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THE OPERATIONS OF "A" TROOP, 8TH REGT. (1ST CAV. DIV.)
MANUS ISLAND, 14-24 MARCH 1944
(BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO CAMPAIGN)
(Personal experience of a Troop Commander)

Type of operation described: TROOP IN AN AMPHIBIOUS
LANDING AND OFFENSIVE, DEFENSIVE JUNGLE FIGHTING.

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of "A" Troop, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st U.S. Cavalry Division on Manus Island in the Admiralties from 14-24 March, 1944.

"A" Troop's strength was 160 enlisted men and 5 officers. The troop was organized into a troop headquarters, three rifle platoons and one weapons platoon. Basic arms were the M-1 rifle and Carbine. Supporting arms within the troop were 9 BARs, 6 light machine guns, 6 Rocket Launchers and 3 sixty M.M. Mortars.

The troop was a part of one of the oldest Regular Army Regiments in the U.S. Army. The 8th Regiment claimed more Congressional Medal of Honor winners than any other U.S. outfit. Organized in 1866; took part in the Indian Wars, also served in the Philippines before the First World War. In 1940, 41 and 42 the 1st Cavalry Division participated in the Louisiana maneuvers, and in 1943, shipped to Australia without their horses. (1)

While in camp near Brisbane, Australia the men spent 5 months of training for jungle and amphibious operations. In December and January the division was shipped to Oro Bay, New Guinea for further training before the Admiralty Operation. Since Oro Bay was only 400 miles South of the Admiralties it was to be the staging area for the division operation. (See Map #1)

STRATEGICAL IMPORTANCE

The Admiralty Islands, which consist of some one hundred and fifty islands, had been at the top of General McArthur's priority list for some time. The Admiralties lay at the apex of a triangle almost equidistant from Kavieng and Madang, about 240 miles; and 270 miles from once dangerous Wewak. The islands served the Japs as a major staging and supply depot for the Bismarck Archipelago and New Guinea. In the hands of the Japs they were a constant threat to McArthur's exposed flank on New Guinea and New Britain. In the hands of the Allies it would deny the Japs use of further effective air and naval operations in the Bismarck Sea and leave garrisons of some 100,000 Japs isolated. Capture of the Admiralties would represent a strategic gain of the greatest importance. Not only were they in the center of the great semi-circle formed by the main enemy defenses on New Guinea and the Bismarcks, but were on the Japanese side of the crescent. The islands, with their airfields and Seeadler Harbor, could be developed into an offensive base for allied air and naval power to protect allied advance into the open waters leading toward the Philippines. (2)

.(See Map #1)

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

The Admiralties were discovered by the Dutch in 1616; later, in 1885, Germany extended its rule to the Bismarck Sea. In 1914, the island group was allotted to Australia by the League of Nations. The islands were quiet and peaceful when the Japs seized them in January, 1942. Comprising 800 square miles, the terrain ranged from mountains to marshes and from coconut groves to jungles. (3) (4)

Only 2° South latitude, the weather is hot with high humidity; annual rainfall is 154 inches.

Mountainous and well forested, Manus is about 50 miles long and 17 miles broad at its widest point; it has several excellent harbors, a few small rivers and three jungle trails. Mount Dremsil, on the Southwest part of the island, reaches the height of 2,000 to 3,000 feet. Most of the shore line is covered with thick mangrove growth.

Like many Pacific islands, the Admiralties had never been thoroughly explored. It was not until later than 1927 that a British patrol succeeded in pushing across Manus.

Civilized years brought law and order to the natives. The murder of white officials and planters during the German ownership ceased. The native of the Admiralties today is very friendly toward the white man. (5)

PLANNING FOR ADMIRALTY OPERATION

Planning for the Admiralty Operation was started in early January, 1944 at Alamo Headquarters by 6th Army and staff of the 1st Cavalry Division. Instructions were given to the Staff to make a thorough terrain study of the islands and, with further reconnaissance, make an estimate of the situation. (6)

G.H.Q. issued orders for the operation to take place early in April. With this information, planning and training got under way. The Navy and Airforce were particularly active in the vicinity of the islands during the month of February.

Later in February, air reconnaissance indicated that certain parts of the islands appeared to be evacuated. With this information on 24 February, Alamo Force Headquarters received orders for the immediate ground reconnaissance on the Admiralties. By this time, plans for an assault, designated as the Brewer Operation, were almost fully outlined in accordance with earlier instructions. (7)

During the planning, several conferences had taken place among representatives from Alamo Force, the 5th Airforce, and the 7th Amphibious Force, which were under the command of the Allied Naval Forces of the Southwest Pacific Area, Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid. These conferences had settled all preliminary details of ground, air and naval coordination. (8)

The 1st Cavalry Division, commanded by Major General Innis P. Swift, had been designated as the

nucleus of the task force assigned to this operation. Although the Division was dismounted for operations in the Pacific, it retained its organization as a Cavalry unit with two brigades, each made up of two reinforced regiments. In addition to supporting units, each regiment consisted of two squadrons of three rifle troops each, and a heavy weapons troop. The 1st Brigade was comprised of the 5th and 12th Cavalry Regiments, commanded by Brig. Gen. William C. Chase. The 2nd Brigade was comprised of the 7th and 8th Cavalry Regiments, commanded by Brig. Gen. Verne D. Mudge.

