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THE OPERATIONS OF THE ALAMO SCOUTS (SIXTH
US ARMY SPECIAL RECONNAISSANCE UNIT) ON
THE FOLLOWING MISSION: RESCUE OF SIXTY-SIX DUTCH
AND JAVANESE FROM THE JAPANESE AT CAPE ORANSBARI,
DUTCH NEW GUINEA, 4-5 OCTOBER 1944 (NEW GUINEA CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of Team Leader of the Alamo Scouts)

Type of operation described: RAIDING MISSION

Captain Tom J. Rounsaville, Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO II

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the Alamo Scouts in the rescue of 66 Dutch and Javanese prisoners from the Japanese at CAPE ORANSBARI, DUTCH NEW GUINEA, 4-5 October 1944, and the preliminary scouting activity and coordination that led to the formulation of the plan that effected this successful raid.

As the Alamo Scouts, a special reconnaissance unit of the Sixth US Army in the Pacific, were necessarily a sparsely publicized organization because of security reasons, it is necessary to go in to the background of this unit and the purpose for its organization prior to a discussion of the mission mentioned above.

General information relative to the Japanese was plentiful in the Pacific, but very little specific information was available and, as every commander needs specific information relative to a force that he is to engage in combat so that he can accomplish his mission with a minimum loss of human life, it was necessary to exercise such measures as were mandatory to collect such information. Air reconnaissance was excellent but there was much that could not be seen from the air. Documents and prisoners' stories were good but what could one believe and what not to believe? One could not formulate operations plans on a document or gamble a division against the dubious knowledge of a Japanese soldier or even an officer. Specific and timely information was needed - a means of getting precisely what you wanted to know when you wanted to know it. This was the problem that faced General Krueger, the commander of the Sixth US Army. (1)

Sharing the same problems, the Navy organized an experimental group known as Amphibious Scouts, all volunteers with special training. These scouts would land amphibiously, by night, in enemy territory, in small groups, reconnoiter for several days or weeks, and bring out eyewitness information on the enemy. These teams were composed of both American and Australian Army personnel and some Navy adventurers. These groups made several missions in to enemy territory for reconnaissance purposes, sometimes sending out their information by radio. Some of the missions were successful and others failed, with the team members being tortured to death. Considering the successes of these early groups, General Krueger saw practicability in a new and permanent organization operated by the Army for Army missions. It would mean a sifting out of troops from every part of the southwest Pacific to find the officers and men exactly suited to the task. They had to be courageous, but not foolhardy. They had to be volunteers because all of their work would be behind enemy lines where a spirit of adventure would add immeasurably to success. (2)

Recalling the bright history of his home town, San Antonio, Texas, and the Alamo, and the code name of the Sixth US Army, "Alamo", General Krueger decided to formulate a group of Army scouts and christened this small band "The Alamo Scouts". (3)

Once conceived, the idea sprang rapidly into fruition. High ranking Army officers were called upon to submit plans and to contribute ideas, gathered from such experience as they had had in reconnaissance and patrol work. Plans and ideas were submitted and weighed. How long should such a group be trained? How would candidates be selected? Where would a training base be set up? All these recommendations and questions were settled and on 28 November 1943, General Krueger published the following order, extracts of which are listed below:

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- (2) A-1
 - (3) A-1

"1. The ALAMO SCOUTS TRAINING CENTER is hereby established under the supervision of Headquarters Alamo Force at the earliest practicable date prior to 1 January 1944, and at a location in the vicinity of the present headquarters.

2. The training center will train selected volunteers in reconnaissance and raider work. The course will cover a six-weeks period. Specially selected graduates will be grouped into teams at the disposal of the Commanding General, Alamo Force, and will be designated "Alamo Scouts"; the remainder will be returned to their respective commands for similar use by their commanders.

3. Commanders of combat units will be called upon from time to time to furnish personnel for the above training. Personnel so selected must possess the highest qualifications as to courage, stamina, intelligence and adaptability."

