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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 41ST INFANTRY REGIMENT  
(PHILIPPINE ARMY) OF THE 41ST INFANTRY DIVISION  
IN THE DEFENSE OF THE ABUCAY LINE, BATAAN,  
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, 10-18 JANUARY 1942  
(PHILIPPINE CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of an American Instructor  
with the Philippine Army)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY REGIMENT IN THE  
DEFENSE OF A MAIN BATTLE POSITION

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) of the 41st Infantry Division in the defense of the Abucay Line, Bataan, Philippine Islands, 10-18 January 1942, during the defense of Bataan.

In order to orient the reader, it will be necessary to discuss briefly the major events which led up to this action.

On 7 December 1941 approximately nine hours after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese airforce struck devastating blows on the lightly held garrisons in the Philippine Islands, reducing the small but capable airforce to a skeletal operational and offensive arm. (See Map A) (1) The enemy followed this attack with subsequent landings on the North, West and East of the main island of Luzon, making it necessary for the Commanding General, Douglas MacArthur, to rush the scattered Filipino-American defenders into the small peninsula of Bataan. (2)

In Bataan, under a light but gallant covering force, the majority of the troops in the Philippines, stationed on Luzon, were ordered to prepare a defensive position known as the Main Line, reaching from the eastern side of Bataan near the small barrio of Abucay and stretching in a general westerly direction across the peninsula to the forward slopes of Mt. Natib. (See Map B) (3)

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(1) A-1, p.70  
(2) A-1, p.74  
(3) A-2, p.17

## THE GENERAL SITUATION

The main defense line consisted of a system of defenses taking advantage of any terrain features or communication nets possible. The plan of the Commanding General, II Corps, was to block the North-South highway on the eastern side of the peninsula with a strong and well trained force and to use successively trained units on their left in an effort to withhold the Japanese striking elements. (4) The terrain presented obstacles from the eastern side of the peninsula to the center of the forward slopes of Mt. Natib. Beginning at sea level at Manila Bay, the terrain made a steady but rugged ascent, and the left sector of the II Corps was perched precariously in the rugged and practically impassible area on the northern slopes of Mt. Natib. Near the Manila Bay side, rice paddies and some cane fields were present, but the cultivation by man stopped abruptly and the terrain became rugged jungle growth with deep gorges and extremely heavy foliage. (5) The Philippine Division's 57th Infantry (PS) occupied the primary position astride the North-South highway on the Manila Bay side of the peninsula. (6) A small barrier of Mabatang was partly destroyed in order to afford fields of fire, (7) and the road running from Mabatang to Mt. Natib was used for movement of troops and supplies prior to its denial by the enemy. The

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- (4) A-2, P.19
  - (5) A-5
  - (6) A-3, P.48
  - (7) A-5

41st Infantry Division (PA) under the command of General Vencent1 Lim (PA) occupied the position to the right. The 51st Division (PA) under the command of Major General Jones (USA) occupied the left part of the II Corps sector on the forward slopes of Mt. Natib. (See Map C) (8)

*of what?*

Generally the combat efficiency of the opposing forces was anything but equal. The enemy was ~~l~~ well trained, disciplined, combat seasoned and victorious. Their equipment was modern, and their supplies adequate. Every soldier had confidence in his weapon. The Japanese army was supported by a large and efficient airforce and adequate artillery of sufficient caliber to support the attacks.

Opposing this force was the Philippine Army, composed of poorly trained and disciplined troops. American officers and noncommissioned officers had been assigned to the various divisions, regiments and battalions to instruct and guide the training of these units. (9) Only a few soldiers had completed range practice with their primary weapon. The equipment from the blue denim uniform and the helmets made from coconut husks to the old Lee Enfield rifle were out-dated and inadequate. Engineer equipment such as picks, shovels and machetes were lacking in all units. (10) The best weapon available to the Philippine Army infantry soldier was the Browning caliber 30 machine gun model 1917 with the old World War I mount. Artillery units were formed and partially equipped, but lack of training hampered their effectiveness. (11)

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(8) A-1, p.19  
(9) A-1, p.4  
(10) Personal knowledge  
(11) A-1, p.21

After the initial attacks of the Japanese airforce, the supporting friendly airforce was relegated to a reconnaissance roll. It should be borne in mind that language difficulties posed a training problem before the war and during the subsequent fighting. (12)

Based on the above analysis, those troops in the defense of the Main Line of Bataan had anything but a confident feeling.

#### DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS 41ST INFANTRY REGIMENT (PA)

The 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) was composed of three battalions, a heavy weapons company, a headquarters, a headquarters and service company and a medical detachment. Assigned to this Regiment were seven officers (USA) and 13 enlisted men (USA). The strength of the Regiment was 1821. (13) Their arrival into the main battle position was made in commandeered alcohol burning vehicles, and over three days were required for the stragglers to locate the unit. On 25 December 1941, the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) moved into positions on the MLR assigned by the 41st Infantry Division (PA). The sector assigned was approximately 4500 yards wide on the left of the 57th Infantry (PS). The Regiment was directed to organize a single line in width and dig in defensive positions. This order was modified by orders to prepare the positions in depth. (14)

The senior instructor held a short conference with the American instructors, and the Filipino regimental and battalion

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(12) A-3, p.46

(13) A-5

(14) Personal knowledge

commanders and issued a tentative order for the organization of the defense. The senior instructor assigned specific recon-  
missions  
*along* naissance/ of the entire front to locate key terrain and likely avenues of approach. It was difficult to outline the MLR, as many of the alcohol burning vehicles had stalled and considerable confusion resulted before the proposed front line was clear. (15)

Officers and men alike failed to realize the task upon them, and it appeared they were making little progress. The following day the 42nd Infantry Regiment (PA) arrived and went in on the left, and the Regimental front was reduced to 2600 yards, enabling establishment of support and reserve lines. (16) The latest information available as to the enemy intentions indicated a determined effort to crush our covering force. Enemy aircraft began attacks on the organizing units of the main defense line. During the period 29 December to 8 January the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) worked at top speed to organize their defensive positions. Barbed wire obstacles were constructed without the use of iron stakes and with little or no engineering tools. (17) Bayonets and the personal bolos of the Filipinos proved to be the most valuable and practicable equipment available. Some soldiers resorted to the use of meat can covers in preparing fox holes, machine gun emplacements and communication trenches. The American instructors with the Infantry Regiment under the stern but purposeful guidance of Col. Loren A. Wetherby (USA) produced a conscientious and progressive effort throughout the entire Regiment. The 41st

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- (15) Personal knowledge  
(16) A-5  
(17) Personal knowledge

Infantry Regiment (PA) was disposed on the MLR with 1st Battalion on the right. The 2nd Battalion was on the left, and the 3rd Battalion had the dual job of occupying and organizing the RRL and preparing and occupying the OPLR. (See Map D) With each Battalion was one officer instructor (USA) and two, or in some cases four, enlisted assistants (USA). This personnel cannot be too highly praised for their hard work and *the* results of this Regiment.

Detailed plans as to routes, boundaries, gaps, coordinated fire plan and final protective lines were worked out in each front line battalion to include the battalion support line. The 3rd Battalion in Regimental reserve would be used to effect immediate and effective counterattacks. (18)

#### BATTLE SITUATION

By 8 January 1942 the defense positions of the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) were beginning to take shape, and confidence began to creep into the hearts of the personnel. Telephone communication with battalions <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ installed and, although the original front line had to be moved forward approximately 50 yards to tie into the 42nd Infantry Regiment (PA) on the left, none of the original preparations were removed, primarily (the double apron barbed wire fence. With the construction and completion of the new MLR tactical wire, the defenders in the front line companies found themselves with barbed wire to their front and again to their immediate rear. This particular situation was frowned upon by visiting staff officers from Division and Corps, and the order for the removal of the wire

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(18) Personal knowledge

in the immediate rear was issued. (19) Subsequent action by the enemy prevented this order from being carried out. Col. Wetherby, (USA), senior instructor of the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA), accompanied by Lt. Col. Fidel Cruz (PA), Regimental Commander, inspected and ordered changes in the OPLR. (20) About 1600 on the afternoon of 8 January within a few minutes after their return to the MLR, the OPLR made contact with the enemy patrols. (21) At this time the Regiment received its first casualties, two wounded. Final coordination was made with units on right and left as to support fire. Artillery concentration sheets were distributed from the direct support and general support artillery. The 41st Field Artillery Battalion (PA) with sixteen 75-mm guns were in direct support of the Regiment. A forward observer from this battalion was with each of the front line infantry battalions. A liaison officer was with the Regimental forward CP, and telephone communication was installed to the fire direction center.

The 86th Field Artillery Battalion equipped with 155-mm rifles (GPF) were in general support of II Corps. (23) The heavy weapons of the Regiment were under Regimental control. The 50 caliber water cooled Colt machine guns were implaced in the battalion support positions and afforded the Regiment its only anti-tank defense. These weapons were of early vintage. Americans in the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA), either officer or enlisted, had never seen or used this type weapon. It was very heavy and took six men to operate it effectively. One man in

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(19) Personal knowledge

(20) Personal knowledge

(21) A-5

(22) A-1, p.27

(23) A-1, p.22

an adjacent hole cranked the water pump for cooling. The three inch stokes mortar platoon was located in rear of the RRL, and wire communication was sufficient for only one observer.

