

A History of the Wartime Experience
Of
Elliott W. Allen, Sergeant, United States Army
Squad Leader
3rd Sqd, 2nd PLT, Co B, 1st BN, 19th Regt, 24th INF Div
By
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This paper was written to record some of the wartime experiences of my father, Elliott W. Allen. I intend to pass this paper to my children when I am complete with it. Information was gained by talking to Sergeant Allen, reading his papers, notes, and records from his army days, talking to Technical Sergeant William Braswell on the morning of 1 Dec 89, and reading several books on action in the Southwest Pacific Theater. Most notable of these was The Children of Yesterday by Private Jan Valtin, 24th Infantry Division.

Sergeant Allen was drafted into the Army in April of 1941. According to my mother, Evelyn Andrews Allen, he was the first to be drafted from Charlton County, Georgia for the upcoming war. My mother told me of this on April 20, 1991 when we were in Folkston, Georgia attending a family reunion.

Sergeant Allen passed thru Pensacola for the first time driving an army 2-1/2 ton truck in a convoy. His unit was going to the Louisiana maneuvers in June of 1941. They were coming from Camp Blanding, Fl, near Jacksonville. He was previously at Camp Wheeler, GA at Macon. Camp Wheeler was on the Cochran Short Route southeast of town. The Louisiana maneuvers lasted until October 1941. They left there for the North Carolina maneuvers. The North Carolina maneuvers were "provisional" which meant units were experimenting with new tactics. Sergeant Allen's infantry company became a tank destroyer unit. They used 75mm guns pulled by a truck. After three weeks they used 37mm guns. Sergeant Allen said they were in the field artillery.

They got back to Camp Blanding on December 4, 1941. Sergeant Allen was immediately put on kitchen police and could not go home. He did not remember what he had done to get kitchen police but he laughed when he told the story. On December 7, 1941 he had kitchen police. Several days later he was given a short furlough home. When he returned he was issued cold weather gear of four sets long underwear, and two heavy overcoats. He thinks this was a tactic to hide the destination of their next troop move. They were put on a troop train and sent to California. Their cold weather gear was carried aboard ship, the President Johnson. Aboard ship their cold weather gear was turned in and jungle gear issued. Some of this gear included short pants and short sleeve shirts.

The 102nd Infantry laid over in California for about 10 days. Here they received all of their immunization shots for sickness. Shots were given in the famous Cow Palace of San Francisco. Sergeant Allen said shot doses were doubled and tripled and some soldiers died as a result. One floor was reserved for those with reactions. Soldiers were put in bunks with their feet elevated and stayed there until they recovered or died.

During this time Sergeant Allen had about three days to see the sights of San Francisco. **I believe**

they were quartered on an island in San Francisco bay, Possibly Merritt Island.

Sergeant Allen left the states with the 102nd Infantry Regiment for the Pacific and Christmas Island on 29 Jan 88. He sailed on the USS President Johnson from San Francisco. Latrines had been built on the upper decks out in the open with tarpaper privacy stalls. By the time the Johnson had sailed from San Francisco Bay all of the tarpaper had blown away. When these boys had to answer the call of nature they were really out with nature.

For three days after sailing from California Sergeant Allen said the weather was rough, foggy, and cold. Most of the troops were seasick and the ship smelled terrible. People stopped taking showers and in the rough seas latrine water washed over the decks. They were nothing more than open troughs with salt water running continuously. Not real first class accommodations.

Sleeping in the hold of the ship was rough also. Bunks were stacked from one to five high. There was no air conditioning and it was hot, dank, and musty. They were crammed in so tight there was no place to sit. Sergeant Allen said you either lay in your sack or stood on the deck. If you were in the top bunk you might be laying between the steam pipes.

On the ship everyone had duty each 24th hour period. Sergeant Allen said this was just to keep you busy. Duty could have been kitchen police or guard duty. The guards were on deck mainly to look out for men overboard.

With the Johnson were another troop ship, two destroyers, and the Battleship USS Washington. The destroyers would pickup any man who fell overboard. The Washington was making its first operational cruise and was one of the most modern battleships. It was bringing up the rear in the convoy. Two patrol planes, probably Kingfishers like on the USS Alabama, now docked in Mobile, AL, were aboard Washington. Sergeant Allen said all of the soldiers aboard would get on deck to watch the plane take off. Just before a patrol plane landed the Washington would make a great sweeping turn to smooth the water out for landing. The planes would land, taxi to the fantail of this great Battleship and be hoisted aboard with the crane. Sergeant Allen's regiment arrived at Christmas Island on 11 Feb 42. They had sailed 10 days. With the 102nd Infantry on Christmas Island were one coastal artillery battalion and one engineer battalion. Colonel Rutledge was in command. When they dropped off at Christmas Island one destroyer stayed with them. Sergeant Allen said it patrolled for a "couple of days" out of there. I don't know when the destroyer left.

There were no docking facilities at the island when the Johnson dropped anchor. It carried five barges and two small tugboats to unload cargo with. The barges were 30' by 40' in size and wooden. Johnson anchored about a mile of shore, out of the breakers. Winches and booms were used to unload barges and tugs. That started immediately. In less than an hour all barges and tugs were in the water. These barges could only carry about two GI trucks or four jeeps. Five Hawaiian boat captains under contract to the Corps of Engineers were along to operate the boats.

The barges were pushed towards the beach, cut loose, and rode the breakers to the shore. The ramps were lowered and unloading began. The first supplies unloaded were material to build a little dock. Soon after a little dragline was loaded on a barge and pushed in to dredge an area for the tugs to operate. The tugs only drew three feet of water. There after the barges did not have to be beached. Lumber was still just thrown over board to ride the breakers in. Soldiers would pick it up

and stack it.

Unloading the Johnson took 28 days. There were about 25 GI trucks, a few jeeps, and 3-4 coastal artillery guns. There was also the usual infantry equipment. 150 drums of gasoline were aboard also. The coast artillery was the first troops to go ashore. I assume this was to begin building defensive positions. The infantry was last. They also had the longshoreman duties to unload the cargo.

Sergeant Allen said Christmas Island was like a big horseshoe with a shallow lagoon. All loading and unloading depended on the tide. He said the tide was not very high. The highest place on the island was only 4 feet above sea level. You could see the coast from any place on the island. The widest part was only 3/4 mile wide. The outer perimeter was 120 miles long and the inner 65 miles long. The channel out of the lagoon was very treacherous when the tide ran out. It was very narrow and the tide ran fast.

The 102nd Infantry got to Christmas Island two months before the rainy season began. When the rain began Sergeant Allen said the sun would shine "as bright as it could" and be raining as hard as ever. That was when the tide was the roughest and the breakers were 25 feet high. During these times towing barges was very dangerous. Barges could be lost from sight behind the next swell. Sergeant Allen said boat captains had to be sure to give the barges enough towline so that when the barge was on top of a crest and the boat in the swell that the barge would not be drug down on the tug. Two tugs were lost this way. The crew did jump over and was saved. In about May of 1942 the island received four more tugs. These came in on the third resupply ship. The 102nd Infantry eventually had seven tugboats.

About this time the Hawaiian boat captains had to return home. Volunteers were asked for those who had boat experience. Sergeant Allen said he stuck his hand up. (He was tired of stringing barbed wire.) The biggest boat he had ever operated was a 10-foot brim boat with a 1-1/2 horse outboard motor. He laughed when he told this story. Sergeant Allen worked with one of the Hawaiians for five days and the boat was turned over to him. The captain told Sergeant Allen that about the only way to learn to tow barges was just to learn by experience. The hard part was landing the barges next to the ships. Sergeant Allen said, "That was when you would catch the devil". Sergeant Allen said he would never forget the first time he tried to land a barge on the upwind side of a ship. Normal practice was to land downwind so the ship would block the wind. Things were hurried though, so unloading had to occur on both sides. The wind took control of the barge. At 100 feet out Sergeant Allen had the deckhand give the barge more rope so it would not take control of the boat. When he did the barge hit the side of the ship. The skipper went crazy. He came running down to the side and yelled at Sergeant Allen to "never land a barge on his ship like that again". If it had been a steel barge it might have punched a hole in the side of the ship. Sergeant Allen said that was the only time he really crashed into a ship like that.

Sergeant Allen said he made out "pretty good" on the boat detail. He was a boat captain for about five months. It was the best duty he had on Christmas Island and I believe in the pacific. The boat people had their choice of just about anything that came in on the ships. This is because Sergeant Allen's infantry buddies were doing the unloading and would sample whatever came in. He said he had all the canned chicken he could eat and they "ate it all the time".

On the fifth ship to come to Christmas Island somebody decided to put a brand new 2nd Lieutenant out on the ship to stop the sampling. He was about 20 years old. His job was to check down in the hold to see who was opening boxes. This ship had a load of very expensive briarwood pipes. When the Lieutenant checked, all below were smoking new pipes. They had also sent up a box for Sergeant Allen and his buddies on shore. The box of pipes was not on the tug just yet. It was on the corner of the pallet where the "keepers" were placed. The Lieutenant was wise to that and had the GI's put his evidence on the deck while he had the signalman blink for the military police. Before the MP's got over on the next tug someone kicked the pipes overboard. With no evidence, everyone got off free.

Eventually a big steel barge requiring two tugs was brought to Christmas Island. It had a dragline mounted on it. It was used to unload cargo ships and was much faster than using the little barges with the little dragline. This had a long boom on it. On one occasion just after unloading the big barge while it was still on the beach everyone "knocked off" to go eat. All of the boat hands ate in the headquarters area so they were quite a distance from the cargo unloading area. After they came back from chow they noticed the barge was gone. The tide started out while they were eating and pulled the barge out to sea. It went out the channel and about two miles out to sea. The officer in charge told the men to head out after it. About all they could see was the boom over the horizon. Before they could catch it they were miles out. They also made the mistake of going around to the downwind side to try to tie up to it. The barge almost sunk the tugboats. When they did tie up to it about all they could do was barely move it against the wind and the tide. It was an oil barge and empty. It sat about 10 feet above the water line. The sun was down before they returned and this was with the help of two other tugs.

Shortly after this incident the airfield was finished and most supplies started coming in by airlift. With the bigger barges not as many tugs were needed also.

Only one other time did the officers try to stop pilfering. This next incident is what fouled up Sergeant Allen's boat days. On another ship came only one case of cigarettes and they were Lucky Strikes, everyone's favorite. Down in the hold these boys decided these cigarettes did not go anywhere. They took what they needed and sent the rest up for Sergeant Allen and his deckhand to distribute. These went on the barge where the deckhand was king. He passed them out that night to his buddies and since Sergeant Allen was ranking "gadget" he got some too. Sergeant Allen got three cartons.

A week later it was determined that this one case of cigarettes was property of the Red Cross official. Major Calvery, the Intelligence officer, was detailed to investigate. Sergeant Allen knew him well. He rode on Sergeant Allen's boat often. It was known that the cigarettes came in on Sergeant Allen's boat so he was called in for questioning. Sergeant Allen was asked to "enlighten" the major. Sergeant Allen said he had some cigarettes but did not know which boat they came in on. He had also taken them from the packs and stacked them in the carton. Other guys had done this too because the investigation was common knowledge. When asked to produce his cigarettes they were clean and Sergeant Allen thought he was off the hook. A week later some of the "Luckies" in a pack with Red Cross markings were found in Sergeant Allen's deckhand's tent. When presented with the evidence the deckhand said Sergeant Allen was boat captain and he was just following orders. Glenn Jennings, another boat captain, had gotten some also. He did not even smoke. Those went to his buddies. In the end Sergeant Allen, Jennings, and Jennings' deckhand got

a summary court-martial and Sergeant Allen's deckhand got 30 days restriction to quarters. Sergeant Allen said a lot of difference that made. There was not anywhere to go anyway. Sergeant Allen said the summary court-martial was just to let you know who was boss. It did stop the bootlegging for a while though.

Glenn Jennings was from Florence, Alabama. Sergeant Allen has tried to contact him over the years but has been unsuccessful. I wonder if he survived the war.

When Sergeant Allen got back to his real job of being an infantryman he started stringing barbed wire again. He said they strung wire all over the island. The 102nd Infantry only set up to defend about 10 miles of the island but still they had to string the barbed wire across the island every so many yards. This was to make a barricade. At the end of these barricades, on the beach, machine gun emplacements were made to cover the approaches to the island. Sergeant Allen talked to an artilleryman in the spring of 1990, who was with him on Christmas Island and who remembered seeing the infantry troops stringing barbed wire.

While on Christmas Island Sergeant Allen applied to take the examination for the Air Corps. He wanted to be a pilot. Colonel Rutledge was going get him a waiver so that he did not have to take the exam. The incident with the cigarettes fouled that up. The application still went forward however, and the test was given at Hickam Field, Hawaii. Sergeant Allen passed the written exam. He did not get into the Air Corps because of color blindness. A friend of Sergeant Allen, Joe Robinson, did pass and went on to pilot training. He became a Flight Officer and went on to Europe. He was not heard from again. Sergeant Allen passed through Joe's hometown of Collinsville, Alabama in the mid 1970's but could not locate him. No one there had heard of him. I wonder if he survived the war?

Sergeant Allen's boat license and meal card for Christmas Island is attached to this paper.

Morton Downey, Sr., father of the abrasive talk show host, Morton Downey, was in Sergeant Allen's platoon while he was in the 102nd Regiment.

Hawaii

Sergeant Allen left Christmas Island on 28 Dec 42 bound for Hawaii and the 19th/24th Infantry Division. He sailed aboard the SS Haleakala, an inter-island cruise ship. In it's cruise ship days it was a small luxury liner. About 100 men left for Hawaii aboard the Haleakala at a time. To keep from going down into the hold to eat Sergeant Allen bought a three pound box of Whitman's chocolate to eat. He ate so much so quick that he was sick before he got aboard ship. He also did not answer his name at roll call while he was on the Haleakala so he would not have to pull guard duty detail. Whenever his name was called he just sat still. When he got off the ship another roll call was made and he was caught. The officer at the bottom of the gangway called out "Private Allen". He answered "Here sir". The officer then asked where had he been all this time and then had him stand aside. The officer in charge asked why he had not answered roll call during his stay on the ship. Sergeant Allen said he did not know anything about a roll call. The officer told him, "Well you will be talked to later." That talk was when he found out he was going to the 19th Infantry Regiment. He found out that very day. He arrived at Schofield Barracks and joined the 19th Regiment on 1 Jan 43.

The 19th and all other elements were out on outposts when Sergeant Allen arrived so he and the other newcomers spent three days in the barracks alone before going out in the field to join the units. The Island had been ringed with coastal gun positions for island defense and the 19th Regiment was part of that effort. The outpost rotation consisted of three weeks in the field and one week back in the barracks.

Barracks duty consisted mainly of training. Many new draftees were sent. Most were married and in the 40 year old range. They had not been to basic training. Some of these men had been sent into the army by their wives for running around. While Sergeant Allen and his troops were back in the barracks they would give these new draftees their basic training. Sergeant Allen said here is where he found out what the real army was like. Some of the old regular army sergeants could really dress these draftees down. They used "rough" language. Some of these "old" men really turned out to be good soldiers according to Sergeant Allen. Three or four of these old privates, right off the street, had worked for Kraft Company. They were married, with children, and were very homesick. The old regular army sergeants would really chew these soldiers out.

While at Schofield Sergeant Allen saw several soldiers have a shoot out with M-1 Garand rifles. I don't know how many were involved but three were killed. These men were from the 21st Infantry Regiment, another regiment of the 24th Infantry Division. Sergeant Allen said they were men who just did not mind "mixing it up" and were in just a barracks brawl. These occurred fairly regular in the 21st Infantry as it was a very "rough" outfit.

One man in Sergeant Allen's company was killed also. A man named Wolf shot and killed this man whose name Sergeant Allen does not know. The circumstances of the soldiers death is also unknown but Wolf was transferred out of the company. Usually in cases such as these the guilty man was placed in a unit on the way out and was not heard from again. That is what happened to Wolf.

While at Schofield Barracks Sergeant visited with his cousin, Homer Allen, who was in the Air Corps. He was stationed at Hickam Field. Hickam Field was adjacent to Pearl Harbor, the big Navy base.