Colonel Frederick W. Bradshaw (deceased) of JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI, was selected by General Krueger as the Director of the Scout Training Center, ably assisted by Lieutenant Colonel (then Captain) Gibson Niles. He was given the mission as outlined in the memorandum mentioned in the above paragraph, and directed to set up a training center on FERGUSON ISLAND off the NEW GUINEA coast on 3 December 1943. (4)

As the mission given Colonel Bradshaw was that of turning out a well-trained, well-conditioned group of men capable of skillful and secret reconnaissance behind enemy lines and within his island bases, personnel to attend the scouting school had to be selected with extreme care. In addition to having a sound background in ground combat, it was required that men have a high sense of duty, intelligence with imagination, self-discipline, common sense, good physical condition, and an unselfish and stable emotional background. It was impossible to find men with all the desired attributes, but those possessing the greatest number of them were selected. To insure

that there were no mental reservations on the part of the individual, each person was required to volunteer for this duty.

The training itself paralleled the selection of personnel in importance. The training period was of six weeks duration and as the time was insufficient to thoroughly train each soldier in every subject, it was taken for granted that students were versed in many of the basic subjects of the service. Refresher Courses were given in scouting, patrolling, map reading, and weapons. Subjects such as message writing, radio communication, aerial photography, intelligence, and field reconnaissance as a team were stressed and many hours were spent in teaching each tentative scout to excel in mastering them. The subjects that proved most interesting to the trainees was a thorough study in the use of all Japanese weapons and the employment of rubber boats in night landings from small naval craft. A great many hours were devoted to the amphibious, blackout landings, and as it proved to be the case in subsequent operations against the enemy, the ability to negotiate rough surf made possible the success of many missions.

Physical conditioning was second in importance to night landings; consequently, approximately two hours each day were devoted to a rigorous training program that became progressively more arduous. It was found that this team physical training and swimming prepared the scouts with an aggressive spirit, both mentally and physically, for the demands of difficult missions in the field. All were to learn of the paramount importance that a conditioned soldier was to play in lengthy missions behind enemy lines.

The training period was divided into two phases. The first three and one-half weeks were spent in refreshing the memories of the trainees on all the courses that could be taught in jungle classrooms or nearby terrain. The last phase of the training entailed the practical application of the subjects studied, plus the applied battle experience of the students in strenuous field problems. These problems were made as realistic as possible

under conditions that closely resembled those which would prevail in enemy territory. The practical application phase was a series of dry runs on what was to be expected of these teams in actual operations.

From the outset it had been the plan that only the best, the outstanding volunteers would be retained as Alamo Scouts, the others to be returned to their units for use as scouts. The question as to who would be retained as scouts was answered by Colonel Bradshaw and his staff in the following manner.

Each enlisted candidate was asked to name, by private ballot, the three officers, in order of his preference, he would be most willing to follow on a mission. He was also asked to name five other men into whose hands he would entrust his life, working with them as a team member on a mission. Student officers, in turn, were asked what men they would wish to have with them if they were assigned a mission. This policy was democratic and invaluable, it was found, in that some of the missions were as much as three months in length and when tempers and patience became frayed, it was much easier to keep a group in harmony that had been selected on this basis. The fact that not a single scout lost his life in more than seventy successful combat missions bears out not only the importance of careful training and detailed planning, but also the inestimable value of the painstaking selection of personnel.

General Krueger now had the unit he had planned. Scout teams trained to razor sharpness in every phase of scouting and intelligence. It remained now only to await a call from the G-2 Section of the Sixth Army under which the scouts operated.

The missions that the scouts performed from December 1943 to September 1945 fell into one of the following types:

1. Reconnaissance as represented by the majority of the missions carried out in the NEW GUINEA CAMPAIGN, reconnaissance of enemy defenses,

beaches, terrain, troop movements, etc in areas where future operations were planned far in advance of the location of friendly forces.

