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OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "C" (REINFORCED), 126TH INFANTRY,
(32ND INFANTRY DIVISION) IN A SEPARATE ACTION IN THE
AGNO VALLEY, LUZON, P.I., 30 JULY - 6 AUGUST 1945
(LUZON CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY AND GUERRILLA UNITS
IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN

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Incl 1

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NOTE: The 32nd Infantry Division history has not as yet been published and no other source materiel was available. However, statements and facts were checked with Captain John H. Murphy, Advanced Class, TIS, former Adjutant, 127th Infantry and Lt. R. J. Peterson, Associate Basic Class, TIS, former I & R Platoon Leader, 127th Infantry.

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of a very small Task Force, Task Force Farmer -- composed of Company C, 126th Infantry, 32nd Infantry Division, reinforced in the battle for the Mountain Province, Luzon, Philippine Islands, 30 July - 6 August 1945.

The events which preceded this operation were the usual ones for a Pacific Campaign. Early in January 1945, General MacArthur's forces had returned to Luzon, main island of the Republic of the Philippines.

The Sixth Army followed by the Eighth Army had landed and seized initially the low open country near the beaches. (1) The Japanese, employing delaying action, had withdrawn to the rugged hill masses to make their traditional last stand. The pattern set so many times before was to be used again. It was: to drive wedges into the enemy's position; to push them further back into the hills; to cut his pockets of resistance into even smaller pieces; to overwhelm some and leave others to die of disease and starvation in the high and unfriendly jungle mountains. (1)

By July 1945, this plan had been almost completed and there were but a few large pockets remaining. One of these large pockets of troops was under the command of General Nishiyama in the Carabelle mountains and it contained the in/famous General Yamashita. (See Map A)

(1) A-1; Charts 51 and 59

THE GENERAL SITUATION

Pressure had been applied to both sides of this pocket by elements of the 6th, 25th and 32nd Divisions on the South and East operating along Highway 5; and by elements of the 32nd and 33rd Divisions on the North and West, with a regiment of the 32nd, operating from Baguio, the country's summer capitol. These enemy troops were confined to the highest mountains on Luzon and in the most difficult and rugged terrain. One main highway ran through the western portion; (see Maps A and B) this road cut through a series of high passes and gaps; it doubled and curved back in many places and often had stretches that twisted over 10 kilometers to go forward a scant 2. Brigadier General Charles B. Lyman commanded or exercised control over the forces engaged in opening the highway. In part they consisted of the 127th RCT, 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, and 66th Infantry (Filipino Army) and numerous guerrilla and Filipino Army Forces generally called "Force Volckmann". The general plan of the troops on the North was as follows: 127th RCT would attack north up the highway from Baguio and meet the 66th Infantry advancing South down the highway. Small Guerrilla units and Filipino Army units up to Battalion size would be used as far as practicable as attachments or in some cases for minor individual tasks. Because of the terrain, the 127th would attack for the most part in column of Battalions and hoped to effect a meeting with the 66th just south of Buguias. The 1st Battalion, 126th was in reserve in Baguio.

use map Ref at time
map Ref?
(2)

On July 25, A Company, 126th, was alerted for the mission of guarding the 127th Infantry's line of supply along the highway.

(2) Personal knowledge, Statement of Captain John H. Murphy, Adjutant, 127th Infantry.

They moved out on the 26th. B Company, with a small Guerrilla unit attached, was moved on the 27th to the vicinity of Bokod as additional security for the rear and right flank of the Regiment slowly advancing up the highway. (3)

By the 28th of July, the 127th had passed Balangbang Pass (see Map B) at which point the highway ran parallel to the Agno valley for some 40 kilometers. The valley contained numerous rice fields and many small barrios or towns; they would be anything from a dozen native huts to a 100 frame houses built on stilts. Intelligence reports were scanty but Japanese activity had been noted in the Valley by 127th patrols on the high ground that over looked the valley (see Map B) and the natives had all evacuated. (The natives confirmed the reports of the 127th patrol but their opinions were conflicting; one had as many estimates of Japanese strength or activity as there were natives questioned.)
(4)

On the morning of July 28, the Battalion Commander of the 1st Battalion, 126th and the Company Commander of Company C were called to General Lyman's headquarters and informed of the danger to the 127th's right flank. They were assigned a mission "to protect it by putting a force in the Agno valley and were told to report any gathering of Japanese forces parallel to the advance up the highway." All available assistance was offered the 1st Battalion in planning if it was needed and additional units would be attached as available. These additions consisted of extra forward observer artillery parties and the 1st Battalion, 1st Pangasinan Regiment (Filipino Army) which was a fully recognized guerrilla unit composed of 3 rifle companies and a headquarters company. (The rifle companies had 3 rifle platoons each and a