The new orders did not alter the final mission of the Task Force to establish the Admiralty Islands as an advance air and naval base for future offensive action. The main changes were in the landing place and moving the time up about a month. The reconnaissance in force, or attack if they stayed, was to be aimed at the Eastern coast of Los Negros instead of at the Seeadler Harbor area to the Northwest; and, Momote Airfield was to be the initial objective if the force remained to occupy the island. (See Map #2)

Only two of the islands were important. These were Los Negros and Manus, where the Japs had built excellent airfields at Momote and Lorengau. These had been bombed some fifteen times during February. The garrisons were believed to be in bad shape with most of their defensive installations destroyed. Resistance to bombing had been progressively weaker.

LANDING ON LOS NEGROS

At H Hour 0815, on the morning 29 February, while Rabaul was getting 161 tons of bombs to keep the Japs on the ground, the 2nd Squadron, 5th Cavalry reconnaissance force, disembarked into assault boats from the decks of destroyers, (used instead of transports for a quick getaway if the reconnaissance failed) and landed in Hyane Harbor on the Eastern edge of Los Negros Island. (9) (See Map #2)

With the loss of less than one percent, the Cavalryment quickly stormed the beach and took their immediate objective, the 5,000 foot Momote Airfield. So surprised were the Japs, it took them three days to gather their forces for a counter-attack.

With more than a thousand men landed and dug in against light Japanese resistance, General McArthur considered the landing very successful. The risk of the operation was justified. With the arrival of scheduled reinforcement on D plus 2, the area could be further secured and work begun on repair of the airstrip. (10)

By 5 March, the Brewer Task Force had accomplished its initial objective of securing a beach-head in the Admiralties. In addition to capturing Momote Airfield, the Task Force, now the strength of three squadrons, had inflicted such serious casualties on the Jap defenders of Los Negros Island that, with the reinforcement of the 12th Cavalry the following day, they felt comparatively safe from

any counter-attack. Therefore, the Task Force felt safe to start its offensive operation directed West toward other main objectives, Seeadler Harbor and Lorengau Airstrip on Manus. (See Map #2)

PLANNING THE ATTACK ON MANUS ISLAND

While the 1st Brigade was confined to cleaning up remaining enemy groups holding out on Los Negros the 2nd Brigade was preparing to carry the offensive to Manus Island.

The enemy strength on Manus and his disposition were uncertain. It was estimated that 2,700 Japs were concentrated there and would probably make a stand at Lorengau. Although it was felt that the enemy could do no more than put up a last losing fight, the lack of knowledge of his strength and disposition on such a large island, with difficult terrain, required plans to be made carefully for an invasion in strength.

Fighting in the interior, where mountains and narrow trails presented good defensive positions, and through swampy forests covering the remainder of the island was going to be a tough job. There were only three trails on the island which were suitable for limited number of vehicles. During rainy weather roads and trails, except along the sandy beaches, were impassable for vehicles. Therefore, it was planned to pin the enemy to the coast.

It was planned to hit Manus Island on the beaches at Lugos Mission, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles West of Lorengau, where the

airstrip was the main objective. Lorengau was known to be fortified. It had undergone bombings and strafing attacks at various times but still remained an effective defensive position. Lugos, although $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles away, would afford a good place to land troops to flank the airstrip. It appeared from the air as not being heavily defended. (See Map #2)

It was planned that "A" and "C" Troops of the 8th Cavalry would land as assault waves and establish a beachhead at Lugos Mission. As soon as a beachhead had been established the remainder of the regiment would land--1st Squadron moving East along Number 3 Trail to the airstrip and the 2nd Squadron moving South to Tingo along Number 1 Trail. The 7th Cavalry in reserve. (See Map #3)

As the attack on Manus was being planned it was decided to take two smaller islands, Hauwie and Butjo Luo to place the supporting artillery on. This was done by the 302d Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, accompanied by Artillery Officers. Prior to the landing at Lugos Mission, the 99th Field Artillery Battalion set up on Butjo Luo, and the 271st Field Artillery set up on Hauwie Island. (See Map #2)

On the afternoon 14 March, "A" Troop was in bivouac with the Squadron at Salami Plantation. Here the troop was briefed and thoroughly oriented for the landing at Lugos Mission which was to come the following day. Most of the afternoon and dark hours of the night were spent looking over maps and

aerial photos by members of the troop so that every man would know what his job was the next day. The Artillery Officer attached and Troop Commander, on a map, planned likely concentration that would assist the troops in landing and pushing on to Lorengau, the objective. (11)

While in bivouac, the mens' equipment and arms were checked. One unit of fire was carried on each man for his weapon. The men were fed late that night "10 and 1" rations and issued one "K" ration for the following day to carry into combat.

Since "A" Troop was to make the assault landing for the Brigade, the Troop was loaded into fifteen amphibious alligators and then loaded on LSTs from which they would be launched about 3,000 yards off shore from the enemy beach.

By daylight on the morning 15 March, the loading had been completed and the LSTs were moving out into Seeadler Harbor to join the rest of the task force.

LANDING AT LUGOS MISSION (15 MARCH)

Starting at 0700, the 91st Artillery Battalion, on Butjo Luo Island, started shelling Lorengau Village to divert the Japs attention from possible landings at Lugos Mission. The Navy, with four destroyers moving up and down Seeadler Harbor, shelled the beach area from the Tingau River to Lorengau Village. From New Guinea Airfields, eighteen B-25s arrived, bombed and strafed the beach area of Lugos and Lorengau until H minus 5, H Hour being 0931. (12)

(11, 12) Eye witness. self.