Australia

Sergeant Allen left Hawaii for Australia aboard the USS Lurline. It was a big transport, a luxury passenger ship. The 19th Regiment landed in Brisbane. They stayed on the edge of Brisbane, living in tents, for about 10 days. From there they moved up to Rockingham. Brisbane was on the central east coast and Rockingham about 300 miles north. At Rockingham they had jungle and desert training. The 24th Infantry was there with another division for training. On one occasion the division marched 120 miles in four days. This was hilly, dry, and "burned up" country. The going was tough. Cows and horses were laying dead everywhere they looked. Training was filled with maneuvers, overnight hikes and camps and cross country marches.

One thing to realize about the long marches is that the patrols and scouts who were put out on the flanks to support the main column of troops had a particular tough time. Sometimes they had to make their own trails why the main column was on established trails to move over. These troops on

the flanks were essential though to provide security from enemy attack.

After one of these long marches was complete there was always a couple of days for rest. Sergeant Allen said you could do anything you wanted to do, there was just nothing to do except maybe buy a horse. He bought a horse for a shilling, 16 cents in our money.

When he had time off, Sergeant Allen, Lieutenant Buck, Privates Sutterfield and Gross, along with three other buddies would load up the horse and go to a river about eight miles away and fry fish. They would do this for a couple of days at a time.

Lieutenant Buck was Sergeant Allen's platoon leader. He was a quiet fellow from South Carolina. He was married but rumor said his wife had left him with his two kids. That really bothered the Lieutenant and he brooded over it.

Privates Sutterfield and Gross were Sergeant Allen's close friends throughout the war. He was close with Lieutenant Buck also. In about 1983 Sergeant Allen sent Private Gross pictures that he had taken during the war and asked in a note attached did he remember where these had come from. Sergeant Allen did not sign the note but did include a return address. Shortly he received a letter from Gross' wife stating she did not know who sent the pictures but whoever did must have been close to Private Gross. She also said he had died 12 years before. Sergeant Allen telephoned her after receiving the letter and gave her the details of their friendship. Private Gross was a hog farmer from Iowa and his first name was Raymond. In the early 1950's Private Gross wrote to Sergeant Allen asking if he had joined the National Guard and he wondered if he were going to fight in the Korean War.

While in Australia Sergeant Allen and his company got to unload several more inter-island ships. This was done from a rock jetty type dock. There was a 14 foot tide in that part of the country also. These ships always brought in a supply of scotch and most soldiers would trade cigarettes for whiskey.

Lieutenant Woods of Mississippi, a real son of the south, who had no use for blacks, was a graduate of Ol' Miss, played football for the Chicago Bears, and although an officer had no use for the Army, much less officers, was in Sergeant Allen's company. He associated with the enlisted troops and had a big supply of scotch whisky. On one particular night, after his troops had unloaded a ship, they laid down on the dock, drank their whisky, and got drunk together. After drinking and swimming all night around the dock, Lieutenant Woods was going to show the troops how to do a swan dive. All of the troops were "keyed up" and the Lieutenant forgot about the 14 foot tide. It had gone out. At 250 pounds he made a big mess. He landed on the rocks below. No bones were broken but he was cut from head to toe.

Lieutenant Woods' troops came to his rescue, bandaged him up, and got him to his quarters. That was just at daylight. At reveille he was barely able to make the formation. After an investigation Lieutenant Woods was court marshaled. He was restricted to quarters for the rest of the 24th Division's stay in Australia. According to Sergeant Allen that was not for very long. The punishment did not bother the Lieutenant because "he did not want any part of them anyway".

On a more serious note there was an old lady who made butter and cheese for the troops. She had

two cows. She was English and had come over years earlier with her husband, who was in the British army. They came over about 1920. She loved the army and when her husband had died she missed the service life. The 24th filled the need. At some point someone attempted to rape the old woman. She was over 70 years old. Everyone was called out for inspection but not told why. The hour was before 7:00 a.m. and was a fairly common practice so no one suspected anything. Troops were marched by the medical staff, with no clothes on, for an inspection. Private Haggen began to scratch himself. When he did he broke out in welts as usual. He was immediately suspected of attacking the old woman. The lady said she had scratched he attacker. Haggen was pulled out of line and given a hard time. In time he cleared up and then demonstrated to the authorities that if he scratched himself he would bring welts on his body. He was let go.

Goodenough Island

After leaving New Guinea the 24th Division went to Goodenough Island. It was an island east of New Guinea. After being there for about a week several cases of dengue fever appeared among the soldiers in the 24th Division. Dengue was a very serious illness that killed three or four members of Sergeant Allen's company. A redheaded soldier named Turner, from Alabama, caught dengue and had severe headache and high fever. A soldier named Wick died with the disease. Both of these men were in Sergeant Allen's platoon.

The 24th Infantry Division was on Goodenough Island for rest and relaxation. While having a Service Rifle and Full Field Display, an inspection where all issued equipment is displayed and inspected in a very precise manner, Colonel Jock Clifford or possibly Colonel Chapman, asked one soldier, Cliff Jackson, "Private, what would be your reaction if you came face to face with a Japanese. What would you do?"

As the Colonel stood nose to nose with the soldier, Jackson said "Sir, I would withdraw for 100 yards and display my Service Rifle and Full Field Display." The commander was not amused. Jackson was given a summary court-martial and restricted to quarters for a month. These inspections were detested by the troops. Sergeant Allen laughed for several minutes when he told this story. Colonel Clifford was killed by a Japanese Mortar on Mindoro in the Philippines and I do not know what happened to the soldier.

Sergeant Allen said not long after this incident he saw a native woman with a suckling pig on her breast. He said it was nothing to see one native man throw another one down and have his homosexual enjoyment right in front of whoever wanted to see. The natives in his opinion were just like animals.

Sergeant Allen left Goodenough Island aboard a Landing Craft, Infantry, LCI for short. This vessel would hold about two platoons and the bow would lower so that rolling cargo, such as tanks, could be loaded aboard. Two platoons was about 100 men. The 24th Division landed at an island close to Rabual and stayed there for four days. The invasion force waited there until more ships could arrive for the New Guinea invasion.

New Guinea Hollandia When did the invasion begin?

Hollandia is where the 24th Infantry Division made its first combat landing of W.W.II. Going to

Hollandia the weather got pretty rough. The LCI's, having flat bottoms, did not take the rough seas very well. Sergeant Allen said they sounded as if they would break in two.

The beach was not anything as intelligence had predicted. There was not much opposition on the beach. There were small inlets along the shore and Japanese patrol boats were hiding there. The air force and navy had been there first, however, and had run most of the Japanese under cover. The area was well saturated with bombs and navel heavy gunfire. Directly behind the beach shoreline was very swampy terrain. This left no place for equipment and supplies to be stockpiled during the landing operation. According to the official U.S. Army history of the operation, elements of the 19th Infantry Regiment backpacked many tons of supplies ahead to the front.

There was nothing but a mountain trail leading to Hollandia. Hollandia was actually five miles from the shoreline where Sergeant Allen and the 19th Infantry Regiment landed. It was a Headquarters for Dutch missionaries. Several Chinese were there also.

Sergeant Allen said the regiment found a Japanese jeep type vehicle. It was pressed into service to carry supplies and equipment. Sergeant Allen said it had three cylinders and the motor was air cooled. It was about the same size as our jeeps. Apparently in their haste to retreat the Japanese had abandoned this jeep and it had slid off the mountain and turned on its side. trail and was abandoned by the Japanese.

Sergeant Allen's battalion reached its first objective on the first day. That was a big lake just outside of Hollandia. This is where General MacArthur built a big home soon after the island was secure. Every night the Japanese sent airplanes over from Biak Island to bomb the American troops. On the third night on New Guinea the oil dump was struck by Japanese bombers. There was a large supply of oil there by then.

There was a Japanese airfield near Hollandia which the 19th Regiment captured quickly and that was where the supply dump was made. C-46 aircraft ferried most supplies in including gas. The airplanes were landing there before the airfield was completely secure and the Japanese put up a stiff fight. They were fairly strong around the airport and gave the 24th Division a good fight.

Sergeant Allen said that they had been drilled constantly about what the Japanese would do to them. They were told not to capture Japanese because the Japanese did not take American prisoners. U.S. troops were told to stay until the Japanese were whipped. The standing order was do not take Japanese prisoners. During one patrol operation Sergeant Allen's platoon was making a sweep around the regimental perimeter. They would go out of the perimeter during day light and work as far around as they could before coming back through the lines before dark. On this patrol, as on most, Sergeant Allen's squad was on the point and Sergeant Allen as squad leader was about third man back in the column. The scouts found Japanese on a river bank, on the opposite side of the river from the patrol. They were in a clearing. At that point Sergeant Allen said the squad became like a bird dog on a covey of quail. They just squatted there and waited for orders to come up from the platoon leader. The first orders up were to deploy for an attack to wipeout the Japanese. Sergeant Allen's squad deployed for the attack. Actually the platoon leader, Lieutenant Buck, wanted to take prisoners and tried to pass that word up to Sergeant Allen. With 50 men in the patrol and no radio contact within the platoon, that word never reached the head of the column.

Sergeant Allen said a patrol of this size was strung out a long way in the jungle. Word was passed up by hand signals and word of mouth. The column was halted while the second squad moved across the river and behind the Japanese. From listening to Sergeant Allen a period of about fifteen minutes or so must have passed while this took place. This must have been a very tense time for the patrol. Sergeant Allen's squad was not aware of this movement or of the fact that the third squad was deployed to the flank to support Sergeant Allen's first squad and the second squad which was now across the river.

Even visual communication was very difficult in the dense jungle terrain. When the Japanese started to move away the first squad fired on them and all of the Japanese were killed. Sergeant Allen did not want them to get away. He also said it was good that none of the platoon members behind the Japanese were hit by friendly fire. Also, the third squad moved in support of Sergeant Allen's first squad thinking they were in trouble. When they reached the first squad the action was over. In the end Sergeant Allen said there were about five Japanese involved and he thinks they never saw or heard the Americans who got them.

Lieutenant Buck was very upset at Sergeant Allen because no prisoners were taken. He thought Sergeant Allen had not followed orders when in fact Sergeant Allen had never received the order to take prisoners. Lieutenant Buck told Sergeant Allen he had gotten him "in a bind" and thought it might be brought up in the higher chain of command. The Platoon Sergeant had some input in the discussion and told Sergeant Allen that he as the Platoon Sergeant knew the orders and realized that Sergeant Allen did not get them. The Platoon Sergeant was the one who relayed orders up. He also said the Lieutenant was now "in a jam" meaning he was in serious trouble. He also did not fault Sergeant Allen for giving the order to shoot. Lieutenant Buck was transferred out of the second platoon as a result of this action. That happened about five days later. Lieutenant Buck was eventually made Platoon Leader of the heavy weapons platoon of Company B. He led the heavy weapons platoon onto beach during the invasion of Leyte. This patrol action occurred with 30-40 days left on New Guinea.

Thompson sub-machine guns were much sought after as the weapon to carry on patrol. They were somewhat light weight and delivered a tremendous amount of fire power. On New Guinea about the only troops that had them were the engineers. On another patrol Sergeant Allen carried a Thompson sub-machine-gun. He was not on the point but about the eight or ten men back. The entire platoon was on patrol. His patrol encountered a Japanese on the ground about 20 yards away. Sergeant Allen said the Japanese were disorganized and every where in the woods. The point had gone by this Japanese and he had almost gone by the Japanese. **His friend Private Raymond Gross said, "Allen, there's one on your right"**. Sergeant Allen told this part of the story in a whisper, just like he were back in the jungle. The Japanese was just getting up. He got up to move away moving parallel and in the opposite direction of the patrol. Sergeant Allen fired several bursts at him. He missed. He said to me, "I never cut a feather". The Tommy was known to climb up when fired and if you were not expecting it you would probably miss. Sergeant Allen had never fired a tommy gun in his life. As the Japanese stood to return fire Sergeant Allen started backing up and fell back into a stump hole. A good thing because the Japanese missed also. **Sergeant Allen's buddy, Private Gross, fired on the Japanese with a single tracer round and struck him between the eyes.** The bullet passed thru the Japanese's head and continued out into the jungle where it lit up the trees. Sergeant Allen found the Thompson before going on patrol. It was laying next to a coconut tree in the bivouac area and he doesn't know how it got there. He found it the day

before the above patrol action. When he returned from this patrol he replaced it by the tree and never used a Tommy gun again. Privates Gross, Sutterfield, and Carpenter were on this patrol. Carpenter was from Mississippi.

Biak Island

In order to eliminate the air raids that the Japanese made regularly, a regiment of the 24th Division, the 34th Regiment, was sent to Biak Island to capture the airfield there. After they secured the Island the 34th was replaced with the 24th or 29th Infantry Regiment, an all black outfit. Sergeant Allen said in their first combat they just slaughtered each other at night. They continually fired on each other. Parts of the 19th and 34th Regiments were sent to Biak to resecure the island. Later on the island was returned to the black regiment. This type of action was not uncommon in the Pacific. According to Sergeant Allen there were lots of jungle noises. The trees were full of parrots. These parrots made a lot noise by just breaking tree branches. When one green troop would shoot at a noise the entire company may open up. Green troops thought this was enemy movement. If the perimeter was not set up just right the troops would be firing on each other. Sergeant Allen said a green outfit may take a week to get over those jitters.

MACARTHUR'S RETURN TO THE PHILIPPINES

Philippines, Leyte

Sergeant Allen's battalion traveled to Leyte aboard the USS DuPage. He was aboard ship from 13 Oct to 20 Oct 45.

Landing on Leyte

Sergeant Allen said when the 19th Infantry Regiment came ashore the Japanese were tied into the tops of the coconut trees and were only sniping at our forces. According to General MacArthur's biography the first five waves came ashore under sniper fire only. Sergeant Allen's notes say it was 'a tough beach'. After the first five waves MacArthur said there was a murderous mortar attack. In the book Decision at Leyte by Stanley L. Falk, the author said the really heavy fighting occurred when the 19th Infantry came ashore south of their objective at Red Beach. This explains why the mortar attack came after five waves. Apparently the Japanese were not expecting the landing at that exact location. Falk said the 19th pressed vigorously off the shore despite heavy casualties. Sergeant Allen came ashore at 1040L on 20 Oct 44.

While on the landing craft going ashore at Leyte, Lieutenant Buck, mentioned in the Valtin book and earlier in this paper, told Sergeant Allen he hoped to see him in three weeks. He hoped that he could survive the next three weeks. Sergeant Allen did not get to see the Lieutenant after they hit the beach. Lieutenant Buck was the first of Sergeant Allen's unit to be killed on the beach at Leyte. He was shot through the stomach, side to side, and his guts spilled out. Sergeant Allen said the comment about three weeks really worried him and he was 'extra scared'. He said he could not wait for those first three weeks to pass. A picture of Lieutenant Buck is found in attachments to this paper.

One should note that Lieutenant Buck led the heavy weapons platoon of Company B. Sergeant Allen said he selected his squad to support the heavy weapons platoon despite the incident in the jungle at New Guinea. Sergeant Allen said it was Lt. Buck's choice to have his squad. This particular incident is still to this day very painful for Sergeant Allen to talk about.

During the first day on Leyte, Sergeant Allen's squad B.A.R. man, G.P. Morgan, had his weapon shot twice. That is to say Japanese bullets hit the actual weapon two times. Finally, while standing behind a tree with the butt of his B.A.R. shot off and hanging at his side Morgan said to Sergeant Allen, "Allen, they are going to get me yet". He spoke slowly with a Kentucky accent. The B.A.R. is the Browning Automatic Rifle, 30 caliber, squad automatic weapon. I do not know if Morgan survived the war.



General MacArthur, left, wades ashore at Red Beach, Leyte, P.I. 20 Oct 45. General Sutherland, his Chief of Staff, is to his left.



