

General Subjects Section
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1947 - 1948

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 306TH INFANTRY
(77TH INFANTRY DIVISION) ON IE SHIMA
16 APRIL - 21 APRIL 1945
(RYUKYUS CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Regimental Operations Officer)

Type of operation described: REGIMENT IN ATTACK

Major Mills Brown, Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO. 2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index.....	1
Bibliography.....	2
Introduction.....	3
The Regimental Plan.....	8
The Battle for Ie Shima.....	10
Analysis and Criticism.....	20
Lessons.....	23
Map A - Okinawa and Ie Shima	
Map B - Ie Shima - The Plan	
Map C - Ie Shima - The Situation, 16 and 17 April	
Map D - Ie Shima - The Situation, 18 and 19 April	
Map E - Ie Shima - The Situation, 20 and 21 April	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A-1 Tenth Army Action Report
Ryukyus - 26 March to 30 June 1945 (TIS Library)
- A-2 Operation Plan Iceberg
77th Infantry Division (TIS Library)
- A-3 Capture of Okinawa (Ryukyus Operation)
27 March to 21 June 1945
OPNAV 34-P-0700 - Navy Department (TIS Library)
- A-4 Field Order 26
Hq, 77th Inf Division
12 April 1945 (TIS Library)
- A-5 77th Infantry Division Operation Report
Iceberg - Phase II - Ie Shima (TIS Library)
- A-6 Narrative Account - 306th Infantry Operation Report
Ryukyus Campaign (Personal possession of author)
(Note: This reference was prepared by the author in his
official capacity as S-3, 306th Infantry)
- A-7 Intelligence Bulletin, Sept 1945
Military Intelligence Division, War Department (Personal
possession of author)

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 306TH INFANTRY
(77TH INFANTRY DIVISION) ON IE SHIMA
16 APRIL - 21 APRIL 1945
(RYUKYUS CAMPAIGN)

(Personal Experience of a Regimental Operations Officer)

INTRODUCTION

(Map A)

On 26 March 1945, D-Day minus 6 for Operation Iceberg, elements of the 305th and 306th Infantry Regiments of the 77th Infantry Division landed on islands in the Kerama Retto near the southeast coast of Okinawa, and the war in the Pacific moved to the front door of the Japanese homeland. (1)

Iceberg was the code name for the campaign to wrest Okinawa and nearby islands of the Ryukyus chain from the Japanese. The purpose of the operation was to secure bases from which attacks on the main islands of Japan and their sea approaches could be launched by naval and air forces. (2)

Ie Shima, a small island lying about three miles off the Motabu peninsula of Okinawa, possessed an operation airfield. In addition, the terrain of the island, flat, table-like, and well drained, with unobstructed air approaches except on the eastern end where a high rocky pinnacle jutted some 600 feet into the air, made Ie Shima a potential air base of major importance. Its capture was deemed very desirable. (3) Actual amphibious assault to secure the island was not considered feasible, however, until such time as Motabu peninsula on Okinawa had been captured. (4)

The 77th Division, as XXIV Corps reserve for Iceberg, had been assigned several alternate missions, any one of which it was to be prepared to execute on order. Included among these missions was the capture of Ie Shima. Accordingly, plans had been made and personnel briefed and rehearsed for the operation. (5) On 11 April the 77th received instructions to take Ie Shima. D-Day was set at 16 April. (6)

(1) Personal Knowledge; (2) A-1, p. 1-0-1; (3,4) A-1, p. 7-IV-1;
(5) Personal Knowledge; (6) A-4, p. 1

To enable the reader to evaluate properly the operations of the 306th Infantry on Ie Shima, it will be necessary to review very briefly the history of the participating troops and the action in which they were engaged immediately prior to the landings on Ie Shima.

Training for the 306th Infantry prior to its actual participation in combat had consisted primarily of field problems and maneuvers with emphasis placed on realism and combat applicability. Activation as a regiment of the 77th Division in March 1942 was followed by the usual basic, unit and combined training. In early 1943 the regiment moved into the field and during the next fifteen months participated in vigorous and realistic training under a wide variety of climatic and operational conditions. A three months' maneuver in the chill, muddy swamps of Louisiana was followed by six months of the hardest type of training, maneuvers, and combat problems in the blistering heat and choking dust of the Arizona desert in the summer. Then followed in rapid succession a mountain maneuver in the cold and snow of the West Virginia mountains, a range season at Indiantown Gap and amphibious training in the icy waters of Chesapeake Bay in December and January.

