

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

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1948 - 1949

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 511TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY
REGIMENT (11TH AIRBORNE DIVISION) IN THE MOUNT
MALEPUNYO MOUNTAIN MASS, EAST OF LIPA, LUZON,
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, 12 APRIL - 2 MAY 1945
(PHILIPPINES CAMPAIGN)

(Personal Experience of a Regimental Intelligence Officer)

Type of operation described: A RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE
AND A COORDINATED ATTACK IN HILLY JUNGLE TERRAIN

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INTRODUCTION

The last organized defenses of the Japanese forces in Southern Luzon were destroyed in the battle of Santa Clara, as it is known to the people of the Philippines. The battle raged for several weeks in the vicinity of the Malepuno Mountain Mass and ended when the 511th Parachute Infantry seized and held the final Jap defensive positions. (1)

In order to understand the battle it is necessary to review the preceding actions in Luzon. On the 9th of January the Sixth Army, General Walter Krueger commanding, landed at Lingayen Gulf, swung southward clearing the central plain and smashed its way toward Manila. (See Map A) Later in the month, Eighth Army mounted two thrusts which were to pass to the Sixth Army control. (2) On the 29th of January, XI Corps landed to seal off Bataan. Two days later the 11th Airborne Division (-) landed at Nasugbu and pressed rapidly inland with the mission of advancing to the north and east. (3) On February 3rd, the division, having reached the Carilliao-Batulao defile, committed the 511th Regimental Combat Team in a vertical envelopment. (See Map B) On the following day, with the 511th spearheading, the division advanced northward, moving thirty miles by nightfall to reach the Paranaque River Bridge just south of greater Manila. As the leading elements of the Sixth Army entered Manila from the north, the division "found itself holding a beachhead sixty-nine miles deep and one hundred yards wide." (4)

(1) A-3, p.202; (2) A-4, p.25; (3) A-1, p.67; (4) A-1, p.77.

This bold advance had caught the Japanese southern defense commander, General Fuji, in the middle of a change in plans. (5) Before he could mass forces to counterattack or interfere with the extended supply line, the 11th had battered its way across Nichols Field, swung eastward to crack the Genko line, completed its mission at Fort McKinley, and was facing him again with orders to destroy all Japs in Southern Luzon. (6) When the division, now under XIV Corps, with the 1st Cavalry Division, had advanced to Mount Bijiang, Fuji decided to concentrate for his final defense at the positions in Mount Malepunyo, which he had begun in January. Having failed to stop our advance to Manila, his mission was to detain the airborne units in his area and to occupy the maximum number of our forces. (7)

While moving southward, the 511th had received reports from native volunteers, agents and guerillas of troop concentrations and supply dumps at Santa Clara. On the 8th of March air strikes were requested and the town was obliterated. (8)

By the end of March the Japs throughout Luzon, having been driven from their original lines, had dug in a series of isolated strongholds in rugged inaccessible terrain. Though their will to resist was impaired by decimation of their units, losses of communications, transportation, supplies, aircraft and artillery, they rarely, if ever, considered the face-destroying act of surrender and were determined to inflict upon us the maximum losses. (9)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

By 11 April, General Fuji, with most of his artillery gone and his units shattered or surrounded, had organized the 2,000

(5) A-9, p.9; (6) A-1, p.99; (7) A-9, p.8; (8) A-5, S-3 Journal, 8 March; (9) A-3, p.157.

remaining men of the 17th Infantry, 86th Air Field Battalion, a naval service unit and six fishing base battalions (infantry trained) (10) into four composite battalions in Malepuno. (11) He had plenty of supplies and ammunition. (12) XIV Corps had cleared all main routes of communication in Southern Luzon to the Bicol Peninsula. In the First Cavalry Division area the 12th Cavalry was patrolling north of the line, Lucena-Antimonan (13), the 5th Cavalry was moving farther east. The 7th and 8th Cavalry Regiments had cleared to the northern edge of Malepuno and had advanced into its eastern side. (14) In the 11th Airborne area, the 187th Glider Infantry was containing a Jap position at Mount Macolod and holding Malarya Hill at the western edge of the Malepuno Mass. The 188th Glider Infantry was operating in the Tayabas-Antimonan area. The 3rd Battalion of the 511th, under division control at Tiaong, was ambushing Jap stragglers. The 511th (-), at Batangas and Bauen, was patrolling the Calumpin peninsula and southern Batangas. (15)

