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OPERATIONS OF THE 35TH INFANTRY REGIMENT  
(25TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE SEIZURE  
OF DIGDIG, LUZON, PHILIPPINE  
ISLANDS, 23 FEBRUARY-5 MARCH 1945  
(LUZON CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Regimental Supply Officer)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY REGIMENT  
EXECUTING A WIDE ENVELOPEMENT.

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OPERATIONS OF THE 35TH INFANTRY (25TH INFANTRY  
DIVISION) IN THE SEIZURE OF DIGDIG, LUZON, PHILIP-  
PINE ISLANDS, 23 FEBRUARY - 5 MARCH 1945  
(LUZON CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Regimental Supply Officer)

ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, in the seizure of DIGDIG, LUZON, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, 23 February to 5 March 1945, by the execution of a wide envelopment.

Prior to this action, several events transpired which are of interest to the reader in visualizing the development of the Luzon Campaign, of which this is a small part.

The first step taken in the liberation of the PHILIPPINE ISLANDS was on 20 October 1944 when the Sixth Army invaded LEYTE. (1) This resulted in dividing the PHILIPPINE ISLANDS in two, thereby isolating the strong enemy forces in LUZON from those in the islands to the South, and in providing a base from which to support the impending attack upon LUZON. (2) (See Map A)

Even before the LEYTE Campaign was completed, the Sixth Army embarked on its primary mission of seizing the key island of LUZON, turning over the job of completing the LEYTE operation to the Eighth Army, which was given the mission of destroying all enemy forces in the PHILIPPINE Archipelago South of LUZON. (3)

The capture of LUZON would provide a base from which attacks might be launched upon JAPAN, CHINA, or FORMOSA. (4)

- (1) A-1, p.5
- (2) A-2, p.11
- (3) A-2, p.13
- (4) A-2, p.12

The invasion fleet, comprised of task groups from various points in the South and South West PACIFIC, rendezvoused in LEYTE GULF in early January 1945 and proceeded to LINGAYEN GULF, on the west coast of LUZON, arriving on 9 January 1945. (5)

Following a heavy bombardment (6), I Corps and XIV Corps landed abreast, in an unopposed landing, on the beaches between the towns of LINGAYEN and MABILAO. I Corps was on the left. (See Map B)

A beach-head was quickly established. XIV Corps, making the main effort, proceeded south along the western portion of CENTRAL PLAIN in an advance upon the capital city of MANILA. I Corps had the dual mission of protecting the left flank of Sixth Army, and of advancing generally south east along the eastern portion of CENTRAL PLAIN. (7) (See Map B)

The 25th Infantry Division, initially in Army Reserve afloat, was later assigned to I Corps and assisted in the rapid drive across the CENTRAL PLAIN. (8) The end of this phase of the campaign found the elements of I Corps stretched across the entire width of CENTRAL LUZON, looking into the rugged mountains to the North. (9) (See Map C)

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

The next mission assigned to I Corps was the destruction of the Japanese forces in NORTHERN LUZON and the forcing of an entrance into the CAGAYAN VALLEY. (10) These Japanese forces amounted to 110,000 troops of various branches (11), however, a large number of them were involved in combating the

- (5) A-1, p.14
- (6) A-1, p.16
- (7) A-1, p.22-23; 27-28
- (8) A-1, p.21-23
- (9) A-3, diag.24
- (10) A-1, p.43
- (11) A-1, p.57

Guerilla-units which were very active in this section. (12)

The plan of I Corps was to make a concerted attack on 22 February 1945 along the entire line into the mountains to the north. The 33rd Division was to drive on BAGUIO; the 32nd Division and the 25th Division were to form a giant pincer movement on BALETE PASS, the 32nd Division driving along the VILLA VERDE TRAIL, and the 25th Division up HIGHWAY 5. (13)  
(See Map C)

The morale of I Corps troops was in general, high. All units had had previous combat experience in the islands of the PACIFIC and had met with initial success in the CENTRAL PLAIN operations. The Japanese troops were somewhat demoralized due to a rapid withdrawal into the mountains from the plains area. They were forced into the defensive on all fronts. Although Japanese were beginning to surrender in increasing numbers, they remained aggressive and determined throughout. They had less artillery, no airplanes to speak of, and their only armored division had been almost completely destroyed in the action in the CENTRAL PLAIN. Many units had been decimated and combined with others. (14)