In the meantime, "A" Troop had launched from the LSTs and were approaching the beach area in two waves of amphibious alligators, further being supported by an umbrella of fire from LCMs equipped with rockets operated by amphibious engineers. (13)

The alligators drew up just short of the beach. Men quickly dismounted and stormed the beach to find a high cliff and dense jungles in the background. Although there was some confusion, due to the strange terrain which had not shown up on the maps and the fact that the alligators did not land the platoons in the right place, the men quickly scrambled to the high ground against very light resistance and took Lugos Mission. (14)

Immediately a message was sent to the Brigade Commander that the beach had been secured. It was not long until the beach was covered with supporting troops to carry out the mission.

In the meantime, "A" Troop had reorganized and been ordered to lead the 1st Squadron advance down #3 Trail to Lorengau Airstrip. The troop was moving practically at a double time to avoid congestion on the beach with the first platoon, commanded by Lt. Lyndell Bridgewater, in the lead when it ran into the cross fire of three Jap bunkers covered with sniper fire. The position was flanked on the North by the ocean and on the South by a dense mangrove swamp. It was impossible to maneuver to the flanks to knock these bunkers out. S/Sgt. Yancy had been

opposition. (17)

The Squadron dug in for the night, to hold its gain, on high ground overlooking the Southwest end of Lorengau Airstrip. The position which was occupied had partially been prepared by the Japs to defend the airstrip. Evidently they had taken such a pounding from our artillery that they had overrun their own position. There was an abundance of supplies and ammunition left on the position. (18) (See Map #3)

This marked "A" Troop's first day in actual combat. Their casualties were 1 killed, 3 wounded; about 40 Japanese had been killed on the landing at Lugos Mission and the advance down #3 Trail. Throughout the night, the men were harassed by sniper fire and Japanese firecrackers. (19)

The 2nd Squadron during the day had advanced South along #1 Trail to the cross trail at Tingo where they spent the night.

THE FIGHT FOR LORENGAU

At the light of day on the morning of 16 March, the troops dug in at Lorengau were greeted with sniper fire from tree tops on the edge of the perimeter. The machine gunners in the position soon picked out the trees from which the fire was coming and trimmed the tops out. The firing went on for almost an hour and stopped. The men got a bite of "K" ration under this sniper fire before they started the attack on Lorengau. (20)

During the night the Japs had moved in and

occupied a defensive position on a ridge directly to out front about 100 yards. Their well built bunkers and trenches were covered with second growth jungles and, with their smokeless powder, were very difficult to detect. The trees in the vicinity were used by snipers to harass any advancing forces and to protect the Jap position. (21)

Major Moyer S. Shore, 1st Squadron Commander, ordered "A" Troop to move across the West end of the airstrip and clean out the strip of jungles between the airstrip and the ocean. This was done with the 3rd Platoon of "A" Troop, commanded by 2nd Lt. Dominic Childs. An amphibious alligator was secured by the Troop Commander to support the platoon from the ocean side with one 50 caliber and one heavy 30 caliber machine gun. The platoon cleared the strip of jungles by 1030; killing three Japs and capturing an anti-tank gun with 100 rounds of ammunition. (22) (See Map #4)

"B" and "C" Troops in the meantime were heavily engaged with the enemy directly to our front on the South side of the strip. The remainder of "A" Troop was left in a supporting position in the previous nights' bivouac area.

The Squadron fought a very stubborn enemy all day and had only captured the next ridge to their front about 100 yards. During the day, they had suffered 9 killed and 19 wounded. (23)

General Mudge ordered the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry, in reserve at Lugos Mission, to relieve the

(21, 22, 23) Eye witness, self.

1st Squadron of the 8th Cavalry. During the relief, the 7th Cavalry suffered 5 killed and 15 wounded.

The 8th Cavalry Squadron withdrew across the West end of the airstrip and bivouaced for the night in the strip of jungles North of the airstrip.

The 2nd Squadron of the 8th Cavalry during the day had been fighting their way down Number One Trail assisted by a medium tank which had gotten its track blown off by a Jap mine. They went into a perimeter for the night about halfway between Tingo and Lorengau. (See Map #4)

For the following day, plans were laid for a coordinated attack to take the airstrip and push on to Lorengau Village which was across Lorengau River in a valley surrounded by jungles and a horseshoe shape of high ground rising to 400 feet. The plan of attack, with Col. Glenn S. Finley commanding the two squadrons of the 7th and 8th Cavalry, was for the 7th Cavalry to attack along the South side of the strip while the 8th Cavalry Squadron attacked along the North side of the strip. The 2nd Squadron of the 8th, pushing down Number One Trail, would join the attack by hitting the enemy's left flank.

The attack was launched on the morning of the 17th, preceded by naval and artillery support. Two light tanks and assault squads from Division Engineer Squadron were used to knock out enemy bunkers.

By 1300 the attack had progressed with the three squadrons just about on line where Number One Trail

joins the airstrip. The 2nd Squadron, 8th Cavalry had pushed in to join the other two squadrons on the right. The main enemy strongpoint had been overrun. In their hasty retreat, the Japs had scattered land mines to slow up our advance. As troops slowly pushed on toward Lorengau River, a few casualties resulted from these mines. (24)

On reaching Lorengau River about 1600, the Japs had withdrawn and were occupying the high ground overlooking Lorengau Village. Here, it was figured, they would make another stubborn stand.

