

THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "C", 1ST INFANTRY
(6TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE SHIMBU LINE,
LUZON, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, 8-9 MARCH 1945,
LUZON CAMPAIGN.
(Personal Experiences of a Platoon Leader)

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of Company "C", 1st Infantry, 6th US Division in the Battle of the Shimbu Line, Luzon, Philippine Islands, 8-9 March 1945, in the Luzon Campaign.

In order to orient the reader, it will be necessary to go back to the beginning of the Luzon Campaign and give a brief resume of the events leading up to the action.

After the operations on Leyte and Mindoro the third and most important phase of the liberation of the Philippines took place with the assault on the main island of the archipelago, Luzon.

The 6th US Army, under command of Lieutenant General (now General) Walter Krueger, was directed by United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) to seize landing beaches in the Lingayen Gulf area, and be prepared to push down the Central Plains to capture the city of Manila. Pre-invasion strength of the Japanese on Luzon was estimated to be approximately 230,000. (See Map "A") (1) (2)

In all stages of the operation the terms S-day and J-hour were used instead of the customary D-day and H-hour. (3)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The Luzon Campaign began 9 January 1945 with amphibious landings on the beaches in the Lingayen Gulf with the XIV and I Corps abreast, the XIV on the right. The troops landed virtually unopposed and pushed rapidly inland, wading stream and fish ponds which ran parallel to the landing beaches. (4)

(1) A-1, P. 1 (2) A-1, P.11 (3) C-3, P.5 (4) A-1, P.1

Almost immediately after landing I Corps met enemy resistance from strong positions in the hills to the east and northeast. The corps continued to exert pressure to protect the landing area, the only available beachhead, while the XIV Corps pushed south as it was imperative to capture Manila, 120 miles away, before the advent of the rainy season. Of the five divisions the one regimental combat team originally available to the 6th US Army, the 6th and 43rd Infantry Divisions, and the 158th Regimental Combat Team were heavily engaged. (5)

In the area of the 43rd Infantry Division the Japanese were offering determined resistance from well prepared mountain positions. The 63rd RCT (6th Division) in I Corps reserve, was attached to the 43rd Division and committed on the division's left flank. The 158th RCT was landed, 11 January, and relieved elements of the 43rd Infantry Division which had been advancing up the coast north of the landing area. (6)

The 25th Infantry Division, afloat in Army reserve, was landed 11 January, and assigned to I Corps, where it was committed on the right of the 43rd Infantry Division. (7)

The Japanese had obviously expected our forces to land at San Fernando, and had concentrated his strength in the mountainous terrain in that area. Besides this threat, 2 divisions and 1 brigade of Infantry plus the 2nd Armored Division were known to be in the vicinity of San Jose. (8)

This threat to the left flank of the XIV Corps prevented the corps from advancing at the maximum speed southward. (9)

The 6th Infantry cornered and destroyed a well entrenched battalion in the Cabaruan Hills. This division, on I Corps right flank, had to restrain its rate of advance because of the threat

(5) A-1, P. 1 (6) A-1, P. 19 (7) A-1, P. 20,21
(8) A-1, P. 21,22 (9) A-1, P. 32

from the northeast. (10)

I Corps determined to clear the northern Central Plains, in its zone, and thus free XIV Corps from the threat of a flank attack, allowing that corps to push on to Manila.

Elements of the 25th Infantry Division destroyed 5 light, and 27 medium tanks at San Isidora, while the 6th Infantry Division destroyed 4 light and 48 medium tanks at Munoz. (11) Meanwhile the 35th Infantry Regiment of the 25th Infantry Division at Lupao destroyed an additional light and 36 medium tanks. The piecemeal commitment of the Japanese 2nd Armored Division had resulted in its destruction, and freed the XIV Corps left flank of the threat of counterattack. (12)

Guerrilla units, operating under 6th US Army control, were forcing enemy withdrawal from San Fernando, besides harrasing his lines of supply and communication. (13)

The arrival of the 32nd and the 1st Cavalry Divisions, and the 112th Regimental Combat Team on S / 18 allowed I Corps to drive to the northeast, while the XIV Corps increased the tempo of its advance southward, the 37th Infantry Division advancing down Highway #3, the 1st Cavalry Division down Highway #5. (14)

Concurrently with the advance on Manila, XI Corps under 8th US Army control landed on the west coast near San Antonia, 29 January, and drove east to prevent an enemy withdrawal into the peninsula of Bataan. On 31 January the 11th Airborne Division landed at Nasugbu in Batangas Province and pushed north to Manila. (15)

The 1st Cavalry Division and the 37th Infantry Division arrived in northern Manila simultaneously on 3 February, while the 11th Airborne Division reached the southern outskirts 10 February.