(3) Personal knowledge; (4) Personal knowledge, Statement Lt. R. J. Peterson, I&R Platoon Leader, 127th Infantry

small headquarters platoon; average strength per company was 5 officers and 120 men.) The Headquarters and Headquarters Company was in effect another rifle company, its strength was also slightly over 100. The Battalion had the normal command and staff group found in an American Battalion but very little communication equipment and no heavy weapons. The training of this unit, as with most guerrilla, provincials, or Filipino Army units, was almost nonexistent. By American standards they were little better than an armed mob. (5)

The Commanding General also advised the C Company Commander and the Commander of 1st Battalion, 126th, that additional supply and evacuation facilities would be unavailable except for an occasional air drop but that funds were available to hire native carriers. The Commanding General wished to be informed of the general plan the following afternoon, 29 July.

Upon arriving back at the Battalion area the Battalion Commander decided to send C Company into the valley rather than move one of his other companies. The Battalion Commander outlined a rough scheme of maneuver, and advised the C Company Commander to follow it. He placed any of the facilities of the Battalion at the disposal of C Company's Commander. That afternoon two air missions were flown over the valley in CUBS of the 120th FA Battalion. One mission was flown by the Company Commander and one was flown by the Company's Executive Officer, who was also a platoon leader of the 2nd platoon. This was done to check the maps that had been issued and to check for signs of the enemy. The maps proved fairly accurate judging by Pacific standards, and numerous signs were noted of the presence of Japanese troops. (6)

(5) Personal knowledge; (6) Eye witness

The small CUBS were forced to fly, for the most part, several thousand feet above the valley's floor because of strong wind currents. The abrupt mountains and steep, winding canyons made the operation of the planes difficult, and consequently observation at times was spotty. Several important points were learned however, the maps were grossly in error between Buguias and Kabayan. (See Map B) There were mountains where none appeared on the map and the river took several abrupt changes in direction where the map showed it to run straight. The town of Lutab appeared to be strongly garrisoned as did Kabayan. (7) There was a great deal of litter in the streets and from the air the rice paddies surrounding the towns showed plainly many trails where the stalks now ripe had been broken by the passage of innumerable people.

One more flight was thought needed, if possible, at a lower altitude. The Company Executive Officer was assigned this mission and given several specific points on which additional observation was thought desirable.

THE TASK FORCE PLAN

*2nd of 2nd
related to mission
at 11:00*

A written plan was drawn up on the evening of the 28th for presentation to the General along with the lists of requests: The Force, to be called Task Force Farmer, would be composed of Company C -- 4 officers and 150 men, 4 heavy machine guns and 2 81-mm mortars -- with an officer and 40 of the men of Company D; 1 officer and 20 men from Headquarters and Headquarters Company to act as S-4; 1 officer MAC and 1/2 Battalion aid personnel; 3 forward observer parties previously offered; 1st Battalion, 1st Pangasian Regiment less its Battalion Commander, a Lt Colonel, and the Battalion Executive Officer, a Major (as it

*WHY?
FARMER*

*2nd of 2nd
related to mission
at 11:00*

(7) Eye witness, Statement of Lt R. J. Peterson, I&R Platoon Leader, 127th Infantry

was believed that it would be unadvisable to have officers present who were senior to the Task Force Commander.) It was suggested that 200 native carriers be employed for supplies and evacuation, as air drops appeared impracticable from the prior air reconnaissance except in possibly two places. The force would be divided into four separate combat groups. Three would consist of a rifle platoon and a guerrilla company each. Headquarters C Company, Headquarters Company of the Guerrilla Battalion and D Company attachments would form the fourth. One group was to enter the valley the day prior to the start of the mission to secure a base of operation; the balance of the force would proceed into the valley on the 31st. The plan of maneuver would be to push one or more groups up the valley to a position in line with the 127 advance and prepare a defensive position. The balance of the force would then join the perimeter, leaving behind a small rear guard. This operation would then be repeated and the rear guard would be moved forward to the second defensive position. The river was to be used extensively for flank security as the advance continued. Crossing and recrossing was contemplated frequently if the need arose. Any deception possible would be used, and any strong points believed beyond the capabilities of the force would be bypassed and regiment notified. Because of the unreliability and poor status of training of the Guerrilla Battalions, serious engagements would be avoided if at all possible. An additional light machine gun was requested, giving the force a total of 3 lights, one to each group; 6-300 radios were requested, one to each rifle group and 3 to Company Headquarters. Additional SCR 536's were requested to give the force a total of 12. Local security for our supply points along the highway ^{was} to be provided

by troops now guarding the highway, ^{is present for} and lastly, ~~that~~ occasional air missions ^{are to} be flown by the artillery CUBS -- as often as practicable -- to give any information available along the line of advance. (8)