All troops started digging in for the night West of Lorengau River, and in defense of the airstrip, with plans to continue the attack on Lorengau Village the following day. The following day's attack would determine the Japs' strength left on Manus Island.

That night, supplies were brought in on a jetty just off the airstrip. This activity drew fire from the bunkers overlooking the beach area. The bunkers were pin-pointed to be fired upon the next day by the Navy. (25)

During the days fighting, a Trooper had found, on the body of a dead Jap officer, a map case containing some maps which showed the defensive positions on the high ground around Lorengau and on Number Two Trail to Rossum. This information, if true, showed that if the Japs chose to, they could put up a tough fight for Lorengau and Rossum. (26)

The next day, 18 March, the village of Lorengau was not as tough to take as had been anticipated. With artillery, mortar and naval fire, troops waded the Lorengau River and took the village and occupied the high ground against very little resistance.

The high ground around Lorengau Village was quickly occupied by the 8th Cavalry Regiment while the airstrip was occupied by the 7th Cavalry Regiment. Units began to dig in defensive positions to hold the ground taken. Brigade and Regimental Headquarters were moved in to Lorengau Village. A collecting hospital unit was also moved into the village. (27)

Now that Lorengau had been captured, the Brigade had good beaches to land LCMs with supplies and evacuate casualties.

With the capture of Lorengau, large amounts of enemy supplies were taken. One six inch naval gun was taken along with ten 51 caliber machine guns on steel mounts set in concrete. It was obvious that the Japanese were getting low in fighting strength or, with these weapons, they would have put a more bitter fight. (28)

THE RECONNAISSANCE ON ROSSUM

Since the enemy did not put up much of a fight for Lorengau, it was expected that he perhaps was holding up on the road to Rossum. The maps captured on the dead Japanese officer near the airstrip showed strong defensive positions covering the road to Rossum.

Patrols were sent out on the morning 19 March over trails leading out of Lorengau Village. "B" Troop, 8th Cavalry was ordered to send a reconnaissance patrol along the coast East of Lorengau. "A" Troop was ordered to send a reinforced platoon with an Artillery Forward Observer attached, commanded by 1st Lt. James M. Concannon, up Number Two Trail to reconnoiter Rossum and vicinity. (See Map #5)

Lt. Concannon and his patrol moved out on their mission about 0800; took up a patrol formation and crossed the regimental perimeter on Number Two Trail, which was occupied by "E" Troop, 8th Cavalry. The head of the patrol, led by Sgt. Harold F. Leggett, Cpl. Maurice S. Noll and Lt. Concannon had hardly crossed the outpost line, just on a bend in the trail, when they were fired upon by two enemy bunkers. Lt. Concannon was seriously injured in the left arm and Cpl. Noll injured by several bullets over various parts of the body. Sgt. Leggett took command of the platoon, located the bunkers and returned with the platoon to the perimeter to report what had happened.

"A" Troop Commander had observed and quickly assembled the troop to further accomplish the mission. The troop was ordered by Colonel Bradley to move back up the track to knock the two bunkers out. The troop moved out to renew the attack, reinforced with a section of H.M.G.s and a 37 Anti-Tank Gun on wheels, manned by two gun crews. (29)

As leading elements of the troop crossed the

(29) Eye witness. self.

outpost, they were greeted with sniper fire from tall 40-60 foot heavy foliage trees. The Troop Commander immediately called for artillery concentration on the enemy position. As the Artillery Forward Observer was using the radio to get this fire support, he was killed by sniper fire. The artillery radio was knocked out. Immediately, "A" Troop Commander called Regiment for another Artillery Officer and radio. While waiting for a new Artillery Officer, the Jap bunkers were located; heavy 30 and 50 caliber machine guns covered their opening while the 37 Anti-Tank Gun on wheels was pushed up to fire direct cannister and H.E. at the bunkers. The 60 M.M. Mortar section, commanded by 1st Lt. Hugh L. Johnston, was set up in the center of the trail under sniper fire to fire on the bunkers-- three direct hits were made on the two Jap bunkers by mortars set up only 100 feet away. (30)

One of the heavy machine guns, set up on the edge of the trail about 50 feet from the bunker, was badly shot up and the gunner, Cpl. Valencio, seriously wounded. Cpl. Valencio stayed by his gun until it was damaged so badly it would not fire. (31)

The stubborn enemy's position was finally taken for a 200 yard gain after some four hours of continuous firing and maneuvering. There was no water in the vicinity and the sun was pouring down at 90° F. Most of the casualties were exhaustion cases.

The snipers continued to fire without being located, getting a hit now and then on some of the

(30, 31) Eye witness, self.

men moving up and down the hot muddy trail.

As "A" Troop pushed on down the trail, a flank patrol located a warehouse full of clothing, rice and ammunition. This was perhaps why the Japs had been so stubborn to give up their position; they hated to loose these supplies. (32)

It was getting late in the evening when "A" Troop was relieved by "C" Troop, to hold the ground gained during the day, for the night. Before "A" Troop Commander left, feeling that the enemy might counter-attack to regain the supplies, the warehouse was burned.