G.P. Morgan, the BAR man, and Sgt. Allen
Phillipines, 1945

Hill 522- A very important objective

The 1st Battalion/19th Infantry was assigned to take Hill 522 on the first day of the invasion. Hill 522 had a commanding view of the American operation and had to be taken at any cost. The climb up the hill was very steep and slow going. The Japanese were at the top and dug in. An American mortar attack finally drove the Japanese from the summit and the race was on to the top. The 1st Battalion dug in for the night and waited for the Japanese counter attack. This attack was described in MacArthur's biography as a 'fanatical attack'. It included everything from mortars to a banzai charge. During the attack Private Hendrix, from the Atlanta area, and who Sergeant Allen said played poker all night and saw the chaplain all day, began to pray. Sergeant Allen said he prayed so loud you could hear him from 300 yards away. Company Commander, Captain William J. Herman, told Hendrix to be quiet or he would kill him. He was giving away the position of his unit of the unit to the Japanese. Hendrix continued to pray as his commander got his rifle and set out to kill him. The 1st Sergeant knocked the rifle away to save Private Hendrix life. According to Falk more than 50 Japanese died trying to take Hill 522 from 1st Battalion/19th Infantry.

I do not know if Private Hendrix survived the war. Technical Sergeant Braswell thinks Captain Herman got a battlefield commission from corporal to captain earlier in the war.

After taking the top of Hill 522 the 19th Infantry pushed over the hill into the town of Palo. The date was 21 October 1944. The regiment spent the next several days hunting out the Japanese still hiding in caves on the slopes of Hill 522. According to Falk, in his book, *Decision at Leyte*, the Japanese made several night raids into Palo. The last and fiercest came on the night of 24 October. Led by the regimental commander, Colonel Tatsunosuke Suzuki, 75 members of the 33rd Infantry Regiment moved into town using civilians as cover. They knocked out some guns, captured others and with captured 50 caliber machine guns raised havoc. They also set fire to trucks, shot up jeeps and continued through Palo. As they moved they threw explosives into houses, set a supply dump ablaze, and killed helpless wounded American GIs lying in a hospital.

Suzuki's objective was to take the bridge at the north end of town. A dozen men guarded the bridge and most fell with first volley of fire. As the Americans recovered, the remaining bridge guards, reinforced by a platoon of engineers, put up a stiff defense. Most of the attacking Japanese died at the bridge. An American machine gunner, Frank Wisnieuski, killed Colonel Suzuki and a score of other Japanese near the Palo church. At daybreak 60 dead Japanese were found in town. This attack was the high-water mark for Japanese resistance in the Palo area.

Typhoon while on Breakneck Ridge. Wind blew so hard that all the coconuts fell off the trees. Sergeant Allen said that was a "strong wind".

Sergeant Allen's company, Company B/19th Infantry was not known to go hungry. On Leyte there were many wild pigs, chickens and other animals to eat. This outfit, being a bunch of country boys, knew what to do to eat. These boys would hunt for food and have the cooks prepare the meal. Sergeant Allen told me that if there were anything to eat within five miles his squad would have it. A note in Sergeant Allen's notepad dated 24 Dec 1944 states "There will be no private hunting or exploring" by order of Sergeant Thompson taken by Sergeant Allen. A copy of this hand written note is found in the attachments to this paper. *(See also a paper written by Ralph Ermatinger of the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment describing the hunger on Leyte. This paper is attached.)*

Sergeant Allen's notes say the beach at Leyte was tough and that Hill 522, Palo, Pastrona, Jaro, and Leyte valley were rough going. He also said there was too much mountain patrolling. He later told me there was no place flat to walk. The terrain was all up and down.

Mopping up action

General Eichlberger said the mopping up action was the worst kind of fighting in the Pacific. MacArthur's press people would declare a campaign over long before the mopping up was complete. Sergeant Allen said that during the 8th Army mopping up action, as the 19th Infantry was being pulled back to go to Mindoro, that many of the American troops who were killed were brought from the front in "big GI" trucks. There were over 700 killed in action from the 24th Infantry Division. Sergeant Allen said the sight would "really shake you up". There bodies were stacked in the trucks like wood.

Technical Sergeant William Braswell joined the platoon while on Leyte. Braswell told me on the morning of 1 Dec 89 that on Leyte Company B/19th Infantry was split into two groups. Half went to Luzon and half to Mindoro. Sergeant Allen went to Mindoro.

Mindoro

Sergeant Allen left Leyte on 12 Dec 44 for Mindoro aboard the USS Kephart, an APD. An APD was an attack patrol destroyer that could carry two landing craft along side to make a run at the beach, drop off the landing craft and "run" as Sergeant Allen said to leave the ground pounders on their own. Sergeant Allen was not impressed with this ship. He arrived at Mindoro on 15 Dec 44 to a mild beach. Notes state he was under fire from 17 Dec 44 to 9 Jan 45. His battalion participated in mopping up and patrol action. His unit was shelled by the Japanese navy on 26 Dec 44 from 9:00 PM to 1:30 am. Notes also say there were Japanese planes over head and plenty of dog fights.

While cruising aboard the Kephart the troops were up on deck. The ships in the formation were in tight formation because the islands they were cruising through were so close together. A kamakazi, a Japanese suicide bomber, came winding through the hills and hit the bridge of the USS Nashville. The ships had no room to maneuver. The Nashville fell out of the column and retired. Five ships were sunk in this convoy by kamakazi aircraft. Sergeant Allen said it was most amazing about how a ship could just vanish in the explosion. The biggest catastrophe he saw was a ship that carried fuel, ammunition, and troops. Just as it was dropping anchor a kamakazi hit it. Of the 275 troops aboard, only a shoulder of one troop was found. A picture of the smoke column of this ship is attached to the paper. Sergeant Allen said it was a peculiar thing to see a ship slowly sink, with either the bow or the stern standing straight up in the air. Two of the ships sank like this in the convoy, one bow up and one stern up. They sank next to each other.

There was also a squadron of Patrol Torpedo, PT, boats in the convoy. They were along to fight the Japanese navy, if it was a threat. The Japanese lost 22 airplanes trying to sink the PT boats. Not one was lost. The PT boats were very quick and could out maneuver the airplanes.

Braswell said when the 2nd platoon was dug in 100 ft from the beach on the first night the Japanese

launched parachute flares for illumination. He said they looked like street lights strung out along the beach. Braswell said he was so inexperienced he did not know these were Japanese flares. He thought they were from our navy or air force. Soon after came the Japanese navy bombardment. Many three round salvos landed just off the beach and geysers of water went high in the air. The Japanese were on, their range was just a little short. Also that night a Japanese bomb landed 100 ft from the platoon.

On one occasion to send out a patrol, Sergeant Allen chose the patrol members. One of these was newly promoted Corporal Sutterfield, chosen instead Sergeant Braswell. Braswell had little or no experience at that time and on this patrol experience was necessary. Sutterfield told Sergeant Allen that "he was not doing him right". He said, "there were other men who had not gone out and that he had gone enough". He said, "I am going this time but we don't want to do this way again". Sergeant Allen said he could agree with him now and would not do it that way again. The orders were to send good people out to get information on the Japanese. The new people did not have the experience. It should be noted that in the squad were three sergeants who outranked Sergeant Allen but who worked for him. They were still considered "green" troops and not ready to lead troops. Corporal Sutterfield was Sergeant Allen's very close friend throughout and after the war.

Corporal V.L. Sutterfield and Private Angelo L. Durante were nominated for the Silver Star for action on Mindoro. These two were on the perimeter outpost one night with two new replacements out in front of them. These two new troops may have been in Company C. They were shot by Japanese. Durante and Sutterfield rescued them under covering fire by the 2nd platoon. Braswell said all he had on at that time was his underwear and cartridge belt. He fired all his ammo before he realized what he had done. Braswell thinks one of the wounded men died. Durante was later wounded in the head by shrapnel on Mindanao. Braswell said it was not too serious but that the doctors shaved his head. Braswell and Durante were on the same medical evacuation plane later down the line. On the plane Braswell told Durante that he hoped he got his Silver Star. Braswell does not know if he was awarded the metal.

Private Lee Moles was the youngest man in Sergeant Allen's platoon. According to Sergeant Braswell he had red hair. Another night while in the perimeter position, Braswell had crawled to Moles' foxhole. Braswell was over the hole looking forward when he saw a arm come up. There was a partial moon and Moles' foxhole was in the center of the perimeter. Braswell and Moles decided it was a Japanese. No one else should have been moving. Braswell fired five times on the Japanese. He saw sparks fly. He told Moles to give him a grenade and Moles said "Throw the damn thing way out there." Braswell got the Japanese. He heard him moan. I assume the Japanese was inside 2nd platoon's perimeter. Next morning the 1st Sergeant/Company C went out to the dead Japanese to retrieve his saber. The sparks that Braswell saw were ricochets from the hilt of the saber. Members of Sergeant Allen's platoon told the Company C Sergeant that the saber was Braswell's. He has the saber today. Sergeant Braswell also got pictures off the dead Japanese. Also found on the Japanese was a finger from a dead Company C soldier.

On another occasion, after digging in to foxholes, Private Hendrix started a card game. Sergeant Allen said that anytime the troops stopped for more than about 30 minutes you could find a card game. Sergeant Allen walked up to Hendrix foxhole and asked him, "Hendrix, I thought you told someone you were giving up those cards". Hendrix, who Sergeant Allen described as a "used car salesman" type replied, "Allen, a man has got to have something to keep his mind off of things.

When I am looking at an ace in the hole I know I have got everything under control". Sergeant Allen said Hendrix finished his card game and laughed when he told the story.

Sergeant Allen said the infantry could always tell when the time to move out rolled around. General MacArthur's Waves always appeared about that time. The Waves were the female troops in the Navy.

After returning from Peleliu, E. B. Sledge, author of With the Old Breed on Peleliu and Okinawa said he was disgusted to see a female Red Cross worker at their return. He said he could not comprehend or understand such a drastic change in scenery in so short a period of time.



Sgt. Allen in the Phillipines

Shortly after the card game incident Company B moved out across the island to secure the town of San Jose. There were two towns on Mindoro named San Jose and Sergeant Allen's company took the one across the island. The terrain was very mountainous on the way to San Jose. While in the area of San Jose Sergeant Allen received word that he was to rotate back to the states. He left Company B the next day and went back to San Jose to await transportation.

Opposition on the way to San Jose?

What determined when you rotated home?

Can you discuss foxholes at night, artillery barrages, and bansai attacks?

Who was your "buddy"?

Sergeant Allen left Mindoro, Philippines Islands aboard a C-46 on 5 Mar 45 for Leyte. He retraced his steps through the Pacific. He went from Leyte to Peleliu by C-47 on 6 Mar 45, Peleliu to Biak Island by C-46 on 8 Mar 45, Biak to Hollandia by C-47 On 9 Mar 45. He sailed aboard the SS Robin Dorchester on 11 Mar 45 for San Francisco and arrived there on 2 Apr 45. Sergeant Allen said most soldiers on the Dorchester were 'crazy people'. He called it the "psycho" ship. I believe they really suffered from combat fatigue. Sergeant Allen said there were only a few "so called normal" people aboard. He said at least they thought they were normal. Maybe no one else did.

Coming Home

Another soldier from the 3rd Battalion of the 19th Regiment came home with Sergeant Allen. They had been through the Pacific together and wound up at the readjustment center at Miami together. This soldier was married and his wife came to Miami to see him. While in the lobby of a big plush hotel, a WAC, one of the females in the Army, sat in this soldiers lap. He had met her in Australia. Sergeant Allen said for a while there was a real "stew" going on between the soldier and his wife. He laughed very hard when he told this story.

Sergeant Allen was in Miami when President Roosevelt died. He stayed in Miami for about three weeks and then moved on to Texas. In Texas he was discharged from the Army. From there he went to Fort McPherson, Georgia, and home.

When you were discharged were you ready to go home. Were you ready to leave the Army?

There was another soldier who Sergeant Allen knew in the Pacific who left Fort McPherson, Georgia on the same bus. He was going to Dublin, Georgia. At a stop in Cochran, Georgia he bought several bags of peanuts for people on the bus. There were two black women on the bus who said "We don't want no white folks' peanuts". The soldier got mad and told the two women they were going to take those peanuts and eat them. The bus driver had to put a stop to the fight. The soldier was trying to make the ladies eat the peanuts. He got off in Eastman, Georgia to catch the bus to Dublin.

I talked to Flora Ann Bailey on the night of 21 Oct 89 about Sergeant Allen's coming home to Folkston, Georgia. Ms Bailey is Sergeant Allen's youngest sister. Her nickname is Flossie. Apparently he had made it back to the states without his family knowing it. I do not know the reason for that. (I think he did not know he was leaving the Philippe Islands until the day before he left but that is another story.) He sent His mother (my grandmother) a telegram stating he would be home the day before he arrived. Flora Ann said that when she, Trell, and Ralph got home from school that day his mother told them she had good news for them. Trell and Ralph are other younger sister and brother of Sergeant Allen. Before they could hear it they had to pick up the

potatoes in the back yard that his mother had dug. Of course the good news was that Sergeant Allen was coming home.

On the day that Sergeant Allen got home Flossie said that most of the town was at the train station to meet him. 75 trains a day went through Folkston then so they were there a long time. Finally his mother heard someone yell that Sergeant Allen was walking into town. He had taken the bus and had the bus driver drop him off outside of town so he could walk. His mother ran to him. Flossie said that as his mother got closer to Sergeant Allen the slower he walked. She said she could still see his mother hugging Sergeant Allen. She remembered him carrying a bag. Flossie said that the reason Sergeant Allen came home by bus was the he did not want to be with all of the people that he expected to be there. He just wanted to be left alone. I've heard his mother say that he was like that for a long time after coming home from the war. People just did not understand what he had suffered through. Before the war Flossie had always slept with Sergeant Allen. Now that he was home Flossie and Ralph fought over who would sleep with Sergeant Allen. Flossie said that Sergeant Allen did not want anyone to sleep with him. (I visited Folkston on 19-21 April of 1991. The place where the Sergeant got off the bus was just behind his folk's home, no more than 50 to 100 yards away. The highway was US 1. The house is still there and in good shape. It is still occupied. This house is also the first house my parents lived in after they were married on August 3, 1947.)

Flossie also said that when Sergeant Allen wrote to her while away in the war he spoke in the second person. When Flossie burned her foot on hot tar Sergeant Allen wrote "Buck is sorry to hear about your foot and Buck hopes it gets better soon." She also said that his mother sent her to the Post Office every day to see if mail had come from Sergeant Allen. Flossie finally said that once after she had sent him a letter and picture of her that he wrote back that he received a piece of paper in the mail and a chicken had scratched on it. He also joked about the front teeth she was missing. Flossie thought the whole incident was funny.

Sergeant Allen visited Technical Sergeant Braswell's folks in Jacksonville after he got home from the war. Braswell was the Platoon Sergeant of the 2nd platoon. He was assigned to Sergeant Allen's squad so that he could learn the ropes before taking over as Platoon Sergeant. Sergeant Braswell came to the squad the day before leaving for Mindoro. He out ranked Sergeant Allen but worked for him because he had no combat experience. Sergeant Braswell had been in the National Guard before the war and had spent most of the war in the states in a training assignment. He was assigned to the squad just before they left for Mindoro. Sergeant Allen made it home before Braswell. Braswell lost part of his right hand and was shot in the leg on Mindoro trying to save Private Erwin's life. Private Erwin died.

Find out who Sergeant Allen visited while in the Dallas area just before being discharged.



Sgt. Allen in New Guinea



**St Allen (right) and
G.P. Morgan (left)**



Picture taken of Sgt. Allen at the Folkston, GA train station just before leaving for overseas.

The remaining material is support documentation from other sources.....mh

New Guinea

Introduction

World War II was the largest and most violent armed conflict in the history of mankind. However, the half century that now separates us from that conflict has exacted its toll on our collective knowledge. While World War II continues to absorb the interest of military scholars and historians, as well as its veterans, a generation of Americans has grown to maturity largely unaware of the political, social, and military implications of a war that, more than any other, united us as a people with a common purpose.

Highly relevant today, World War II has much to teach us, not only about the profession of arms, but also about military preparedness, global strategy, and combined operations in the coalition war against fascism. During the next several years, the U.S. Army will participate in the nation's 50th anniversary commemoration of World War II. The commemoration will include the publication of various materials to help educate Americans about that war. The works produced will provide great opportunities to learn about and renew pride in an Army that fought so magnificently in what has been called "the mighty endeavor."