These requests of the C Company Commander and his plans were approved with one exception. The Executive Officer of the Guerrilla Battalion would accompany the Battalion. However it was firmly established that the Commander Company C was in command and a definite succession of command was laid down from the C Company Commander to the C Company Executive Officer and in the event of their both becoming casualties, the platoon leader of D Company was next in line of command. After the plan was approved by the Commanding General, Company C set about the balance of their preparation. (9)

THE START INTO THE VALLEY

On the morning of 30 July, the advance guard of Task Force Farmer, the 2d Platoon ^{2 Co.} with B Company ^{2 Unit} attached started down the trail into the valley (see Map B) to secure and establish a base. This was to be done at a bend in the river that had been previously designated by map and aerial reconnaissance. All members of this group were thoroughly briefed and told that knowledge of their presence must be kept from the Japanese for at least twenty-four hours. K rations for three days were carried by all men, and twenty Igorot bearers accompanied this group. (10)

Also, on the 30th the initial supply dump was established under command of the A&P Platoon leader who was to act as the Task Force S-4. (See Map B) The balance of the 200 native carriers were transported to the vicinity of the supply point and final arrangements were made as to their duties. Needed instructions

(8) Plan drawn and presented by author; (9) Personal knowledge; (10) Personal knowledge

were given to them through interpreters and they were assigned to three approximately even groups of 50 odd each, this was done for better control. The thirty carriers left over were instructed to form a fourth group which would later join those already in the valley. Each native group had a head man and a segundo whose pay would be slightly higher. Also, each head man was given a carbine, this greatly increased his prestige and consequently control over his fifty carriers, as with these primitive mountain people a weapon (especially an American weapon) is symbolic with power and authority. (11)

At 0600 the 31st of July the balance of C Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, A and C Companies of the Filipino battalion and the rest of the forces attachments entrucked at Baguio. At 0800 the Line of Departure^{ON MAP B (SEE MAP B)} was reached and the march into the valley began. (See Map B) The trail was^(SEE MAP B) tortuous and extremely steep and the scouts and advance guards were continually stopped to allow those on the flanks to keep in position. Around 1400, when little more than half way down, the 1st Platoon the advance guard ran into a small enemy foraging party in a comodie (Yam) patch; five enemy were killed and at least three were thought to have escaped. Our presence in the valley would now be known, if it ^{was} ~~was~~ not already. Speed in closing into the prepared perimeter was now considered essential. The flank guards which slowed the column were called in and progress was faster. The river was reached. (12) A crossing was made under protection of the waiting 2nd Platoon an hour before dark. A tight perimeter was formed with the carriers in the center. During the night a number of small fires were observed in the small valley due north (see Map B), but nothing

(11) Eye witness; (12) Personal knowledge

was learned about the main valley which was the route to be taken the next day. The night was spent quietly and nothing was heard or observed by anyone along the perimeter. (13)

The next day, 1 August, just after dawn the 1st Platoon and its attached company and a forward artillery party crossed the river and began to move up the valley trail; they were followed one-half hour later by the main body. The 2nd Platoon and its attached company and artillery party remained behind to guard and strengthen the supply base. Almost all the carriers were started back up the trail to the highway under protection of one squad of the 2nd Platoon and one Platoon of guerrillas. The 1st Platoon met no resistance although signs along the trail and in huts adjacent indicated recent and extensive use by the enemy. A halt was called at noon at the end of a particularly narrow section of the valley. The river at this point was confined in a narrow gorge and its flow increased from its usual rapid flow (15 to 18 miles an hour) to a tumbling torrent. (14)

Two squads of the 1st Platoon were sent ahead on reconnaissance. They reported that about twenty enemy soldiers were building a trail block about one kilometer ahead of us and at the far edge of a large clearing. (See Map C) The squad leaders believed that the enemy could be approached quite closely from the river side. The Company Commander and 1st Platoon's leader went forward to the edge of the clearing with Squad leaders. The 1st Platoon leader was given the mission of reducing the trail block. The plan was for him to take his Platoon and one platoon of guerrillas and get as close as possible on the enemy flank. When in position he would call the Company Commander by radio. Upon his signal three of the heavy machine guns would

(13) Eye witness; (14) Personal knowledge

fire for two minutes from our edge of the clearing and one of the D Company's 81's would fire fifteen rounds, attempting to straddle the trail just beyond the enemy positions. First Platoon would attack the partially completed road block from the flank as soon as the machine guns and mortars ceased firing. This simple plan worked well; twelve enemy soldiers were killed and one committed suicide with a grenade. (15) The 1st Platoon had two wounded, one a litter case caused by fragments by the suicide's grenade. As the 1st Platoon attacked the road block, 2nd Platoon's leader reported by radio that a small patrol had run into machine gun positions 1000 yards to their south and east. (See Map C) Their patrol had retired when fired on. They also had two casualties, both guerrillas. (16)