2. Reconnaissance-Intelligence missions as typified by those carried out in the PHILIPPINES. These missions were concerned not only with advanced reconnaissance, but also with organizing interior guerilla units, establishing radio intelligence nets behind the Japanese lines, reporting enemy concentrations, troop movements, and calling for air strikes deep in enemy territory.

3. Raiding missions as typified by the CABANATUAN PRISON release of the first American prisoners of war in January 1945 and by the mission described by this monograph. The scouts were not specifically trained for raiding missions but as they were a well-balanced fighting or reconnaissance team, they successfully accomplished the rescue missions that were assigned.

The scout team that this monograph concerns itself with was graduated from the Training Center on 9 September 1944. The center had been moved to HOLLANDIA by this time to keep abreast of the fast moving situation in the Pacific. Immediately upon graduation, this team and another, plus a contact party, were dispatched to an advanced torpedo boat and submarine refueling station, WOENDI ISLAND, off the coast of BIAK in DUTCH NEW GUINEA. It was felt that these teams should have a few minor missions to give them confidence in their ability prior to their use as a major contributing factor to the intelligence net of the G-2 Section of the Sixth Army. The balance of this monograph treats with a minor warm-up mission and one of the raiding type missions. (See Map A)

NARRATION

ROEMBERPON ISLAND MISSION (17 SEP - 2 OCT 1944)

MISSION

To assist in the evacuation of Dutch, Javanese, and British Indians that had escaped from the Japanese along the main coast of NEW GUINEA to

ROEMBERPON ISLAND, approximately five miles off the coastland, and supervise their loading on naval craft for transportation to BIAK ISLAND to be turned over to the Dutch.

COMPOSITION OF TEAM

1st Lieutenant Tom Rounsaville, team leader

Technical Sergeant Alfred Alfonso, assistant team leader

Sergeant Harold Hard

Private First Class Francis Laquier

Private First Class Franklin Fox

Private First Class Rufo Vaquilar

2d Lieutenant Louie Rapmund, NICA, interpreter

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The last American operation on the island of NEW GUINEA was the landing at CAPE SANSAPOR, DUTCH NEW GUINEA, on 30 July 1944. Followed on 15 September 1944 by our landing on MOROTAI ISLAND, the NEW GUINEA CAMPAIGN was effectively closed. The Allies now had powerful airbases and strong ground forces strategically located for another long step northward. NEW GUINEA as an enemy base had been effectively neutralized and in doing so the Allies had bypassed approximately 200,000 Japanese in the Southwest Pacific area. (See Map B) (5)

Among the by-passed areas was the ROEMBERPON ISLAND-CAPE ORANSBARI areas on the western shore of GEELVINK BAY southwest of NOEMFOOR ISLAND. A NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES group was at this time trying to reclaim as many of its people that were prisoners of the Japs as was possible from an advance base on ROEMBERPON ISLAND and to this area the above-named team was sent to get accustomed to working together as a team in enemy territory. Previous reports from this area indicated that there were isolated pockets of Japanese as well as barge supply stations in the MAORI RIVER area. (See Map B)

LANDING OPERATIONS

The team departed from BIAK ISLAND on 17 September 1944, using PT boats for transportation. It arrived on the west coast of ROEMBERPON ISLAND at approximately 2300 hours the same day and landed in rubber boats on the island where the Dutch Interpreter contacted the NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES people and the team established itself using the island as a base headquarters. Arrangements were made with the Navy to return every third night to pick up personnel assembled on ROEMBERPON. (See Map B)

OPERATIONS

There were already approximately 75 of the escaped prisoners on the island, having been brought there from the mainland in native canoes. The majority of these were transported to the PT boats the night of the initial landing and thence transported to BIAK and the Dutch authorities as had been planned. The following day the efforts of all involved were coordinated by the scouts and an effective plan was set up whereby the natives made scheduled nightly runs in canoes to the mainland to pick up prisoners. The Dutch personnel were assigned the task of questioning re-claimed persons for knowledge of the enemy and the location of other prisoners of the Japs. The plan worked successfully and a maximum load of these people was placed in the hands of the Navy for the journey to BIAK every third night according to schedule. A written report of enemy activity in the area was sent to WOENDI ISLAND each time a group was evacuated. The scout team made several trips to the mainland so as to give the team a chance to look over the area and get an idea of the traf-ficability of same.