On 9 January some small arms fire and enemy artillery registration were received on the 41st Infantry (PA) sector. Air activity increased in volume and intensity by strafing and bombing of CPs and front line positions. This situation created some chaos among unseasoned troops. <sup>a</sup> Few minor casualties were reported in the Regiment. In front of the 3rd Battalion 57th Infantry (PS) on the immediate right and 100 yards across the front of the 1st Battalion was a heavy sugar cane field approximately seven acres in area. This cane field was 400 yards in front of MLR positions. (24) Attempts to destroy the cane field by the Regiment and the engineers failed prior to the attack of the main battle positions. This gave the enemy a superior route of approach to attack positions in front of the 3rd Battalion 57th Infantry (PS) and the 1st Battalion 41st Infantry Regiment (PA). As an after thought a telephone line was run from the Regimental forward CP, located in the center of the sector and approximately 150 yards in rear of the battalion support lines, to the CP of 3rd Battalion 57th Infantry (PS). This small means of communications proved invaluable in the subsequent days of fighting. (25)

About 1900 hours on 9 January 1942 three low flying enemy planes passed parallel to the front lines about 150 yards in rear of the RRL. They did not fire or drop bombs, so it was estimated to be a reconnaissance mission, although it was too

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(24) A-3, p.47

(25) A-5

dark to see effectively. Darkness descended rapidly, and in the rear position intense firing broke out. This created general alarm and confusion along the entire front. The untrained soldiers fired their weapons from within the fox holes. In the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) forty-five minutes to an hour was required to effect control. What was first believed to be infiltrated troops resulted in a fire cracker type explosive that was dropped by the low flying enemy planes and probably detonated by absorbing moisture. (26) Results, no casualties, but a complete picture of the defensive positions revealed to the enemy, and to those on the battle position a more complete understanding of the inadequately trained troops that were to defend.

#### NARRATION

##### FIRST ENEMY ATTACK ON MAIN LINE

Contact with the enemy brought the anticipated problem at hand, and every effort was made in distribution of ammunition. Last minute checks were made with artillery forward observers, and encouraging contact was made with units on both flanks. A last look at our hasty defenses and the fight was on for the main battle position. N

Shortly after daylight the enemy shelled our positions with what was estimated to be fifty shells per minute in the Regimental sector. This was simultaneous with air bombing and strafing. Other than artillery registration and light bombing, this was the first experience under artillery fire and concentrated air attacks. Confusion resulted. Some troops left their advanced fox holes to seek better cover to the rear near the Mabatang-Mt. Natib road (See Map D), where the MLR

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(26) Personal knowledge

was first dug in. The majority of those withdrawing never found courage to return to their advanced positions. The enemy's advanced elements attacked the OPLR on the south slopes of the Calaguiman River valley and forced it back to the MLR. The 41st Field Artillery Battalion (PA) fired concentrations, and it appeared that the enemy had dispersed. On the right in front of the 57th Infantry (PS) larger enemy elements advanced south of the Calaguiman River. The 24th Field Artillery (PS) in the direct support of the 57th Infantry (PS) laid down effective concentrations in front of the 57th Infantry (PS) sector. The withdrawing of the OPLR in the 41st Infantry (PA) sector was considered premature, but this was expected of untrained troops encountering their first aimed fire. The OPLR of the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) was not established again for many days. (27)

After the first heavy enemy shelling and air bombing, the enemy artillery decreased in intensity until only occasional shells were falling in the Regimental area. Air attacks continued throughout the daylight hours. Air observation of the artillery positions brought immediate retaliation, causing the supporting artillery to cease firing during daylight hours. This fact alone reduced the American-Filipino forces in their effectiveness to thwart the Japanese in their preparation for the attack on the main battle position.

At 2245 hours the enemy attacked in strength on the front of the 3rd Battalion 57th Infantry (PS) from the woods and through the sugar can field. (See Map D) (28) The 1st Battalion

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(27) Personal knowledge

(28) A-4, p.14

41st Infantry (PA) engaged in this fight and suffered some casualties. The Japanese casualties were heavy. The 57th Infantry (PS) was forced back to the MLR positions. Light harassing fire was received along the remainder of the 41st Infantry (PA) front. The reaction of the Regiment in this engagement was heartening.