For 18 days the 511th had been in Army Reserve, prepared on 24-hour notice to support the 158th Regimental Combat Team on the Bicol Peninsula. (16) This period and the resulting high supply priority had allowed the regiment to fill all class II and IV shortages. (17) An influx of replacements and a daily diet of hot B rations from the battalion kitchens repaired the ravages of the Manila fighting which had reduced one battalion to less than 300 men (18) and stricken a considerable number of the regiment with some form of jaundice. Among the replacements were our wounded from the Leyte campaign who, in their zeal to rejoin the regiment, had managed to break away from hospitals throughout the

(10) A-6, p.2; (11) A-9, p.11; (12) A-9, p.13; (13) A-3, p.192; (14) A-3, p.199; (15) A-1, p.110-112; (16) A-1, p.112; (17) A-5, S-4 Journal; (18) Statement of Lt.Col. Holcombe, Feb. 1949.

theatre and filter back to us without benefit of routine channels. (19) Our strength, 1800, (20) was almost up to our T/O of 1975 (21), and this figure was augmented by the several odd natives per company who had proved their ability as guides and fighters. (22) Our vehicles, nineteen jeeps and twenty-one 2½-ton trucks, were in operating condition. (23) Our secondary mission of patrolling within the sector and guarding bridges was largely executed by guerilla units, except when contact was imminent or the patrol was primarily for replacement training. These units varied constantly in number and composition. (24)

RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE

The 511th Parachute Infantry, having been released from Army Reserve on April 12th, relieved the 187th at Malarya Hill. (25) With the support of the 674th Field Artillery (105 mm) and one platoon of B Company, 85th Chemical Mortar (4.2) Battalion, the regiment was ordered to probe the Malepunyo Hill Mass within its zone. (26) (Map C) This order meant, to the veterans of the Leyte mountains, that they would move along the ridges, establish supply routes, occupy high ground, set up strong booby-trapped positions at night, and in the daylight dispatch strong patrols to kill stragglers and locate the main Jap positions. (27) Battalion sectors were assigned and tentative patrol routes were selected from map and aerial reconnaissance. (28) Arrangements were made for the commanders of the initial company-size patrols to examine their routes from a liaison plane. (29)

Malepunyo appeared to be a welter of conical hills covered with tangled rain forest and bamboo thickets, surrounded by

(19) Personal knowledge; (20) A-6, p.8; (21) A-5, Troop List FO #10; (22) Personal knowledge; (23) A-5, S-4 Journal; (24) Personal knowledge; (25) A-1, p.112; (26) A-1, p.113; (27) Personal knowledge; (28) A-5, FO #10; (29) Personal knowledge.

precipitous slopes and interlaced with sharp ridges. (Photo D) The highest peak rose 3,160 feet above the plains of southern Luzon. There were no roads and only poorly kept jungle trails within the thirty odd square mile area. (30) This was exhausting country in which all loads had to be hand carried. For the coming operation, resupply and evacuation would be by native bearer with emergency supplies on call by parachute from our faithful liaison planes. (31)

The 1st Battalion patrols on the south, guided by SCR 300 radio from a liaison plane, pushed through to Tiaong in three days, meeting only a few stragglers on the way. The Jap had prepared positions in the highest hills, but was not occupying them. (32) The 2nd Battalion, advancing into the central sector, found the going tougher. They used Malarya Hill as a starting point. (The 3rd Battalion of the 511th, while attached to the 187th Glider Infantry, had wrested this hill from the Japs on 7 April.)(33) With the help of artillery support, they had established positions on the eastern slope of Mount Dalaga, and were able to observe a cavalry patrol contacting a large number of Japs in the vicinity of Hills 2375, 2380 and 2218. (34) On April 17th the 2nd Battalion, driving in Jap outposts, secured the ridge from Mount Dalaga to the base of Hill 2930 and seized and occupied Hill 2362. (35)

At this time ground observation revealed numerous ridges and knobs that did not show on the maps. Aerial photos were not forthcoming through channels, so the division G-2 sent a cameraman aloft with a K-20 aerial camera. Unfortunately his photos

(30) A-6, p.1; (31) Personal knowledge; (32) A-6, p.2; (33) A-1, p.112; (34) A-5, S-2 Journal; (35) A-5, Situation overlay.