On the night of 28 September 1944, the Dutch interpreters determined, by questioning a released prisoner, that the Japanese had a small strong-hold in the CAPE ORANSBARI area at the mouth of the MAORI RIVER and had, as hostages, a former white Dutch governor, his entire family and servants

who were employed in the cultivation of the plantation along the MAORI RIVER. (See Map B) As no white Dutch had been encountered up to this time, a report was made to the WOENDI ISLAND headquarters and the scout team, using the released prisoner that had furnished the information as a guide, crossed to the mainland to check the MAORI RIVER area. The team ascertained the location of all the buildings on the plantation, the location of both Japanese and Dutch prisoners, the location of all outposts, and the general situation as concerned the fordability of the MAORI RIVER by foot troops, the terrain and general outlay of the area, and definitely determined that the Dutch Governor was there as a prisoner. (See Map C) The team then returned to ROEMBERPON where it was found that orders were awaiting them to return to BIAK ISLAND to confer with the Dutch and other interested personnel to ascertain the advisability of attempting to rescue the Governor and his family. On the night of 2 October 1944, the Alamo Scout team, plus the guides that knew the MAORI RIVER country, the interpreters, and the remainder of the released prisoners, loaded on PT boats and returned to BIAK ISLAND. At BIAK it was decided that two teams would be combined under Lieutenant Rounsaville, with the assistance of three guides and Lieutenant Rapmund, and a rescue of the imprisoned Governor and his family would be attempted on 4 October 1944.

LESSONS LEARNED

The team had found that operating deep in enemy territory was relatively easy if a keen sense of alertness is maintained at all times. They had developed a greater amount of dependability in each other. The shake-down mission was a complete success in that the mission of evacuating the released prisoners was successfully accomplished and the team had developed an aggressive spirit toward the raid on CAPE ORANSEBARI which will be discussed in the following mission. (6)

CAPE ORANSBARI MISSION (4-5 OCTOBER 1944)

MISSION

To rescue and evacuate a Dutch family of fourteen and several Javanese who were held prisoner by the Japanese in an unnamed village three miles up the MAORI RIVER. The number of Japanese estimated to be in the small garrison guarding the village was twenty-six (26).

COMPOSITION OF TEAM

1st Lieutenant Tom Rounsaville, team leader
1st Lieutenant William E. Nellist, assistant team leader
Technical Sergeant Alfred Alfonso
Staff Sergeant Thomas Season
Sergeant Harold Hard
Corporal Andy E. Smith
Technician fifth grade Wilbert Wismer
Private First Class Francis Laquier
Private First Class Gilbert Cox
Private First Class Galen Kittleson
Private First Class Franklin Fox
Private First Class Rufo Vaquilar
Private First Class Bob Asis
2d Lieutenant Louis Rapmund, NICA, interpreter
Three native guides, NEI.

CONTACT TEAM

1st Lieutenant John M. Dove
Technician fourth grade William Watson
Private Charles Hill
Mo M M 1/C K. W. Sanders (USN)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The general situation for this mission was the same as for the one on ROEMBERPON ISLAND. The American landing at CAPE SANSAPOR, DUTCH NEW GUINEA, 30 July 1944, was the last large-scale operation on the island of NEW GUINEA. It had been immediately preceded by landings on NOEMFOOR ISLAND on 2 July 1944 and followed by a landing on MORTAI ISLAND 15 September 1944.