MAP B
1 AUG
POSITION

The Company Commander decided to establish defensive positions for the night, at the north edge of this clearing in a heavily wooded area, at a bend in the river. The daily report was made to the 127th, plans were made to evacuate the wounded with the native carriers the next day and preliminary plans were made for the next day and the proposed attack on Adaoay (see Map C) thought to be held by at least two enemy platoons. The night was spent quietly and nothing of note ^{was} reported by the perimeter. (17)

AUGUST 2. The 3d Platoon with A Company attached moved out at 0530 followed by Company Headquarters, Weapon Platoon and Headquarters Company Guerrillas, 1st Platoon with Company C formed the rear guard. Around 1000, 3rd Platoon radioed that it had halted in a banana grove several hundred yards from the outskirts of Adaoay, a town of approximately 40 native huts, a church and a large school house. Two 5-man patrols were sent

(15) Eye witness; (16) Personal knowledge; (17) Personal knowledge.

out with SCR 536's - one on each side of the town. They reported the place deserted to all appearances. The force moved into the town with two Platoons moving through the houses on the left of the trail and two platoons moving through the houses on the right of the trail. As their leading elements entered the last few houses, three enemy soldiers tried to run from hiding in a shed to the rear of one of the native huts. As they were fired on, several more Japanese hiding under the church, which was built on 2-foot stilts, opened fire on the guerrillas, who had bypassed them. Headquarters Personnel, C Company, promptly bowled hand grenades under the church, but not ^{before} until one guerrilla had been killed. One man of the 1st Platoon and two guerrillas were wounded by the four enemy soldiers found under the church, only three of whom were armed. (18) 127th was informed that Adaoay had been reached. Regimental S-3 ordered the Company Commander to remain in the vicinity of Adaoay and await orders to move (a section of ^{#5} the highway had been blown, again holding up the regiment). (19)

At this point the Company Commander had three pressing problems:

(1) His base, now that the carriers had returned with a full load, had a large amount of rations and ammunition - sufficient for 4 days normal operations. His main force had been resupplied by small groups of carriers and had supplies for at least 1½ day, to continue to build up the dump at the rear base would make it difficult to move, and (20)

(2) As the force moved up the valley the already long supply lines would stretch still farther. Evacuation of wounded to the highway was now over 18 hours, not counting halts for darkness.

(18) Personal knowledge; (19) Statement of Col. Frank W. Murphy, Commanding 127 RCT; (20) Personal knowledge

(3) He could not normally expect another night free from attack. Almost any sort of organized or prepared attack, because of the 500 poorly trained guerrillas, must be avoided and especially one at night.

The first problem could possibly be solved by an air reconnaissance mission by the artillery cubs. One of the native segundados had reported the existence of a trail between Apunan on the highway and the village of Kabayan. (See Map C) If this trail actually existed and Kabayan was reached the supply and evacuation route could be cut to 8 hours. The cubs were asked to find this trail. Also, the S-4 (A&P Platoon leader) was ordered to check on its existence and if he found it to reconnoiter it as best he could. The plan to avoid a ~~night~~ attack was simply to withdraw to an unknown position at night and if the enemy attacked, let him find a vacated position. The 1st Platoon was sent across the river to Kagosit to find a suitable position for the perimeter. An excellent one was found early in the afternoon on a large, rocky, flat knoll heavily overgrown with high bushes. (See Map C) Positions for each platoon of the entire force were laid out and arrangements made for a guide to take each platoon into its position as it crossed the river. Wire was strung across the river under water to assist the men in crossing. A few minutes before dark the 1st echelon - the 81mm and 60mm mortar men - moved out of the town. The rest of the force followed and the center of Adaoay was thoroughly booby trapped. (21)

The position in Kagosit was about 800 yards due east of Adaoay. The D Company Platoon Leader had volunteered to remain

(21) Eye witness

on the Adacay side of the river with one of his Sergeants and had dug-in in a thicket at the edge of the river bank. They were about 250 yards from the town. Mortars were set up as soon as possible with the aid of a Section Sergeant who had previously crossed with the 1st Platoon. The balance of the force took up its position in the perimeter and settled for the night. A few minutes after 0100 a grenade exploded in the town and was immediately followed by 2 others. The two 81mm and two 60mm mortars commenced firing. The Company Platoon Leader, in an excited tone, attempted to give sensing. The mortars fired until each had but 20 rounds left. The observer reported that he could not tell definite results but that most of the fire had landed near the center of the town. Two more booby traps exploded and the rest of the night was spent quietly. Several perimeter guards later reported hearing heavy splashes in the river. (22)

AUGUST 3. As soon as it was light the next day a squad of the 3rd Platoon was sent across the river to ascertain the damage of the night before. This proved useless, although the buildings had suffered considerable damage, little else could be learned as to results - or as to the number of Japanese casualties, one or two remaining booby traps ^{were} picked up and the squad returned.