could not be oriented and he tried again, once more without results. (36)

The 2nd Battalion continued to push eastward. F Company made limited advances down the ridge toward Hill 2930 and patrolled to the south. E Company patrolled forward from Hill 2362. Jap sniper fire against the E Company patrols increased daily. (37) The hills to the north and east in the cavalry sector offered the Jap good observation. Despite these disadvantages, the orders were to continue eastward since no serious resistance had been offered. On the 21st, a patrol returning late reported reaching Hill 2380. This report was questionable, but E Company was ordered to attack in the morning. (38) The 2nd Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Frank Holcombe, before moving out with E Company, summarized the foreboding of his command by saying to his executive, "We're going to step in it today!" (39)

The ridge forward of Hill 2362 was again covered with artillery and E Company advanced against intermittent fire through a coconut grove to the last knob, later known as Davis Ridge, facing Hill 2380. As the Jap fire began to take its toll, the battalion commander issued the orders to return to Hill 2362 until more artillery could be massed. Before the order could be executed, one of the men in the nearby support platoon was hit by a grenade. He held up a bloody stump of an arm, headed back towards the aid station and shouted, "I've got a home run!" Almost immediately Jap heavy weapons opened a terrific volume of surprise fire from the eastward row of hills and decimated the lead platoons. The entire column took casualties as Jap snipers fired

(36) Personal knowledge; (37) A-5, S-3 Journal; (38) Statement Lt. Col. Holcombe, 12 February 1949; (39) Statement of Major John Cook, 12 February 1949.

from concealed spider holes along the ridge. (40) The Jap, for the first time, revealed his main position. The reconnaissance phase was ended.

PREPARATION FOR THE ATTACK

After a thorough study from the air and ground, it was determined that the 2380-2375 hill mass was the key to the Jap position, and that the only approach within our sector was from the south. An oblique photo taken by the S-2 (Photo E) confirmed this view, and the regiment's tentative plan was presented to the division commander, General Swing. (41)

To the north (Map C), the 1st Cavalry, employing a brigade in a five-day attack (April 17-22), supported by artillery and heavy air strikes, had made no progress against the main Malepunyo positions. (42) After a phone conversation with General Swing, the Corps commander, General Griswold, shifted the boundary and unified the command in Malepunyo by attaching to the 11th Airborne Division the 8th Cavalry Regiment and a battalion of the 7th Cavalry. His orders to General Swing were terse: "Capture Malepunyo and destroy all Japs thereon." (43)

Boundary not used

The new division order moved the regimental boundary northward to include Hill 2610 (Map F), shifted units to ring the base of the mountain mass, and attached F Troop of the 7th Cavalry to the 511th. Corps was now supporting the operation with two medium battalions, a light battalion and a company (-) of 4.2 mortars. These units and the 11th Airborne Division artillery were placed around the mountain mass so that high angle fire could be dropped on every possible Jap position. (44)

(40) Statement of Captain Stephen Cavanaugh, 12 Feb 49.

(41) Personal knowledge; (42) A-3, p.200; (43) A-1, p.114;

(44) A-1, p.114.

subject matter

The commander of the 511th assigned the newly allocated area to the 3rd Battalion, Lt. Col. John Strong commanding, and soon learned from patrols up the two ridges leading eastward that the only possible attack route there was covered by heavy defensive fires. All information now indicated a strong position along the north-south ridge from Hills 2218 to 2610, including Mount Mataasna Bundoc. Fortunately, each peak seemed to mask the fires of all others to the north, and each could be covered by fire from the ridge held by F Company. (45) The Japs appeared to be holding the mass of their troops in dug-in positions and caves along the sides of the draws where our artillery would be less effective. (46)

subject matter

The troops moved into position for the attack. The 188th Glider Infantry to the north was to advance in its sector and seize Hill 2480. The 127th Airborne Engineer Battalion was to push a fill across the Onipe river to provide tank and logistical support. (Map F) 8th Cavalry was to maintain its position. The 1st Battalion of the 187th Glider Infantry and the 152nd AAA Battalion were to cut off Japs fleeing to the south and east. The 511th was to make the main effort. (47)