NORTH LUZON is almost completely covered by extensive mountain ranges. The CORDILLERA RANGE runs parallel to the west-coast, leaving a narrow coastal plains along the coast; an extension of the SIERRA MADRE MOUNTAINS parallels the east coast to the ocean's edge; the CARABALLO MOUNTAIN RANGE extends laterally across the island connecting the two. The only useable approach to this valley was over HIGHWAY 5, a

(12) A-6, p.370

(13) A-1, p.47

(14) Personal knowledge; A-10, p.26; A-5, p.116

two -lane gravel road leading through the rugged CARABALLO MOUNTAINS, over lofty BALETE PASS and then dropping sharply to the valley floor below. The approaches to the PASS presented a formidable defensive position against an attacker. (See Map E)

There are two annual seasons in this area: from November through April it is generally cool and dry, with Northeast winds; from June through September it is hot and humid with Southwest winds prevailing. (15)

The supply line, which had been rather extended in the initial stages of the campaign had improved with the advance of army supply points. Generally supplies were plentiful with the exception of some types of artillery ammunition. (16)

#### DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION

As its opening action in the drive up HIGHWAY 5, the 25th Division was given the mission of securing the line CAR-RANGLAN-DIGDIG, and securing and maintaining the uninterrupted use of HIGHWAY 5 from SAN JOSE to DIGDIG. (17)

The plan of operations was to have the 161st Regimental Combat Team, then in positions in the UMINGAN-BALAHU AREA, attack northward through the mountainous area to the west of HIGHWAY 5 with the mission of securing all the high ridges dominating HIGHWAY 5 from the west.

The 27th Regimental Combat Team, located in the vicinity of SAN JOSE would attack northward, east of HIGHWAY 5, with the mission of exerting heavy pressure against the enemy, and of being prepared to launch an all-out attack on call.

The 35th Regimental Combat Team, in the RIZAL-BONGABON Area, was to execute a wide, rapid envelopment of the enemy's

- (15) Personal knowledge
- (16) Personal knowledge
- (17) A-7, p.46

east flank with the mission of securing the PUNCAN-DIGDIG Area. This action would close the route of withdrawal available to the forces defending DIGDIG and permit the destruction of the enemy forces thus trapped.

The Division Reconnaissance Company, reinforced, was to patrol to the east of the division area to secure the flank.

(18) (See Map C) 

#### THE SITUATION OF THE 35TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

At the time the attack order was received, the 35th Infantry was organized in a defensive disposition. The regimental headquarters, service and administrative elements were located in RIZAL, the 1st and 2nd Battalions were in the vicinity of RIZAL, and the 3rd Battalion was in the vicinity of BONGABON. (19)

The combat and reconnaissance elements of the regiment had been conducting extensive patrolling into the CARABALLO MOUNTAINS in anticipation of the operation. (20)

The regiment was near full strength. The fighting across the CENTRAL PLAIN had been largely one of movement, interrupted by independent strong points which were subdued as they were encountered. Losses had been low. Morale was high, a large portion of the men had been with the unit since it was first committed in the PACIFIC in December 1942, and were trained for, and experienced in, "rough-terrain" warfare. (21)

The route designated for the Regiment to follow in its envelopment was 35 miles long. Starting in RIZAL it paralleled HIGHWAY 5, following an over-grown carabao trail up a terrain corridor formed by the PAMPANGA RIVER knifing through the

(18) A-4, p.116; A-8, p.48

(19) A-7, p.46

(20) A-8, p.20

(21) Personal knowledge



CARABALLOS MOUNTAINS, to the village of PANTABANGAN on the edge of an aluvial plain. The carabao trail continued along this plain, curving westward, past CONVERSION to CARRANGLAN. The road from CARRANGLAN to DIGDIG was a two-lane gravel road, passing through a relatively low range of hills just before making a junction with HIGHWAY 5 at DIGDIG. (See Map D)

The mountainous area was generally heavily wooded in the valleys, with grass-topped hills. The aluvial plain was gently sloping to the east and covered with short grass interspersed with rice fields. The area supported several villages. (22)

Patrols had encountered Japanese troops in the CARABALLOS between RIZAL and PANTABANGAN, however they found PANTABANGAN and CARRANGLAN, which had been focal points for large enemy forces as late as early February, free of the enemy. (23)