Daylight on 11 January was greeted with heavy enemy action by fire, artillery, bombs, strafing, mortars and small arms on the entire front and on the right and left of the 41st Infantry (PA) sector. The enemy made excellent use of darkness and the fight in front of the 57th Infantry (PS) to prepare and place in action artillery, mortars and direct fire 37-mm weapons. During this early fire attack some of the machine guns and mortars in the 41st Infantry (PA) sector were put out of action by direct artillery hits. This fire attack by the enemy continued throughout the daylight hours. Earlier during the afternoon Col. Wetherby (USA) and Lt. Col. Cruz (PA) visited Headquarters 3rd Battalion 57th Infantry (PS) and coordinated the plans with the battalion commander, Col. Philip E. Fry (USA). It was decided at this time that the lateral telephone laid between the CP of the 3rd Battalion and the 41st Infantry (PA) forward CP could be used in case the situation became critical in either sector. (29)

Shortly after dusk carrying parties from the service elements, approximately three miles to the rear, brought water, food, ammunition and a whole host of encouraging rumors.

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(29) Personal knowledge

Contact with the 42nd Infantry (PA) on the left was uninterrupted, and contact with the 57th Infantry (PS) was completely reestablished on the right by Col. Wetherby (USA) and Lt. Col. Cruz (PA).

About 2100 hours on the 11 January the enemy assaulted the 3rd Battalion 57th Infantry (PS) on the right after a preparation of combined heavy artillery and mortars. This preparation included the 1st Battalion 41st Infantry (PA). The fierce infantry attacks came from the cane field directly into the face of dug in 2.95 artillery pieces, heavy machine guns and M-1 rifles of the Philippine Scouts. A large group of the enemy fell before this devastating fire, but unending rushes of attacks succeeded in forcing I Company (the left company of the 3rd Battalion 57th Infantry (PS)) from their positions, and 1st Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) refused its right flank. (30)

Company C 41st Infantry (PA) was placed on the right flank in echelon to fill the gap. The enemy had failed to make a penetration of any importance, and their attack slowed down.

The Japanese pressed their attack throughout the night. Approximately 20 to 25 scouts, soldiers from Company I, were picked up in the rear of the 1st Battalion sector and brought to the Regimental forward CP. These men were placed in a small ~~revere~~ <sup>revere</sup> in the rear of the CP and questioned by one of the assistant instructors, (USA). It was determined that the situation of the I Company sector, 3rd Battalion 57th Infantry (PS) was extremely critical. The 1st sergeant and both officers

were casualties. The machine guns had been lost. Ammunition supply was low and in some cases exhausted. (31)

A message was sent to the 3rd Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) Regimental Reserve with orders to supply the members of I Company 57th Infantry (PS) with sufficient ammunition. This was accomplished almost at once to everyone's surprise.

#### COUNTERATTACK 57TH INFANTRY AREA

About 0400 hours 12 January Col. Philip E. Fry (USA), Commander, 3rd Battalion 57th Infantry (PS) called Col. Wetherby (USA) on the lateral telephone and outlined the situation as he knew it in his battalion. Some elements of the Japanese forces were on each side of his CP, and the situation was very critical. He had lost contact with I Company and could obtain no information. Col. Wetherby (USA) informed him of the situation as he knew it, and both parties immediately agreed that aggressive action must be taken at once. (See Map E) Col. Wetherby (USA) and Lt. Col. Cruz (PA) in a conference agreed that a counterattacking unit from the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) would report to Col. Fry (USA) at his CP and try to stem the Japanese advance until assistance from higher headquarters could be received. (32)

An American instructor (USA), the executive officer to Col. Wetherby (USA), was ordered to take C Company 41st Infantry (PA) and organize the members of I Company 57th Infantry (PS) into a counterattacking unit and attack as soon as possible in a north northeast direction. Daylight was breaking before the counterattacking unit could be organized and orders issued.

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(31) Personal knowledge

(32) Personal knowledge

The I Company elements of the 57th Infantry (PS) were placed in the center of the counterattacking force. This was the first effort of the 41st Infantry (PA) units in the attack. Apprehension was felt by all concerned at the possibility of its success. In moving into the 57th infantry (PS) sector the counterattacking force was stopped behind a rice dike approximately four feet high. The force was deployed about 160 yards along this dike. The company commander and platoon leaders with the assistance of the instructor (USA) checked all men as to their readiness and oriented them as to the mission. The counterattacking force was to move directly over the rice dike, pass through a barbed wire entanglement and clear the woods of snipers in the vicinity of the 3rd Battalion 57th Infantry (PS) CP, approximately 100 yards directly to the front. After passing the 3rd Battalion CP, they were to continue in a line back to the original MLR.