The Allies now had strategically located ground forces and airbases to be used as jump-off points to the north in the continuance of the Pacific Campaign. Approximately 200,000 Japanese had been by-passed in effectively neutralizing NEW GUINEA as an enemy stronghold. (See Map A)

Among these by-passed areas was the CAPE ORANSBARI area on the western shore of GEELVINK BAY, southwest of NOEMFOOR ISLAND. Previous Alamo Scout reports indicated that a Dutch family and some Javanese were being held prisoners by the isolated Japanese in the MAORI RIVER area. (7) Previous reconnaissance of the area had also revealed other Japanese pockets in this area as well as some barge traffic on the waterways for resupply purposes.

LANDING OPERATIONS

1. The scout team armed with Thompson sub-machine guns, smoke, and fragmentation grenades and hunting knives, and carrying one SCR 300 radio with one SCR 300 being left on the PT boats for use of the contact party for ship to shore communication departed from BIAK ISLAND on the 4th of October 1944. The team arrived at a point (See Maps A and C) 3 1/2 miles from CAPE ORANSBARI the same date and proceeded to land in five-man rubber assault boats, accomplishing same at 1930 hours. As had been previously planned, one of the native guides was sent to the front and one to each flank along the shore from the landing place. Upon the return of these

(7) A-3, A-4

natives with a report of no enemy in the area, the contact team was released to return to the waiting PT boats and the team proceeded inland toward the MAORI RIVER guided by the guide who had previously been a captive in the same area. The track was nearly obliterated but it approached the native village through a mangrove swamp which constituted the only unprotected flank of the village.

2. It was estimated that it would take the team approximately twelve hours from the time of landing to accomplish the mission.

OPERATIONS ASHORE

The native guides preceded the teams in an ^{Southern} easterly direction toward MAORI RIVER and arrived there at point B approximately 6 1/2 hours later. The team leader immediately sent the guide that was acquainted with the area into the village to attempt to get last minute information relative to enemy dispositions, if available. He returned with the information that the Japs were disposed the same as when he had escaped from them seven days prior to that time. Based on his information and a tentative plan already in existence, the following plan for the rescue was made:

1. The assistant team leader was to take four men and cross the MAORI at point B at 0300 and proceed to point F, an enemy outpost known to have two machine guns. Upon the commencement of firing from the main village, he was to kill the members of the outpost and move the machine guns to a position where he could cover the native track along the ocean that led in to the position from the south as this was the only direction that could furnish reinforcements to the position fast enough to cause a delay to the plan. If he did not hear the initial firing in the village, he would automatically hit the outpost at dawn. (See Map C)

2. The team leader accompanied by the remainder of the party was to cross the MAORI RIVER above the village at which point the team was divided in the following manner:

a. Two men were detailed to proceed to point D and kill the two Japanese officers living there, making sure not to harm the village chief who the Japs were holding as a hostage to protect them from native uprisings.

b. The interpreter and two NEI guides were to proceed to the enclosures housing the Dutch prisoners at point E. Their mission was to get the Dutch and Javanese ready to travel as soon as the position had been neutralized.

c. The team leader and five men were to proceed to the main garrison, point C, arriving there so as to start the attack as soon after 0400 as practicable. It was known that the Japanese cook arose at 0400 to prepare the morning meal. The initial burst of fire from this group was the signal for all three parties to simultaneously attack. It was further planned that the team leader would send a message to the assistant team leader by one of the NEI guides as soon as the mission in the village had been successfully accomplished so that the team leader could return the messenger with the word that it was safe to proceed to point G for pick-up by the PT boats and the contact team.

3. A radio reported to be located in the barracks at point C was to be destroyed by the team leader's group prior to his departure from the village.