World War II was waged on land, on sea, and in the air over several diverse theaters of operation for approximately six years. The following essay is one of a series of campaign studies highlighting those struggles that, with their accompanying suggestions for further reading, are designed to introduce you to one of the Army's significant military feats from that war.

This brochure was prepared in the U.S. Army Center of Military History by Edward J. Drea. I hope this absorbing account of that period will enhance your appreciation of American achievements during World War II.

GORDON R. SULLIVAN
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff



New Guinea

24 January 1943-31 December 1944

The campaign on New Guinea is all but forgotten except by those who served there. Battles with names like Tarawa, Saipan, and Iwo Jima overshadow it. Yet Allied operations in New Guinea were essential to the U.S. Navy's drive across the Central Pacific and to the U.S. Army's liberation of the Philippine Islands from Japanese occupation. The remorseless Allied advance along the northern New Guinea coastline toward the Philippines forced the Japanese to divert precious ships, planes, and men who might otherwise have reinforced their crumbling Central Pacific front.

New Guinea is the second largest island in the world. Its north coastline extends nearly 1,600 miles from twelve degrees south latitude to just south of the equator. A major mountain range cuts across the island's center from the eastern end of New Guinea to Geelvink Bay on the west and makes passage overland through the jungled mountains by large units nearly impossible. The lee of the mountainous spine, around the Port Moresby area, is wet from January to April but otherwise dry. On the windward side, scene of most of the ground fighting during 1942-1945, rainfall runs as high as 300 inches per year. As one veteran recalled, "It rains daily for nine months and then the monsoon starts."

Disease thrived on New Guinea. Malaria was the greatest debilitator, but dengue fever, dysentery, scrub typhus, and a host of other tropical sicknesses awaited unwary soldiers in the jungle. Scattered, tiny coastal settlements dotted the flat malarial north coastline, but inland the lush tropical jungle swallowed men and equipment.

The terrain was a commander's nightmare because it fragmented the deployment of large formations. On the north shore a tangled morass of large mangrove swamps slowed overland movement. Monsoon rains of eight or ten inches a day turned torpid streams into impassable rivers. There were no roads or railways, and supply lines were often native tracks, usually a dirt trail a yard or so wide tramped out over the centuries through the jungle growth. Downpours quickly dissolved such footpaths into calf-deep mud that reduced soldiers to exhausted automatons stumbling over the glue-like ground. Fed by the frequent downpours, the lush rain-forest jungle afforded excellent concealment to stubborn defenders and made coordinated overland envelopments nearly impossible.

Infantrymen carrying sixty pounds of weapons, equipment, and pack staggered along in temperatures reaching the mid-90s with humidity levels to match. Thus the U.S. Army faced a determined Japanese foe on a battleground riddled with disease and whose terrain made a mockery of orthodox military deployments.

Strategic Setting

In January 1943 the Allied and the Japanese forces facing each other on New Guinea were like two battered heavyweights. Round one had gone to the Americans and Australians who had ejected the Japanese from Papua, New Guinea. After three months of unimaginative frontal attacks had overcome a well-entrenched foe, General Douglas MacArthur, the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) commander, had his airstrip and staging base at Buna on the north coast. It was expensive real estate. About 13,000 Japanese troops perished during the terrible fighting, but Allied casualties were also heavy; 8,500 men fell in battle (5,698 of them Australians) and 27,000 cases of malaria were reported, mainly because of shortages of medical supplies. Besides ruining the Australian 7th and U.S. 32d Infantry Divisions, the campaign had severely taxed the Australian 5th and U.S. 41st Infantry Divisions. The exhausted Americans needed six months to reconstitute before their next operation. Australian ground forces, despite heavier losses, became the front line of defense against the Japanese who, though bloodied, were ready for round two.

To block the Allied counteroffensives on New Guinea and in the Solomons, Tokyo dispatched thousands of reinforcements to its great bastion at Rabaul, New Britain. On 9 November 1942, Eighth Area Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. Hitoshi Imamura, opened on Rabaul. Eighteenth Army,

commanded by Lt. Gen. Hatazo Adachi, was organized the same day and subordinated to Eighth Area Army. Adachi took charge of operations on New Guinea. Despite their defeat at Buna and the heavy losses in the continuing struggle for Guadalcanal, in January 1943 Japan still held the preponderant air, naval, and ground strength in the Southwest Pacific and retained the strategic initiative in New Guinea. With these advantages, they planned to strike again for Port Moresby.

Japanese construction battalions had transformed the prewar airfield and harbor at Lae, North East New Guinea, into a major air base and anchorage on the Huon Gulf. Japanese infantrymen could land at the stronghold and then sortie under air cover to seize a forward air base at Wau, located in the malarious Bulolo Valley about 150 miles west-northwest of Buna. With Wau in hand, the Japanese could lunge forward again toward Moresby protected by an aerial umbrella. Isolated and weakly defended, the Australian airstrip at Wau seemed ripe for Eighteenth Army's picking.

In January 1943 Eighth Area Army ordered reinforcements to Lae. Forewarned of the impending convoy by decrypted Japanese naval messages, MacArthur's air chief, Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney, commander of Allied Air Forces and U.S. Fifth Air Force, sent repeated air attacks against the enemy ships. Allied pilots sank two troop transports, damaged another, and killed 600 Japanese soldiers. Only one-third of the intended Japanese reinforcements reached Lae, and these survivors salvaged only half of their equipment. Without reinforcements, the desperate attack on Wau failed. The defeated Japanese remnants fell back into the jungle, slowly giving ground toward Lae.

Repulsed at Wau and pressed by the Australians, Japanese forces on New Guinea urgently needed reinforcements. On 19 February 1943, U.S. Navy cryptanalysts handed MacArthur solid intelligence that the enemy was planning another major transport to Lae in early March. Kenney threw every available aircraft into a three-day struggle from 2 to 5 March, known as the Battle of the Bismarck Sea. Eight transports and four destroyers were lost in all. Of the 51st Division's 6,912 troops, about 3,900 survived, but only 1,000 soaked, oil-stained, and dispirited officers and men reached Lae. Kenney's destruction of the 51st Division condemned the Japanese to the strategic defensive on New Guinea.

From February to June 1943 the battleground in eastern New Guinea lapsed into a stalemate as the opponents reinforced and replaced earlier losses. Shipping shortages created logistics and transportation bottlenecks for both sides. The Imperial Navy could not make good its heavy losses in naval planes and pilots so the Japanese Army Air Force was gradually taking control of air bases and operations in New Guinea. For the Allies, Europe also had first priority, for long-range heavy bombers and fighters were needed in North Africa. Kenney found himself trying to justify additional scarce warplanes from Washington for New Guinea. Carrier-based aircraft in the Pacific remained firmly under U.S. Navy control, as did the greater part of the Pacific Fleet. MacArthur was limited to cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. He lacked transports, cargo vessels, and landing craft as well as the specialized crews to man them. Neither side had the resources in early 1943 to force a decisive victory, and the campaign seemed likely to continue as a war of attrition.

Operations

At SWPA General Headquarters MacArthur's staff was planning the timetable for his triumphant return to the Philippines. Code-named RENO, it became the basis for operations against Japan from February 1943 through August 1944. During that time, RENO underwent five modifications to keep pace with changing operational and strategic requirements. RENO I envisioned leapfrogging past

Japanese strongholds in New Guinea and using paratroopers to seize key bases en route to Mindanao in the southern Philippines. The Japanese roadblock to MacArthur's scheme was the so-called Bismarck Barrier, that is, New Britain and its naval and air bases at Rabaul in combination with the series of Japanese air enclaves dispersed along the northern New Guinea coastline.

The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff directive of 28 March 1943 described Southwest Pacific objectives as a line running across the straits between Finschhafen, New Guinea, and New Britain. They ordered MacArthur to establish air bases on Woodlark and Kiriwina Islands; to seize the Huon Peninsula and Madang; and to occupy western New Britain. Meantime, under Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr., Commander in Chief, South Pacific Area, the U.S. Navy with Army and Marine troops would clear the Solomons to southern Bougainville. These operations were seen as preparatory for the ultimate seizure of Rabaul.

From these decisions grew the CARTWHEEL operation, a joint Southwest and South Pacific undertaking that originally envisioned thirteen amphibious operations, over six months, culminating in the capture of Rabaul. It began the night of 29-30 June when Halsey invaded New Georgia, Solomon Islands, and MacArthur struck at Nassau Bay. The following day two U.S. Army separate regiments, the 112th Cavalry and the 158th Infantry, made unopposed landings at Woodlark and Kiriwina respectively.

For CARTWHEEL MacArthur created ALAMO Force, an independent operational command that was in reality almost identical to Southwest Pacific's newly created U.S. Sixth Army. By placing ALAMO Force directly under General Headquarters, MacArthur removed American troops engaged in tactical operations from the control of Allied Land Forces commanded by the Australian General Sir Thomas Blamey. MacArthur personally selected Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger to command Sixth Army. Another American, Vice Adm. Arthur S. Carpender, commanded Allied Naval Forces which included the U.S. Seventh Fleet. His aggressive assistant was Rear Adm. Daniel E. Barbey, who commanded VII Amphibious Force, the ships that would carry the ground forces, their equipment, and supplies forward into battle against the Japanese during CARTWHEEL. The limited sixty-mile range of the boats of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade, selected to transport the troops and equipment, dictated that the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, land in Nassau Bay. On 30 June a makeshift fleet of 3 PT boats; 29 landing craft vehicles, personnel (LCVP), and 1 landing craft, mechanized (LCV); and 2 captured Japanese barges carried the battalion to its objective.

Although the troops landed without enemy opposition, SWPA had much to learn about amphibious operations. Pounding surf had beached or wrecked eighteen of the precious landing craft. Small bands of enemy soldiers appeared the following day, but after confused nighttime skirmishes in a tropical downpour the outnumbered Japanese fled into the concealment of the thick jungle. They left behind some 50 of their dead comrades as well as 18 dead and 27 wounded Americans.

About forty miles from Lae, Nassau Bay became a staging base that threatened Japanese defenders at Salamaua, a village midway between the two points that guarded the overland approach to Lae. As the 162d Regiment, 41st Division, pushed slowly north along the coast from Nassau Bay, Adachi had to siphon troops from Lae to protect Salamaua. This left his already understrength Lae garrison vulnerable to a flanking attack by sea and air.

An Allied pincer was slowly closing on Lae. While the Americans pushed along the coast, Australian troops advanced on a western axis from Wau through the Markham Valley. The mainstay of the Japanese defense was a lone infantry regiment. In such rugged jungled terrain, however, a few determined men could slow down a division. Numerous streams cut the coastline into a swampy, muddy bog that impeded the American push. The few jungle trails capable of bearing basic logistic support made the direction of the Australian overland thrust predictable. Japanese infantrymen dug in along key terrain dominating the obvious approaches. A grueling 75-day ordeal followed in the jungle wilds under appalling conditions. Patrol-size probes lurching through overgrown and tangled vegetation became the principal maneuver elements. Ambush and sudden death awaited the careless or unlucky because it was often impossible to see more than a few feet into the undergrowth. In the Southwest Pacific, small arms claimed 32 percent of Americans killed in action during the war and artillery 17 percent—a marked contrast to the overall rates in the European theater of 19.7 and 57.5 percent respectively. In part the aberration stemmed from the relative paucity of Japanese artillery compared to their Axis allies; in part it reflects the face-to-face combat characteristic of jungle fighting.

American losses from the end of June until 12 September, when Salamaua fell, were 81 killed and 396 wounded while the Australian 15th Brigade suffered 112 killed, 346 wounded, and 12 missing. Japanese losses surpassed 1,000 men. The battle casualties tell only part of the struggle fought out against nature in the jungle wilds. Men on both sides collapsed, exhausted from the debilitating tropical heat and humidity; soldiers shook violently from malarial chills or from a drenching in tropical downpours. Others simply went mad. The neuropsychiatric rate for American soldiers was the highest in the Southwest Pacific theater (43.94 per 1,000 men). The same monotonous field ration—bully beef and biscuits for the Australians, C-rations for the Americans—left soldiers undernourished and susceptible to the uncountable tropical diseases that flourished in the warm, moist jungle.

Japanese losses in their prolonged defense of Salamaua had left Lae exposed to an Allied envelopment. For his part, General Adachi expected the newly organized Fourth Air Army at Wewak to protect Lae's flanks against possible Allied airborne or seaborne assaults. As for MacArthur, the continuing shortage of ships and aircraft in SWPA meant that an envelopment of Lae required a total effort and all available resources. He could not, however, take that risk without local air superiority.

Faced with Japanese air power on two fronts—Rabaul and now Wewak—Kenney concentrated all his might against the latter. Wewak, however, lay beyond the effective range of Allied fighters, and ordering unescorted heavy bombers to make the attack risked unacceptable losses. Instead Kenney built an advance secret air base sixty miles southeast of Lae from where his fighters could reach Wewak. He planned the raid on the basis of compromised Japanese Army Air Force air-ground codes which revealed that the enemy had concentrated ten flying regiments at Wewak. On 17 August 1943, Kenney's airmen struck Wewak and left 100 parked airplanes destroyed on taxiways or damaged in their earthen revetments. A follow-up strike the next morning wrecked 28 more Japanese planes. In just two days Fourth Air Army lost three-quarters of its aircraft. Temporarily crippled, it was unable to oppose the first coordinated airborne and amphibious assault in the Pacific that occurred two weeks later.

More than forty ships manned by 3,200 sailors of Barbey's VII Amphibious Force, with the 2d Engineer Special Brigade attached, carried the Australian 9th Division to landing areas eighteen miles east of Lae. A two-echelon landing spread over 4 to 6 September placed

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Airdrop at Nadzab, Morning of 5 September 1943.

(U.S. Air Force photograph)

some 7,800 Australian troops in the rear of the Japanese defenses. Meanwhile, unchallenged by Japanese air power, on 5 September 96 C-47 transports, escorted by another 200 fighters and bombers, ferried the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment to Nadzab, about twenty miles west of Lae. In a spectacular display, hundreds of American paratroopers emptied the C-47s within five minutes. They met no opposition on the ground and quickly secured the landing zone. Within two days C-47s were flying troops from the Australian 7th Division into the airhead. The sea-air envelopment threatened to cut off the 51st Division at Lae from the rest of Eighteenth Army. Adachi ordered the division to withdraw to Finschhafen fifty miles east of Lae. The luckless Japanese had to detour around the Australians blocking the coastal road and into rugged, 12,000-foot-high mountains to reach the north coast. About 8,000 officers and men trekked into the foreboding mountains. More than 2,000 Japanese never came out, most victims of starvation.

Coupled with the loss of the Central Solomons and the Aleutians, this latest reversal convinced Tokyo that its forces were dangerously overextended. Imperial Headquarters therefore established a revised main perimeter line from western New Guinea through the Carolines to the Marianas. Although Rabaul and eastern New Guinea were now expendable, Japanese forces there were ordered to delay MacArthur's advance as long as possible.

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Meanwhile Allied strategy also underwent a major shift. At the QUADRANT Conference held during August 1943 in Quebec, Canada, the Combined Chiefs of Staff approved the Joint Chiefs' recommendation to bypass rather than to capture Rabaul. Now MacArthur's task became the neutralization of the Japanese on New Guinea as far west as Wewak. QUADRANT'S decisions gave priority to the U.S. Navy's drive across the Central Pacific and naturally disappointed MacArthur, who had argued for the seizure of Rabaul. The SWPA commander received official notification of the Combined Chiefs' decisions just five days before his attack on Finschhafen.

Finschhafen was the strongpoint that guarded the western side of the sixty-mile-wide straits separating New Guinea and New Britain. About 3,000

Japanese construction and engineer troops defended from fortified Sattelberg Ridge. This high ground overlooked the entire coastline about Finschhafen and blocked any further ground push northward toward Sio. The Japanese perched on the jungle-covered ridgeline waiting for the inevitable Allied landing.

Australian troops arrived at Finschhafen on 22 September. They quickly cleared the narrow coastal enclave encompassing the port and then started up the Sattelberg ridgeline. The fighting deteriorated into a series of deadly small unit combats against a well-entrenched and fanatically stubborn opponent. By the end of September 2,400 more men from the 20th Division had reinforced the battle-depleted engineers.