For the hard days fighting, "A" Troop had gained 500 yards of the mile trail to Rossum. It was the start of a bitter and slow fight all the way to Rossum.

Upon being relieved by "C" Troop, "A" Troop moved back to take up a defensive position around Brigade Command Post.

It was evident now that the enemy, expected to be at Lorengau, was holding up in the heavy foliage-muddy jungle around Rossum--right where we had hoped he would not choose to fight.

The following day, 20 March, the Brigade Commander ordered the 7th Cavalry to take up the fight for Rossum and continue the patrolling to the West part of the island. The 8th Cavalry was ordered to clear out the Eastern end of Manus. Patrolling missions were carried out by "A" Troop from a camp near Salesia Plantation between the dates 20-23 March.

THE ATTACK OF ROSSUM

On the night of 23 March, the 1st Squadron, 8th Cavalry was alerted to move back to Lorengau the following day to relieve the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry, who had been badly shot up trying to take Rossum and vicinity. During the four-day fight for the trail to Rossum, the 7th Cavalry Squadron had suffered severe casualties; 87% of its officers were casualties, largely from sniper firing while trying to direct their troops.

Lt. Colonel John Maxwell, Commander of the 7th Cavalry Squadron, told Major Shore as he was being relieved that the bulk of the enemy's force was dug in on Hill 116, South of Old Rossum across Number Two Trail. Their strength was approximately one Company. The bulk of the machine guns on the position appeared to be right of the trail, firing across the trail. Three snipers in the vicinity, which had not been located, were covering the trail leading into the position. They seemed to have plenty of ammunition and were well dug in. (33)

It was impossible to make a flanking envelopment because of the heavy jungle growth. Troops would have to stick pretty much to the trail and no large number could be concentrated on the trail at one time. The trail was covered by numerous snipers in tall, heavy foliage trees.

With this information, Major Shore chose to attack with "A" Troop on the left of the trail; "C"

Troop on the right of the trail; and "B" and "D" Troops in reserve. (See Map #5)

As the 7th Cavalry moved out, the 8th Cavalry moved in to take up the attack formation. Japs were met by the 8th Cavalry on the first ridge opposite Hill 116. There was a dense jungle growth between the two hills. The only observation that could be made on the enemy's position was by looking down along the edge of the jungle trail leading into the position.

Supporting the attack were two medium tanks, a 81 M.M. Mortar Platoon, in position about 600 yards to the rear, and one Artillery Battalion.

While troops were moving up on the ridge opposite the enemy position, 105 artillery concentration was being placed in the low ground to the front and on Hill 116. 81 M.M. Mortar Platoon was giving "A" Troop close support as it moved up into position. "A" Troop was receiving machine gun fire as it moved up from the left of the enemy's position. The 81 M.M. Mortar support was very good. (34)

Also supporting the attack were two Australian P-40s who dropped two 500 pound bombs on the enemy position. (35)

The attack jumped about 0930 with a smoke shell. As the tank slowly moved up supporting the attack, it caught a hail of knee mortar shells from the enemy position and eventually was stopped by a land mine. The tank crew became excited and started firing

(34, 35) Eye witness, self.

its' machine guns through the trees toward the Jap's position. This made so much noise that the Japs took advantage of it and hit the troopers with everything they had on their position for about 20 minutes. Finally, the tank stopped firing and the Japs eventually stopped. During that time, "A" Troop alone had lost 5 men killed and 22 men wounded. Most of the men wounded were in Troop Headquarters and the reserve platoon near the tank where knee mortar shells had fallen and snipers had fired. (36)

The attack was continued with close support of 81 M.M. Mortars in front of "A" Troop's sector. Contact with "C" Troop, on the right, had been lost and no communication could be made with Squadron Headquarters.

"A" Troop had pushed up to the foot of Hill 116 and had started over when it was stopped cold by cross fire of machine guns. The troop pulled back a few yards after losing three men, and called for more, and closer mortar fire. (37)

Captain Walter Hart, Weapons Troop Commander, was directing the mortar fire. As he and his telephone operator were crouched down together near the Troop Command Post, a sniper shot and seriously wounded the telephone operator. After that, Captain Hart carried a sound powered telephone hidden in his fatigue jacket. (38)

General Mudge showed up at "A" Troop Command

Post about that time and asked what was holding up the attack. The Troop Commander told him approximately where the enemy machine guns were located. He asked what was needed to knock them out and the Troop Commander asked for another tank, so the General sent his Aide back to bring up the second tank. When the tank arrived, a driver from the troop and Lt. Bridgewater were put in the tank since they knew where the gun positions were located.

With another concentration of mortar fire on the enemy position and the supporting fires of the tank, "A" Troop, equipped with flame throwers and hand grenades, attacked Hill 116. Men moved through tangled jungle growth to the top of the position throwing hand grenades and firing at fleeing Japs that were trying to escape the assault fire of the attacking troops. (40) (See Map #5)

Flame throwers and a bulldozer were used to clean out and cover up enemy bunkers on the position. Hill 116, once a jungle covered hill, was changed to a ghostly looking fire burnt hill with trees stripped of their foliage and limbs. Every foot of the ground had been affected by artillery or mortar fire. It was covered with tangled jungle growth, enemy equipment and dead Japs. (41)

By 1630 the enemy position had been completely overrun and the men dug in for the night. It was here that the enemy had concentrated the last of his forces in the defense of the island and put up

a stubborn last stand. He was by no means whipped because of the lack of supplies for there was an abundance of ammunition and equipment. In some of these jungle built bunkers, truck loads of ammunition, food and clothing were stored away. (42)

For their activity in this operation, "A" Troop was given a unit citation.