The commanding officer of the 511th Parachute Infantry, Col. E. H. Lahti, gathered his forces. The 3rd Battalion, in reserve, was to establish ambushes covering the draws to the west. (Map G) The 2nd Battalion, from its same position, was to guard the supply trail, give fire support on call, and protect the 75 mm assault guns of D Battery, 457th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, which had been carried by hand loads into positions on the Dalaga Ridge and Hill 2362. The 1st Battalion, Lt. Col. Fred Wright commanding,

(45) A-6, p.3; (46) Personal knowledge; (47) A-1, p.114.

in conjunction with Task Force 58, composed of C Company (511th) and F Troop (7th Cavalry), was to make the assault after the massed artillery and all the air strikes obtainable had been laid on. This assault was to focus three columns against Hill 2380. B Company was to advance eastward from the draw between Dalaga and Hill 2362. A Company was to drive north from F Company's foremost position. Task Force 58 was to clear Mataasna Bundoc from the cavalry position westward. (48)

While the troops moved to implement the plan and native carriers moved supplies, the regimental observation post was established on the Dalaga Ridge. On April 25, air strikes were directed against the hills by the air support party on the plain. These were ineffective, and on the 26th a SCR 694 radio was carried to Hill 2362, and the commander of D Company, Captain Cavanaugh, was directed to talk the planes into the targets by relay to the air support party. (49) With cross observation from the regimental observation post, the succeeding strikes were on target. (50)

By the night of the 26th, the artillery fire plan was complete. 5,000 rounds would fall on Hills 2375, 2380, 2218, Davis Ridge, and Ringler Ridge. More would be available on call. The heavy concentrations would fall when B Company signaled its arrival at the base of Ringler Ridge. All battalions were registered and communications were established through the fire direction center of the 674th Field Artillery Battalion to mass six battalions on call. During the night three surprise volleys of four battalions each were fired Time-on-Target into the draws and suspected water points. (51)

(48) A-6, p.3,4; (49) Personal knowledge; (50) A-5, S-3 Journal; (51) A-6, Artillery Fire Plan.

THE ATTACK: FIRST DAY, 27 APRIL 1945

Handwritten note: Handwritten note:
At dawn the flank companies began their advance to the Lines of Departure, B Company in the heavy jungle popping red smoke grenades to mark position as the artillery cleared the route ahead. When B Company reached the base of its objective ridge, the artillery opened its heavy preparation on the hills. A Company, moving behind 81 mm. bursts along the trail ahead, seized Hill 2218 (Map G) without opposition, but firing was heard from the east where the Task Force had begun a small arms fight that was to continue intermittently throughout the day. While A Company prepared to continue north, artillery plastered Hill 2380 and, on signal, lifted to the higher hills as the infantry labored up the slopes. A Company reached the crest of Hill 2380 without opposition, but soon felt light sniper fire from Hill 2375. The 75 mm. assault gun squad on Hill 2362 located this resistance and silenced it with five rounds, one a direct hit. (52)

At 1300 hours, eighteen A-20 attack aircraft worked over Hill 2610, and an hour later a second flight struck effectively at Hill 2418. A Company sent a platoon to Hill 2375. The Japs had prepared company-size positions on A Company's hills, but apparently had withdrawn to the north. The platoon of D Company from Mount Dalaga was ordered up to occupy Hill 2218. (53)

B Company continued to move through the thick jungle most of the day. They uncovered and searched out numerous Jap supply caves along their route, but these were guarded only by dead men. By mid-afternoon they had occupied their objective, Ringler Ridge, just short of Hill 2380. They cleared the many Jap positions and dug in for the night. (54)

(52) A-6, p.4,5; (53) A-5, S-3 Journal; (54) A-6, p.6.

The Task Force had control of Mataasna Bundoc by 1500 hours but was having difficulty clearing the saddle to Hill 2380. Their thrust westward was held up by snipers. The Task Force commander, Major Ciceri, requested a patrol from A Company to assist his advance by taking the snipers in rear. The patrol moved out, but soon ran into heavy resistance in a bamboo thicket and suffered several casualties. Sergeant Berardi of A Company and two others, realizing the plight of the patrol, started down into the saddle to help evacuate the wounded. Snipers opened on them and killed two men before they could even contact the beleaguered patrol. Sergeant Berardi immediately began a rush toward the snipers and, although receiving a mortal wound, drove out the Japs, and joined the patrol. He then assumed command and directed the evacuation of the other wounded. For this action he received a post-humous DSC. The Task Force was ordered back to the crest of Mataasna Bundoc so that artillery and mortar fire could sweep the saddle. (55)

As the regiment dug in for the night, a supply column of native bearers moved on to all positions with "C" rations, water, and ammunition. The day's total of casualties suffered was eight killed in action, twelve wounded in action. (56) Harassing fires in the draws were employed throughout the night. (57)

Plans for the next day included: (Map H)

- (1) Two 9-plane air strikes against Hill 2418 at 0800.
- (2) Following the air strikes a 1,000-round artillery preparation on Hill 2418, with smoke on Hills 2070, 2610 and 2418, the latter to be lifted on call by B Company.