Two weeks later the Japanese launched a combined ground and amphibious counterattack. Australian infantrymen beat back the ground attack, but in the early morning darkness of 17 October one barge full of Japanese troops got ashore on the Allied beachhead. Pvt. Nathan Van Noy, Jr., of the 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, although seriously wounded by enemy grenades, sprayed the advancing Japanese with .50-caliber machine-gun fire. Van Noy's body was later found with his finger still on the trigger, his last round of ammunition fired, and thirty slain Japanese sprawled in front of his position. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

The Japanese counterattack was broken, but they fought on for two more months. Australians of the 9th Division attacked the ridgeline again and again, isolating and destroying pockets of Japanese resistance one at a time. At least 5,500 Japanese perished, but they held their ground until late November. MacArthur found himself bogged down at Finschhafen, where he had expected a walkover.

While the Australians were bearing the majority of the fighting from Nassau Bay to Finschhafen, General Krueger was training his growing number of American divisions to fight as amphibious task

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forces. Admiral Barbey had responsibility for the amphibious portion of the training designed to take full advantage of Southwest Pacific's domination of the air and sea by moving infantrymen over water to strike at their objectives. The seizure of undefended Woodlark and Kiriwina Islands in the southern Solomon Sea about 180 miles east of Buna during June 1943 had served as dress rehearsals for American GHQ planners as well as for lower echelon commanders of combat and service support units.

Southwest Pacific Area had expanded dramatically. From two infantry divisions, the 32d and 41st, in December 1942, the American contingent numbered five divisions (1st Cavalry, 6th, 24th, 32d, and 41st) by 31 January 1944. MacArthur also had three regimental combat teams (formed by attaching a field artillery battalion to the 503d Parachute Infantry, 112th Cavalry, and 158th Infantry Regiments), three engineer special brigades, and five Australian infantry divisions. Three more U.S. infantry divisions—the 31st, 33d, and 43d—were on the way. A combination of organized mosquito control, scientific treatment, and improved malaria discipline drummed into the GIs during training decreased

outbreaks of the epidemic sixfold and thus improved combat effectiveness. Kenney had about 1,000 combat aircraft at his command. The new Seventh Fleet commander, Vice Adm. Thomas C. Kinkaid, had about the same number of warships as his predecessor, but Barbey's amphibious fleet had grown with transports, cargo vessels, and landing craft. Together with Admiral Halsey's South Pacific force, the Allied commands enjoyed overwhelming numerical superiority in air and naval strength. They also held the strategic and tactical initiative and could select the times and places for forthcoming operations that were most advantageous to the Allied cause.

The Japanese, in contrast, could not replace their losses in aircraft, shipping, and skilled manpower. Japan's air losses on the New Guinea and Solomons fronts perhaps surpassed 3,000 aircraft. On the ground, Eighteenth Army had suffered around 35,000 casualties. Of the three divisions in eastern New Guinea—the 20th, 41st, and 51st—only the 41st was near full strength. Airfield, shipping, engineer construction, and assorted service units brought Japanese strength in the eastern half of the island to around 60,000 troops. A dangerous 350-mile gap separated maneuver elements of the 41st Division at Wewak from those of the 36th Division at Sarmi, Netherlands New Guinea. The 36th was part of a frenetic Japanese effort to strengthen the western half of the island through the construction of a web of interlocking airdromes. Until the buildup in the west was completed, Imamura and Adachi were locked in a desper-

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ate battle of attrition against a foe with a crushing superiority in resources. Paradoxically, the jungle that had claimed so many Japanese lives now sheltered them from a concentrated Allied ground offensive. The jungle rendered large unit maneuver impossible so the Allies could not bring their overwhelming firepower, manpower, and material resources to bear en masse against a selected Japanese stronghold. To sustain an infantry regiment in combat devoured the resources of two division equivalents. Every Allied operation depended on an extensive logistics infrastructure, painstakingly scratched out of the wilds, that stretched from engineers developing a coastal enclave and port back through the ships that were the umbilical cord between the advance base and the staging areas. Few soldiers actually fought the Japanese. The majority, perhaps seven of every eight, served in support roles—unloading ships, building roads, hauling supplies, preventing malaria, constructing airfields and bases, and so forth. How best to use the favorable military balance was a question whose answer depended on where MacArthur decided to go next. CARTWHEEL had scheduled landings by U.S. Marine and U.S. Army units at Cape Gloucester and Gasmata on the New Britain coasts as part of the reconquest of Rabaul. The Quebec decisions, however, meant that MacArthur's staff had to modify the original plan. MacArthur's intermediate objective was Madang, about halfway between Finschhafen and Wewak. To strike Madang, any Allied amphibious force had to cross the straits separating New Guinea from New Britain. To protect the Allies' flank during the Madang and Cape Gloucester operations, Southwest Pacific headquarters also ordered the seizure of an air and PT base on New Britain. Thus, on 15

December 1943, MacArthur's forces crossed the straits and invaded Arawe on the western tip of New Britain. The 112th Cavalry Regiment tried to surprise the enemy at Arawe by a predawn attack in rubber rafts. Although Japanese gunners shot the flimsy boats to pieces and repulsed this diversionary assault, the 112th's main force did get ashore by more conventional means. After suffering through numerous Japanese air raids, the 112th repulsed a Japanese counterattack at the end of the month and eventually pushed the enemy away from its perimeter. Thereafter the cavalymen, despite the swampy ground and thick mud fed by almost continuous tropical rains, successfully performed every task that the limited nature of their mission allowed. At Cape Gloucester on the north side of New Britain, the 1st Marine Division found itself in similar circumstances, but on a larger scale. Mud, unbroken swamp, and dense jungle made an overland

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advance toward Rabaul impossible. Indeed the increasing tempo of MacArthur's advance rendered it unnecessary.

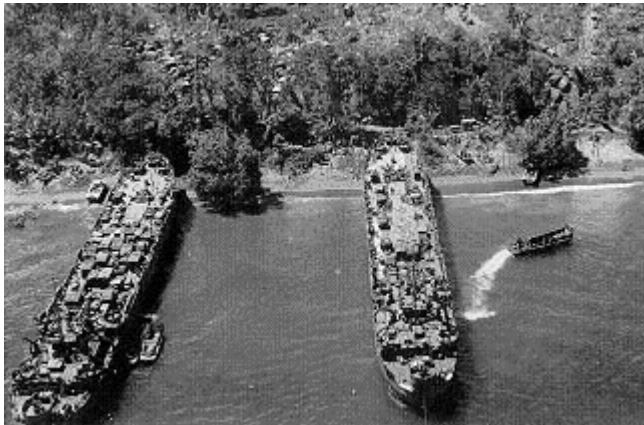
On New Guinea Australian troops of the 7th Division were ahead of schedule, advancing rapidly through the Ramu Valley on the south side of the Finisterre Range. On the Huon Peninsula the commonwealth's 9th Division had secured Finschhafen in early December and was moving along the coastline north of the range. To exploit the success at Finschhafen, Sixth Army received orders on 17 December to capture Saidor, thereby severing the Japanese line of retreat. Barbey's VII Amphibious Fleet carried the 126th Infantry Regimental Combat Team (RCT), 32d Division, from Finschhafen through the Dampier Straits 175 miles to Saidor. In contrast to the confusion at Nassau Bay just six months earlier, the unopposed landing at Saidor on 2 January 1944 was a model of precision. Troops and cargo were unloaded in record time, and, at the cost of 6 battle casualties, more than 6,700 troops and their supplies were ashore by evening. MacArthur now had an intermediate staging base for his Madang operation, control of both sides of the straits, and an enemy division trapped at Sio between the Australian 9th Division's steady advance and the 126th RCT's blocking position at Saidor. Once again the Japanese found themselves forced to flee into the rugged mountains in order to escape encirclement. As they sidestepped inland around Saidor, the retreating Japanese left a trail of abandoned equipment. On 15 January 1944, an Australian patrol pushing through Sio after the fleeing enemy discovered a half-buried trunk in a stream bed. It held the complete cipher library of the Imperial Japanese Army's 20th Division. The find was immediately returned to Central Bureau, MacArthur's Allied cryptanalytic agency in Brisbane, Australia. Central Bureau used the captured code books to solve the Japanese Army's main cipher system. This intelligence windfall arrived exactly when MacArthur was most prepared to take advantage of it. In January 1944 MacArthur and his staff were searching for ways to accelerate the final phases of the campaign against Madang and complete the isolation of Rabaul. Around this time, Fifth Air Force pilots consistently reported the absence of any signs of Japanese activity on Los Negros, largest of the

Admiralty group which lay about 360 miles west of Rabaul. Kenney insisted that air power had driven the Japanese from the island and recommended to MacArthur that ground troops immediately seize the supposedly undefended island with its valuable airstrips. Despite intelligence from decrypted enemy communications which revealed that more than 4,000 Japanese were defending the Admiralties, MacArthur approved Kenney's scheme. On five days'

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First Wave at Los Negros, Admiralty Islands. (DA photograph)
notice, Sixth Army was ordered to land in the Admiralties. If the troops encountered too much opposition, they would withdraw the same day. On 29 February 1944, a reconnaissance-in-force of about 1,000 officers and men from the reinforced 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, landed on Los Negros. The initial landings caught the Japanese off guard, facing the opposite direction. But the Japanese fought back with a fury; vicious night fighting typified the next five days. Krueger threw sufficient reinforcements into the battle to tip the balance in the cavalymen's favor. After three days of piecemeal attacks, the Japanese struck hard on the night of 3-4 March and nearly succeeded in breaking the cavalymen's lines. During this action Sgt. Troy A. McGill and his eight-man squad withstood repeated attacks. When all but McGill and another man had been killed or wounded, McGill ordered the survivor to the rear, fired his rifle at the advancing Japanese until it jammed, then fought them in front of the position, using the rifle as a club until he was killed. His actions earned him a posthumous Medal of Honor. MacArthur's luck and daring, plus the courage of a handful of cavalymen like Sergeant McGill, had won an impressive victory. Capture of the Admiralties isolated Rabaul and gave MacArthur a forward air base that extended his fighter range past Wewak.
Seizing

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Unloading LST's, Red Beach 2 (Hollandia). (U.S. Navy photograph)
the Admiralties two months ahead of schedule also led the Joint Chiefs to reevaluate Pacific strategy. MacArthur sent his chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Richard K. Sutherland, to Washington to brief an operation remarkable in scope, daring in execution, and promising to cut months off the Southwest Pacific advance. This was the revised RENO IV plan to jump an unprecedented 400 miles up the New Guinea coastline to capture the major Japanese air and supply base at Hollandia. Code-named RECKLESS, the Hollandia operation was a masterpiece of sound planning that took full advantage of extremely accurate intelligence obtained from reading Japanese codes. For MacArthur it proved the decisive operation on New Guinea and was the turning point in his war against the Japanese. When Allied codebreakers lifted the veil shrouding Japanese defenses, it became evident that MacArthur's next landing, scheduled for 26 April in Hansa Bay, midway between Madang and Wewak, could expect strong ground opposition. Moreover Japanese aerial reinforcements were filling up the major air base complex at Hollandia from where they would support the land defense of Madang. Conversely, Hollandia's land defenses were almost nonexistent. The soft Japanese center remained vulnerable to an Allied landing. JCS approval of RECKLESS did not automatically ensure success of

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The Assault on Wakde Island. (DA photograph)

execution. MacArthur, for instance, needed carrier air support because Hollandia was far beyond the range of his land-based fighter aircraft. The U.S. Navy, busily preparing for its assault of the Marianas, could provide three days of

carrier support and no more. General Headquarters planners then decided to seize Aitape, about 140 miles east of Hollandia. Aitape's airstrips could provide land-based fighter support to the ground troops at Hollandia after the carriers departed. The operation now evolved into a herculean effort by 217 ships to transport safely 80,000 men, their equipment, and supplies 1,000 miles to conduct three separate amphibious landings deep in the enemy rear area. The Japanese fleet was no longer a threat, having withdrawn from Rabaul to the safety of the Philippines. Control of the skies along the invasion route, however, was the prerequisite to success.

By late March, Kenney knew from deciphered Japanese communications that about 350 enemy warplanes were concentrated near Hollandia where they believed themselves safely beyond the range of Allied air strikes. Employing new model P-38s whose extended range

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made them ideal as escorts, Kenney sent sixty B-24 heavy bombers against Hollandia on 30 March. Follow-up raids demolished nearly all the operational Japanese aircraft at Hollandia on the ground. Never again would the enemy contest air superiority over New Guinea.

For MacArthur to bag all of Eighteenth Army, it was imperative that Adachi continue to believe that MacArthur's next blow was aimed at the Madang-Hansa area. A well-designed deception effort fed General Adachi and his staff a steady diet of false information about an Allied landing in Hansa Bay that the Japanese were predisposed to believe. The deception was so successful that on 22 April the 24th and 41st Divisions, led by Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger, commander of I Corps and the RECKLESS Task Force, landed unopposed twenty-five miles apart at Hollandia. The 163d Regimental Combat Team simultaneously waded ashore against no opposition at Aitape. In one swoop MacArthur had split the Japanese defenses on New Guinea in half, isolating Eighteenth Army in eastern New Guinea.

Once ashore, the 24th and 41st Divisions, moving east and west respectively, conducted a pincer movement to encircle Hollandia's three airfields. The maze of jungle trails, rain-swollen streams, marshy lowlands, and numerous hills and defiles proved a harsher opponent than the Japanese. Although there were 7,600 enemy near Hollandia, most were assigned to service, airfield, and communications units. Only one in ten carried a rifle. Surprised, badly outnumbered, demoralized, and ill equipped for battle, the Japanese fled into the jungle in hopes of reaching Sarmi, about 150 miles to the northwest. On 26 April the pincers closed on the airdromes where GIs discovered an aircraft graveyard of 340 wrecked planes that provided silent testimony to the deadliness of Kenney's earlier air raids.

With the enemy disorganized and confused, MacArthur's strategy was to capture additional forward airfields from which to cover his further advance into Geelvink Bay and thence the Vogelkop Peninsula. While his Sixth Army advanced rapidly westward to exploit his Hollandia advantage by not allowing Japanese defenders any respite, General Krueger simultaneously had to prevent Adachi's

Eighteenth Army from breaking through the Hollandia encirclement. Just five days after the Hollandia/Aitape landings, MacArthur ordered the 41st Division to leapfrog to Wakde Island and the airstrips at Sarmi on the adjacent New Guinea coast by mid-May.

The 163d RCT landed unopposed in Maffin Bay near Sarmi on 17 May and prepared to take Wakde. The following day four rifle companies of the 163d assaulted the tiny island. Wakde proved a tough nut to crack. It took two days of nasty squad-size fighting to pry almost 800

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Japanese defenders from their spider holes, coconut log bunkers, and coral caves. In sum, 40 American soldiers were killed and 107 wounded to take Wakde. They counted 759 Japanese corpses and brought back 4 prisoners of war. By 22 May Krueger had achieved his objectives near Sarmi. He then enlarged the mission. To secure the high ground overlooking Maffin Bay, Krueger ordered an overland advance toward Sarmi village about eighteen miles west of the beachhead. The American push by the 158th RCT ignited a sharp battle for a coral lump overgrown with rain forest, forever after known as Lone Tree Hill. Following several days of close-in fighting, correctly believing itself outnumbered and overextended, the 158th pulled back toward its beachhead. Three separate Japanese forces threatened the Americans. Units of the 223d and 224th Infantry Regiments had checked the 158th RCT at Lone Tree Hill. Simultaneously a second Japanese task force composed of the main force of the 223d Infantry had infiltrated through the jungle and worked its way behind the strung-out American advance. Yet a third enemy force, a battalion of the 224th Infantry, was returning from the direction of Hollandia, which placed it on the exposed eastern flank of the American beachhead. Fortunately for the GIs, the Japanese could not coordinate their offensive, but their piecemeal attacks alerted Sixth Army to the potential danger of the situation.

Operations farther west required the 158th RCT and the 163d Infantry. To replace them, and to strengthen Army forces, Krueger ordered the entire 6th Infantry Division to the Sarmi region. On 14 June the 6th Division relieved the 158th and took up the fight for Lone Tree Hill. After ten days of tough, close infantry fighting, the now veteran 6th Division held Lone Tree Hill. Division members counted nearly 1,000 Japanese bodies and sealed other enemy soldiers forever in fortified caves. The division itself suffered about 700 battle and 500 nonbattle casualties. With the high ground in American possession, Maffin Bay became a major staging base for all or parts of five different task forces—Biak, Noemfoor, Sansapor, and Leyte, plus Luzon in the Philippines.