(7)

In March 1944 the regiment sailed for the Pacific, arriving in the Hawaiian Islands in April. Training on Oahu consisted of range firing, tank-infantry training in jungle terrain, advanced amphibious training and a course at the islands' famous Jungle Training Center.

(8)

Combat experience for the regiment prior to the Ryukyus Campaign consisted of participation in operations on Guam and Leyte. Fortunately hostile opposition on Guam had not been severe and the green and untested troops of the regiment were provided with an excellent opportunity to get

(7,8) Personal Knowledge

their bearings in combat. Leyte, however, was a different story. The bitterly contested push up the Ormoc Valley was hard, gruelling combat from which the regiment emerged in January 1945 a veteran outfit - tough, aggressive, and confident. (9)

High level planning for the Ryukyus Campaign had been instituted at an early date. The Tenth Army plan was issued on 6 January 1945, while most of the Army troops slated for the operation were still in combat on Leyte. (10) This early action enabled the 77th Division to publish its operation plans and distribute them to the regiments by 18 February 1945.

(11) Thus the all important detailed planning at regimental and battalion level was initiated in ample time to smooth out the countless problems that accompany all amphibious operations. Unfortunately, the troops did not fare as well as the staffs during January and February. Some elements of the regiment remained in contact with the enemy on Leyte until the end of January. In addition, the Luzon assault was being staged on Leyte and simultaneously a great mass of supply for Okinawa was arriving and had to be moved across the beaches. Requisitions on the regiment for work details were too heavy to permit the undertaking of a real training program. As a result the six hundred replacements received in January got little or no training with their new units. (12)

77th Division plans for Iceberg established CT 306 and assigned it assault missions in one definite and four possible plans for employment in the Ryukyus. The definite plan was for the Kerama Retto, a group of small islands off the southwest coast of Okinawa which the Navy needed for an advanced anchorage and seaplane base. The Kerama Retto was scheduled to be captured during the week preceding the 1 April assault on Okinawa. The capture of Ie Shima sometime after 1 April was one of the possible tasks for which the 77th was to be prepared. (13)

(9) Personal Knowledge; (10) A-1, p. 3-0-17; (11) A-2, p. 1;
(12) Personal Knowledge; (13) A-2, Plan IV

As established by the 77th Division Operation Plans for Iceberg,
CT 306 consisted of the following elements: (14)

306th Infantry
304th FA Bn
2 Sections 477 Amphibious Truck Co
Co B, 302d Engr Bn
Co B, 302d Med Bn
Det 777th Ord Co
Det 77th Sig Co
Det 77th Ren Tr
Btry B, 7th AAA (AW) Bn (-1 Plat)
Co B, 706th Tk Bn
2d Plat, Co A, 88th Cml Wpns Bn
132d Engr Bn
Det 292d Joint Assault Signal Co
Det Hq and Hq and Sv Co, 708th Amphibious Tk Bn
Co C, 708th Amphibious Tk Bn
Co D, 708th Amphibious Tk Bn
773d Amphibious Tractor Bn

In addition to the above listed elements, certain other units were assigned to the Combat Team. Since the purpose of these assignments was for control during transportation to the Ryukyus, these units will not be considered here.

Shipping for CT 306 consisted of Transport Division 49 (four APA's and two AKA's) and an LST flotilla. This shipping arrived as scheduled early in March and by 6 March the combat team was completely loaded. BLT-1, with a company of amphibious tractors and a company of amphibious tanks attached for landing phases, was loaded in four LST's. BLT-2 was set up in the same manner (14) A-2, Annex ABLE

and loaded in the remaining four LST's of the flotilla. BLT-3, Regimental Headquarters, and various command, staff and liaison groups from non-organic elements of the combat team were loaded on one APA while the remaining ships of the transdiv carried the rest of the combat team. (15) On 7 March Transdiv 49 with CT 306 aboard sailed from Leyte Gulf for the southeast coast of Leyte where rehearsals for the proposed landings were scheduled. Heavy seas in the rehearsal area limited the practice landings, but each BLT was able to carry out one rehearsal with the assault waves. On 16 March the 77th Division departed from Leyte for Operation Ioeberg. (16)

The D-6 landings in the Kerama Retto were carried out as scheduled. The islands were lightly held and the regiment escaped with few casualties. By D-Day, 1 April 1945, the regiment was re-embarked and awaiting further orders. (17)