The troop suffered 7 men killed and 32 officers and men wounded. This figure does not include the attached units. (43)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

It will be observed in a study of this operation that "A" Troop accomplished each mission assigned it in very good order. It was given some of the toughest missions on Manus Island--the landing at Lugos Mission; the advance guard to Lorengau Airstrip; first to fight the Japs on Rossum Trail; and, the attack on Hill 116. The success of "A" Troop in combat was largely due to the proper use of supporting fires and strong aggressive leadership among its Platoon and Squad Leaders.

Some of the criticisms that could be made of this operation are:

1st: A very thorough reconnaissance should be made of the beach area selected for an amphibious landing. The beach area at Lugos Mission looked nothing at all like had been explained. The high ground encountered there was certainly not anticipated by the landing troops.

2nd: In jungle fighting where observation is

difficult, higher commanders should not force subordinate units to advance more rapidly than they are able to protect themselves from surprise and ambush.

3rd: Men in the assault waves were loaded down with too much personal equipment for an amphibious landing. It resulted in waste of equipment and extra fatigue on the men.

4th: There was too much unnecessary firing among the troops. Men were inclined to fire at every bush that moved. This excess firing only gave the Japs an opportunity to fire and yet conceal their position.

5th: The supply of clothing and food was inadequate during this operation. Men lived on "K" and "10-1" rations for almost two months when kitchens could have been made available down on the beaches while in rest camps. The inadequate supply of clothing, and a means for cleaning them, was perhaps the reason for so much skin disease.

The coordination between Air, Navy and Army was excellent in this operation.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons to be learned from this operation are:

1st: Surprising the enemy gives the attacker many advantages although he may be on strange ground.

2nd: Proper use and appreciation of supporting artillery is invaluable to attacking ground troops

in the jungles.

3rd: Planning and training for an amphibious operation must be thorough and complete, but allow for flexibility in its execution.

4th: A defensive position is no stronger than its weakest flank without a reserve to repel a break through.

5th: Fire discipline and control is absolutely necessary when fighting an enemy in close jungles with poor observation.

6th: Proper sanitation conditions must be maintained among troops and checked consistently by the immediate commanding officer.

7th: The success of combat in jungle fighting is strictly the responsibility of small unit commanders, because large units cannot be controlled in dense undergrowth.

8th: Troops while fighting under sniper fire must take adequate cover or keep on the move. Furthermore, equipment denoting your importance should be kept concealed from snipers.

9th: All types of terrain are negotiable by the enemy.

10th: Communications are vitally necessary in jungle operations.

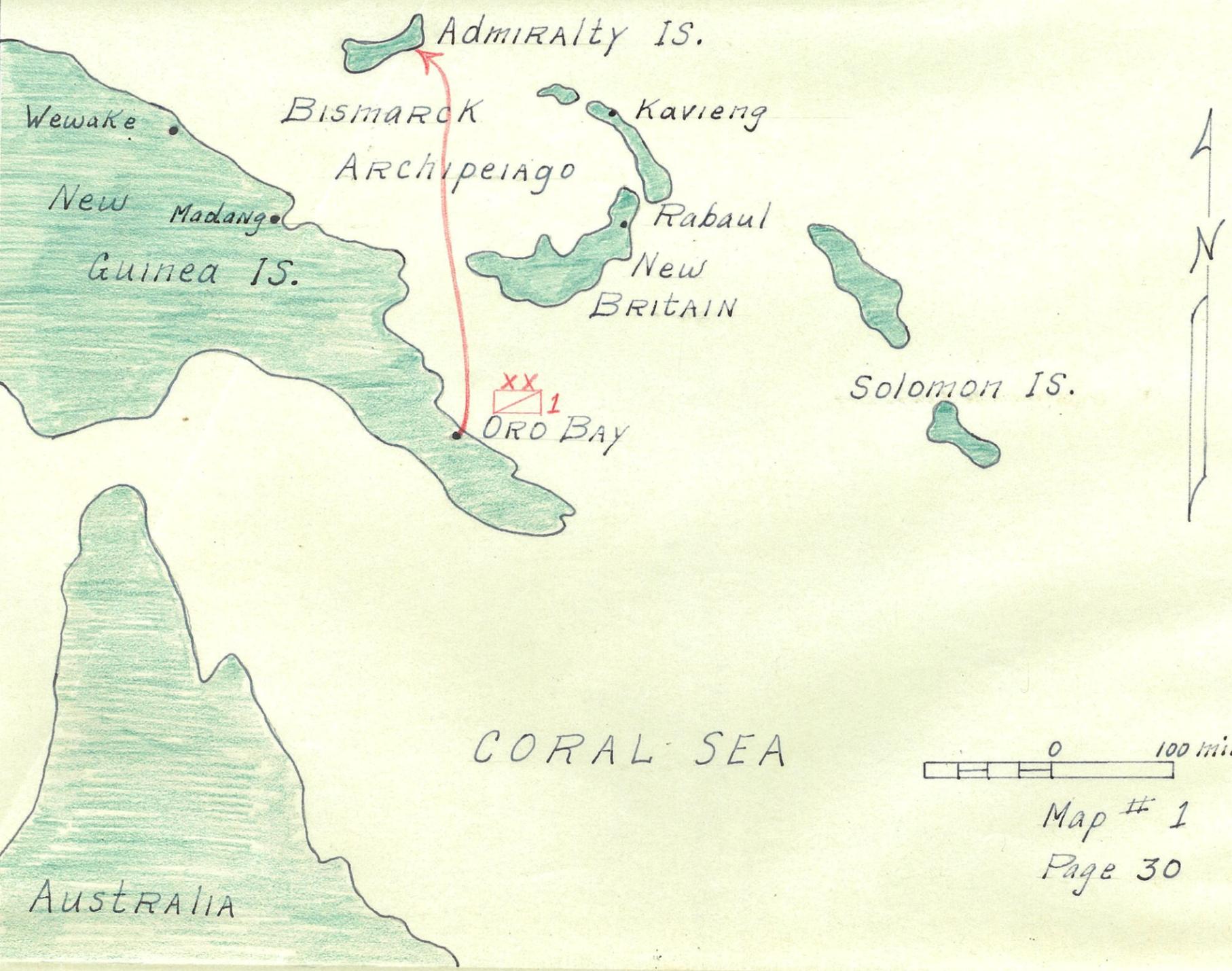
11th: A defensive position must be organized to protect yourself from an attack from any direction.