The 6th Division was slated to spearhead the Sansapor landing, so Sixth Army headquarters ordered the 31st Infantry Division to Maffin Bay to replace it. From mid-July until the end of August, the 31st conducted aggressive patrolling to keep the Japanese at bay. It suffered about 240 battle casualties while killing nearly 300 Japanese and capturing 14 others before it departed in early September to invade Morotai. The 123d Regimental Combat Team, 33d Division,

arrived on 1 September to garrison the area. It remained until January 1945

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Infantrymen Moving Up, Biak. (DA photograph)

when a battalion combat team of the 93d Infantry Division replaced it.

Altogether the fighting near Sarmi cost U.S. Army units approximately 2,100 battle casualties. Five times that number of Japanese perished. Although the area later supported five invasions, the push toward Sarmi was a significant distraction at a time when Krueger had his hands full juggling four other major operations—Aitape, Noemfoor, Sansapor, and Biak.

Biak Island dominates strategic Geelvink Bay. Its coral airstrips, suitable for heavy bombers, were a powerful lure to MacArthur and Kenney. On 27 May the 41st Division (minus) arrived at Biak which lies only sixty miles south of the equator. The first wave landed exactly as planned, but strong currents carried subsequent units well west of their designated landing beaches. There was, fortunately, only nominal enemy resistance because the invasion caught the Japanese garrison flat-footed. Still, the steaming equatorial heat, thick, twelve-foot-high scrub growth, rugged terrain, and small parties of Japanese entrenched in caves cut into the face of a 200-foot-high cliff combined to slow the American advance along the coastal track toward the vital airstrips. Nevertheless, by the following morning, patrols of the 162d Infantry Regiment were within 200 yards of the island's airfields. Then a violent Japanese counterattack drove them back.

American troops now found themselves under attack from the west and the targets of well-aimed fire from the East Caves which dominated the coastal road. In constant danger of being cut off, the 162d fought an unseen enemy until ordered to withdraw in late afternoon. The next morning opened with another counterattack by the 222d Infantry Regiment supported by half a dozen light tanks. Sherman M4 tanks dispatched the inferior Japanese models while the 162d broke the infantry attack. The Japanese, however, regrouped for

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another attack. More importantly, the Americans finally recognized the

importance of clearing the high ground of Japanese.

In these circumstances, the 41st Division commander, Maj. Gen. Horace H. Fuller, requested reinforcements. Krueger dispatched the 163d RCT, which had accomplished its mission at Wakde and was an organic regiment of the division. It arrived on 1 June along with an admonition from Krueger to the division commander to push the offensive vigorously. Meanwhile the 186th Infantry Regiment had occupied the plateau overlooking the landing beaches and was pushing westward. With the 162d along the coastal road pinning the Japanese defenders, the 186th threatened the East Caves from the rear. MacArthur, however, wanted the airfields immediately to support planned landings farther west. His unrelenting pressure on Krueger translated, in turn, to Krueger's demands that the 41st Division quickly take the airfields. Thus the 186th Infantry was ordered from the high ground down to the airfield on the coast. By moving into this basin, the regiment placed itself under Japanese guns and suffered a continual pounding. Because the enemy dominated the airdrome by fire, it remained unusable by Allied warplanes.

MacArthur then dispatched General Eichelberger to the island with orders to get the troops moving on the airfield. Despite a shakeup of commanders, the fighting continued unabated on Biak through June, and the island was not completely secured until mid-July. The doomed garrison fought tenaciously, but to a foregone conclusion that left more than 4,800 Japanese dead at the cost of nearly 2,800 American casualties. Because Biak's airfields were not taken as scheduled, MacArthur ordered the capture of the strips on tiny, 15-mile-long by 12-mile-wide, Noemfoor Island situated 60 miles west of Biak.

Preceded by an intense naval bombardment, more than 13,500 troops of the 158th Regimental Combat Team (Reinforced) stormed ashore on Noemfoor on 2 July against desultory resistance. One dazed Japanese prisoner announced that recently arrived reinforcements had raised the garrison's strength to nearly 4,500 men.

The surprised task force commander immediately requested reinforcements from Sixth Army. In truth no Japanese reinforcements had landed on Noemfoor, but the reserve of 1,500 officers and men of the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment jumped onto the island using its runway as their drop zone. High winds carried the parachutists to bone-cracking landings in supply dumps, vehicle parks, and amidst wrecked Japanese aircraft. No paratroopers fell to hostile fire, but 128 were injured in the jump, including 59 serious fracture cases.

To the paratroopers also fell the nasty job of mopping up the

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enemy on Noemfoor. "Mopping up" meant searching for an elusive enemy and hoping you found him before he found you. When the Japanese did surprise a platoon from the 503d, Sgt. Ray E. Eubanks led his squad to their relief. Enemy fire wounded Eubanks and smashed his rifle, yet he continued to lead his men forward and, using his rifle as a club, killed four Japanese before he was again hit and killed. His heroism earned a Medal of Honor. For the entire Noemfoor campaign, the task force incurred a total of 411 battle casualties while killing 1,759 Japanese and capturing another 889, mostly laborers. While GIs secured Biak and

Noemfoor, 500 miles to the east Eighteenth Army was approaching Aitape. After scant opposition following the 22 April landing at Aitape, Allied engineers had quickly converted the existing Japanese airdromes into a major fighter base. By early June the 32d Division had established an outer defensive perimeter along the western banks of the Driniumor River, about fifteen miles east of the airstrips. Extensive intelligence reports warned the American commanders of the coming offensive.

Privy to the unfolding enemy plan thanks to codebreaking, Krueger asked MacArthur for, and received, additional infantry, artillery, and air reinforcements for Aitape, bringing the total forces, either present or en route, to two and two-thirds divisions. Eventually the 32d and 43d Infantry Divisions, plus the 124th Infantry, 31st Division, and the 112th RCT as well as a corps artillery section and tank destroyer battalion stiffened the defense. On 28 June Krueger created XI Corps to oversee the growing Allied force and appointed Maj. Gen. Charles P. Hall its commander. Hall enclosed the vital airstrips with a semicircular, ten-mile, defensive belt whose flanks rested on the sea. Along this line were more than 1,500 mutually protective log bunkers. Barbed wire obstacles and entanglements girded the line. Within that perimeter stood the equivalent of two divisions, including nine infantry battalions. Fifteen miles east, however, only three infantry battalions and two understrength cavalry squadrons defended the Driniumor River line. They had little barbed wire, few bunkers, poor fields of fire, and miserable jungle tracks for communication.

The Driniumor's twenty-foot-wide stream was easily fordable, calf-deep water. Dense jungle and towering trees on both sides of the wider riverbed effectively masked movement on the opposite banks. American riflemen and machine gunners in foxholes, pits, and a few bunkers along the river nervously awaited a Japanese attack. Japanese prisoners of war told of a forthcoming assault. American patrols had encountered stiffening Japanese resistance, and numerous decrypted

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messages pointed to an imminent offensive. Rather than wait for the Japanese attack, Hall ordered a textbook maneuver, a reconnaissance-in-force along both enemy flanks, to commence on 10 July.

That morning an infantry battalion on the north and a cavalry squadron on the south crossed the Driniumor and probed cautiously eastward. The reconnaissance-in-force passed north and south of Eighteenth Army's main assembly areas which were from two to four miles inland from the coast. Only two infantry battalions and a cavalry squadron remained to defend the Driniumor line.

That night ten thousand howling Japanese troops burst across the shallow Driniumor and charged through the center of the badly outnumbered and undermanned covering force. GIs fired their machine guns and automatic rifles until the barrels turned red hot, but the Japanese, eerily visible under the light of flares, surged forward. American artillery fell in clusters on the

Japanese infantrymen, killing and maiming hundreds or crushing others beneath the tall trees that snapped apart in the unceasing explosions. Japanese numbers proved irresistible. Their breakthrough precipitated a month-long battle of attrition in the New Guinea wilds.

GIs moved behind heavy artillery support to close off pockets of Japanese resistance. The jungle restricted movement so the hardest fighting fell to rifle squads or platoons. Infantrymen fought a disconnected series of vicious actions that appeared coherent only on headquarters' situation maps. Adachi's men asked no quarter and received none. During July and August 1944, nearly 10,000 Japanese perished. Almost 3,000 Americans fell along the Driniumor, 440 of them killed. In terms of American casualties, it was MacArthur's most costly campaign since Buna.

One measure of the severity of the fighting was the award of four Medals of Honor, all posthumously, for the campaign. Three soldiers received the decoration for self-sacrifice. Pvt. Donald R. Lobaugh of the 127th Infantry, 32d Division, launched a single-handed attack on a Japanese machine gun nest that saved his squad but cost him his life. S. Sgt. Gerald L. Endl, 128th Infantry, 32d Division, also single-handedly engaged the enemy at close range to save seven wounded Americans. As Endl was carrying the last wounded man to safety, a burst of Japanese machine gun fire killed him. Second Lt. George W. G. Boyce, Jr., of Troop A, 112th RCT, threw himself on a hand grenade to save his men. Second Lt. Dale Eldon Christensen, also of Troop A, won the medal for his series of heroic actions and outstanding leadership during the 112th's mid-July counterattack. Christensen was later killed "mopping up" after a Japanese attack. Their valor and

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the anonymous heroism of their comrades broke the back of Eighteenth Army. Hall's victory allowed Sixth Army's other ongoing operations to proceed on or ahead of schedule and validated MacArthur's concept of bypassing the enemy. Adachi's terrible defeat left Eighteenth Army trapped between the Americans in the west and the Australians in the east. In mid-December 1944 Australian forces began a slow, determined drive from the east toward Wewak, which finally fell on 10 May 1945. Australian losses were 451 killed, 1,163 wounded, and 3 missing. Some 7,200 Japanese fell. Adachithen kept his approximately 13,000 survivors together in the hills and surrendered only in September 1945. Adachi himself was tried at Rabaul for war crimes, but beat the hangman by committing suicide in September 1947.

With the fighting along the Driniumor flickering out, MacArthur's final assault landing on New Guinea took place at Sansapor, a weak point between two known Japanese strongholds on the Vogelkop Peninsula. There were about 15,000 Japanese troops of the 35th Division at Manokwari, 120 miles east of Sansapor. Sixty miles to Sansapor's west were 12,500 enemy soldiers at the major air base complex of Sorong. Rather than fight on the enemy's terms, MacArthur employed SWPA's well-tested amphibious capability to leapfrog to Sansapor where, on 30

July, 7,300 men of the 6th Division conducted an unopposed landing. Sixth Army had once again split the Japanese forces in order to seize a coastal enclave that combat engineers quickly transformed from jungle overgrowth into two airfields that provided valuable support during MacArthur's invasion of Morotai in the Molucca chain. Japan's 35th Division found itself isolated in western New Guinea. For historical purposes, Sixth Army closed the Vogelkop operation on 31 August 1944, although the 6th Division remained there until it left for Luzon, Philippines, in January 1945. Units of the 93d Infantry Division then took over the defense of the airfields.

Analysis

The New Guinea Campaign is really the story of two Allied armies fighting two kinds of war—one of grinding attrition and one of classic maneuver. During the attrition period, from January 1943 until January 1944, Australian infantrymen carried the bulk of ground combat while the Americans reconstituted, reinforced, and readied themselves for the maneuver phase of the campaign. During attrition warfare characteristic of eastern New Guinea ground operations through the seizure of the Saidor in January 1944, the Allies suffered more

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Jungle Fighters, Arawe, Pacific, by David Fredenthal. (Army Art Collection)

than 24,000 battle casualties; about 70 percent (17,107) were Australians. All this to advance the front line 300 miles in 20 months. But following the decisive Hollandia, Netherlands New Guinea, envelopment in April 1944, losses were 9,500 battle casualties, mainly American, to leap 1,300 miles in just 100 days and complete the reconquest of the great island.

The series of breathtaking landings, often within a few weeks of one another, were the fruits of the Australians' gallant effort in eastern New Guinea. They fought the Japanese to a standstill at Wau and then pushed a fanatical foe back to the Huon Peninsula. This gave Sixth Army the time to train and to prepare American forces for the amphibious assaults that MacArthur envisioned. It also bought the time to bring the industrial capacity of America to bear in the Southwest Pacific. Aircraft, ships, landing craft, ammunition, medicine, equipment—in short, the sinews of war—gradually found their way to MacArthur's fighting men. Still, without flexible senior commanders who adapted their plans to wring full advantage of Japanese weakness, the campaign could have degenerated into a meatgrinder

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along the coast which is what the enemy wanted.

Instead the speed of MacArthur's seaborne envelopments consistently surprised the Japanese. At the strongpoints where they expected to fight a delaying action, MacArthur bypassed them. Where they were weak, he overwhelmed them. Between Wau and Sansapor 110,000 of the emperor's soldiers and sailors died from enemy action, disease, or starvation in the pestilent jungles, the cold mountains, or in the empty seas. Another 30,000 were isolated in New Guinea and neutralized. Add to this the more than 57,000 imperial soldiers and 39,000 sailors marooned on New Britain and the totality of Allied victory in the New Guinea Campaign comes into sharp relief.

Victory on the ground depended on local air superiority which enabled the Navy to carry the ground forces safely forward to the next objective. The infantry held the ground and allowed the engineers to construct a forward air base, and the cycle began again. Against this sophisticated employment of combined arms warfare, modern technology, and industrial might, Tokyo asked its hardened veterans to do the impossible. Japanese infantry operations, brave, determined, but futile, were swept aside by Allied joint operations relying on the combined air, naval, and ground firepower essential for the conduct of modern war. MacArthur bypassed the jungle and left it to devour the Japanese soldiers isolated in its interior.

But above all New Guinea was the story of the courage of the GI who could always be counted on to move forward against a determined foe. It was the ordinary American soldier who endured the worst deprivations that the debilitating New Guinea climate and terrain could offer. It was the lowly GI who was the brains, the muscle, the blood, and the heart and soul of the great army that came of age in the Southwest Pacific Area in 1943 and 1944. In one tough fight after another, he never lost a battle to the Japanese. Those accomplishments and sacrifices are forever his and deserve to be remembered by all.

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Further Readings

Two volumes of the U.S. Army in World War II series, John Miller, Jr., *CARTWHEEL: The Reduction of Rabaul* (1959) and Robert Ross Smith, *The Approach to the Philippines* (1953) remain the best accounts of the New Guinea Campaign. Similarly David Dexter, *Australia in the War of 1939-45: The Army: The New Guinea Offensives* (1961) is an excellent recounting of Australia's ground war on New Guinea. Several top American commanders like Robert L. Eichelberger and Milton MacKaye, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo* (1950); Walter Krueger, *From Down Under to Nippon* (1953); and George C. Kenney, *General Kenney Reports* (1949) discuss

New Guinea operations in general terms. More critical, though still general, accounts appear in Eichelberger's letters published in Jay Luvaas, ea., *Dear Miss Em* (1972) and D. Clayton James' excellent biography *The Years of MacArthur*, vol. 2, 1941-1945. Edward J. Drea's "Defending the Driniumor," *Leavenworth Paper* No. 9 (1984) details tactical operations at Aitape while his *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War Against Japan, 1942-1945* (1992) analyzes MacArthur's use of intelligence during the New Guinea fighting.

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Cover: Troops of the 32d Division near Saidor. (DA photograph)

Leyte

Introduction

World War II was the largest and most violent armed conflict in the history of mankind. However, the half century that now separates us from that conflict has exacted its toll on our collective knowledge. While World War II continues to absorb the interest of military scholars and historians, as well as its veterans, a generation of Americans has grown to maturity largely unaware of the political, social, and military implications of a war that, more than any other, united us as a people with a common purpose.

Highly relevant today, World War II has much to teach us, not only about the profession of arms, but also about military preparedness, global strategy, and combined operations in the coalition war against fascism. During the next several years, the U.S. Army will participate in the nation's 50th anniversary commemoration of World War II. The commemoration will include the publication of various materials to help educate Americans about that war. The works produced will provide great opportunities to learn about and renew pride in an Army that fought so magnificently in what has been called "the mighty endeavor."