As previously mentioned, the capture of Ie Shima had been presented to the 77th Division as one of its possible missions. Preliminary intelligence, based largely on photos, indicated that the Jap was prepared to make an all-out defense of the island. The beaches and airfields were protected by extensive fortifications, including intrenchments, pillboxes and obstacles. Enemy activity seemed directed toward the improvement of these defensive installations. However, during the period that the 77th was at sea following the Kerama Retto landings, a change appeared to take place in the enemy intentions. Aerial photographs indicated that the airfields had been cratered by demolitions and that ditches had been dug across them in several places. Repeated minimum altitude reconnaissance flights failed to reveal the presence of any hostile forces on the island. (18) Every indication pointed to the probability of a mass withdrawal of both the garrison forces and civilians to nearby Okinawa. (15) A-4, Annex BAKER: (16) A-6, Section I, p. 2; (17) A-6, Section II, p. 4; (18) A-3, p. 1-5

Based on this late intelligence new estimates of the situation were prepared and three new operations plans (one preferred and two alternate) were issued by the Division. The variations in these plans were based primarily on various combinations of possible landing beaches. The final plan could not be selected until Navy Underwater Demolitions Teams had made a reconnaissance of reef conditions off the beaches. Upon receipt of the UDT reconnaissance reports the Division ordered the preferred plan executed. D-Day was established as 16 April and H-Hour was to be announced. (19)

THE REGIMENTAL PLAN
(Map B)

The reports of the UDT's confirmed a point previously established from photo interpretation. Only one of the beaches, Red T-4, had a deep water approach through the reef. The remaining beaches were suitable for landings from LCVP's and lightly loaded LCM's for a period of from one to two hours before and after high tide. Amphibious tanks and tractors and DUKW's could, of course, cross the reef at any time. Since the good beach, Red T-4, was the obvious choice for landings, and since it was backed by the built-up area of Ie Town and completely dominated by the looming heights of Iegusuku Yama, the pinnacle at the eastern end of the island, Division wisely elected to land somewhere else. The preferred plan, which Division ordered to be executed, called for landings by CT 306 across Beach Green T-1 and by CT 305 (less one battalion which had been left as garrison force for the Kerama Retto) across Beaches Red T-1 and T-2. (20)

The plan of the 306th for the assault and capture of Ie Shima was not complex. The landing was to be made with the 1st and 2nd Battalions abreast, the 2d on the right. An initial beachhead line was established, (19) A-4, p. 1; (20) A-4, p. 1,2

to which both battalions would move in boat teams prior to reorganization. After quick reorganization on the IBH both battalions were to move out on order, capture the airfields, and be prepared to push on to secure Iegusuku Yama (the peak). The 3d Bn was to transfer from LCVP's to LVT's off the reef and land on Beach Green T-1 on order. Once ashore the battalion was to move into an assembly area near the western end of the island, reorganize, and then patrol the western and northwestern end of the island. Since Iegusuku Yama (the peak) was in the zone of action of the 2d Battalion and appeared to be the most formidable area to be attacked by the regiment, the 2d Battalion was assigned only about a third of the regimental zone of action. This prevented the 1st Battalion from covering the rest of the zone without over-extending its frontage so 3d Battalion was given an additional mission. When its patrols had established the fact that no hostile elements remained in the northwestern portion of the island, the 3d Battalion was to proceed east along the north coast of the island, echeloned to the left rear of the 1st Battalion, to protect the left of the regiment and to patrol the rocky cliffs of the north coast.

(21)

To the right of the 306th, the 305th was to turn east after landing and capture Is Town and Beach Red T-4, thus permitting the landing of heavy equipment across the only beach with deep water approaches. The 305th was, in addition, charged with maintaining contact with the 306th.

(22)

If employed the 307th was to land across beaches Blue T-2 and T-3 with the mission of seizing Iegusuku Yama from the south. (23)

(21) Personal Knowledge; (22) A-4, p. 1; (23) A-4, p. 2

THE BATTLE FOR IE SHIMA

(Map C)

16 April

The first indication that the Jap intended to defend Ie Shima came prior to H-Hour. Determined Kamikaze attacks succeeded in breaking through the combat air patrol and reaching the area of the fire support ships. Heavy anti-aircraft fire prevented the Jap pilots from completing successful attacks and the landings were not interrupted. The assault waves of the 1st and 2d Battalions crossed the line of departure at 0800 and hit Beach Green T-1 eight minutes later. The naval gunfire supporting the landings was imposing and effective and the assault waves encountered no opposition in the beach area, although one LVT was lost when it struck a mine. The minefield on the beach was only the first of many which were to be encountered. The boat teams of the assault waves pushed ahead rapidly and reached the IBH in a matter of minutes. As rapidly as the arrival of succeeding waves would permit the battalions reorganized. Contact was established between the 1st and 2d Battalions, but the 305th did not establish contact with the 306th at this time. (24)