12th: Troops fighting in the tropics should be equipped with as little equipment as necessary

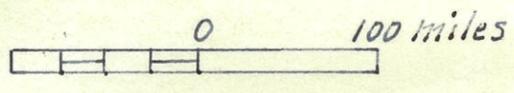
and that equipment made as light as possible.

13th: Extreme heat saps a man's strength and causes exhaustion. Salt must be taken in small quantities often to prevent exhaustion.

14th: A unit is no better than its leaders and prior training. Men must be led in combat by its small unit commanders.



CORAL SEA



Map # 1

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AUSTRALIA

Wewake

New Madang

Guinea IS.

BISMARCK

Archipelago

Kavieng

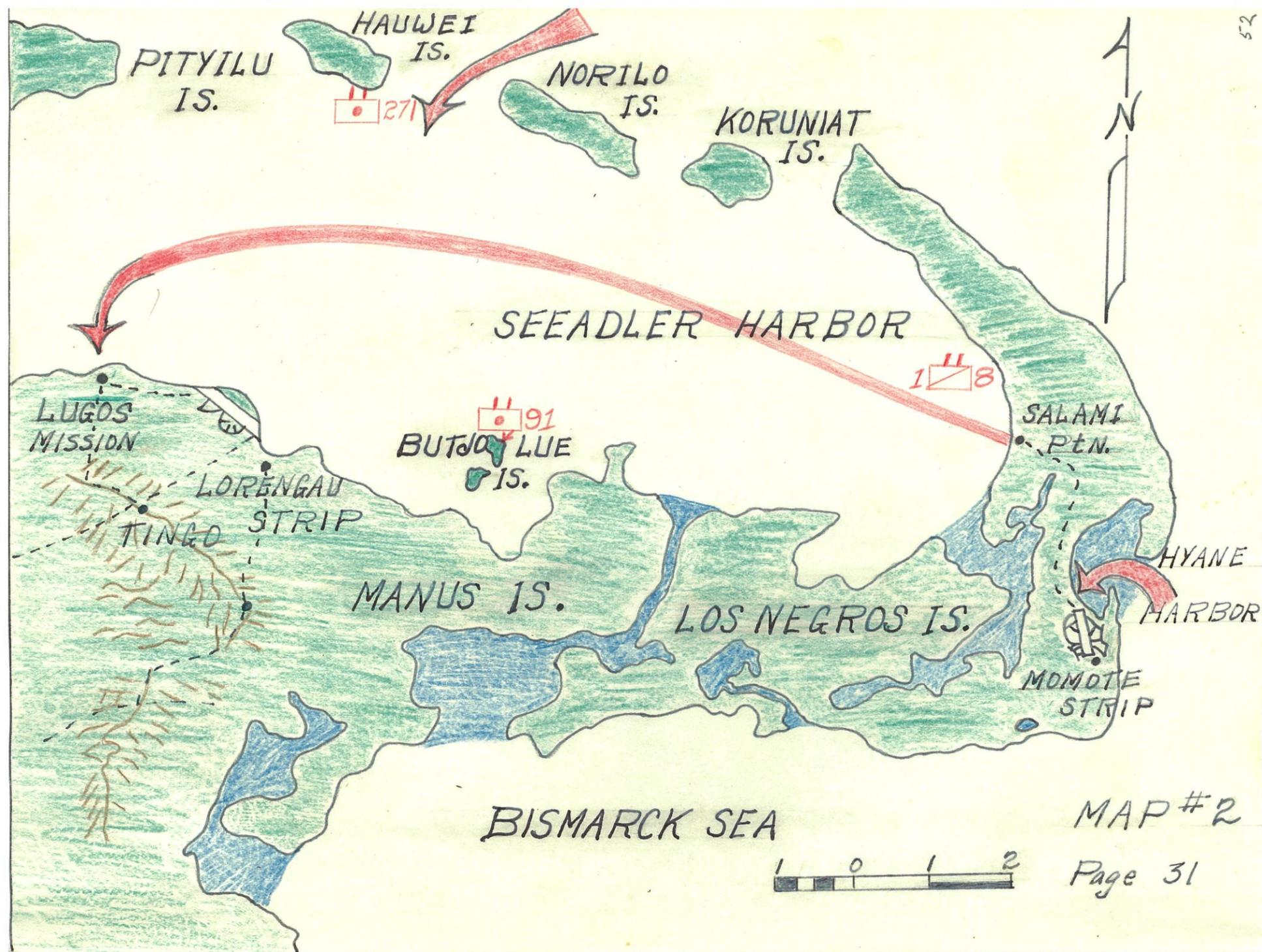
Rabaul

New BRITAIN

Solomon IS.