The rear base was ordered to move forward with all its supplies. This meant a double load for the carriers hence their progress would be slow. A squad of the 1st Platoon and a Platoon of Guerrillas were sent back along the trail to meet them at a prearranged spot. This was done for additional protection as the bulk of the Force's supplies were on this carrier train. The

(22) Personal knowledge

balance of the 1st Platoon and its attached company were sent out on two patrols - one to Apunan, and one to Bila. (See Map D) Both towns were to be partially burned. Bila to be burned at least one hour after Apunan. As these barriers were on a good trail to Bokod, a sizeable town some 25 miles south and east. It was hoped that this might deceive the enemy into believing that Bokod was our objective.

Around 1500 the rear base with all its personnel and supplies had closed into the perimeter, one carrier had been drowned in making their first river crossing that morning. (23) During one of the regular reports to Regiment, the Commanding Officer asked permission to move the next day to Lutab. (See Map D) This request was granted, also the existence of the suspected trail was confirmed by Regiment. (See Map D) The 1st Platoon's patrols returned about 1800 with two wounded. The Guerrillas returned loaded down with whatever they could carry from the household effects of the two villages. The Patrol Leader, the 1st Platoon Leader, complained that they had been of little use to him all day and attributed his two wounded men directly to their lack of support. (24) This was not the first time the Filipino soldiers had performed poorly and punishment of some kind was needed. The two offending Platoons were made first to take all the articles taken from the towns and throw them into the river. Then they were assigned to set up their own perimeter some 700 yards north of the rest of the force. In addition to disciplining them, for they were quite worried about leaving the protection of the main perimeter this also secured and partially protected the best means of

- (23) Statement of Lt. Gordon B. Ingram, Company C, Executive Officer;
(24) Statement of Lt. Glen Johnson, Platoon Leader

approach to the main body's position. During the night the artillery observers who had been inactive so far had their battalions fire concentrations on Lutab and on several small towns in the valleys in the west. (See Map D) (25)

AUGUST 4. At 0700 on the 4th of August the entire force moved out heading for Lutab with the exception of a few carriers and their escort who were to evacuate the wounded, one of whom had died during the night despite the efforts of Lt Geick, the MAC. At 0800 the 2d Platoon leader reported they had reached the trail junction. (See Map D) Following the prearranged plan of the night before the 2d and 3d platoons with their attached companies took the higher and right trail to Lutab. The 1st Platoon and its attached company followed by Company Headquarters and the carriers and with Guerrilla Headquarters Company forming the rear guard took the lower and less exposed trail. 300 radio contact was maintained between groups and the lead elements of both columns were kept abreast. A position 900 yards south of Lutab was reached at 1100 hours. Here the two trails ran closely together. (See Map D) Final plans and a short reconnaissance were made before taking the town. Resistance was light; two men of the 3d platoon were wounded. (26) The platoons and companies took up their prearranged defensive positions and the perimeter was organized with the carriers spread throughout its center. The large supply dump was set up under the direction of the 1st Sergeant. Two patrols were sent out to reconnoiter the route to Kabayan. Around 1600 the center of the town received mortar fire from several 90-mm mortars. (27) It did little damage to C Company personnel but inflicted some on the guerrillas who had not completed digging in. A number of the guerrillas panicked (25, 26, 27) Eye witness

and ran wildly about. After two good concentrations the mortars ceased firing, a section of the heavy machine guns had in the meantime fired on several likely OP's. The 2nd Platoon had only a few scratches. The guerrilla casualties were: 4 dead and 7 wounded and also a few of the carriers hurt. The Aid Station spent a rather busy evening, especially so as the casualties could not be evacuated. (28) Evacuation had to wait until Kabayan was taken and the new trail reached. (See Map E) Patrols returned around 1800 with some valuable information. (29) They reported the existence of a swinging cable bridge across the river 100 yards south of Kabayan. This bridge was guarded by a few enemy soldiers. They also reported that south of Kabayan a flat area of small rice paddies and garden patches would enable the Force to attack on a wider front than was usually used but that we would have to cross 150 yards of completely bare ground. Lastly, they had encountered a native and had forced him to return with them, this man provided information about the strength in Kabayan, 70 Japanese and some machine guns. One other important point was an enemy observation post east of the town on a high hill from which they could see Lutab and the rice paddies on its outskirts. (See Map E) That evening partial plans were made to attack Kabayan. The Company Commander would use the 1st and 3rd platoons and their attached companies and all additional BAR men in the entire force would accompany them. This was a total of about 50 BAR's. Also 2 light machine guns and 2 60's. Artillery would probably not be used but one observer would accompany them. The balance of the Force would remain behind under command of the 2nd Platoon leader (the Company Exec) until

(28) Eye witness; Partial Report, Sgt Chester Williamson;
(29) Personal knowledge

ordered forward. Those remaining at the rear base must be prepared to move out 10 minutes after receipt of movement orders.