World War II was waged on land, on sea, and in the air over several diverse theaters of operation for approximately six years. The following essay is one of a series of campaign studies highlighting those struggles that, with their accompanying suggestions for further reading, are designed to introduce you to one of the Army's significant military feats from that war.

This brochure was prepared in the U.S. Army Center of Military History by Charles R. Anderson. I hope this absorbing account of that period will enhance

your appreciation of American achievements during World War II.

GORDON R. SULLIVAN
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

Leyte
17 October 1944 1 July 1945

By the summer of 1944, American forces had fought their way across the Pacific on two lines of attack to reach a point 300 miles southeast of Mindanao, the southernmost island in the Philippines. In the Central Pacific, forces under Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commanding the Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean areas, had island-hopped through the Gilberts, the Marshalls, and the Carolines. More than 1,000 miles to the south, Allied forces under General Douglas MacArthur, commanding the Southwest Pacific area, had blocked the Japanese thrust toward Australia, and then recaptured the Solomons and New Guinea and many of its outlying islands, isolating the huge Japanese base at Rabaul.

These victories brought American forces to the inner defensive line of the Japanese Empire, and in the summer of 1944 they pushed through that barrier to take the Marianas, the Palaus, and Morotai. With the construction of airfields in the Marianas, US. Army Air Forces were within striking distance of the Japanese home islands for the first time during the war. Yet, despite an unbroken series of defeats during two years of fighting, the Japanese showed no inclination to end the war. As American forces closed on Japan, they thus faced the most formidable outposts of the Japanese Empire: the Philippines, Formosa, and Okinawa.

Strategic Setting

Months before the Marianas and Palaus came under American control, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had addressed the question of objectives beyond those island groups. Early discussions considered Formosa and the Philippines. Domination of either would threaten Japanese sea lines of communication between her fleet bases and industries in the home islands and the resource-rich East Indies to the south. In addition, a strong American beachhead in the Philippines would jeopardize Japan's internal communications within the archipelago, the location of the largest concentration of Japanese ground strength outside the home islands and China. Although possession of Formosa would give American forces an ideal springboard for operations on the Chinese mainland it would place those forces between Japan and the huge enemy garrison in the Philippines. The Philippine archipelago thus seemed a more logical objective.

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The Joint Chiefs of Staff could not afford to ignore the political implications of its military planning. A return to the Philippines involved a compelling political dimension that did not apply to Formosa. The Philippine Islands had been a special concern of the United States since 1898, and the inherent politico-military responsibilities arising from that relationship could not be discarded so easily. General MacArthur and others insisted that the United States had a moral obligation to liberate the Republic's 16 million citizens from harsh Japanese occupation as soon as possible.

On 12 March 1944, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed General MacArthur to plan an invasion of Mindanao, the southernmost island of the archipelago, starting on 15 November. The general responded in June with a two-phase operational plan which included the seizure of southern Mindanao on 25 October to serve as a staging area for a larger amphibious assault against Leyte three weeks later. Luzon, the largest island in the archipelago and the location of the headquarters for Japanese forces in the islands, would eventually have to be taken to secure the Philippines. However, Mindanao and Leyte had features that made them desirable, if not necessary, preliminary operations to the liberation of Luzon. For one, both islands were accessible. Generally exposed coastlines; Mindanao to the south and Leyte to the east; would allow American forces approaching from either direction to preserve uninterrupted lines of communication from recently secured bases. In contrast, an amphibious strike directly against Luzon in the northern Philippines would be more difficult to support. Second and critical to forces operating together for the first time, both islands were known to be defended by garrisons much smaller than that on Luzon. MacArthur's staff estimated Japanese combat strength on Mindanao to be 50,000 with another 50,000 in the Visayas, the central Philippine Islands which included Leyte. They estimated that Luzon had 180,000 defenders.

Preparation for the invasion of the Philippines was greatly assisted by ULTRA, the Allied top secret interception, decryption, and dissemination program against Japanese radio traffic. Acting on tip-offs from ULTRA, American submarines and aircraft had been ambushing Japanese shipping in the Western Pacific and interfering with enemy exploitation of resources in the East Indies for many months. In June 1944 ULTRA revealed that Tokyo had decided to greatly strengthen its Philippine defenses to block the expected American route of advance northward toward the home islands. That knowledge and subsequent intercepts had allowed the Allied high command to focus submarine and air attacks against Japanese shipping routes and flight paths to

the Philippines. But despite increasing losses, the Japanese buildup in the islands continued through the summer and fall of 1944.

For the Allies, the sooner the invasion began, the better. But the availability of amphibious shipping, fleet fire support, and air support became major obstacles to accelerating the invasion date. Logistical studies by different headquarters gave conflicting answers to the question of whether or not there was enough shipping in the Pacific to support major landings on both Mindanao and Leyte. By the end of summer the Joint Chiefs of Staff could no longer wait to fix the timetable for the assault. On 8 September the chiefs directed MacArthur and Nimitz to take the Leyte and Surigao Strait area beginning 20 December.

The issues of objectives and operational scheduling were finally settled by fleet-covering operations in support of the invasion of the Palaus and Morotai. Beginning on 7 September 1944, carrier task forces from Admiral William F. Halsey's Third Fleet struck Yap and the Palaus, as well as Mindanao and islands in the central Philippines. Air strikes continued in October against Japanese airfields on Okinawa, Formosa, and Luzon, as well as enemy shipping in adjacent waters. American planners estimated that these attacks destroyed more than 500 enemy aircraft in the Philippines and a similar number elsewhere, in addition to about 180 seagoing merchant ships. The aerial successes convinced them that a major landing on Mindanao was no longer necessary and that available shipping and logistical strength could now be concentrated on Leyte. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed MacArthur and Nimitz to cancel intermediate operations and accelerate planning to carry out an invasion of Leyte on 20 October.

Meanwhile, Japanese Imperial headquarters received a completely different impression of what had been occurring. With their naval pilots forwarding wildly exaggerated reports of downing 1,200 American aircraft and sinking eleven aircraft carriers, Tokyo became increasingly optimistic. Although senior naval officers grew suspicious of these claims, other military authorities in Tokyo accepted them. In their eyes, the supposed American losses made it possible to decisively defeat the Americans wherever they landed in the Philippines; if Japan could concentrate its resources there. American planners, however, continued to regard Leyte as a mere stepping stone to the more decisive campaign for Luzon. This conceptual difference would greatly increase the stakes at Leyte or wherever the Americans landed first.

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Operations

One of the larger islands of the Philippine archipelago, Leyte extends 110 miles from north to south and ranges between 15 and 50 miles in width. The land surface presented features both inviting and forbidding to U.S. military planners. Deep-water approaches on the east side of the island and sandy beaches

offered opportunities for amphibious assaults and close-in resupply operations. The interior of the island was dominated by a heavily-forested north-south mountain range, separating two sizable valleys, or coastal plains. The larger of the two, Leyte Valley extends from the northern coast to the long eastern shore and at the time, contained most of the towns and roadways on the island. Highway 1 ran along the east coast for some forty miles between the town of Abuyog to the northern end of San Juanico Strait between Leyte and Samar Islands. The roads and lowlands extending inland from Highway 1 provided avenues for tank-infantry operations, as well as a basis for airfield construction.

The only other lowland expanse, Ormoc Valley is on the west side of the island connected to Leyte Valley by a roundabout and winding road. From the town of Palo on the east coast, Highway 2 ran west and northwest through Leyte Valley to the north coast, then turned south and wound through a mountainous neck to enter the north end of Ormoc Valley. The road continued south to the port of Ormoc City, then along Leyte's western shore to the town of Baybay. There it turned east to cross the mountainous waist of the island and connected with Highway 1 on the east coast at Abuyog. Below Abuyog and Baybay, the mountainous southern third of Leyte was only sparsely inhabited and contained no areas suitable for development.

Mountain peaks reaching to over 4,400 feet as well as the jagged outcroppings, ravines, and caves typical of volcanic islands offered formidable defensive opportunities. In addition, the late-year schedule of the assault would force combat troops and supporting pilots, as well as logistical units, to contend with monsoon rains. On a favorable note, the population of over 900,000 people, most of whom engaged in agriculture and fishing, could be expected to assist an American invasion, since many residents already supported the guerrilla struggle against the Japanese in the face of harsh repression.

The Imperial Japanese Army administered all garrisons and forces in the Pacific and Southeast Asia through its Southern Army, which included four area armies, two air armies, and three garrison armies. The 14th Area Army was responsible for the defense of the Philippines. Commanded by General Tomoyuki Yamashita, the 14th

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Area Army delegated responsibility for defense of Mindanao and the Visayas to the 35th Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. Sosaku Suzuki. From an order of battle that included four complete divisions and elements of another, plus three independent mixed brigades, Suzuki assigned the 16th Division, under Lt. Gen. Shiro Makino, to defend Leyte and designated the 30th Division, posted to Mindanao, as field army reserve. By October Japanese strength in the Philippines, including air and construction units, totaled about 432,000 troops, with General Makino's 16th Division controlling somewhat over 20,000 soldiers on Leyte.

The 14th Area Army was supported by sizeable air and naval forces. Both the 4th

Air Army and the 1st Air Fleet were headquartered in the Philippines, and could call on reinforcement from task forces in the Borneo and Formosa areas totaling 4 carriers, 7 battleships, 2 battleship-carriers, 19 cruisers, and 33 destroyers. American intelligence estimated the Japanese still had between 100 and 120 operational airfields in the Philippines, with 884 aircraft of all types. The largest of six airfields on Leyte; at Tacloban, the provincial capital; could accommodate medium bombers.

To take Leyte, American and Allied forces mounted the largest amphibious operation to date in the Pacific. The Joint Chiefs of Staff designated General MacArthur supreme commander of sea, air, and land forces drawn from both the Southwest Pacific and Central Pacific theaters of operation. Allied naval forces consisted primarily of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, commanded by Vice Adm. Thomas C. Kinkaid. With 701 ships, including 157 warships, Kinkaid's fleet would transport and put ashore the landing force.

The U.S. Sixth Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, and consisting of two corps of two divisions each, would conduct operations ashore. Maj. Gen. Franklin C. Sibert's X Corps included the 1st Cavalry Division and the 24th Infantry Division, the latter less the 21st Infantry, which had been temporarily organized as an independent regimental combat team (RCT). Maj. Gen. John R. Hodge's XXIV Corps included the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions, the latter less the 381st Infantry, also organized as an RCT in army reserve. The Sixth Army reserve would include the 32d and 77th Infantry Divisions and the 381st RCT. Of the six divisions, only the 96th Infantry Division had not yet seen combat.

Supplementing these forces were a battalion of Rangers and a support command specially tailored for large amphibious operations. The task of the 6th Ranger Infantry Battalion was to secure outlying islands and guide naval forces to the landing beaches. The new Sixth Army

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Service Command (ASCOM), commanded by Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Casey, was responsible for organizing the beachhead supplying units ashore, and constructing or improving roads and airfields. General Krueger had under his command a total of 202,500 ground troops.

Air support for the Leyte operation would be provided by the Seventh Fleet during the transport and amphibious phases, then transferred to Allied Air Forces, commanded by Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney, when conditions ashore allowed. More distant-covering air support would be provided by the four fast carrier task forces of Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet, whose operations would remain under overall command of Admiral Nimitz.

The Sixth Army mission of securing Leyte was to be accomplished in three phases. The first would begin on 17 October, three days before and some fifty miles east of the landing beaches, with the seizure of three islands commanding the eastern

approaches to Leyte

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Gulf. On 20 October, termed "A-day," the X and XXIV Corps would land at separate beaches on the east coast of Leyte, the former on the right (north), the latter fifteen miles to the south. As quickly as possible, the X Corps would take the city of Tacloban and its airfield both just one mile north of the corps beachhead secure the strait between Leyte and Samar Islands, then push through Leyte Valley to the north coast. The XXIV Corps' mission was to secure the southern end of Leyte Valley for airfield and logistical development. Meanwhile, the 21st RCT would come ashore some seventy miles south of the main landing beaches to secure the strait between Leyte and Panaon Islands. In the third phase, the two corps would take separate routes through the mountains to clear the enemy from Ormoc Valley and the west coast of the island at the same time placing an outpost on the island of Samar some thirty-five miles north of Tacloban.

Preliminary operations for the Leyte invasion began at dawn on 17 October with minesweeping operations and the movement of the 6th Rangers toward three small islands in Leyte Gulf. Although delayed by a storm, the Rangers were on Suluan and Dinagat by 1230. On Suluan they dispersed a small number of Japanese defenders and destroyed a radio station, while they found no enemy on Dinagat. On both, the Rangers proceeded to erect navigation lights for the amphibious transports to follow three days later. The Rangers occupied the third island Homonhon, without opposition the next day. Meanwhile, reconnaissance by underwater demolition teams revealed clear landing beaches for assault troops on Leyte itself.

Following four hours of heavy naval gunfire on A-day, 20 October, Sixth Army forces landed on assigned beaches at 1000 hours. Troops from X Corps pushed across a four-mile stretch of beach between Tacloban airfield and the Palo River. Fifteen miles to the south, XXIV Corps units came ashore across a three-mile strand between San José and the Daguitan River. Troops in both corps sectors found as much or more resistance from swampy terrain as from Japanese fire. Within an hour of landing, units in most sectors had secured beachheads deep enough to receive heavy vehicles and large amounts of supplies. Only in the 24th Division sector did enemy fire force a diversion of follow-on landing craft. But even that sector was secure enough by 1330 to allow General MacArthur to make a dramatic entrance through the surf and announce to the populace the beginning of their liberation: "People of the Philippines, I have returned! By the grace of Almighty God, our forces stand again on Philippine soil."

By the end of A-day, the Sixth Army had moved inland as deep as two miles and controlled Panaon Strait at the southern end of Leyte. In

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General MacArthur wades ashore in the 24th Infantry Division sector, 20 October 1944. (National Archives)

the X Corps sector, the 1st Cavalry Division held Tacloban airfield and the 24th Infantry Division had taken the high ground commanding its beachheads Hill 522. In the XXIV Corps sector, the 96th Infantry Division held the approaches to Catmon Hill, the highest point in both corps beachheads; the 7th Infantry Division had taken the town of Dulag, forcing General Makino to move his 16th Division command post ten miles inland to the town of Dagami. These gains had been won at a cost of 49 killed 192 wounded and 6 missing.

In the days that followed the Sixth Army made steady progress inland against an enemy which resisted tenaciously at several points but was unable to coordinate an overall island defense. In the process, the 1st Cavalry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Verne D. Mudge, secured the provincial capital of Tacloban on 21 October. Two days later General MacArthur presided over a ceremony to restore civil

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1st Cavalry Division troops advance inland through swampy terrain. (National Archives)

government to Leyte. To prevent a Japanese counterattack from the mountainous interior, the 5th and 12th Cavalry Regiments, 1st Cavalry Brigade, established blocking positions west of the city, while the 7th and 8th Cavalry Regiments, 2d Cavalry Brigade, cleared the fourteen-mile-long San Juanico Strait between Leyte and Samar Islands, mounting tank-infantry advances on one side of the narrow body of water and amphibious assaults and patrols on the other. Opposition was light, and the cavalrymen continued advancing around the northeast shoulder of Leyte toward a rendezvous with the 24th Division.

On the X Corps left, the 24th Infantry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Frederick A. Irving, drove inland meeting more determined enemy resistance. During five days and nights of hard fighting, troops of the 19th and 34th Infantry Regiments killed over 800 enemy in the effort to expand their beachhead and take control of high ground commanding the entrance to the northern Leyte Valley. By 1 November, after a seven-day tank-infantry advance supported by the fire of three

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artillery battalions, the division's two regiments had pushed through Leyte Valley and were within sight of the north coast and the port of Carigara. The next day, while the 34th Infantry guarded the southern and western approaches to

the port, the 2d Cavalry Brigade entered and cleared the city. In the victorious drive through Leyte Valley, the 24th Division killed nearly 3,000 enemy. These advances left only one major port on Leyte; at Ormoc City on the west coast of the island; under Japanese control.