The Commanding Officer of the 2d Battalion was instructed to attempt to establish contact but not to delay his advance for that purpose. As soon as both of the assault battalions declared themselves ready the order was given to continue the advance to phase line A. At the same time the 3d Battalion was directed to land without delay and initiate the patrolling of the northwest portion of the island. The 3d Battalion closed ashore at 1015 and by 1130 reported that the area had been patrolled and no contact with hostile forces made. The battalion was then instructed to proceed with the second phase of its mission, that of following to the left rear of the 1st Battalion and patrolling the north coast. (25)

(24) Personal Knowledge; (25) A-6, Sec III, p. 1 and Personal Knowledge

The leading battalions, advancing across open ground, encountered only sporadic and scattered rifle fire and reached phase line A by 1040. Coordination and contact were good all along the regimental front and the 305th Infantry reported its left flank slightly to the right front of the 2d Battalion, so no delay on phase line A was directed. Pushing out toward the airfield, the 1st and 2d Battalions began to encounter opposition from the many hostile defensive installations surrounding the airstrips. The resistance was not, however, in keeping with the extent of the elaborate defensive organization of the ground and served only to reduce the speed of the advance. As the battalions approached the airstrips they encountered extensive minefields consisting of 500 kilo aerial bombs buried tail down so that only the nose fuzes protruded above the ground. Surprisingly, the camouflage of the mines was very poor and the fields were totally ineffective as tactical obstacles. The only thing they accomplished was to cause the battalions to delay for a short time while paths were cleared and taped. (26)

While crossing the eastern airstrip the 1st and 2d Battalions came under increasingly heavy small arms, machine gun, mortar, and anti-tank fire from Iegusuku Yama. About the same time resistance to their immediate front stiffened. In the 1st Battalion zone of action several earth and log pillboxes were encountered and reduced. By 1430, however, both battalions had pushed across the airfield and reached phase line B. (27)

During the entire day contact with the 305th Infantry had been unsatisfactory. Although charged with the responsibility, the 305th had not maintained contact with the 306th. Reports from the 305th, from combat patrols and from Division, as to the location of the 305th left flank were conflicting. When the 306th reached phase line B a definite attempt was made to tie in with the 305th. This effort finally located (26,27) A-6, Sec III, p. 1 and Personal Knowledge.

the left flank of the 305th. It was over a thousand yards to the rear of the 306th right flank. (28)

With limited daylight hours remaining and any further advance by the regiment serving only to deepen the vertical gap on the right, the 306th was ordered to dig in for the night along phase line B. The 2d Battalion refused its right flank and Co K, reinforced with four amphibious tanks, established a strong point facing south in the center of the gap. (29) Orders were received from Division to be prepared to continue the advance next day, but to limit action initially to patrolling and supporting the attack of the 305th by fire until such time as the 305th had succeeded in reducing the strong opposition to its front. (30)

By nightfall the 306th was dug in along phase line B with Co K in position in the gap. Limited supporting elements of the combat team were ashore. The 304th FA Battalion had made a successful landing across the reef in DUKW's and had been firing for the regiment since about 1220. (31)

17 April
(Map C)

Except for the usual attempts at infiltration by the enemy, the night of 16-17 April was spent quietly by the regiment. At 0818 the Co K strong point fired in support of the attack of the 305th Infantry. When its fires had been masked the strong point was released and its elements returned to their parent units. During the remainder of the day, action in the regimental area consisted only of mopping up and patrolling. All three battalions received mortar, machine gun, and large caliber, flat trajectory fire from Iegusuku Yama during the day. This fire was particularly heavy in the 2d Battalion Area. (32)

(28,29) Personal Knowledge; (30) A-5, p. 25; (31) Personal Knowledge; (32) Personal knowledge