AUGUST 5. A little over an hour before dawn, the advance column left the perimeter, they moved as rapidly as possible. (30) At the first light they were well over half way to Kabayan and under the lee of the hill which obscured them from the Jap OP. (See Map E) From then on progress was slow. The column moved off the trail but continued parallel to it, keeping as close as possible and taking advantages of the excellent concealment offered by the heavy undergrowth. At 0800 the edge of the fields south of Kabayan ^{WAS} were reached by the lead scouts. After a hasty reconnaissance by the company commander a plan similar to that made the evening before was adopted. The 1st and 3rd Platoons were to attack abreast, one platoon covering the advance of the other by fire. Additional BAR men would be divided evenly. This gave each platoon a strength of about 45 and over half of that 45 were BAR's. There were no good fields of fire or positions for the machine guns. They were to follow the company commander, echeloned to the rear and 25 paces apart and with the 1st squad 25 paces behind the company commander. One guerrilla company would seize the bridge, one company would be in reserve less one platoon which would follow the 3rd platoon on the right. The mortars would initially hit the center of the town and walk their fire back to the far side of the town unless directed to fire on other targets. The attack started on a signal from the Company Commander's messenger, the 1st platoon moved forward rapidly across the small garden patches and rice paddies supported by the fire of the 3rd platoon and using marching fire as they advanced on the outskirts of the town. They halted at a strong stone wall

(30) Eye witness

25 yards from the first group of houses, and they had covered almost 100 yards before the first man was hit. (31) The 3rd platoon then moved up on the line with the 1st platoon at the wall from which position both platoons took up the final assault. The Japanese had been caught completely by surprise and resistance although participated in by almost all the enemy was unorganized and ineffectual. Within 15 minutes both platoons had reached the north edge of the town. (32) The enemy had been cleared from Kabayan, a few snipers continued to fire from positions part way up the hill that they used as an OP. This was extreme rifle range and very inaccurate, however the mortars and the machine guns soon drove them back over the top of the hill and out of range. The guerrillas had meantime seized the bridge and the reserve was moved up to take their part in the reorganization and defense of the town. (33) There were over 50 enemy dead; our casualties were 3 killed and 7 wounded; guerrillas 2 killed and 3 wounded. The rear base in Lutab was contacted by radio and ordered to move forward, a platoon was sent back along the trail to meet them. The rear base closed into the perimeter around noon. Carriers were hurried through their mid-day meal and most of them were immediately started up the new trail under a strong guard. The casualties were littered out with them, those that had occurred in the taking of Kabayan and also those who had been wounded the day before. With them went about a half dozen men who had jungle ulcers or jungle rot. The Medico had urged their evacuation. (34) The present position in Kabayan was reported to Regiment, ^{which are} ~~who were~~ now approaching Mt. Osdung. (See Map E). Regiment ordered the Force to remain in Kabayan

(31, 32) Eye witness; (33) Personal knowledge; (34) Eye witness

and hold the crossing. The River at this point was extremely swift and unfordable. Rapids extended from Kabayan down stream to Lutab and up stream for about two miles. ^{Sater} Additional orders were to continue with a strong force up the valley to eventually effect a junction with the 127th at or near Buguias, as per the original mission. (35)

The 2nd platoon with its attached company was assigned this task. The Company Commander reinforced this group with two light machine guns and a 60-mm jungle mortar. A dozen of the remaining carriers were also attached as extra bearers. The 2nd Platoon moved out around 1400. Their objective ^{was} a small mountain to the right ~~trail~~ of the main trail and two or three miles north of Kabayan. At 1800 the 2nd Platoon reported that they had established a perimeter approximately three miles up the trail. They could not define their position any closer, the map was so greatly in error that it was practically useless. (See Map E). The balance of the force crossed the river to a better defensive position on the west side. (See Map E) The platoon of guerrillas and a squad of the 1st Platoon remained on the far side to guard the approach to the bridge. The night was spent quietly on the perimeter. (36) A great deal of artillery and mortar fire was heard apparently to the north and some firing at a lesser distance to the south. Because of the mountains, continual wind in the valley sound had already been extremely to locate.