Just as the signal of the attack was to be given, the assistant instructor (USA) observed approaching from the rear and slightly to the right of the counterattacking force's position, two vehicles, one a civilian sedan and the other a 1½ ton truck. They were moving very rapidly up an engineer road in the center of the 57th Infantry (PS) sector. These two vehicles were also observed by the Japanese, and intense fire was brought to bear on them. They stopped when they saw the counterattacking force, and Major Skolls (USA) jumped out of the civilian sedan and ordered the personnel of the truck to dismount. Major Skolls (USA) contacted the assistant instructor (USA) of the counterattacking force. He stated that he had brought a platoon of heavy machine guns from the 57th

Infantry (PS) reserve unit. The assistant instructor (USA) 41st Infantry (PA) briefly outlined the situation and the plan of attack. Major Skolls (USA) attached the platoon to the counterattacking force and returned to the rear to report the situation. (32) The truck parked directly in back of the sedan had suffered a direct hit by an artillery shell and was rendered useless. The sergeant in charge of the machine gun platoon reported to the assistant instructor (USA) for orders. A brief conference was held with the Filipino company commander. A platoon of infantry was ordered to provide close in protection to the platoon of heavy machine guns. They were to displace forward by section, furnishing flanking and grazing fire across the front of the attacking force. The coordinating of this fire required three trips in exposed terrain by the assistant instructor (USA), as the machine gun platoon had to be on the left of the attacking force to give flanking fire.

With a prearranged signal, a burst of machine gun fire, the attack jumped off about 0550 hours. Approximately 10 casualties were sustained in the first few seconds after moving over the top of the rice dike. By 0630 hours the woods had been cleared of many of the snipers in the vicinity of the CP 3rd Battalion 57th Infantry (PS). The assistant instructor (USA) reported to Col. Fry (USA) and was ordered to continue the attack. Col. Fry (USA) obtained supporting artillery from the 24th Field Artillery (PS). This fire was to fall on the former main line positions and to lift on call. (33) The counterattack was successful in stopping the enemy advance and pushed the 3rd Battalion 57th Infantry (PS) lines back to the creek south of

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(32) Personal knowledge  
(33) Personal knowledge

the Mabatang-Mt. Natib Road, where friendly artillery and Japanese mortar fire prevented further forward movement. (See Map E)

The counterattacking force being dressed in blue denim presented an unfamiliar sight in the 57th Infantry (PS) sector and at first were believed to be enemy forces by the artillery observers. The counterattacking force held this position until relieved by reinforcements of the 57th Infantry (PS). They were then returned to the 41st Infantry (PA) control.

Simultaneously with the counterattacking force the 1st Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) pushed its own right flank back to the main line positions. Japanese efforts throughout the remainder of 12 January consisted of artillery fire and air strikes. By this time the personnel of the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) had recovered from their first shock of combat reactions and dug in more firmly for the assault they knew would come.

#### ENEMY ATTACK ON THE 41ST INFANTRY REGIMENT (PA)

Throughout the night of 12 January and until dawn of 13 January, the direct support artillery battalion and the general support 155 GPF battalion pounded the enemy sector. This fire stopped abruptly with daylight, and the enemy artillery, mortar fire and air attacks started with the heaviest fire yet sustained. As the enemy air attacks were unopposed, their strikes became more severe and accurate. The 2nd Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) received the heaviest casualties, although the 1st Battalion received many casualties. The advanced CP of the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) had been pinpointed, and artillery pounded this sector throughout the day.

It was estimated that four hundred 105-mm shells fell within a 400 yard circle of the CP during the day. (34) Signal communication was disrupted, and its maintenance practically impossible. Lt. Garcia (PA), Headquarters Company 41st Infantry (PA), performed in an excellent manner with his communication repair crews in reestablishing telephone communications. Distribution of rations, water and ammunition was accomplished prior to daylight. No direct assault was attempted during the th of 13/January. Observation of troop and truck movement was noted friendly for the/artillery, which was preparing for the retaliation as soon as the sun set. The effectiveness of artillery fire in the defense of the Main Line cannot be too highly praised.

The enemy attack by fire continued on 14 January. Small mortar and 37-mm guns were far enough forward to fire at machine gun emplacements and individual fox holes. The casualty toll grew rapidly. Mid-afternoon of the 14 January the 2nd Battalion had 50% casualties in its two front line companies. The artillery observer with the 2nd Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) was withdrawn when an enemy shell hit the tree he occupied close to the 2nd Battalion CP. The enemy fire became so devastating on the exposed positions of the 2nd Battalion that its front line companies were withdrawn to the support line south of the Dalahetan Creek, south of the Mabatang-Mt. Natib Road. (See Map F) About 1700 hours the 1st Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) on the right of the Regimental sector withdrew to south of the Dalahetan Creek, as its two front line companies were exposed on the right by the position of the 57th Infantry (PS), and the left was exposed as a result of the withdrawal of the front

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(34) A-5

line companies of the 2nd Battalion. In addition friendly artillery could not render close in supporting fires while they held their front line positions.