(10) A-1, P. 25, C-3, P. 136

(11) A-1, P. 43

(12) A-1, P. 44

(13) A-1, P. 48

(14) A-1, P. 1

(15) A-1, P. 2

Early in March, after severe fighting, all Japanese troops in Manila had been killed or captured. Meanwhile, XI Corps troops landed at Mariveles, on the southern tip of Bataan, 15 February; and the 34th Infantry Regiment, simultaneously with the 503rd Parachute Regiment, landed on Corregidor Island to effect the opening of Manila Harbor to Allied shipping. (16)

By 7 February I Corps controlled the northern end of the Central Plains except for a few isolated enemy strongholds. Throughout this entire period the 40th Infantry Division was engaged in fierce fighting in the rugged terrain in the mountains west of Bambang. (17)

Early in the campaign it became evident that General Yamashita, the Japanese commander, had an overall strategic plan of defense which was to defend from what amounted to flanking positions in the mountains, without opposing in mass our movement down the Central Plain. This conclusion proved correct when a captured 26th Japanese Division estimate of the situation dated September 1944, revealed that the Japanese realized they could not afford a decisive battle on the Central Plains, and that withdrawal into the mountains to fight a delaying action of attrition was the better plan. (18)

"CG 6th Army determined to retain the initiative, but had to operate with two divisions less than had been planned. The problem was solved by dispensing with a reserve and rapidly shifting forces from place to place whenever necessary to gain preponderance of numbers and fire power." Thus, in tracing the development of the Luzon Campaign, it will be found that a unit will be found in widely separated areas in a short period of time. (19)

In general, the situation in the first part of March 1945

(16) B-2, P. 4-5 (17) B-2, P. 7 (18) B-2, P. 1; A-1, P. 1
(19) A-1, P. 2

found the Japanese defending the mountains west of Bamba~~n~~, east of Manila, and north of the Central Plains. (See Map "B")

THE ENEMY SITUATION

In accordance with his policy to defend the mountain areas, General Yamashita had organized a series of strong points extending north from Laguna de Bay to include Ipo Dam, a distance of over 12 miles. (See Map "C") The line, continuing east of Cabanatuan on north to an undetermined terminus was known as the Yamashita Line, after the Japanese general commanding on Luzon. The portion of the line between Laguna de Bay and Ipo Dam was named the Shimbu (Brandishing Sword) Line. As later events were to prove the name had been well chosen. (20)

Guerrilla and aerial reconnaissance revealed that the enemy had organized each of the dominating terrain features along his line, which was organized in depth in some places for a distance of 10 miles. From his positions he could cover the defiles and draws with small arms fire, and could accurately adjust mortar and artillery fire on our troops. (21)

The fortifications consisted of an elaborate system of caves, tunnels, and trenches, constructed during a five or six month period by forced Filipino labor. An estimated 30,000 troops manned the defenses, well supplied with automatic weapons, antiaircraft and anti-tank guns, and well sited artillery, heavy mortars, and rocket launchers. These rockets, the first our troops had encountered, were of enormous size having a diameter of 20cm, and weighing 111 pounds. The terrific concussion, the shattering explosion, as well as the terrifying noise of its propelling charge produced not only casualties, but had a serious effect on morale. The strength of the enemy's positions were

(20) A-1, P. 2 (21) C-3, P. 138

beyond question. (22)

Although forced on the defensive the Japanese attitude was not one of passive defense. His reactions to our trusts were sharp and skillful, well coordinated counterattacks and numerous "suicide" attacks taking place. The Japanese soldier had been instructed that when he died he was to take ten Americans with him, with his own death a foredrawn conclusion he became, if anything, a more formidable foe seemingly intent only on having company as he embraced "honorable death". (23)

In some instances the enemy troops would leave well prepared defensive positions to attack strong American positions, dying in our fire in a vain attempt to close in hand to hand combat which he considered his forte, or to blow himself up with as many Americans as possible. In other instances he would remain in his caves apparently in a stupor, making little effort to defend himself yet forcing our troops to burn or blow him out.