THE LAST DAY

AUGUST 6. Early next morning security patrols were sent out on both sides of the river and additional defensive installations were constructed. Around 0900 2 natives, both wounded by

(35) Personal knowledge; Orders of Major Schwartz, S-3, 127th Infantry; (36) Personal knowledge

grenades, were brought to the Command Post by one of the bridge guards. They told a curious story, along with five others, two of whom were women they had hidden in the hills across the river from Lutab for several weeks, they saw our force take Lutab on the 4th of August. It had been their intention to cross the river and put themselves under our protection. They had waited until the next day to cross the river. Their progress had been slow for fear of running into any of the enemy and when they finally entered Lutab they found our forces gone. They then decided to spend the night in Lutab, and try to join us the next day. During the night a few Japanese had attacked the town. (37) In the darkness these natives had either been mistaken for American soldiers or had been attacked out of spite. The other five had been killed, they were quite sure, and they did not know whether or not the enemy remained in Lutab after the attack. They had hidden in the underbrush and had slipped out while the Japs were still in the town. One of these natives wanted the Company Commander to send a patrol back to Lutab for the bodies of two of his relatives. This of course could not be done. At 1200 hours the 2nd Platoon reported that they had reached the point they estimated to be a mile or two south of Buguias. (See Map F) They had killed seven of the enemy during the morning advance and had found them all in groups of two's or three's, evidently stragglers from the fighting on the highway. (38) At 1400 the 2nd Platoon leader radioed that his force had been hit and was pinned down, he had only six or eight casualties but couldn't move a man without getting him hit. Two of his guerrillas platoons, the only ones not pinned down, had taken off and he

(37) Personal knowledge; Late Statement of Colonel Yoshtomi, Commanding 58 Brigade; (38) Statement of Lt. Gordon B. Ingram, Platoon Leader.

didn't know what he could do. (39) He explained his situation further. That morning, they met no resistance and he had pushed his scouts hard in an attempt to reach Buguias or its outskirts as soon as possible. At one point the river ran through a narrow steep gorge for about 400 yards. (See Map E) In order to save time in passing through this gorge he decided to hold two guerrilla platoons back at the entrance to the gorge and to hurry on through with his platoon and the other guerrillas. When they were half way through they noticed a party of Japanese going in the opposite direction and on the opposite side of the gorge. They were at a distance of, at the most, 300 feet and slightly lower on another trail. The gorge was bare of almost all vegetation and why neither saw the other was difficult to understand. The 2nd Platoon and the guerrillas fired first tumbling a number of the Japs off the trail and down many hundred feet into the river below. None of the men had continued on to the mouth of the gorge to protect their front which had now actually become their flank. A machine gun later joined by another opened up from somewhere in the rear of the Jap column. Every one hit the trail and although they had taken casualties initially they took no more as long as they were prone and protected by the small hollow in back of the trail's edge. The Jap's were still enough below so that the edge of the trail and the slight hollow behind it afforded protection; but if the enemy found a way up the steep wall on their side, they would have been able to place fire on these troops. The 2nd Platoons attached machine guns were also pinned down and its lone mortar had used up all its ammunition and gotten no results. ^PThe Company could not reach the platoon with their 81-mm mortars so it was planned to use artillery.

(39) Personal knowledge; Statement of Lt. Gordon B. Ingram

The 2nd Platoon's forward observer's radio was out but by use of the 300 and relay through one of the other artillery observer's radios a fire mission was called. As the gorge was narrow and quite steep the 2nd Platoon artillery observer requested high angle fire. The mission was somewhat delayed due to the radio relay and over a dozen rounds were used to adjust. Finally the artillery was zeroed in. With each volley a few men were able to run back along the trail out of the gorge. The artillery was most effective and one or two instances it started minor land slides. Once the platoon leader got his machine guns out and set up the Japanese were forced to withdraw and he was able to evacuate his casualties. (40) His casualties were: 2 killed and 3 wounded, 4 guerrillas killed, 3 carriers killed and 2 wounded. A bypass route was found shortly and the force again started for Buguias at 1700. They reached a small knoll at its outskirts around 1800, just as the 2nd Battalion 127 entered the town from the east. (See Map E) A junction had been made and that phase of the operation over, (41) C Company and its attached guerrillas had completed their mission and hoped to be relieved.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In studying this operation, the end of the war greatly helped in forming opinions. I was able to talk, mostly through interpreters, to the commanders of surrendering units who had fought against us actively, or whose units had. These commanders included two general officers, several full colonels, and a number of field grade and company grade officers.

(40) Personal knowledge; Statement of NCO, 2nd Platoon and Statement of Lt. Gordon B. Ingram, Platoon Leader; (41) Personal knowledge

I believe that the entire operation of C Company and its attached battalion was unnecessary, and a waste of man power, rations, ammunition, and the pay received by the carriers. The flank and rear of the Regiment could have been much better protected, at a smaller cost than over 60 killed and wounded, if the force had been stationed along or near the main highway and had patrolled to the flank. I doubt if any real protection was given the regiment at all except as possibly by creating a minor diversion. As to warning the regiment of an impending flank attack, it could have been better done by troop outposts, stationed near the exposed flank and spread over a wider area. This is especially true when you realize that C Company and its attachments were seldom able to observe or control more than a scant two or three miles along its line of advance. Also, any crossing of the river a few miles ahead ^{of} behind would have been unobserved.