By 2000 hours 550 casualties, dead and wounded, had been reported in the Regiment. (35) Friendly artillery continued to fire on Japanese positions and <sup>to interdict</sup> ~~interdiction~~ of roads. Under the cover of darkness food, water and ammunition were furnished, and, in addition, reorganization of the two front line battalions were effected. The 3rd Battalion took over the duties of the 2nd Battalion on the Main Line, and the 2nd Battalion was placed in Regimental reserve. Urgent requisitions were rushed to the 41st Infantry Division Headquarters (PA) for additional machine guns to replace weapons lost by direct hits of enemy fire.

At daylight of 15 January the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 41st Infantry (PA) with artillery support from the direct support battalion counterattacked to restore the Main Line positions of the front line companies. The 3rd Battalion failed to gain against the enemy, who had infiltrated in the wooded bottom of Dalahetan Creek. Upon reporting the situation to 41st Infantry Division Headquarters (PA), the 41st Engineer Battalion (PA) was attached to support the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) and was placed on the RRL, and the remnants of the 2nd Battalion were made into a composite battalion with the 3rd Battalion. Enemy attacks by artillery and air increased in intensity. All requests for air support and anti-aircraft protection were answered with "not available". (36) At 1700 hours the 3rd Battalion 32nd ?

Result 7  
1st Bn att

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(35) A-5  
(36) A-5

Infantry (PA), less one company and one platoon<sup>of</sup>/machine guns, was attached to the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA). They were held in rear of the RRL until dark. Their mission was to counterattack with 1st Battalion to restore the Main Line positions of the 3rd Battalion on the Regimental left the following morning. The 1st Battalion was withdrawn to the south side of Dalahetan Creek under a cover of darkness, and preparations were made for the attack. The regimental commander and senior instructor decided to move to the Regimental CP from the forward CP about 700 yards in rear of RRL. The supporting artillery withdrew to rear positions. The communication section of the 41st Infantry (PA) salvaged some abandoned telephone wire thus enabling the establishment of telephone lines to the battalions from the Regimental rear CP. This communication system was installed during the night and completed early the following morning. The forward CP of the 41st Infantry (PA) originally 150 yards in rear of the support line (now the firing line) was subject to enemy artillery, mortar and small arms fire. The personnel moved to the new Regimental CP under the cover of darkness. The abandoned CP was occupied by the battalion commander and staff of the left front line battalion, and, almost instantly, direct shell fire hit and destroyed the CP and killed three officers (PA) and four enlisted men (PA). Major Lee Lauderbeck (USA), assistant instructor, was placed in command of the 2nd and 3rd composite Battalion in lieu of a qualified Filipino officer. The enemy attacked the 1st Battalion sector at 2330 hours but was unable to effect a penetration. As a result, the attack shifted to the left battalion sector, and small arms fire continued until about 0300 hours of 16 January.

*Not clear*

*Withdrawn to same location at 1700 14/16*

The counterattack jumped off at 0600 hours on the 16 January and was partially successful. The 1st Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) regained its positions on the MLR, but the 2nd and 3rd Composite Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) in conjunction with 3rd Battalion 32nd Infantry (PA) was unable to advance. This was partly due to the lack of friendly artillery and mortar support. The artillery could not fire, as the enemy positions were approximately 200 yards from the battalion support line. Fifty to sixty percent of the three inch stokes mortar ammunition failed to detonate, <sup>and</sup> thus was ineffective. The counterattack was called off at 1000 hours, and reorganization was made. The 3rd Battalion 32nd Infantry (PA) and the 2nd and 3rd Composite Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) had suffered heavy casualties in both officers and men. The remnants of the 3rd Battalion 32nd Infantry was placed on the RRL. At approximately the same time, the counterattack was stopped, 90 enlisted men (PA) arrived at the Regimental CP from straggler lines in the Division area. These replacements were used to bolster the Regiment and were assigned to Major Lauderbeck's (USA) composite battalion and, for the most part, were placed on the battalion support line. The 1st Battalion remained on its MLR and fired to the left in order to prohibit reserves from joining the enemy spearhead during the daylight hours. Enemy fire and air attacks continued throughout the day.

At 2100 hours, Lt. Nathaniel Matthews, Infantry (USA), assistant instructor, 2nd Battalion 43rd Infantry Regiment (PA) on orders from the 41st Infantry Division (PA) reported that the 2nd Battalion 43rd Infantry (PA) was attached to the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA)(organic weapons only). This bat-

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talion was assigned to assist the 1st Battalion in another counterattack to restore the front line company's MLR positions. Again the 1st Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) was withdrawn so artillery could fire to support the counterattack.