An outstanding example occurred in the 1st Cavalry Division's zone of the Shimbu Line when about 100 Japs rushed out of a large cave, hair and clothing aflame, but each clutching a rifle or sub-machine gun and firing as they ran until killed by US fire or flame throwers. (24) Another example occurred in the 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry, area, when four or five enlisted men found a large air vent on the top of a hill. Phosphorous grenades were thrown down the vent, and immediately four or five of the enemy ran out of an entrance at the foot of the hill. These were easily cut down with fire. This process continued until a total of 54 Japs were piled up at the entrance. (25) However, on the whole, the enemy conducted his defense with great skill, tenaciously maintaining his position until forced to

(22) C-3, P. 143; B-2, P. 11
(24) C-3, P. 149

(23) B-2, P. 24, 28; C-3, P. 152
(25) Personal Knowledge

withdraw, which he did to the next position, and the battle began anew. Only by being constantly on the alert did our forces avoid sustaining far greater losses.

In the construction of his cave positions the Jap had demonstrated great skill and forethought. The entrance curved back into the cave, giving good protection against fire, in addition blast walls were constructed, so that the effectiveness of our artillery and air strikes were greatly diminished. In many cases a direct hit would have been necessary to inflict material damage. The overall operation, despite the excellent artillery and aerial support, was one of Infantry burning, blasting, and digging the enemy from his holes. The importance of the Shimbu Line lay in its threat of counterattack on Manila, our main supply base. The possibility of the enemy shelling Manila from his positions. The enemy's grip on the water supply system for the Manila area.

Only with his destruction would Manila be safe to develop into the great naval and supply base its potentialities warranted.
(26)

THE COMPANY SITUATION

Company "C" of the 1st Infantry Regiment, 6th Infantry Division, in the assault wave of the amphibious landing in the Lingayen Gulf on S-day, encountered but little opposition in its sector on the left flank of the division.

As part of the 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry, the company pushed rapidly to the southeast to secure the beachhead line. During the first two weeks of the campaign the company had made but slight contact with the enemy. Several patrol skirmishes with stragglers had taken place, while the company on foot and on LVT's advanced southward to cross and secure the Agno River line.

(26) B-2, P. 26; C-3, P. 143

In the latter part of January the first major engagement, in which the company participated on Luzon, occurred in the Cabaruan Hills against an estimated 1,500 well entrenched, stubborn Japs. After digging the defenders out of their holes the 1st Battalion again headed south, re-crossed the Agno River, and headed to the east. (27)

By 4 February the 1st Battalion had attacked San Jose against light opposition and had taken the town and its approaches, thus sealing off the Japanese escape route from southern and central Luzon through Balete Pass to the north. On 6 February the 1st Battalion killed 150 of the enemy with a surprise dawn attack on his rear south of San Jose. (28)

On 12 February the 1st Regimental Combat Team, in Army reserve, moved to Dinalupihan, on the northern end of the Bataan Peninsula. From there it advanced down the east coast and across the peninsula, and by 20 February Bataan had been cut in two with our capture of Bagac on the western terminus of the Bagac-Pilar Road. (29)

By 26 February, Company "C", having been returned with RCT 1 to division control, had proceeded to and occupied the town of San Mateo in the Marikina Valley. Later the same day the enemy shelled the position for four hours with 150mm mortars killing the Company Commander, Captain Joseph H. Davis, and several enlisted men, and inflicting severe casualties. On orders from 1st Battalion the area was evacuated, and new positions taken up south of the town.

On 28 February the company moved across the Marikina Valley and up the north slopes of Mt. Mataba to probe the enemy lines in that area. From his excellent observation posts on the high

(27) A-1, P. 25 (28) D-4, P. 93,96,100 (29) D-4, P. 105

ground, the enemy poured devastating artillery and mortar fire into our ranks. The company was forced to lie concealed under trees all night and the following day, without food or water and without being able to evacuate the wounded, as every sign of activity on our part was the signal for the enemy to drop heavy concentrations of mortars with deadly accuracy.