Current policy of the Sixth Army was to carry 1-2/3 rations of class "B", and one ration of emergency rations on hand in the units. No given level of class III supplies was designated, and one unit of fire was authorized. (24)

In anticipation of a difficult supply situation, emergency authorization for 3 days supply of emergency rations was obtained and issued to the battalions, and a request was initiated for authorization to carry 5 emergency rations and 2 units of fire in the Regiment. (25)

On 22 February 1945 the 1st and 2nd battalions moved into assembly areas to the Northeast of RIZAL and the 3rd battalion moved into the town of RIZAL proper in preparation for the operation. (26) (See Map D)

- (22) Personal knowledge
- (23) A-8, p.21; A-7, p.46; A-5, p.37; A-10
- (24) A-5, p.138
- (25) Personal knowledge
- (26) Personal knowledge

## THE PLAN OF THE 35TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

The Regimental Commander's plan provided for successive intermediate objectives. They were in order: the village of PANTABANGAN, the village of CARANGLAN and the final objective PUNCAN-DIGDIG AREA.

The plan for the first objective, PANTABANGAN, was for the 1st and 2nd Battalions to "move out" of their assembly areas at 0715 hours on 23 February 1945. The 1st Battalion was to advance along the PAMPANGA RIVER VALLEY. The 2nd Battalion was to follow the carabao trail running parallel to, and to the right of, the PAMPANGA RIVER. The 3rd Battalion was to remain as Regimental reserve in RIZAL. A group of 30 pack horses, secured from the local citizenry, was attached to the 1st Battalion to assist in the transportation of supplies. (27)

The Regimental Commander, following a suggestion of the Division Commander, accepted the voluntary assistance of a band of Guerillas who were based in RIZAL. They numbered 3000 individuals, but possessed arms for 26 only. The regiment armed 150 of them and formed them into 4 platoons. It was planned to employ them in safeguarding the RIZAL-PANTABANGAN TRAIL. (28)

### NARRATION

#### ADVANCE ON PANTABANGAN

At 0615 hours 23 February 1945 the 1st Battalion sent out Company B as an advance screening force, and at 0715 hours the main body of the 1st Battalion and the 2nd Battalion moved out of their respective assembly areas.

The 1st Battalion, under cover of its screening force, advanced up the PAMPANGA RIVER VALLEY, and although unopposed,

(27) A-8, p.21  
(28) A-11

encountered great difficulty of movement due to the terrain. The 30 pack-horses, loaded with provisions and ammunition, required constant help across the river and up the steep banks. As many as 19 crossings of the PAMPANGA RIVER were made during the day. At 1700 hours, Company B entered PANTABANGAN without opposition. The balance of the 1st Battalion was forced to camp out about 4 miles short of the village due to the approach of darkness.

The 2nd Battalion, accompanied by the Regimental Commander and forward CP group, moved up the RIZAL-PANTABANGAN ROAD with two companies abreast. (29) Light organic transportation moved with this column and carried the bulk of the supplies. The forward elements were subjected to light harassing rifle fire from the hills on both sides of the column and were slowed down by several mined areas in the roadway. A light bulldozer preceded the column of accompanying vehicles to knock out any rough spots found in the road. The Guerilla platoons occupied the high terrain overlooking the road as the column moved along. (30)

Company C, 25th Engineer (C) Battalion closely followed the column, widening the road, installing fills and improving the road-bed so as to accomodate heavy military traffic. (31)

At one point along the road, a small defensive position, knocked out by the leading elements, disclosed a "sleeper". A Japanese officer, lying low in a fox-hole until the jeep carrying the Regimental Commander was opposite him, fired his last round of ammunition, narrowly missing the Regimental

- (29) A-8, p.21
- (30) Personal knowledge
- (31) A-9, p.16

Commander. The Japanese then leaped to his feet and charged down the slope with his saber. An enlisted man from the regimental medical detachment moved forward to intercept him, however, his carbine jammed and the Jap closed with him and lopped off one of his arms before an M-1 rifle cut the Jap down. (32)

Despite the enemy's harassing activities, the 2nd Battalion moved steadily along to join Company B in PANTABANGAN late in the evening. That night, the perimeter killed several Japanese attempting to infiltrate the lines. (33)