#### SUCCESSFUL COUNTERATTACK

The counterattack supported by artillery fire jumped off at 0830 hours, 17 January. No artillery preparation was made. The late time being set to allow officers of the 2nd Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) an opportunity to view the terrain in daylight. Again the 1st Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) retook the Main Line positions, but the 2nd Battalion 43rd Infantry (PA) and the composite 2nd and 3rd Battalions 41st Infantry (PA) advanced only a few yards. The 1st Battalion was unable to extend to the left to cut in rear of enemy penetrations. The artillery support was over and did not strike the enemy in the creek bottom. Lt. Matthew was killed in leading the attack of the 2nd Battalion 43rd Infantry (PA). Casualties were heavy on both sides. The counterattacking force was reorganized and continued to occupy the battalion support line on the left of the Regimental sector. Effort to penetrate the enemy positions by patrols into the creek bottom and scattered woods were partially successful, but heavy casualties precluded this action. The Regiment had suffered over 700 casualties up to this time. Enemy shelling and air bombing and small arms fire continued throughout the day. Arrangements were made to continue the counterattack the following morning.

atk of 73d  
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A conference was held in the Regimental CP at 2000 hours with the following units represented: 41st Field Artillery Battalion (PA), 42nd Infantry Regiment (PA), 2nd Battalion 43rd Infantry (PA), 41st Engineer Battalion (PA), battalion commanders of the 1st Battalion and the composite 2nd and 3rd Battalions 41st Infantry Regiment (PA). As a result of this conference, the following plan was made. A coordinated counter-attack against the enemy salient 41st Infantry sector would jump off 0630 hours on 18 January. The 41st Field Artillery Battalion (PA) would move into positions where they could fire in close support of the attack. The 41st Field Artillery Battalion would give a five minute preparation to start at 0625. Forward observer would be with 1st Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) to lay concentration within 100 yards of counter-attacking force. The 42nd Infantry Regiment (PA) was to support the attack on the left by fire and to attack with two companies simultaneously with the 1st Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) on the right, with the mission to close the gap behind the enemy before day break. Specific references as to terrain were made where the two forces were to meet. Three inch stokes mortars and ammunition from the 42nd Infantry (PA) were to assist the attack and be placed under the control of the composite battalion commander, Major Lauderbeck (USA). The direct assault force was composed of the remnants of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions 41st Infantry (PA) and the 2nd Battalion 43rd Infantry (PA).

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After the conference the personnel reported to their units to prepare for the attack. The service area of the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) had suffered direct bomb hits during the afternoon and could not furnish food for the Regiment. Water and ammunition arrived and were distributed under the cover of darkness.

All units involved in the counterattack reported to the Regimental CP at 0430 hours, and all were ready for the attack. At 0625 hours the artillery preparation started. A forward observer, in a very exposed position, brought the fire down with excellent results. At 0630 hours the assault forces rushed from the front, coordinated with attacks from both flanks. The fight was short lived. The enemy was driven out, leaving over 300 dead and what appeared to be a battalion headquarters. The gap between the 1st Battalion 41st Infantry (PA) and the right of the 42nd Infantry (PA) was not completely closed until after daylight. By 0800 hours the composite battalion of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions 41st Infantry (PA) and the 2nd Battalion 43rd Infantry (PA) occupied the MLR north of the Mabatang-Mt. Natib Road. (See Map D)

An immediate reorganization of the front was made and patrols were sent out as far as the <sup>Calaguiman</sup> ~~Cabawan~~ River to the north without making enemy contact. The remainder of the day was spent in reorganization, evacuation and burying of the friendly and enemy dead. Enemy shelling was reduced, and the Main Line was back in the hands of the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA).

The Presidential Unit Citation was awarded the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) for its action in the defense of the Main Line on Bataan. (37)

## ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

### 1. ENEMY AIR POWER AND FRIENDLY ARTILLERY

The lack of friendly air power and anti-aircraft protection in the face of adequate enemy air support, resulted in high casualty rate and low morale in the 41st Infantry (PA). The enemy air power struck at will on the main battle position and placed friendly artillery positions under continuous observation and attacks during daylight hours. Observation was sufficient from within the main battle position to have directed artillery fire on the Japanese troops movements and supply lines. But, due to the enemy air power, the supporting artillery could only fire at night. When the situation became very critical, friendly artillery would fire concentrations during daylight, but this always brought about the loss of artillery weapons and personnel by enemy air strikes and counterbattery from air OPs. It was never anticipated that unhampered air activity on the part of the enemy could be so effective in denying the infantry the use of their most valuable and powerful supporting arm. The supply of the front line units and the evacuation of the wounded was hampered by enemy air activities. With friendly artillery effectiveness reduced, the enemy was able to move flat trajectory weapons close enough to the battle position to bring aimed fire on front line company positions. This was the cause of the withdrawal of the 2nd Battalion, enabling the enemy to occupy a salient in the Regimental left sector with very little effort. Every effort was made to deny the enemy the use of the flat trajectory weapons, but darkness brought about the only let up.