Again 1st Battalion ordered the company to evacuate an untenable position, which was accomplished that night under cover of darkness, in the short period of the darkness of the moon. (30)

About 4 March 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry, was moved to the division's right where the 20th Infantry Regiment had succeeded in penetrating the foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains east of Marikina. From this general area the action to be described below took place.

In order to assist the reader in understanding and evaluating the material that follows it may be well at this time to acquaint him further with "C" Company, its strength, and its manner of operation.

"C" Company, 1st Infantry, had participated in the Wadke-Maffin Bay, and the Sansapor operations in the New Guinea campaign. It landed on S-day with a strength of 150 men and 5 officers, short some 37 men and 1 officer. Approximately 2/3 of the enlisted men were veterans of the New Guinea Campaign, well versed in the enemy's tactics and capabilities. Morale was high, and the men and officers self-confident and well trained. Before hitting the Shimbu Line the replacement personnel received in New Guinea were combat experienced and battle seasoned. However, dysentery which made its appearance shortly after S-day, battle casualties, and malaria had reduced the strength to about 80. Of the personnel

(30) Personal Knowledge

present the majority were suffering from amebic dysentery, loss of sleep and rest, and the lack of hot food.

The perimeter defense was taken up each night before dark by the company, and in conjunction with the battalion SOP anybody moving above ground after dark was presumed to be the enemy and was forthwith fired upon. The perimeter was organized so that three, or four if possible, individual foxholes were dug close together so that the the occupants could reach from one hole to the next without walking above ground. Each man spent about two hours on guard in his hole every night, this guard being responsible for the security of the personnel in his group of holes. These measures were necessary because of the aggressive Japanese night infiltration tactics.

The physical condition of the men left much to be desired, as has been stated dysentery was prevalent, necessitating from 6 to 10 movements daily; they were getting insufficient sleep and rest as the battalion moved almost every day, the long marches into enemy territory being made afoot in the enervating heat and the nights offering little sleep between the guard, the intense cold, the frequent rains, and enemy action. Furthermore, hot food was the exception rather than the rule, the usual food being K ration. (31)

THE ATTACK

Aerial observation revealed that the area from Mt. Pacawagan to Antipolo was traversed by numerous north-south trails. Intelligence knew for some time that the enemy in Batangas province, south of Laguna de Bay, had been moving northward east of the lake and then along trails somewhere in the Sierra Madre Mountains. Evidence existed to support the conclusion that this was the main (31) Personal Knowledge

route of withdrawal to northeastern Luzon for the enemy troops trapped in the south.

If the trails between Mt. Pacawagan and Antipolo could be severed the enemy routes of supply would be rendered ineffective, and his forces isolated. Therefore, the plan of XIV Corps to accomplish this objective was to employ the 6th Infantry Division on the north, and the 1st Cavalry Division on the south. The 1st Cavalry Division was to move east along the entire front, while the 6th Infantry Division was to make its main effort on its right. (32)

A major part of the new plan was assigned to the 1st Infantry Regiment. The regiment was assembled in the 20th Infantry Regiment's sector on the division's right flank, 6,000 yards east of Marikina. Following a two day preparation by air and artillery, including two 155mm howitzer battalions, one 155mm gun battalion, one 8 inch battery, and one 240mm howitzer battery, in addition to the massed fires of the division's four battalions of artillery, the 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel (later Colonel) Francis J. Corbin, pushed off to the attack 080630 March. (33)

The corps objective in the 1st Infantry sector lay 1,500 yards to the front, a steeply rising ridge running north-south at right angles to the direction of advance, the dominating terrain feature in the vicinity.

The battalion attack plan called for Companies "A" and "B" in the assault, "B" on the right, Company "C" in reserve. "A" Company moved to its objective against determined opposition and succeeded in establishing positions on Hill "A". (See Map "D") The enemy, from the front and from Hill "X" continued to deliver

(32) C-3, P. 144 (33) D-4, P. 113; C-3, P. 145

extremely heavy machine gun and mortar fire upon this company, despite repeated air strikes and artillery concentrations delivered upon request of Captain George V. Holanik, the company commander.

Company "B" in its sector, encountered light opposition in its advance to Hill "B", its objective. Patrols from "B" Company moved across the ridge separating the companies to establish lateral contact with Company "A".

Almost immediately after the capture of Hill "B", bulldozers from the 6th Engineers, protected by a rifle squad from "C" Company, commenced construction of a supply trail to Company "B".