Since the rapid advance of the previous day had put the regiment in position to assault the dominant terrain feature of the island, this inactivity on 17 April seems curious. The reason is contained in the determination of Division to make its main effort on the south flank despite the fact that FO #26, the order under which the assault was made, called for reduction of Iegusuku by the 306th. (33) This main effort was initiated by the attack of the 305th and augmented by two battalions of the 307th. The attack of the 305th made good progress on the right flank and by 1040 had partially secured Beach Red T-4 from the rear. On the 305th left, adjacent to the 306th, the advance made good progress for about 500 yards, where heavy resistance from the outskirts of Ie Town stopped it. The vertical gap between the regiments had been reduced to around 500 yards. (34)

Between 1030 and 1200 two battalions of the 307th Infantry (the other battalion was under Corps control) were landed across Beach Red T-4. At 1300 these two battalions launched an attack toward Iegusuku, but by late afternoon were inland only 600 yards at the point of farthest advance. The position reached was so exposed to the severe fire from Iegusuku that they were forced to withdraw slightly. The 307th dug in for the night with its left battalion inland 400 yards and the right battalion refused back to near the beach. (35)

18 April
(Map D)

The 306th Infantry attacked at 0730 as a part of a coordinated Division attack. The main effort was to be made on the right by the 307th, which was to continue toward Iegusuku Yama. The 306th was to make a limited objective attack to reach a coordinating line which had been established to permit the 307th unrestricted fires to its front. (36)

(33) A-4, p. 2; (34) A-5, Opns Map; (35) A-5, p. 25; (36) A-5, p. 27

Since the 2d Battalion was already on the coordinating line, the attack was made as a pivoting movement by the 1st and 3d Battalions. Initial ground opposition was light but strong reaction from hostile weapons sited on the peak prevented rapid advance. On the north coast the 3d Battalion discovered enemy groups in caves along the rocky shore. Although these hostile forces were not tactically disposed and presented no obstacle to the advance of the battalion, they had to be cleared out. Attempts at persuading them to surrender were unsuccessful and the battalion was forced to assault the caves with flame throwers and demolitions. (37)

In the zone of the 1st Battalion the principal opposition encountered centered around a group of four pillboxes. This strong point delayed the battalion somewhat but succumbed to standard assault tactics. By 1300 the 1st Battalion was on the coordinating line. The 2d Battalion made an advance of about 300 yards on its left to stay tied in with the 1st. (38)

The time consuming operations against the caves on the coast prevented the 3d Battalion from reaching its portion of the coordinating line. The battalion did, however, push out combat patrols to the objective. These patrols encountered scattered enemy groups but were able to reach the objective without difficulty. (39)

The 1st Battalion pulled its left back to make contact with the 3d and the regiment dug in for the night in position on the coordinating line except in the zone of the 3d Battalion. (40)

The other regiments of the 77th met with little success during the day. Faced by a formidable defensive area around Ie Town the 305th was able to gain 400 yards only after a day of bitter and costly fighting. The 307th, attacking north into the built-up area, was confronted with

(37) Personal Knowledge; (38) A-5, p. 28 and A-6, Sec III, p. 2;
(39,40) A-6, Sec III, p. 2 and Personal Knowledge

the same defensive area and was able to advance about the same distance. The advance of the 307th pinched out the south battalion of the 305th. This battalion was then attached to the 307th and moved around that regiment's rear into position to protect its right (east) flank. (41)

19 April
(Map D)

During the entire day Division continued the attack by the 305th and 307th Regiments, holding the 306th in its positions along the coordinating line to allow the attacking forces unrestricted fire to their fronts. (42)

Division issued orders for a coordinated attack on Iegusuku Yama on the 20th. The Commanding General of the division, after a personal reconnaissance by small boat around the east end of the island, had determined that the eastern slopes of Iegusuku were the most suitable for assault. (43) The 306th Infantry was ordered to make the attack. The regimental plan called for the 1st Battalion to make the main effort. The 3d Battalion was to follow the 1st, echeloned to the left rear to protect the regimental left flank. The 2d Battalion was to make such local attacks as might be necessary in order to maintain contact with the 1st. This maneuver promised to be rather complicated, involving as it did a change in direction of advance of over 100 degrees for the 1st Battalion and even more for the 3d. The simplifying factor was, of course, the peak itself. There was no conceivable chance that any unit could fail to identify, and thereby miss, the objective. (44)

The regiment spent the day preparing for the attack. Reconnaissance and plans were made and orders were issued and checked carefully to insure the necessary close coordination. Co D, 706th Tank Battalion, which had been attached to the regiment, and the regiment's Anti-Tank and Cannon

(41) A-5, p. 28,29; (42) A-5, p. 30; (43) A-5, p. 34; (44) Personal Knowledge

Companies (M-18's and M-8's) were brought up for direct fire support.