The supply of food and water were never adequate. This fact reduced the combat efficiency of the troops. The lack

of modern methods in supply and evacuation required excessive effort in man power to furnish the supply of food, water and ammunition that was received.

In the training phase of a foreign army, American officers and noncommissioned officers can adequately serve in the roll of instructors and advisors, but under combat conditions this roll should no longer exist. Although the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) achieved a high degree of success in the instructor-advisor capacity. A great deal of time was lost and duplicate effort required to accomplish a task when the American officers were in an instructor roll. Adverse conditions would have resulted had not the personality of the senior instructor been compatible and understanding.

## 2. THE MISSION

In studying and analyzing the mission of the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA), it is my opinion that the sector assigned was within the capabilities of the Regiment. Absolute knowledge that they were to hold at all cost gave those members of the Regiment, who were fighting for their homeland, an additional incentive. The Filipino soldier did not have to be motivated to fight.

One paramount trait evident in the units on the Main Line was mutual distrust in the capabilities of each other. The 57th Infantry Regiment Combat Team (PS) demonstrated lack of faith in the ability of the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) to stand up under fire. Plans were even made in the 57th Infantry (PS) sector to refuse their left flank and swing around, putting their back to the beach, if there was a tendency of the 41st

Infantry Regiment (PA) to give way. Only through the superior leadership and continuous effort of the senior instructor, Col. Loren A. Wetherby (USA), were these false impressions rectified, and mutual support resulted.

3. FAILURE OF COMMAND RESPONSIBILITY

The excellent avenue of approach for the enemy left by the defending units, the sugar cane field in front of the Main Line, was the failure of command supervision in all echelons. It was obvious that all units left the job of destroying this avenue of approach to the other unit. There is no question in my mind that the failure to destroy this cane field doubled casualties received in the 57th Infantry (PS) and the 41st Infantry (PA).

Other failures were those of requesting assistance in the counterattacks from adjacent units, as evidence of the last counterattack on 18 January in the 41st Infantry (PA) sector. The expenditures of the 3rd Battalion 32nd Infantry (PA) and the 2nd Battalion 43rd Infantry (PA) probably would not have been required had the 42nd Infantry (PA) on the left been used to assist by fire and furnish a counterattacking force on the first counterattack in the left of the 41st Infantry (PA) sector and had the artillery been required to move observers and pieces in order to lay preparatory fires.

4. THE ACTION OF THE 41ST INFANTRY REGIMENT (PA) IN THE 57TH INFANTRY RCT (PS) AREA

Due to poor training and lack of equipment, the Philippine Army was considered by the regular troops on the main battle position as undependable. Thus, little consideration was given to the 41st Infantry Regiment's (PA) ability in assisting in

counterattacks. The appeal for assistance by the 3rd Battalion Commander 57th Infantry (PS) was immediately answered, and a successful counterattack was launched with untrained troops in offensive operations.

The use of the 41st Infantry (PA) troops in the 57th Infantry (PS) sector violated command ~~per~~ogative. Permission had not been received from the 41st Infantry Division (PA) to leave the Division area, nor was permission granted by the Commanding Officer of the 57th Infantry RCT (PS) to enter that sector. The common sense decision made by the senior instructor and the Regimental Commander of the 41st Infantry Regiment (PA) enabled the counterattacking force to strike the enemy as the penetration became limited. The counterattack was actually under way before communication could be made with the 41st Infantry Division Headquarters.

#### LESSONS

1. In order to defend a battle position, the defenders must have available every weapon of warfare that are in the hands of the enemy to stand a 50% chance of success.
2. Adjacent units must have complete confidence in each other or disaster will result.
3. Counterattacks must be made by utilizing every supporting weapon and the combined fires of adjacent units.
4. All enemy avenues of approach must be covered, either by fire/or the reduction of the element that makes a certain route a likely approach.
5. Control must be exercised in the early stages of the defense/in order not to outline the defended position to the enemy while the enemy is still at long range.

6. Combat outposts must be held vigorously and reestablished at every opportunity.

7. Attached troops should not be used in the counter-attack in a piecemeal fashion. Higher headquarters should indicate the troops available, and this force should be sufficient to overwhelm the enemy salient.