(55) A-6, p.5; (56) A-5, S-3 Journal; (57) A-6, p.54.

- (3) B Company to pass through A Company and to seize Hill 2418 on order.
- (4) A Company to hold Ringler Ridge, Hills 2380 and 2375 until relieved by the Task Force.
- (5) Task Force to clear the saddle, hold Mataasna Bundoc and relieve ^A B Company.
- (6) I Company to seize Hill 2070 and the remainder of the 3rd Battalion to be prepared to move on one hour's notice. (58)

THE ATTACK: SECOND DAY, 28 APRIL 1945

The air strikes went in as scheduled at low level. The nine P-38's dropped their parachute demolition bombs and napalm, landing four bombs and most of the napalm in the target area.

At 1006 hours, as the artillery preparation neared its close, B Company was ordered forward. At 1010, the artillery lifted to Hills 2070 and 2610, and the 4.2's ceased fire. B Company, moving along a narrow trail on the slope of Hill 2375, by-passed A Company and pushed up the sides of Hill 2418, killing the few remaining Japs without receiving a single casualty. (Map H) Jap fire from a mountain gun was ineffective. After a short rest, B Company was ordered to advance on the final objective, Hill 2610. Captain Ringler soon discovered that the only feasible route, staying on the ridge lines, was via Hill 2070, which I Company had been ordered to take. The regimental commander diverted I Company and ordered it to relieve A Company on Hill 2418, since he had decided to let the 1st Battalion carry the attack until they asked for help. While this relief was under way, the artillery checked its registration on Hill 2070 and then laid in a 675-round concentration. Once more B Company secured its objective. (59)

(58) A-8, Apr. 27; (59) A-6, p. 6.

A Co was to remain on Hills 2380-2375

Task Force 58 had spent the day clearing the Japs off a minor north-south ridge which covered the saddle between Hill 2380 and Mount Mataasna Bundoc. At 1110 hours they had killed fifteen Japs and were in contact with twenty-five more. They used white phosphorus grenades to burn off the grass concealing the holes, and, as the Japs came out, mowed them down with mortars and small arms. The grass fires got out of hand for a moment, and forced our troops off their crest. However, the Japs were too disorganized to take advantage of the situation, and positions were soon recovered. The Japs continued to resist stubbornly from the draws. (60)

Platoons and guerilla units of the 2nd Battalion moved up to occupy the hills vacated by the 1st Battalion. As the supply column moved through their positions, it was discovered that about half the water had disappeared en route, and regimental headquarters arranged an emergency parachute drop for A and B Companies on Hill 2070. (61)

During the night all perimeters reported Jap activity and Task Force 58 suffered two casualties from a small Banzai attack. A total of eight Japs were killed and the rest were easily driven from all positions. (62)

Plans for the morning called for three heavy air strikes against Hill 2610, with our troops only 700 yards (map distance) away from the target of the 1,000-pound bombs. The flight line was checked and rechecked; all forward units were given an extra supply of colored smoke grenades; and the artillery piece, which would fire the marking round of white phosphorus, was carefully

(60) A-6, p.8; (61) A-8, 28 April

(62) A-5, S-3 Journal.

adjusted onto the target. B Company was to assault Hill 2610, with A Company ready to reinforce if necessary. The two company commanders, looking down the ridge toward Hill 2610, estimated the peak at 100 yards rather than 700. (63) A Company's radio on Hill 2070 was to assist Captain Cavanaugh in directing the planes to their targets. The usual artillery preparation would follow the air strike. Task Force 58 was ordered to fire a heavy preparation, then push through the Jap positions. (64)