(45) The 304th FA Battalion, which had been firing from positions in the vicinity of Beach Red T-2 was displaced to positions well forward on the north coast of the island in order to bring more effective fire to bear in the area to be attacked. (46)

South and southwest of Iegusuku the 305th and 307th had battled all day in the hotly contested rubble of Ie Town, but despite the full weight of all artillery and naval gunfire available and the most determined efforts of the infantry, gains were negligible. (47)

20 April
(Map E)

At 0730 the 1st and 3d Battalions moved out to a line of departure for the attack on Iegusuku Yama. H-Hour was not until 0915 but it was considered desirable to give the battalions ample time to get turned around and faced in the new direction of attack. (48)

Following a preparation fired on the peak by the division artillery, the 1st and 3d Battalions jumped off on time. The attack provoked immediate enemy reaction in the form of fire from Iegusuku and from the circle of caves, pillboxes and open emplacements that formed its outer defenses. Against this heavy opposition the 1st Battalion moved slowly but steadily. Tank-Infantry teams, demolitions teams from Co B, 302d Engineer Battalion, and infantry assault tactics were employed to reduce the hostile positions, and one by one they fell. Despite the intense opposition the battalion had advanced about 600 yards by noon and had secured its zone of action to within about 200 yards of the base of the peak. (49)

On the left and to the rear of the 1st Battalion, the 3d had encountered little opposition. Combat patrols probing 300 to 500 yards to the south encountered scattered enemy opposition but no hostile forces of significant strength. At noon, when the 1st Battalion paused at the base of the peak

(45) Personal Knowledge; (46) A-6, Sec III, p. 2; (47) A-5, p. 29-31
(48,49) A-6, Sec III, p. 2 and Personal Knowledge

to reorganize prior to making its final assault, the 3d Battalion was in position on its left flank as ordered. (50)

Having completed its reorganization, the 1st Battalion called for a preparation by the 304th FA Battalion and jumped off at 1430. Co C, the battalion reserve, was passed through the right assault company, which had suffered heavily in the morning. Led aggressively by their Company Commander, the men of Co C began to advance at a trot, then at a run. The assault spirit spread like wildfire and in a matter of seconds the entire 1st Battalion was charging up the slopes of Iegusuku Yama. In less than 20 minutes the battalion had swarmed over the lower slopes and was halfway up the peak, where the steep rocky slopes slowed the advance. While the successful assault had secured the ground, it had not eliminated all of the enemy. From caves, tunnels, pillboxes and open emplacements the fanatical defenders battled to the death. All afternoon long combat raged at bayonet and grenade range as the enemy emplacements were reduced. (51)

The Japanese positions on Iegusuku Yama are worthy of description. The entire peak, except for the rocky pinnacle at its top, was honey combed with tunnels. At almost all of the openings to these tunnels were constructed defensive installations ranging from rock and log barricades to concrete gun emplacements and pillboxes. The weapons housed in these covered gun positions varied from light machine guns and mortars to artillery pieces. Some of the emplacements housed anti-tank guns behind steel doors which were opened for only a few seconds while the gun engaged a target. The extent of the tunneling which the Japanese had done on Iegusuku is difficult to imagine. One shaft, which was investigated after the action, was discovered to have a camouflaged entrance on the flat ground at the base of the peak. The entrance was a shaft, some 30 feet deep from which a tunnel

(50) Personal Knowledge; (51) A-6, Sec III, p. 3 and Personal Knowledge

ran back into the mountain. From this main tunnel at least five branches led to the surface on the side of the peak where they terminated in gun emplacements. This tunnel system provided the defender with almost impregnable fighting positions, with bomb-proof living and storage space, and with completely covered routes of communication between the various installations. (52)

While the 1st Battalion was engaged in reducing extensive fortifications of the type just described, the 3d Battalion was heavily engaged also. In its assault on the peak the 1st Battalion had gotten on a considerably narrower front than had been planned. The 3d Battalion had slipped somewhat to the right and pushed its right flank up on the peak to maintain contact with the 1st. These elements of the 3d Battalion participated in the assault and were engaged in the same type of combat as was the 1st Battalion. The 3d Battalion left, echeloned well back in keeping with the battalion's mission of flank protection, was still 400 yards from the base of the peak. (53)