Late in the evening, the Regimental Commander issued his orders, orally, for the following day. In view of the exhausting march to which the 1st Battalion had been subjected, and the fact that a large part of the battalion had yet to arrive in PANTABANGAN, he decided to employ the 2nd Battalion in continuing the advance on the second objective, CARRANGLAN. The 1st Battalion would remain in PANTABANGAN to protect the supply route and would patrol extensively in all directions. (34) (See Map D)

#### ON TO CARRANGLAN

The next day the 2nd Battalion, covering a wide front, advanced northwest along the aluvial plain, against slight resistance, and secured the village of CONVERSION. Two 150 mm mortars were captured intact which were the first of their kind encountered by the 35th Infantry. (35)

In the meantime, the 1st Battalion occupied PANTABANGAN, and the Regimental Supply section, based in RIZAL, established

- (32) Personal knowledge
- (33) A-8, p.22
- (34) Personal knowledge
- (35) A-8, p.22

a forward supply point within its perimeter. (36)

On 25 February 1945 the 2nd Battalion continued its advance and by late afternoon was 2500 yards Southeast of CARRANGLAN. Just as they were setting up a perimeter defense for the night, the Japanese attacked with approximately two companies. (37) They were repulsed, however, during the night they continued the attack, harassing the perimeter at all points with machine gun and mortar fire. The morning disclosed 40 enemy dead, whereas the 2nd Battalion lost, 1 killed and 5 wounded. (38)

The 3rd Battalion, rested after its stay in RIZAL, was brought forward on Service Company trucks to CONVERSION where they de-trucked and moved on foot to MANKITKIT which had previously been cleared by the 2nd Battalion.

The 1st Battalion then became Regimental reserve and continued its mission in PANTABANGAN. (39)

The authority to establish a 5-day supply of emergency rations and 2 units of fire of ammunition within the Regiment was granted on 25 February 1945. The Regimental Supply Section immediately drew these rations and loaded them on trucks for a trip to PANTABANGAN the first thing in the morning. (40)

Unfortunately, the enemy chose this time to impose a road-block on the RIZAL-PANTABANGAN ROAD, just east of MOUNT AJA, at a very vulnerable point on the road. For, at about 1800 hours 25 February 1945, a group of the enemy attacked 2 guerrilla platoons, guarding the road, who promptly fled. The

- (36) Personal knowledge
- (37) A-9, p.11
- (38) A-8, p.22
- (39) Personal knowledge
- (40) Personal knowledge; A-5, p.138

services of the guerilla band were immediately discontinued. (41)  
The Japanese then knocked out a bulldozer by hurling a block of picric acid against it and then established themselves in the bluff overlooking the road. (42) (See Map D)

Due to this action, Company B was sent to GENERAL LUNA the following morning to prevent similar action on the supply route to the 2nd Battalion. The Regimental I and R Platoon was sent South along the RIZAL-PANTABANGAN Road to eliminate the road-block, but found it too strong. Company C, reinforced by elements of Company D, was then employed against it. By now it was discovered that the road-block consisted of a reinforced company which was occupying critical terrain. (43)

Realizing that some time would be required to eliminate this road-block, the Regiment arranged for an air drop of 250 rations. (44)

Meanwhile, the 2nd Battalion occupied CARRANGLAN without further resistance. That night, a small enemy force attacked the perimeter without success. (45)

On 27 February 1945 the 3rd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment was attached to the 35th Infantry for the purpose of securing the RIZAL-PANTABANGAN ROAD and of protecting the 35th Infantry's supply route from RIZAL to CARRANGLAN. (46) They advanced up the road with Company K in the lead. The enemy road-block, subjected to a converging attack from opposite sides, was reduced by 1600 hours. (47)

The waiting supply train immediately moved forward to

- (41) A-11
- (42) A-9, p.11
- (43) A-8, p.22
- (44) A-5, p.40
- (45) A-8, p.22
- (46) A-5, p.40
- (47) A-8, p.22

PANTABANGAN where an advance dump was established. There-after the dump closely followed the Regiment by successive bounds, frequently finding itself dependent upon Service Company alone for security due to the rapid movement of the units of the Regiment. (48)