THE ATTACK: THIRD DAY, 29 APRIL 1945

The day broke bright and clear, and the artillery fired early to check their registrations. By 0800 the P-38's, with 1,000-lb. bombs aboard, were searching for their target. Red smoke grenades popped on the occupied hills; white phosphorus shells burst on Hill 2610; and A and B Companies snuggled a little closer to the ground. The first flight roared in, following their leader in column, strafing, then loosing their bombs. The mountains shook but the peak of Hill 2610 still loomed untouched between the bracketing hits. The second flight had a clear view of the target as their leader scored on the crest of the hill. One by one they followed, each bomb starting a small landslide. The third flight circled, awaiting instructions. The commander of B Company radioed "Call off the planes, one man wounded, several with bloody noses." (65)

The battalion commander replied, "Last flight cancelled. Coordinate artillery concentrations, using at least 500 rounds, including smoke. Shift fires to north slope of Hill 2610. Let me know when you move out." (66) B Company moved. (Map I) They had climbed half way up the precipitous slope when strange shells

(63) Statement, Capt. Jefferies, 12 Feb 49; (64) A-8, 28 April; (65) A-6, p.7 (quoted in part); (66) A-8, April 29.

*May H. ...
data and more info ...
allow*

started dropping in. While a radio check determined that the shells were from the tank destroyers, firing for the 188th to the north, the regimental commander, in a liaison plane, guided B Company away from the target area and encouraged them upward.

(67)
At 1045 hours, B Company reached the top of Hill 2610 (Map I) and immediately began clearing the many Jap caves and trenches. It first appeared that the caves were empty, but after several white phosphorus grenades were dropped in one large hole, the Japs came pouring out of the ground 50 yards away. For a few minutes B Company riflemen on the crest had a "turkey shoot". As this action ceased, the men, moving up to grenade another hole, found themselves showered with fragments from a satchel charge which the Japs flung into the air. Eighteen men from B Company were slightly wounded. On another portion of the hill, Jap machine gun fire seemed to come right out of the ground where the Japs apparently were firing through cave vents. A platoon from A Company and an engineer demolition squad scaled Hill 2610 to help B Company and, a little later, the regimental commander dropped a flame thrower from his liaison plane. He then directed the movement of an I Company platoon to a knob between Hill 2610 and Hill 2418 in order to strengthen his hold on the hills.

While the regimental objective was being secured, Task Force 58 blasted the Japs once again with a mass of artillery, and by 1045 hours, C Company had moved through to Hill 2380. (68)

MOP-UP

Early in the morning of April 30, G and I Companies moved up on Hill 2610 to be ready for a further push, if needed. G Company moved northward down the ridge to Hill 2480, after permission had been granted to move beyond the regimental boundary. (69)

(67) A-6, p.7; (68) A-6, p.7; (69) A-6, p.8.

From their positions on Hill 2480, their patrols were able to contact the 188th Glider Infantry which had succeeded in clearing a strongly fortified Jap position in a coconut grove on the northwest side of the Malepunyo Mass. (70)

With the high ground in our possession, all units began patrolling the draws and hill slopes to flush out the last remaining Japs. Where resistance was suspected, artillery concentrations were used to clear the way. (71) A new supply trail between Mount Dalaga and Hill 2070, first used by I Company in their advance on the second day, reduced the long carry to one and a half hours. The 1st Battalion moved up their guerillas to Davis Ridge. Large caves connected by wire communications and still containing many supplies were uncovered on both the east and west slopes of Hill 2380. Hill 2610 contained a mountain gun with 17 rounds of usable ammunition and a honeycomb of trenches and caves. (72) High-powered radio equipment and many dead were found in the largest cave. (73)

The tale of the battle would not be complete without the statements of General Fuji, just before he was hanged as a war criminal.

maps always between 2418-2375

"On the 25th of April I issued the order to begin withdrawing to Mount Banahao (Map B) by small groups starting on the 27th. I planned to withdraw the least heavily engaged units first. I left April 29th with about 200 men, moving up the draw east of Hills 2610 and 2480." (74) (Map I)

On May 2nd, after a thorough search of all draws and enemy cave positions, the mountains were turned over to the guerillas, and the 511th marched out of the hills. (75)

(70) Statement, Lt. Col. D. P. Quandt, 24 Feb 49.