Personnel from Company "C" were busily engaged all day as guards for ammunition trucks, or as hand carrying parties, getting ammunition to Company "A" in its desperate effort to maintain its position.

About 1630, "C" Company was ordered to move forward and take up position on the high ground between "A" and "B" Companies, to fill the 800-1000 yard gap. The company was alerted and moved out with the minimum of delay, going up the trail 2nd and 3rd Platoons abreast in column, 3rd Platoon on the right.

The company moved up the steep trail at the maximum rate in order to be in position before darkness. At a point up the trail, the leading elements cut off through the fields in the shortest line to the high ground. On the way up several men were dispatched to investigate a small knoll, Hill "Y", which appeared to have a few foxholes dug on its crest, while the remainder of the company toiled up the rugged slope, in the intense heat, as fast as possible.

The men sent to investigate the knoll commenced firing and several hand grenades were heard exploding. As they were seen to be firing into the holes, and as no fire was being received by the

company nor, apparently by the investigating group, the leading platoon leaders decided themselves, in the absence of orders from the company commander, to continue to push rapidly forward to the high ground.

Upon reaching the rear of the topographical crest of Hill "C", the leading platoon leaders halted their platoons, closed the men in, posted security, and began a preliminary reconnaissance of the area while awaiting the arrival of the company commander, Captain George C. Graf. Captain Graf arrived and made a hasty reconnaissance after conferring with the platoon leader of the 2nd and 3rd Platoons. It was decided to employ the 3rd Platoon on the right, the 2nd Platoon on the left, while the 1st Platoon tied in on both flanks to close the rear.

As the company strength was approximately 70 men it was decided to form the perimeter on the topographical crest, above the steep slope on the forward side, in order to locate the grouped holes close enough to allow mutual fire support and contact, and to prevent infiltration by the enemy during the night.

The men who had been dropped off on the approach earlier reported back at this time with the information that 7 Japanese were in a large, covered hole on the knoll, and what had appeared to be two foxholes were in reality two entrances to the position. The Japs who had apparently been sleeping or resting preparatory to their night's work, or had been stunned by the terrific bombardment of the past two days, were caught unawares and easily disposed of.

The hill offered no concealment, there being no trees or vegetation on the crest or the rear slope, while the forward slope was covered with waist high grass. As darkness was rapidly approaching, it was decided to assign areas to the squads and have

work commence immediately on the position, despite the lack of concealment. Accordingly, the troops were placed and work began; as no heavy machine gun support was available the light machine gun section was split and placed one on each flank along the crest of the ridge, the only place grazing fire could be obtained.

Work on the position had been going on for about fifteen minutes when heavy, but inaccurate, machine gun fire was received from an undetermined point of origin on Hill "X". It was impossible to locate the position of the enemy gun on the tree-covered Hill "X", however friendly machine gun fire from Hill "A" silenced the enemy's fire. This fire from Hill "A" apparently could not destroy the enemy position so the 60mm mortars of Company "C" fired on the most likely gun positions. What effect was had upon the enemy could not be determined; however, as the fire had been lifted the consolidation of our position was again rushed because of the rapid descent of darkness.

Shortly before dark all holes had been dug, ammunition had been brought up, and sound power telephones ran out to the platoon CP's. However, the grass on the forward slope had not been cut, nor had booby traps or obstacles of any kind been emplaced.

Realizing the impossibility of cutting effective swaths through the grass with bayonets in the short interval before dark, the platoon leaders attempted to correct this undesirable situation by setting out hand grenades with trip wires of telephone wire. About six grenades had been so placed before darkness forced a return to the holes. Each of the front line platoon leaders had zeroed the 60mm mortars to the front of their platoons, but because of the nearness of the mortars on the reverse slope, accurate fire was impossible. Attempts to get onto the near portion of the wooded draw to our front was futile.

With darkness an uneasy silence fell on the front lines, an occasional shot or two was heard from "A" and "B" Companies positions, but nothing broke the silence in "C" Company area.