With the end of the war a week later and the subsequent surrender of Japanese troops, C Company arranged for the surrender of a large number of prisoners. They included the remnants of one Japanese independent mixed brigade, part of another brigade, part of an imperial division and several other smaller units. A total of over 2500 troops and before the Company was relieved, they negotiated for the surrender of additional hundreds. All of these troops had been in the general vicinity of C Company's operation, at least within a day or so's march of C Company's various perimeters.

It is hardly good military tactics to send one rifle company and 500 untrained militiamen into an area containing several thousand and more of the enemy, especially so when any available supporting troops are a 12 to 24 hours distant. Adequate

intelligence could and should have been ascertained as to Japanese strength and disposition beforehand. I believe that the higher echelons took a decided risk with this force. Not a calculated risk at all but one based on poor guess work with no thought at all given to supporting or reinforcing C Company if the need arose.

Surprise, extreme good fortune, and the fact that the advance was made parallel to and in front of an enemy MIR and also parallel and behind an outpost line are the only reasons the entire force was not attacked, surrounded and destroyed.

Lack of adequate communications prevented the enemy from organizing in time for any worthwhile attack. With his communication dependent almost entirely on messenger and the terrain difficult to negotiate, we had in most cases moved before he could group a force sufficiently large to attack. One other fact that helped C Company was poor disposition of the Japanese troops, one commander held the outpost line and another commander responsible to a different headquarters held the MIR. Their orders also had been vague and their responsibilities concerning any action in the valley itself poorly defined. Both were reluctant to move from their primary defensive positions and attack us in any strength in places they considered outside of their limiting points.

The enemy also discounted first reports of our presence in the valley and stubbornly believed that any American attack would come from the highway headed in an easterly direction against their positions of Mts Libung, Aki, and Ambubungan. (See Map B)

The 2d Platoon leader, through ^{Vision} a grave error of several basic rules of tactics, jeopardized and almost lost over half his entire force of 150 men. 150 men are often too large a number to entrust to the command of an extremely junior lieutenant during his first campaign. Also, the lives of a thousand men are too great a responsibility to be placed on a company commander. This is especially true when the type of terrain is considered. My past experience had been restricted to jungle warfare. I was totally ignorant, for the most part, of employment of troops in the open terrain which was encountered on several occasions. I was unable to employ the 4th Guerrilla Company having no additional rifle units which could be attached. Their training and lack of dependability made it impossible to use them alone. This company consumed about 1000 rations that were hand carried over difficult trails and could provide nothing to the operation. Obviously, I should have foreseen this.

To summarize results, the Task Force accomplished its mission. It effected the junction at Buguias and the Regimental Flank was not attacked.

However, little of a tactical nature was gained and no worth while ground held with the exception of the bridge at Kabayan. The enemy lost some equipment, some materiel, that he could not replace and had suffered over 150 dead. Our losses in materiel were slight and casualties much less.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons learned in this operation are:

1. Placing a Company Commander of one unit over a battalion or acting battalion commander of another unit often makes for hesitancy of command.

2. Speed of movement is essential to an inferior force. It enables one to strike at weakly defended points and retire or pass on to the positions of safety.

3. Complete communications are essential to successful operations. Additional radios can often be put to good use.

4. Reserves should be placed so that they can be quickly employed. They must be in a position to influence the actions ^{SP} decisively.

5. Adequate intelligence ^{should be furnished} by higher headquarters is a necessity, and is frequently omitted.

6. Good NCO's who have been given responsibility in past operations will perform well when responsibility is intelligently increased. As an example, good squad leaders in many cases creditably commanded guerrilla platoons.

7. When extra combat troops in any sizeable number are attached to a company, some provision must be made to add a small staff.

8. Knowledge of the enemy's character, habits, national traits ^{is} is a decided advantage.

9. Deception can confuse the enemy and help both an attack or a defense.

10. High angle artillery fire can be brought in quite close to the troops if fired on a far slope of a steep and narrow canyon. Shorts are then not shorts but merely rounds } that land below the intended center of impact.

11. Aerial reconnaissance can be of great help in planning and can be advantageously used during the conduct of an operation.

12. Failure to post proper local security elements is often fatal.

13. Varied terrain calls for different tactics. Jungle fighting can't be used in open country and vice versa.

14. Surprise is one of the best weapons a commander has. It will often spell the difference between quick success and long costly fighting.