The air-drop, meanwhile, was successfully accomplished. The rations were dropped upon the 64th Field Artillery airstrip near PANTABANGAN resulting in better than 90% recovery. (49) This airstrip and another established later at CARRANGLAN were used a great deal in connection with reconnaissance activities, and also was the main route of evacuation for the wounded. Jeeps delivered the wounded to the airstrip. From there they were flown to another airstrip Southwest of RIZAL where division ambulances picked them up for further evacuation. During the period of the road-block, the Regiment consolidated its gains, holding up its advance to await the outcome of the enemy action. (50)

With the 2nd Battalion well entrenched in CARRANGLAN, the Regiment had secured its second objective which was to serve as a base for the operations against PUNCAN and DIGDIG. (51)

#### THE ADVANCE ON PUNCAN

The Division Commander, somewhat apprehensive over the ease with which the Regiment had progressed thus far, and expecting the Regiment would run into strong resistance as it neared the final objective, ordered the Regimental Commander to proceed more cautiously. (52)

At 0700 hours 28 February 1945, the 2nd Battalion moved

- (48) Personal knowledge
- (49) A-5, p.40
- (50) Personal knowledge; A-11
- (51) A-9, p.11
- (52) A-5, p.41

out of CARRANGLAN, leaving the flat, open aluvial plains and advancing cross country into the high hills to the Southwest. They were forced to leave their vehicles behind, so each man carried 2 rations on his back. Following a trail along the MARINGALU RIVER, the dense underbrush and the waist deep streams made the going tough. By 1700 hours, the Battalion was in position on high ground near the junction of the MARINGALU and TALAVERA RIVERS. (53) (See Map D)

Company C, 65th Engineers again showed their worth, driving a bulldozer road through the dense growth to a point just a quarter of a mile behind the Battalion by the end of the day.

Meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion, 35th Infantry moved into CARRANGLAN and set up a perimeter on the west edge of the village, with Company K in the vicinity of MARINGALU. Company I, 27th Infantry, attached to the 3rd Battalion, set up a road-block on the east approach to the village and was given the mission of patrolling to the North. (54)

The 1st Battalion, then in the vicinity of GENERAL LUNA, was given the mission of protecting the 2nd Battalion's supply route. The Battalion Commander dispatched Company A to the vicinity of the newly bulldozed road.

On 1 March 1945, E and F Companies supported by Company H and the 64th FA Battalion occupied the high ground 1000 yards northeast of PUNCAN against moderate resistance, and were able to look down into the village. (55) At this point they were subjected to intermittent artillery fire which continued through the night. In the morning combat patrols were sent out, they located and silenced this artillery, and

(53) A-8, p.24  
(54) A-8, p.23  
(55) A-5, p.41



destroyed one 105 mm howitzer and a large quantity of ammunition found in the vicinity of HIGHWAY 5. (56)

During this time, Company E moved in on PUNCAN against slight resistance, and by 1200 hours secured the village. By nightfall Companies F and E joined and set up a perimeter defense around the village.

The 1st Battalion sent Company C, reinforced, to occupy the positions on the high ground vacated by E and F Companies.

Throughout the night, artillery in the vicinity of TALAVERA BRIDGE fired on the village, and small enemy attacking parties harassed the perimeter with mortar fire. (57) The enemy lost- 28 killed during the night activities.

By this time the 27th Infantry Regiment, driving from the South, advanced to the high ground South of PUNCAN, and the 161st Infantry Regiment progressed to the high steep hills 3500 yards South of DIGDIG. (58)

On 3 March 1945, Companies E and F consolidated their positions and probed the enemy defenses to the North. By the morning of 4 March 1945, the remainder of the Battalion joined them in PUNCAN. (59) (See Map D)

#### THE ADVANCE ON DIGDIG

As the 2nd Battalion advanced on PUNCAN, the 3rd Battalion simultaneously advanced on DIGDIG. On 1 March several patrols, in strength, were sent out to reconnoiter various approaches to DIGDIG. One of these, advancing North of and parallel to the CARRANGIAN-DIGDIG ROAD, encountered a small force of the enemy in well dug in positions. The patrol neutralized this position by a liberal use of white phosphorous grenades and

(56) A-8, p.24  
(57) A-8, p.24  
(58) A-5, p.42  
(59) A-8, p.24

a flame thrower, then proceeded on to reconnoiter the high ground northwest of DIGDIG. (60)

Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion moved up into position near the 3rd Battalion at MARINGALU.