EXECUTION OF THE PLAN

The team leader with the entire group, less the assistant leader and four men, crossed the MAORI RIVER approximately one hundred yards above the unnamed native village occupied by the Japanese at 0330. Immediately upon crossing the river the party was divided as had been previously planned. Two men were dispatched to take care of the Japanese officers in hut D; the interpreter and two NEI soldiers were sent to alert the Dutch and Javanese with instructions to get them ready to travel as soon as possible after the firing stopped. The team leader and five men,

accompanied by their guide, proceeded to within five yards of the barracks at C and were in position to administer the proper sedative to the enemy at 0400. The team spread out a bit to allow better fire coverage of the building and opened fire at 0410. After one magazine of ammunition had been fired, white phosphorous grenades were thrown into the building to facilitate better lighting and more accurate firing. The move was a complete surprise, thereby fourteen of the Japs were killed in bed with only four wounded Japs getting out the back way and in to a trench in rear of the building. These Japs were dressed only in shorts and after they were flushed out of the trench by two members of the team, killing two when the Japs ran, it was deemed inadvisable to pursue the remaining two into the jungle because time was too valuable to waste in such a manner.

At point D, the two men entered the hut housing the two officers, and upon the initial burst of fire from point C knifed one to death and an attempt was made to capture the other, but he was hit so hard by one of the scouts that he died later. The native chief was released and the area was canvassed for documents.

The fire-fight was hardly over when the Dutch officer and his assistants had begun assembling the rescued family and the Javanese and preparing them for the evacuation to point G for pick-up by the PT boats.

The assistant team leader in the meantime had crossed the MAORI RIVER at 0300, proceeding toward point F along a native track, preceded by his native guide. He was in position at 0400 but because of the dense jungle growth in the area blanketing the sound of firing from the village, he failed to hear the initial firing so he placed his men in position and awaited daylight, according to the previous plan. At 0530 he killed the four Japanese sentries on duty, reclaimed the machine guns, moved them to a position from which he could cover the only accessible route in to the village, the trail coming in from the south along the ocean, and awaited

the messenger from the team leader.. This group had now established a small perimeter protecting the pick-up point, point G, from any enemy that might try reenforcing the area.

The mission in the village was completed by 0530 with a messenger being dispatched to the assistant team leader asking him to get in contact with the contact team aboard the PT boats and call in the boats to point G. The radio and all supplies in the village were destroyed. The entire area was canvassed for documents and other matter of intelligence value. The group was then assembled, front and rear security established, and departed along the trail paralleling the MAORI RIVER for the pick-up point at point G. The assistant team leader had notified the team leader in the meantime that point G had been secured. The trip to point G was uneventful with the entire party being taken aboard the PT boats by 0700. Twenty-two of the Japanese guarding the Dutch had been killed, two had been seriously wounded. All of the Dutch and Javanese were rescued without injury and were returned to BLAK ISLAND where they were turned over to the Dutch authorities.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The great weapon of surprise had been used to the maximum in that a small group successfully neutralized a larger force through the media of careful planning, flawless execution so as to achieve complete surprise, plus the coordination with each element of the team carrying out its particular mission.

It was believed later that two SCR 300 radios should have been carried whereby the delay in hitting point F, the machine gun outpost, and the organization of the evacuation point would have been simultaneous with the other action. The failure of sound carrying in dense jungle had been overlooked.

LESSONS

1. All night action must be typified by careful planning, coordination, and flawless execution. It was through this media that a smaller force was able to successfully neutralize a larger force which in turn led to the successful completion of the mission.
2. The control would have been greatly facilitated if two SCR 300 radios had been carried, one with the team leader and the other with the assistant team leader. The failure of sound carrying in the dense jungle ^{is often} ~~had been~~ overlooked.
3. Native guides greatly add to the speed and precision with which a patrol operates in strange country.
4. Interpreters expedite the release and assembly of prisoners for a quick get away where they fluently speak the same language as the prisoners.
5. The experience that these teams gained here was used to maximum advantage when these same teams were used in a similar fashion as the reconnaissance element of the rescue force that retook our first American prisoners of war from the Japanese at CABANATUAN, LUZON, PHILLIPINE ISLANDS, in January 1945.