The silence was broken sharply about 2000 by heavy fire from the machine gun on the left flank. Instantly all were on the alert, however nothing materialized on the front, or right flank. Word was relayed over the soundpower telephone net that Captain Holanik of "A" Company was complaining that the fire was coming into his area, although no casualties had been sustained. The company commander directed the sergeant in charge of the machine gun to fire only when absolutely certain that a target was present. The sergeant reported that he and his crew had definitely seen men in front of their position, despite the utter darkness, and had heard groans after firing. This machine gun continued to fire spasmodically throughout the night, the machine gun crew insisting whenever questioned that they saw men.

About 0200 heavy rifle fire broke out on the left front, and although the platoon leader, Lieutenant George Lipka, was unable to discern any enemy troops or to contact the men firing, he did hear noises to the front indicative of movement. After a few minutes the firing ceased, a few hand grenades were thrown, and silence descended once again.

About 0500, as the gray light of dawn became strong enough to afford a little visibility, heavy machine gun fire was received again from the undetermined enemy position on Hill "X", and "knee" mortar shells began falling in the area. From the front of the right (3rd) platoon, a Japanese officer, followed by 7 or 8 men, sprang up from the tall grass 25 yards away and tried, sword waving, to rush the position. This group may have taken 3 steps before a hail of fire met them, and they went down

into the grass, ~~to be~~ hidden from our view.

Although the grass concealed these people entirely, that area was the target for an occasional grenade, or several shots every now and again the rest of the morning, for we knew the Jap capable of every kind of trickery--until we could see at close inspection that he was indeed dead.

The 60mm mortars again fired on Hill "X", neutralizing the fire from that area, but mortar shells continued to fire into our position, inflicting a few minor casualties. By lying on our backs in the fox holes we could watch the shells falling, and by tracing the probable trajectory determined that the fire was coming from the wooded draw to the front of the right platoon.

The 60mm mortars shifted from Hill "X" and again tried to get fire into the draw unsuccessfully; arrangements were then made with "B" Company to fire their 60mm mortars into the draw. However, the difficulty of adjustment required the abandonment of this scheme after several rounds fell too close to the perimeter. Although aimed small arms fire could not be brought to bear upon the draw from the cover of the fox holes, due to the conformation of the forward slope, it was fired upon by men standing up and emptying rifles and BAR into it. Evidently this had some effect upon the enemy as screams and shouts were heard. The machine gun upon Hill "X" again opened fire, and after several more casualties had been sustained this practice had to be abandoned, however no more mortar fire was received from the draw.

Fire from the 81mm mortars was again directed on Hill "X", however this failed to halt the enemy fire from that position. In an attempt to move the light machine gun on the right flank, which flank could be covered by men who were below the crest and therefore unable to enter the fire fight to the front, the gunner

was hit by the enemy machine gun fire. However, the gun was gotten to the front, but was not put into action at this time.

The enemy meanwhile had been infiltrating through the tall grass and had drawn close to our front. A grenade battle ensued, the air being filled with the flying fragments, as both our troops and the enemy threw grenades along the entire front. This grenade battle continued intermittently through the entire morning. A grenade landed in the hole of Pfc Arrey and blew off his leg; casualties were sustained along the front in both platoon areas.

Litters and Filipino litter bearers were sent to the rear of the perimeter from battalion aid station. The casualties were evacuated, as hit, from the perimeter with great difficulty. They had to be dragged across the crest of the hill, inching their way on their stomachs to avoid the machine gun fire falling in the position with undiminished intensity. The men who had left their holes to assist the wounded, and the replacements from the rear to fill the vacated holes, had to crawl under this same fire to regain the front. The enlisted Medical Corps aid men worked fearlessly and tirelessly, crawling from place to place under the enemy fire, to render aid and reassurance whenever the cry of "Medics" went up.

The machine gun from the right flank was retained in the 3rd platoon area on the perimeter to be used to fire on the enemy machine gun on Hill "X" when located (we did not wish to disclose this gun's position until we could definitely locate the enemy gun) or to be used in firing from the hip in case of another and bigger charge. About 1000 ammunition, which had been running short, particularly hand grenades, was distributed by passing or throwing from hole to hole along the length of the perimeter. (34)

(34) Personal Knowledge

The company commander reported the situation to the battalion commander at this time, informing him that "C" Company was unable to counterattack because of the insufficient number of men not already engaged, and the persistent machine gun fire from Hill "X" which could rake any counterattacking element with almost flanking fire. Lieutenant Colonel Corbin, the battalion commander, promised to send up two SPM's (Self-propelled Mounts), attached from Cannon Company, as reinforcements.