In accordance with the regimental plan the 2d Battalion had attacked with its left to maintain contact with the 1st Battalion. When the latter battalion's assault swept up the slopes, the left company of the 2d Battalion followed suit. Late afternoon found the regiment with the northern half of Tegusuku firmly in its possession and with elements of all three battalions digging in on the former Japanese stronghold. (54)

During the night of 20-21 April all three battalions received infiltration attempts and counter-attacks. The counter-attacks followed the usual Jap pattern in that they were suicidal in nature. Enemy soldiers and civilians, many with demolitions charges strapped to their bodies, rushed the regimental positions. The personnel with the demolitions charges functioned as human bombs, blowing themselves up as they reached the vicinity

(52) A-7, p. 69; (53,54) A-6, Sec III, p. 3 and Personal Knowledge

of the front line troops. Other counter-attackers seemed to have no objective other than to die. (55) This was not the first time the Jap had counter-attacked on Ie Shima. The 305th and 307th had been hit by night attacks of up to estimated company strength. (56) It was, however, the first time that the 306th had been subjected to measures larger than infiltration attempts. The suicidal efforts of the enemy inflicted a few casualties but achieved no results of tactical significance. (57)

In the zones of action of the other regiments the day's attack had produced significant results, although gains, measured in yards, were not impressive. The 305th and 307th regiments succeeded in pushing through the rubble of Ie Town and reaching positions from which the southern and southeastern slopes of the peak could be attacked. (58)

21 April
(Map E)

Although the attacks of the previous day had doomed the Japanese defense, combat continued on the 21st with almost undiminished intensity. The 77th had achieved a complete encirclement of the hostile position and now initiated a series of carefully coordinated battalion assaults to move onto the southwest, south, and southeast slopes of the peak. (59)

The 306th participated in two of these attacks. At 0830 the 3d Battalion began reduction of a hostile strong point on its left flank. The position succumbed to a tank-infantry action and the battalion moved on up the slopes of Iegusuku. There they joined with the 1st Battalion in intensive and hard fought mopping up operations. At 1030 a battalion of the 305th, attacking from the southeast, made contact with the 3d Battalion. (60)

The second attack by elements of the regiment occurred at 1400. The right company of the 2d Battalion, Co E, was still in the same position it had occupied on the afternoon of D-Day. To its right the battalion of the

(55) Personal Knowledge; (56) A-5, p. 51; (57) Personal Knowledge;
(58) A-5, p. 31-34; (59) A-5, p. 35-37; (60) A-6, Sec III, p. 3

305th which had been a thousand yards to the rear on the night of D-Day had finally battled up to positions abreast of the 2d Battalion. To the front of these units loomed the southwest slopes of the peak. At 1400 they jumped off in a coordinated attack to reduce this last enemy pocket. The attack immediately came under heavy small arms fire. Hampered by the fact that the proximity of the battalions on the peak prohibited artillery and mortar support, the attackers worked their way forward by providing their own base of fire with machine guns and rifles. By 1445 they had reached their objective after a short but costly fight and began mopping up. (61)

At 1025 a group of volunteers from the 306th, led by the Regimental S-2, had scaled the top-most pinnacle of Iegusuku and unfurled the Stars and Stripes over Ie Shima. It was not, however, until 1730 that organized resistance ended and the island was declared secured. (62)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

Examination of the operations of the 306th Infantry on Ie Shima reveals a picture of uniformly successful Infantry action. From its well executed landings across Beach Green T-1 to its spectacular assault of 20 April on Iegusuku Yama, the regiment functioned in a highly creditable manner. In speaking of the attack on Iegusuku by the 306th, a Colonel observer from Headquarters, Pacific Ocean Area, said, "This looks like something out of a picture book. I never thought I would see a Bering attack so closely duplicated in combat". (63)

Analysis indicates that this success did not just happen; it was a direct result of a multitude of factors. While examination of the most important factors will reveal nothing new, it may well prove of value if it serves to highlight and re-emphasize the importance of certain basic elements of infantry doctrine which are too often over-looked.

(61) A-5, p. 36 and A-6, Sec III, p. 3; (62) A-5, p. 36; (63) A-5, p. 32

Training. The 306th was fortunate in the fact that it was afforded time for thorough training under a wide variety of conditions prior to its first combat action. It was fortunate also in that its leaders constantly sought to keep training interesting and realistic. Uniformly high standards of performance were demanded and met. The result was more than worth the effort expended. The amphibious assault had for a background the long uncomfortable hours on Chesapeake Bay, the short, intensive training at Hawaii. The advance across the flat open terrain around the airfield had a training counterpart in similar movements on the Arizona desert. The infantry assaults against caves and pillboxes with flame throwers and demolitions were made by men who had participated in countless similar practice assaults. The tank-infantry teams had trained for just such action on Oahu; and the attack up the rocky slopes of Iegusuku was made by a battalion which had experience in such attacks from maneuvers in the West Virginia mountains.