(71) Personal knowledge; (72) A-5, S-3 Journal, 1 May; (73) Personal knowledge; (74) A-9, p.11,12; (75) A-5, S-3 Journal, 2 May.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In analyzing this battle at its close, the members of the 511th Parachute Infantry felt that its successful culmination had been the pay-off for all the previous lessons learned the hard way. They now had an increased confidence in their ability to carry out future missions.

I think this operation is an illustration of the Infantryman's bread and butter thesis that the only way to defeat a fanatical enemy is to physically occupy his strong points. The Japanese defenders at Malepunyo had resisted a terrific pounding by bombs and artillery for nearly a month. They yielded their positions to a small force of determined infantrymen, who had worked in close enough to: (1) select the objectives; (2) protect the forward observers; (3) guide the bombers to their targets; and (4) occupy the commanding ridges.

The artillery and airforce support in this operation was magnificent, and I think no infantryman would like to contemplate such a mission without it. Because of the precipitous nature of the terrain, overall artillery support would have been impossible without the circular emplacement of the artillery battalions. When it became apparent that observation in the hills would be required for a proper direction of air strikes, the Air Force furnished a portable VHF set and operator. Over 10,000 artillery rounds and 72 fire or demolition bombs were dropped in the 511th area during the operation. (76)

The soldiers who won this battle were volunteers for their particular regiment. Though some had grown a bit "ouchy" as their (76) A-6, fire plans.

number of combat days piled up, they never faltered when given a mission, and never thought of turning back. Above all, they were good infantrymen - able to live where they found themselves; to eat what they were given; and to fight with the weapons at hand! In this unbelievably difficult terrain, their airborne training had stood them in good stead. Their stamina, developed by runs and long marches, made them fit to carry their combat loads up the rugged peaks and ridges. Experienced in aerial re-supply methods, they could always go for the most difficult objective, confident that emergency supplies could be dropped in a few minutes.

The artillery liaison planes were of great assistance to the commander and staff, and undoubtedly expedited the course of the battle. They made it possible to communicate with the patrols, study terrain, observe operations, drop emergency supplies, photograph the area, and direct artillery fire. This latter capability served as life insurance for the pilot and observer, since it was the reason for the Jap commander's orders against firing at liaison aircraft. The activities of the aircraft were limited only by the weather and the inadvisability of flying over areas that were being shelled.

Maximum use of native assistance also contributed to the operation. The guerilla units helped our manpower situation by occupying positions, furnishing guards, and carrying out patrol missions in the regimental sector beyond the mountains. Native laborers, up to 1300 a day, were used by the S-4 for carrying supplies to the battalions in the hills. (77)

The main flaw in the operation occurred during the reconnaissance phase. The absence of exact maps and aerial photos made a proper terrain analysis impossible. Consequently, the value,
(77) A-6, p.9

strength, and security of the Dalaga Ridge was not understood until F Company had advanced down it nearly to Hill 2218. This ridge became the springboard for the final attack, and the importance of the original seizure of Malarya Hill was realized.

Although Fuji said he had ordered a withdrawal in the middle of our attack, he did not leave with his headquarters group until the 29th - the day that B Company was exterminating the last defenders of Hill 2610. The final toll - 511th dead, 32; Jap dead, 632 (78) - leaves little doubt as to the effectiveness of our operation. The Corps total of Jap dead, 1,647 (79) in the Malepunyo area, indicates that Fuji and his party were among the few escapees.

LESSONS LEARNED

The following lessons illustrated in this operation apply particularly in difficult terrain.

1. Against a fanatical enemy there is no substitute for the determined riflemen.
2. Proper use of the terrain may mean the difference between victory and defeat.
3. Ridges are sometimes the only feasible means of approach.
4. Exact maps, or in their absence aerial photos, may save lives. *Maps of the area should be studied*
5. Trained photographers should be available to the regiment to take, prepare, and interpret photographs of difficult terrain.
6. Effective use of liaison aircraft for command, communication, and resupply will conserve manpower and expedite the victory.

(78) A-5, p. 34; (79) A-3, p.203.

✓ 7. Bomb safety lines can vary with the terrain, the situation, and the confidence in the pilots.

8. Tactical aircraft can best be controlled by an observer who can clearly see the target and the line of flight.

9. When artillery is available, it should be used in mass.

✓ 10. Unity of command at the operational level is essential.

11. Where available, natives should be used to the maximum as irregular forces and labor.

12. White phosphorus grenades thrown into the enemy's grass camouflage is an effective combat expedient.