(35)

For the next 45 minutes or so there was comparatively little action. The 60mm mortars of both "A" and "C" Companies laid concentrations on Hill "X" on and off. The 81mm mortars placed several concentrations on the same hill. Along the perimeter small arms fire, or grenades, ~~was~~ thrown on suspected areas, or when the men saw the grass move. The enemy on the forward slope replied with several grenades, while the machine gun on Hill "X" gave the company an occasional burst.

Approximately 1100 the Cannon Platoon Leader, Lieutenant Dodge, arrived at the company CP with two SPM's. Captain Graf acquainted him with the situation, and sent him forward to the 3rd Platoon Leader for orientation on the ground and recommendations for the employment of his vehicles. The two platoon leaders soon arrived at a plan of action which the company commander approved via sound telephone.

One SPM was retained just to the rear of the crest, while the other advanced over it. As soon as the SPM made its appearance the machine gun on Hill "X" took it under heavy fire, the slugs plainly ripping into the packs hung on the sides of the SPM. Mortar shells began pumping out of the draw in a steady stream, while two Japs from the charging group sprang up from

(35) Statement of Captain George C. Graf, 9 March 1945

the grass and ran down hill.

The men running down the hill were caught in the back by fire from the 50 caliber machine gun mounted in the "pulpit" of the SPM. The enemy machine gun on Hill "X" was definitely located by one of the Infantrymen and indicated by his BAR fire. The SPM fired its cannon into the target area--the machine gun fire stopped abruptly. The Cannon Platoon Leader, searching the portion of the draw pointed out by the 3rd platoon leader, happened to see a mortar shell just leaving the muzzle. Several rounds of the cannon filled the air with broken flesh and screams. (36)

Additional machine gun and cannon fire was directed into both the draw and Hill "X" by the SPM and the Infantry. The SPM was then withdrawn to the rear slope to avoid possible enemy artillery fire--its mission completed.

Captain Graf reported to the battalion commander that the Jap attack had been beaten off. About 1400 Company "C" was ordered to continue the advance and attack Hill "X".

The plan was for the 1st Platoon, which had not been in the action during the night or morning, to move along the ridge to the left, below the crest, as far as the draw west of Hill "X" and attack through the draw. The 2nd Platoon, the next strongest platoon followed with the Weapons Platoon, and the 3rd Platoon following in that order. (See Map "D" for route)

The 1st Platoon numbered 17 men, the 2nd Platoon 11, and the 3rd Platoon 8 men. As the company moved out, about 13 dead Japanese were found on the left flank with a heavy machine gun nearby. Apparently our machine gun had prevented the enemy from living long enough to employ his gun. From the crest of the ridge
(36) Personal Knowledge

on the left 58 enemy dead were easily counted. No attempt was made to count those in the draw. (37)

The 1st Platoon reached the draw followed closely by the 2nd Platoon, the 3rd and Weapons Platoons remaining on the left end of Hill "C" to support the attack by fire. As the head of the 1st Platoon was about halfway through the draw, and the 2nd Platoon just swinging into it, heavy machine gun and mortar fire was directed against them. Word was received that both platoon leaders were hit, and that numerous casualties had been inflicted upon the 1st Platoon. The 81mm mortars threw smoke on Hill "X" and the far end of the draw. For the next hour the company was busy evacuating the casualties on ponches and shelter halves, back to Hill "C", where Filipino litter bearers waited to carry the wounded back to vehicles. Both 1st and 2nd Platoon Leaders, Lieutenants Lipka and Wancheck, were killed, as was one enlisted man. The entire 1st Platoon, all 17 men were casualties. (38)

Upon being informed of the situation the battalion commander ordered "C" Company to remain in its position on the left end of the ridge. He, himself, arrived in the company area about 1530 to look the situation over for himself. About 15 minutes after the arrival of the battalion commander, enemy artillery began to fall into the area. However, because of the nature of the terrain the projectiles either struck harmlessly on the forward slope or fall, equally harmlessly, to the rear of the company.