Planning. The timely dissemination of plans and orders from higher headquarters, and similar timely dissemination within the regiment did much toward eliminating the confusion that invariably surrounds combat. Utilization of the time thus provided to make detailed preparation for the operations in the Ryukyus contributed measurably to the regiment's actions. In particular the value of such detailed planning is illustrated during an amphibious assault. Much of the credit for the smooth, well executed landings on Beach Green T-1 must go to the long hours spent by commanders and staffs in setting the operation up while still in Leyte.

Aggressiveness. The will to push forward and keep pushing is illustrated in almost all phases of the regiment's actions, and to this will must be attributed a considerable measure of the success. Two outstanding examples are the conduct of the 2d Battalion on D-Day and the action of the 1st Battalion in its attack on Iegusuku. On D-Day, the 2d Battalion

commander, whose mission at the time included the capture of the peak, refused to take counsel with his fears when the situation on his right flank became vague. Instead he advanced with determination and put his battalion in position to accomplish its mission. The fact that the 2d Battalion was not called on to assault the peak on the next day does not detract from this bold action. In its attack on Iegusuku the 1st Battalion was faced, throughout the morning, with the most discouraging type of combat. Against a well emplaced, determined enemy, the battalion was forced to inch its way forward reducing the hostile positions one at a time. Only a spirit of aggressiveness in all personnel, from the front line riflemen to the battalion commander, kept the advance from stalling.

Sound Tactics. At no time did the regiment veer far from normal infantry tactical doctrine. Plans and orders were kept simple. Even the attack on Iegusuku, which involved a big change in direction, was essentially a simple plan, suited to terrain which made its execution relatively simple. The decision to employ the 3d Battalion on line instead of in the conventional reserve position was dictated by the terrain of the island and by previous experience in fighting the Jap.

Leadership. To comment upon the high quality of the leadership in the 306th Infantry during the operation under discussion is almost superfluous. Even where not specifically mentioned, it is reflected in every phase of the action. The factors discussed above - the training, the planning, the aggressive spirit, the sound tactics - and the myriad of other factors which contributed to success in battle had their foundation in leadership.

Analysis of the defense of Ie Shima by the Japanese brings to light several defects worthy of examination. The failure of the enemy to oppose the landings of the 305th and 306th may be laid to any one of these possibilities. The enemy may have considered his beach defenses inadequate to

withstand the preparation of naval and air bombardment which he was certain would come; he may have been tactically surprised by the landings over the poor beaches at the western and southwestern end of the island; or he may simply have failed to evaluate the vulnerability of an amphibious assault during its early stages. Whatever the reason, the enemy failed to take advantage of his opportunity to inflict losses upon the assaulting echelons.

Enemy counter-attacks were poorly timed, in insufficient force, and apparently without tactical objectives. The number of Japs killed on Ie Shima while attempting small counter-attacks, infiltration, and what might be termed suicide attacks, must have been considerable. Had this force been committed as a unit, at a significant time, and with a definite objective, it might well have succeeded in causing a great deal of embarrassment to the attacking forces.

The Japanese defensive installation around Iegusuku Yama was elaborate. It lacked the concrete construction, electric lights, air conditioning and other refinements of more famous fortified areas, but it served to protect the occupants equally well. Yet the island fell, as had other islands before it, because the enemy's total effort was defensive in nature.

LESSONS

1. Thorough training, conducted realistically with high standards of performance required, pays valuable dividends in combat.
2. Planning, especially for amphibious operations, must be thorough, detailed and timely.
3. Combat organizations must be imbued with a spirit of aggressiveness. The will to keep driving forward, if only a yard at a time, may spell the difference between success and failure.

4. Simple, clear and easily understood tactical plans based upon accepted doctrine produce sound infantry action. Variation from normal tactical procedures may be employed successfully when dictated by the terrain, the situation or the enemy's capabilities.

5. The absolute foundation of success in battle is leadership.

6. Defense alone, as the whole and total of a combat effort, is without significance. In order to attain meaning, defense must be part of a plan which contemplates decisive offensive action.

7. Counter-attack must be timely, must have a definite objective, and must be in sufficient strength to achieve decisive results.