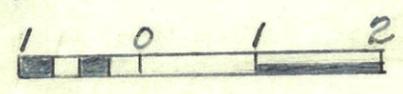
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1
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BISMARCK SEA

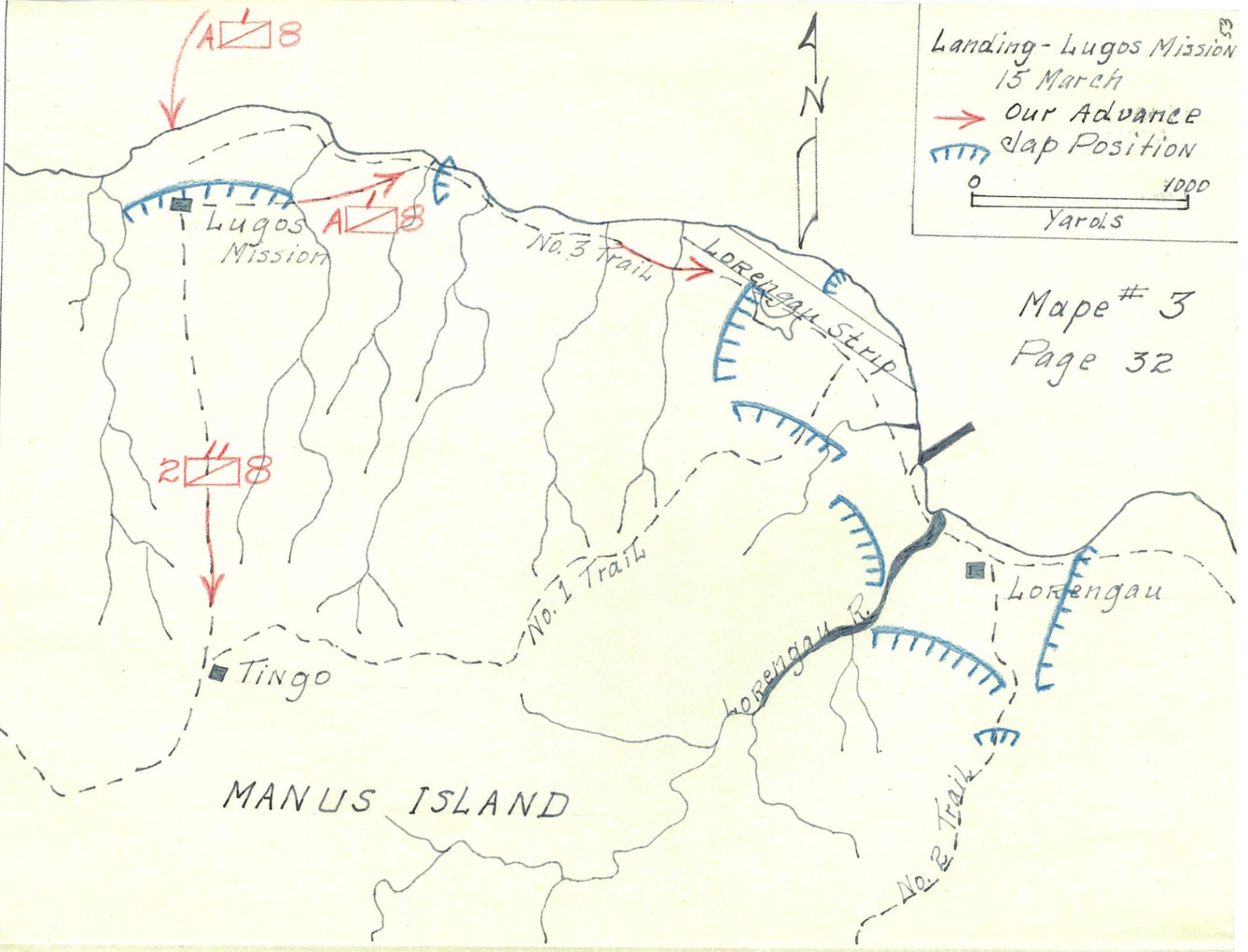
MAP #2



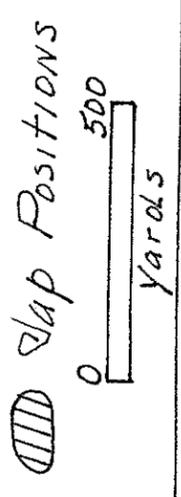
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Landing - Lugos Mission
 15 March
 → Our Advance
 [Blue hatched area] Camp Position
 0 1000
 Yards

Map # 3
 Page 32



Fight For Air Strip
16 March



Map # 4
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