Before his departure, Lieutenant Colonel Corbin told the C company commander to remain in his present position for the time being, and be prepared to return, ~~An~~ order, to the position of the night before on Hill "C", now occupied by "G" Company. (39)

Except for the intermittent artillery falling in the area
(37) Personal Knowledge (38) Personal Knowledge (39) C-3, P. 146

nothing further occurred until about 1700, when the battalion commander radioed the company commander to ask if he thought he could hold his position for the night. As the total company strength ran about 43 men, the company commander requested additional personnel to hold the position. (40) The Assault Squad from Battalion Headquarters Company was sent up as reinforcements. Company "C" dug in, still receiving artillery fire, and settled down to another night of waiting and watching, its 60th successive such night since S-day.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In studying the Luzon Campaign, from S-day to 9 March 1945, one finds numerous points worthy of attention.

First, the Japanese apparently did not expect us to land in the Lingayen Gulf area with its many streams and fish ponds a short distance from the beach, and the heavy surf usually present there. In accordance with this belief they stationed their troops at San Fernando, too far away and too immobile to seriously affect our landing on S-day.

The decision of the Japanese commander, General Yamashita, not to oppose us in the Central Plains, but rather to fight from the mountains was well founded. However, his implementation of this plan was faulty as his forces were not mutually supporting.

The American action in isolating and reducing the Japanese in their mountain defenses were classic examples of military operations. General Krueger utilized to the utmost his mobility, on interior lines of communication, with the greatest economy of force. These tactics enabled us to bring overwhelming strength against the enemy at one point after another.

The employment of the Japanese 2nd Armored Division, dug in as pillboxes, at widely separated places; immobile not mutually

(40) Statement of Captain George C. Graf 9 March 1945

supporting, and committed in piecemeal, resulted inevitably in the destruction of this force with comparatively few casualties to us.

Troops operating in tropical climates are subject to large variety of diseases. Unnecessary fatigue increases the incidence of these diseases. The lack of two divisions in the Luzon Campaign necessitated unusual exertions from the troops available, resulting in increased casualties from sickness.

The enemy on Hill "X", as well as in other positions, demonstrated that well entrenched, determined, troops cannot be routed by artillery nor air power alone. In the final analysis, the task is one for the Infantry.

In the defense, as exemplified by Company "C" on Hill "C", sufficient forces must be held in reserve to be used at the most opportune moment, to decisively affect the course of battle.

If the enemy can be enticed into attacking strong defensive positions, his casualties will be far disproportionate to ours.

The Japanese demonstrated the utmost ingenuity in constructing and camouflaging his defensive positions as shown by the enemy machine gun on Hill "X".

Whenever possible the military crest should be utilized, and effective fire lanes cut. By being forced to violate these principles "C" Company was deprived of grazing fire across its front; ~~and~~ enabled the Japs to draw close to our position without detection.

Fire power is the important element of close combat. Despite their lack of numbers the men of Company "C" inflicted severe casualties on the enemy because they were not only ready, but eager to use their weapons whenever a target appeared, or a likely target area was present.

The failure to obtain adequate indirect fire into the wooded draw to its front caused "C" Company unnecessary casualties.

The practice of remaining under ground at night enabled the enemy to move about during the hours of darkness in his rear areas unmolested, and allowed him to draw near our positions with comparative ease.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons re-emphasized by this operation are:

1. The advantage of surprise, as shown in our selection of landing sites, is of inestimable value.
2. Defensive positions must be mutually supporting.
3. The principle of mass, by isolating the battlefield and reducing the enemy position successively with overwhelming strength at each point, insures success.
4. The mobility of our forces resulted in the greatest economy of force.
5. Armored units must be held mobile, employed in mass, and be mutually supporting.
6. Tropical operations require acclimatization of troops, and special precautions against diseases.
7. Determined, well entrenched troops can, in the final analysis, be only ejected by Infantry action.
8. Reserves must be available to influence the course of battle at the critical moment.
9. Defensive positions should be situated on the most advantageous terrain, and every means taken to improve the natural defensive qualities of the terrain.
10. Troops must be taught in training to fire their weapons. Only occasionally will the enemy be seen, therefore target areas must be searched by fire.

11. Well constructed, well camouflaged positions give a definite advantage to the defender. US troops in World War II were notoriously lax in camouflage discipline.

12. Supporting fires must be utilized to the fullest.

13. We must always strive to overcome any advantage the enemy possesses. The practice of remaining immobile during the night, a carry over from our days of defeat, should have been corrected by vigorous indoctrination and training.