It was at this time, while the Regimental Supply dump was located in CONVERSION, that the Regiment was required to accept a PX allowance of beer immediately, or forfeit it entirely. It was on a cash on delivery basis. In view of the fact that it was the first beer seen in a long time and there was no assurance of an additional supply, the Regimental Commander authorized the Supply Officer to accept the beer providing he could finance it. The time allowed and the dispersion of the troops prohibited individual collections, so he approached 3 of the top gamblers of the Regiment. When told of the dilemma, they immediately dug into their pockets and came up with the \$2500 required. The regiment got its beer, but it added greatly to the supply load. (61)

At 0330 hours 2 March, the 3rd Battalion, with B Company attached, began its advance on their objective. Company I moved out in advance of the Battalion and ran into strong resistance approximately 700 yards Northwest of MARINGALU. At dawn Company K moved in on the left of I Company and B Company moved through K Company to a position on the left flank of the 3rd Battalion.

As soon as they were in position, an artillery preparation was called for and the line advanced against increasing resistance. The Battalion, for the first time, had finally met a definite line of resistance consisting of a

(60) A-8, p.26

(61) Personal knowledge

maze of caves and tunnels. (62)

With additional artillery preparations, the Battalion over-ran the defenses and by late afternoon occupied the high ground to the Northwest of DIGDIG, with B Company overlooking the road junction. Company B moved down the hill to the valley floor and advanced to within 400 yards of the road junction at DIGDIG, when it was forced by the approach of darkness to return to the protection of the Battalion perimeter.

The following morning at 0745 hours the Battalion moved down off the high ground into DIGDIG, finding fully prepared positions unoccupied. A large Supply Depot was captured intact just east of DIGDIG which apparently was the main supply and maintenance point for the entire sector. It was obvious that the arrival of the 35th Infantry was unexpected. The 3rd Battalion secured the high ground in the vicinity of DIGDIG and immediately reorganized to defend the road junction at DIGDIG. (63)

THE FINAL OBJECTIVE IS SECURED

Although DIGDIG and PUNCAN were now occupied by the 35th Infantry, there still remained pockets of resistance to eliminate between the two towns. While the 3rd Battalion was consolidating its positions in DIGDIG, B Company was returned to 1st Battalion control and was given the mission of proceeding south on HIGHWAY 5 to effect a junction with the 2nd Battalion. They moved swiftly down the road encountering slight, disorganized resistance. By using white phosphorous grenades, they set fire to the dry grass and underbrush bordering the road, thereby simplifying their progress. These brush fires

(62) A-7, p.51; A-5, p.41

(63) A-8, p.26

exploded a large ammunition dump between DIGDIG and PUNCAN. All guns and emplacements were found to be facing southward and the defenders were completely surprised. As Company B neared PUNCAN, it ran into well organized pockets of the enemy entrenched in two gullies Northeast of the town. The Regimental Commander ordered them to secure the high ground overlooking HIGHWAY 5, and to block any attempt of the Japanese to withdraw. (64)

On the 4th and 5th of March, the 2nd Battalion went about the job of mopping up this last area of resistance in the objective area. It was found that point blank artillery fire and heavy mortar concentration failed to knock out the enemy in deep caves in these gullies. Finally the infantry with bazookas, flame throwers and twenty-five-pound satchel charges moved in under heavy covering fire to methodically seal off the caves one after the other. After the ridges overlooking the gullies were secured, barrels of gasoline were rolled down the banks and ignited with tracers and white phosphorous grenades to clear out the brush and expose still other caves. (65)

At 1430 hours 5 March, the last pocket of resistance was overcome and the PUNCAN-DIGDIG area was in friendly hands. (66)

The 35th Infantry Regiment had, in a matter of 11 days, successfully completed a wide envelopment over a 35 mile route which culminated in the elimination of a strong position astride the route of advance of the 25th Infantry Division. The 25th Division had secured its initial objective in the

- (64) A-8, p.27
- (65) A-4, p.119
- (66) A-5, p.42

drive up HIGHWAY 5, and the highway was open from SAN JOSE to DIGDIG. The Division was now in position to threaten the Japanese main defenses to the north by frontal attack or by further envelopments from CARRANGLAN, either by way of the OLD SPANISH TRAIL or along the BARAC RIVER.

### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

#### 1. THE OPERATION

This operation was a bold and calculated risk in the face of known enemy activity within the area to be traversed. The decision to utilize an envelopment was based upon reports which indicated the enemy to be withdrawing Northward, as evidenced by patrol reports showing a decrease in enemy activity in what had formerly been centers of enemy operations, and an educated assumption that the enemy was not in strength on the East flank.

Had the enemy employed additional troops in opposing the envelopment, he might well have established an effective road-block and could then have whittled down the Regiment by attrition.

#### 2. SUPPLY AND EVACUATION

(a) The success of the mission depended heavily upon maintaining a useable supply route, which was extremely vulnerable in the CARABALLO MOUNTAINS. Although the Regiment could have been supplied by continuous air-drops throughout the aluvial plain, such operations generally result in large losses of ammunition supplies due to their weight, and would have limited the use of regimental transportation for want of gasoline.

The preparations to defend the supply route from RIZAL to

PANTABANGAN were not effective or complete enough in an area in which a road-block was anticipated. The 3rd Battalion, 27th Infantry might better have been attached prior to the operation, instead of permitting the enemy to establish an effective block at the most vulnerable point on the road before taking this action.

No advance provision was made for the establishment of Regimental dumps and valuable time was lost in securing the authority. Had the rations been ready to roll, they could have been transported to PANTABANGAN before the road-block had been effected.

(b) Adding the load of PX merchandize to the already heavily laden supply section should have been unnecessary. The fact that it would help morale so definitely outweighed its hindrance.

### 3. PLANNING

The Regimental Commander's initial order covered the immediate objective only in detail, thereby permitting maximum flexibility in subsequent operations. This was demonstrated in resting the 1st Battalion upon reaching PANTABANGAN, and in rapidly moving the 3rd Battalion in a leap-frog move over the 1st Battalion.

### 4. DEFENSE

The Japanese defenses in the area between DIGDIG and PUNCAN were all prepared for defending against an attack from the South. They apparently did not consider the possibility of a successful envelopment of their east flank by way of CARRANGLAN. This oversight resulted in an easy advance of

B Company in its move to make a junction with the 2nd Battalion in PUNCAN, and directly violated the principle of all around defense.

The strength of the defense in and around the DIGDIG-PUNCAN Area, coupled with the apparent withdrawal, would indicate that the purpose of the Japanese was to execute a delaying action, however the ease with which the 35th Infantry moved through the area indicates an insufficient force was employed by the enemy on his east flank to properly secure his main delaying position in the objective area.

#### 5. THE OBJECTIVE

The converging drive of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions on the final objective forced the defenders into a decision which weakened the defenses at DIGDIG as indicated by the unoccupied positions. They were presumably withdrawn to strengthen PUNCAN. This vulnerable rear resulted in a rapid deterioration of the PUNCAN-DIGDIG AREA which would have been a costly operation if taken frontally.

#### 6. PERIMETER DEFENSE

The use of the perimeter defense by the 35th Infantry units in their independent action effectively established its value in operations of this type. It repeatedly proved its ability to repulse enemy attacks and attempts to infiltrate the lines.

#### 7. TERRAIN

The use of inflammable material in reducing cave defenses and underbrush was well demonstrated in eliminating the pockets of enemy ensconced in caves and concealed by underbrush.

## 8. ENGINEERS

The energy and courage with which the engineers carried out their road construction work was of prime importance in bringing about the success of the mission. They constantly maintained the long exposed supply route, and kept the combat roads right behind the constantly advancing front.

### LESSONS

1. A wide envelopement must utilize the element of surprise to the utmost, and be boldly and aggressively carried out in order to insure success.
2. (a) A dependable supply line, insured by sound advance planning, is essential to the uninterrupted progress of the supported unit.  
(b) Provision should be made to prevent unnecessary administrative and physical burdens being placed upon a small unit which requires rapidity of movement as an important element to its security.
3. In planning a complex operation, care must be exercised to insure that orders are kept as simple as possible with maximum flexibility to permit coping with an ever changing situation.
4. An assumption that an enemy will not use a difficult route of approach may nullify an otherwise strong defensive position.
5. Striking an enemy at more than one point requires him to divide his forces thereby weakening each point attacked.
6. A perimeter defense provides excellent all around protection to a small independent unit.
7. The inflammability of the terrain should be kept in



mind both in the offense and the defense.

8. Close coordination between a unit and its supporting engineers is highly important in a cross-country movement over rugged terrain.