broadcast on the 17th, it was necessary to delay the attack of the 2nd Battalion and the firing of the artillery concentrations. This had a bad effect on our men and when they reoccupied the line after the artillery was fired, it was so late in the afternoon that advantage could not be taken of the effect of the fire on the enemy defenses. This, of course, gave the Japanese an opportunity to repair their damaged installations during the night.

Had a tank been made available to the 2nd Battalion when it was first requested, it is probable that the reduction of the strong point could have been accomplished in less than half the time actually required. Once the tank did arrive on the scene, it had an electrifying effect on the men and a disastrous effect on the enemy installations. It did not need to get close to the pillboxes to do its damage. Where a man on the ground had to take his chances with snipers to crawl up to a machine gun position in order to knock it out with grenades or demolitions, all that was required for the tank was that the gunner be able to see the position and a 37mm HE shell picked it up from there. The "defoliation," caused by the artillery fire within the area, allowed increased visibility so that the tank gunner could pick up his targets at distances greater than was normal in the jungle.

Artillery support throughout the operation was excellent. Although the 3rd Battalion could not use artillery initially, due to the jungle, a forward observer was present with the battalion, ready and willing to

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at first*

furnish support when, and if it were called for. Once the pocket was formed, artillery concentrations and intermittent firing, both day and night, gave the enemy little opportunity for rest. When patrols located isolated enemy positions, either artillery fire or mortars were utilized to assist in their reduction or neutralization. The complete exploitation of the capabilities of artillery saved many American lives.

not clear
In view of the difficulties encountered in maintaining supply lines, and the manner and speed with which they were overcome, it is felt that much thought and consideration was given this subject prior to combat and as a result, was never a critical problem. Even when the 1st and 3rd Battalions outdistanced their means of supply, immediate plans were made to resupply them by air. If it is hard to imagine a unit running away from its supply lines in the relatively short space of slightly more than 2,000 yards, it must be remembered that the entire distance traversed heavily eroded foot hills, penetrated dense jungle where the going was very difficult, and the danger of being ambushed by Japanese patrols was an ever present menace. It is believed that the supply operations were highly successful.

LESSONS

- Value*
1. Jungle warfare is no mystery, it is merely a fight in thick woods.
 2. Maneuver is still the essence of attack.
 3. Instruction in the prevention of disease is essential prior to arrival in a tropical area.
 4. Overexertion of the men is undesirable and should be avoided.
 5. Reconnaissance and terrain analysis increases in importance when operating in the jungle.
 6. Care must be taken to ensure that information passed on to the troops is accurate and up to date.
- Have caused this to be avoided*
not necessarily true

7. Positive identification is necessary before opening fire on a suspected enemy.

8. Every effort must be made by individuals on the ground to maintain contact at all times.

9. Sometimes ^{physical} contact cannot be maintained.

Produced
10. Interference by higher headquarters with the already organized plans and schedule for an attack by a lower unit should be held to a minimum.

P.W.
11. Threats should not be made if they are not going to be carried out.

12. Tanks can be used in the jungle to destroy pillboxes and other strong enemy positions.

13. In order to increase the effectiveness of tanks, it is desirable to defoliate the area in which their use is contemplated, by artillery or other type fire.

14. Effective use of artillery will save lives and increase the chance for success.

15. Adequate logistical support is necessary for the success of any operation.