From the XXIV Corps beachhead on the Sixth Army left, General Hodge had sent his two assault divisions into the southern Leyte Valley, the area in which General MacArthur hoped to develop airfields and logistical facilities for subsequent operations against Luzon. The area already contained four airfields and a large supply center.

The mission of the 96th Infantry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. James L. Bradley, was to clear the most prominent terrain feature in the entire Sixth Army landing zone, Catmon Hill. From the 1,400-foot heights of this promontory, the Japanese had observed and fired on landing craft approaching the beach on A-day. Keeping the enemy on Catmon Hill occupied with intermittent artillery and naval gunfire, Bradley's troops made their way through the swamps south and west of the high ground. On 28 October, the 382d Infantry took a key Japanese supply base at Tabontabon, five miles inland, after a three-day fight in which the Americans killed some 350 enemy. As the battle for Tabontabon raged below, two battalions each from the 381st and 383d Infantry Regiments went up opposite sides of Catmon Hill. The Japanese resisted fiercely, still manning fighting positions after several heavy artillery preparations, but could not stop the tank-supported American advance. By the 31st, when the mop-up of Catmon Hill was completed, American troops had cleared fifty-three pillboxes, seventeen caves, and many other prepared positions.

On the XXIV Corps left, or southern flank, the 7th Infantry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Archibald V. Arnold, moved inland against an unusually dense concentration of enemy facilities and defenses. The Japanese had built or improved four airfields in a narrow, ten-mile strip along the east-west road between the small towns of Dulag and Burauen. On 21 October the 184th Infantry took Dulag airfield south of the road while the 32d Infantry cleared both sides of the Calbasag River. Three more days of fighting swamps, extreme heat, and Japanese supported by artillery and armor brought 7th Division regiments to within three miles of Burauen, where three airfields were clustered. The fight for the airfields and village was bloody but flying wedges of American tanks cleared the way for the infantrymen.

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Infantrymen cautiously move toward an enemy machine gun position. (National Archives)

In Burauen itself, troops of the 17th Infantry overcame fanatical but futile resistance, with some enemy popping up from spider holes and others making suicidal attempts to stop the American tanks by holding explosives against their

armored hulls. One mile north, troops of the 32d Infantry killed more than 400 Japanese at Buri airfield. With two battalions of the 184th Infantry patrolling the corps left flank, the 17th Infantry, with the 2d Battalion, 184th Infantry, attached, turned north toward Dagami, six miles above Burauen. Using flamethrowers to root their enemy out of pillboxes and a cemetery, American troops brought Dagami under control on 30 October, forcing General Makino to move his command post yet further to the west.

While most of its units were occupied in the Dulag-Burauen-Dagami area, the 7th Division also probed across the island. On 29 October, the 2d Battalion, 32d Infantry, preceded by the 7th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, moved fifteen miles south along the east coast to Abuyog and then, over the next four days, patrolled west through the mountains to bring Ormoc Bay under observation. Neither advance encountered any Japanese defenders.

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As the Sixth Army pushed deeper into Leyte, the Japanese struck back in the air and at sea. On 24 October, an estimated 150 to 200 enemy aircraft, most of them twin-engine bombers, approached American beachheads and shipping from the north. Fifty American land-based aircraft rose to intercept, claiming to have shot down somewhere between sixty-six and eighty-four of the raiders. Nevertheless, day and night air raids continued over the next four days, damaging supply dumps ashore and threatening American shipping. But by 28 October, American air attacks on Japanese airfields on other islands so reduced enemy air strength that conventional air raids ceased to be a major threat.

As Japanese air strength diminished the defenders began to use a new and deadly weapon, a corps of pilots willing to crash their bomb-laden planes directly into American ships, committing suicide in the process. Termed kamikaze or "divine wind" to recall the 13th century typhoon that scattered and sank a Mongol invasion fleet off southern Japan, these pilots chose as their first target the large American transport and escort fleet that had gathered in Leyte Gulf on A-day. Although Japanese suicide pilots sank no capital ships and only one escort carrier, they damaged many other vessels and filled with foreboding those American soldiers and sailors who witnessed their stunning acts of self sacrifice.

A more serious danger to the American forces developed at sea. To destroy U.S. Navy forces supporting the Sixth Army, the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) decided to commit nearly its entire surface fleet to the Leyte Campaign in three major task groups. One, which included four aircraft carriers with no aircraft aboard, was to act as a decoy, luring Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet north away from Leyte Gulf. If the decoy was successful, the other two groups, consisting primarily of heavy surface combatants, would enter the gulf from the west and attack the American transports.

The approach of the surface vessels was revealed on 23 October, when American

submarines sank two cruisers. The next day, Seventh Fleet units blocked the southern approaches to Leyte while Third Fleet aircraft began attacking the main surface task force. But when his airmen spotted the four enemy carriers far to the north of Leyte that afternoon, Admiral Halsey took his Third Fleet carriers and battleships in pursuit. That night, the two Japanese surface task forces, unmolested by air attacks, moved toward Leyte Gulf and MacArthur's transports and escort carriers. Seventh Fleet battleships sank or turned back units of the smaller Japanese attack force moving through Surigao Strait south of Leyte. But the second and larger task force, which

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included the superbattleships Yamato and Musashi, successfully moved through the San Bernardino Strait, then south along the east coast of Samar Island, northeast of Leyte, to within range of the soft support shipping.

On the morning of 25 October, after two and one half hours of desperate fighting by light U.S. Navy escorts, the Japanese battle fleet mysteriously broke off the engagement and withdrew from the gulf, thereby leaving unexploited the opportunity presented by the Third Fleet's departure. To the north, the Third Fleet caught up with the Japanese carriers and sank all four of them. These encounters, later known as the Battle of Leyte Gulf, represented the largest naval battle in the Pacific. The battle cost the IJN most of its remaining warships, including 3 battleships, one of which was the huge Musashi, 6 heavy and 4 light cruisers, and 9 destroyers, in addition to its remaining carriers.

Americans and Japanese came away from the battle of Leyte Gulf with extremely divergent views of what had occurred. These different assessments provoked planning revisions which completely changed the character and duration of the battle for Leyte. The Americans believed they had dealt the IJN a severe blow; events later proved them correct. But in the immediate aftermath of the sea battle, Japanese commanders believed they had ruined the American carrier force. In fact, they had sunk only one light and two escort carriers and three destroyers. Nevertheless, convinced that they had won a major naval victory and bolstered by reports of air victories in the ten days before A-day, Southern Army resolved to fight the decisive battle on Leyte. Believing MacArthur's ground forces were now trapped on the island, the Japanese command moved to wipe out the Sixth Army. Marshaling available shipping, the Japanese began moving units to Leyte from other islands in the Philippines as well as from Japan and China. The first convoy brought units of the 102d and 30th Divisions during 23-26 October. Over the next six weeks, eight more convoys brought troops from the 1st, 8th, and 26th Divisions, and the 68th Independent Mixed Brigade.

ULTRA intercepts reported the approach of this shipping, but MacArthur's staff at first thought they indicated the beginning of an enemy evacuation. The necessary diversion of Third Fleet and Seventh Fleet aircraft for operations

against surviving Japanese fleet units and the incomplete buildup of the U.S. Fifth Air Force on Leyte itself also weakened Allied reconnaissance and offensive capabilities in the immediate vicinity of the battle. Not until the first week in November did MacArthur's staff realize that an enemy reinforcement was under

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Japanese transport under attack. (National Archives)

way. Thereafter, American forces inflicted severe damage on local Japanese merchant shipping, sinking twenty-four transports bound for Leyte and another twenty-two elsewhere in the Philippines, as well as several warships and smaller vessels. By 11 December, however, the Japanese had succeeded in moving to Leyte more than 34,000 troops and over 10,000 tons of materiel, most of it through the port of Ormoc on the west coast.

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For both Krueger and MacArthur the Japanese reinforcement caused severe problems. Instead of conducting mop-up operations after clearing the east side of Leyte, the Sixth Army now had to prepare for extended combat in the mountains on its western side. These new preparations included landing three reserve divisions on Leyte, which pushed back General MacArthur's operations schedule for the rest of the Philippine campaign, as well as the War Department's deployment plans in the Pacific.

On the ground the picture still looked bright. The linkup of the 1st Cavalry and 24th Infantry Divisions at Carigara on 2 November closed the highly successful opening drive of the campaign. After seventeen days of combat operations, the Sixth Army had all of its first and second phase objectives under control, as well as one third-phase objective, Abuyog. In addition, elements of the 7th Division had pushed across the island from the southern end of the XXIV Corps sector and controlled approaches to the town of Baybay on the west coast. Only one key area, Ormoc Valley on the west side of the island, remained to be taken.

To clear Ormoc Valley, General Krueger planned a giant pincer operation, with X Corps forces moving south through the mountains and XXIV Corps units pushing north along the western shore. To overcome the expected increased resistance, especially in the mountain barrier to the north, Krueger planned to commit his reserve forces, the 32d and 77th Infantry Divisions, and MacArthur agreed to contribute another, the 11th Airborne.

In this final phase, units of both corps would be operating on terrain much more rugged than that encountered on the eastern coast of the island and in Leyte Valley. North of Ormoc Valley, units of the X Corps would have to make their way south along a ten-mile stretch of Highway 2 through the dense mountainous neck

at the northwest shoulder of the island. South of Ormoc Valley, elements of the XXIV Corps would have to advance northward some thirty miles along the coast from Baybay to Ormoc City, all the while under observation of ridgelines only a few hundred yards inland, and then continue north another twelve miles to link up with units of the X Corps. The mountainous terrain north and south of Ormoc Valley offered excellent opportunities for the Japanese to again display the formidable defensive skills for which they were now well known.

For the initial drive on Ormoc Valley, General Sibert's X Corps had the dual missions of opening Highway 2 south through the mountains and closing several other mountain passes through which Japanese forces might counterattack American positions in Leyte

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Valley along the east side of the island. To carry out all these missions, Sibert required additional forces, and on 30 October General Krueger directed General Hodge to return the 21st RCT from the Panaon area to the 24th Division and replace it with a battalion of the 32d Infantry. While awaiting the return of its third regiment, Irving's 24th Division

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prepared to sweep the rest of the northern coast before turning south into the mountains.

On 3 November the 24th Division's 34th Infantry moved out from its position two miles west of Carigara. The 1st Battalion soon came under attack from a ridge along the highway. Supported by the 63d Field Artillery Battalion, the unit cleared the ridge, and the 34th Infantry continued unopposed that night through the town of Pinamopoan, halting at the point where Highway 2 turns south into the mountains. Along the five-mile advance west from Carigara, the infantrymen recovered numerous weapons abandoned by the Japanese, including three 75-mm., one 40-mm., and five 37-mm. guns, as well as much ammunition, equipment, and documentation. Then, after a short delay necessitated by Krueger's concern over a possible seaborne Japanese counterattack along Leyte's northern coast, the 24th Division, strengthened by the return of the 21st Infantry, began its drive south.

On 7 November the 21st Infantry went into its first sustained combat on Leyte when it moved into the mountains along Highway 2, less than one mile inland of Carigara Bay. The fresh regiment, with the 3d Battalion, 19th Infantry, attached immediately ran into strong defenses of the newly arrived Japanese 1st Division, aligned from east to west across the road and anchored on fighting positions built of heavy logs and with connecting trench lines and countless spider holes. The entire defense complex soon became known as "Breakneck Ridge."

Three days later, American progress was further impeded by a typhoon, which had

begun on 8 November, and heavy rains that followed for several days. Despite the storm and high winds, which added falling trees and mud slides to enemy defenses and delayed supply trains, the 21st Infantry continued its attack. Progress was slow and halting, with assault companies often having to withdraw and attack hills that had been taken earlier. Fortunately, the 2d Battalion, 19th Infantry, had seized the approaches to Hill 1525, two miles east of the road enabling General Irving to stretch out the enemy defenses further across a four-mile front straddling Highway 2.

After five days of battering against seemingly impregnable positions atop heavily jungled hills and two nights of repulsing enemy counterattacks, Irving decided on a double envelopment of the defending 1st Division. He ordered the 2d Battalion, 19th Infantry, to swing east around Hill 1525 behind the enemy right flank, cutting back to Highway 2, three miles south of Breakneck Ridge. To envelop the enemy left flank on the west side of the road Irving sent the 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry, over water from the Carigara area to a point two miles west of the southward turn of Highway 2. Lt. Col.

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Filipino volunteers carry supplies into the mountains to reach 1st Cavalry Division troops. (National Archives)

Thomas E. Clifford moved the battalion inland. They crossed one ridge line and the Leyte River, then swung south around the enemy's left flank and approached Kilay Ridge, the most prominent terrain feature behind the main battle area.

Although encountering strong opposition and heavy rains, which reduced visibility to only a few yards, both American battalions had reached positions only about 1,000 yards apart on opposite sides of the highway by 13 November. On that day, Clifford's battalion attacked Kilay Ridge on the west side of the highway while the 2d Battalion, 19th Infantry, assaulted a hill on the east side. Neither unit was able to carry out its objective or close Highway 2.

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For two weeks Clifford's men struggled through rain and mud, often dangerously close to friendly mortar and artillery fire, to root the enemy out of fighting positions on the way up the 900-foot Kilay Ridge. But on both Kilay and Breakneck Ridges the Japanese conducted a bitter, skillful defense. On 2 December Clifford's battalion finally cleared the heights overlooking the road and began turning over the area to fresh units of the 32d Division. During the struggle, the 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry, lost 26 killed, 101 wounded and 2 missing, but accounted for an estimated 900 enemy dead. For their arduous efforts against Kilay Ridge and adjacent areas, both flanking battalions received Presidential Unit Citations. Clifford himself received the Distinguished Service Cross for the action.

While the struggle for the Kilay Ridge area was taking place, other operations in the X Corps zone proceeded apace. To assist Sibert, General Krueger transferred the 32d Division to the X Corps on 14 November; Sibert in turn began replacing the exhausted units of the 24th Division with those of the 32d, commanded by Maj. Gen. William H. Gill. Meanwhile, operating east of the Breakneck-Kilay Ridge area, the 1st Cavalry Division had fought its way southwest of Carigara through elements of the defending 102d Division to link up with 32d Division infantrymen near Highway 2 on 3 December. But it was not until 14 December that the two divisions finally cleared all of the Breakneck-Kilay Ridge area, placing the most heavily defended portions of Highway 2 between Carigara Bay and the Ormoc Valley under X Corps control.

Throughout this phase, American efforts had become increasingly hampered by logistical problems. Mountainous terrain and impassable roads forced Sixth Army transportation units to improvise resupply trains of Navy landing craft, tracked landing vehicles, airdrops, artillery tractors, trucks, even carabaos and hundreds of barefoot Filipino bearers. Not surprisingly, the complex scheduling of this jerry-built system slowed resupply as well as the pace of assaults, particularly in the mountains north and east of Ormoc Valley and subsequently in the ridgelines along Ormoc Bay.

While the X Corps was making its way through the northern mountains, the XXIV Corps had been attempting to muster forces around Baybay for its drive north along the west coast through the Ormoc Valley. Yet, in mid-November the XXIV Corps still had only the 32d Infantry in western Leyte, with the remainder of the 7th Division still securing the Burauen area. Only the arrival of the 11th Airborne Division on Leyte in strength around the 22d allowed the corps commander, General Hodge, to finally shift Arnold's entire 7th

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Division to the west. But almost immediately, further delays ensued. As the 32d Infantry consolidated the division's jump-off positions about ten miles north of Baybay, it suddenly came under attack by the Japanese 26th Division on the night of 23 November. The regiment's 2d Battalion was pushed back, then regained lost ground the next day. To prevent another setback, General Arnold attached the 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry, to the 32d Infantry. Also supporting the American defensive effort was a platoon from the 767th Tank Battalion, two 105mm. batteries from the 49th Field Artillery Battalion, and one Marine Corps 155-mm. battery. The larger caliber unit was from the 11th Gun Battalion, one of two Marine Corps artillery battalions originally scheduled for the invasion of Yap but transferred to Sixth Army control when that operation was canceled. Pummeled by heavy fire from these artillery units, the Japanese went straight for them the night of the 24th, putting four 105-mm. pieces out of action. By cannibalizing parts, the American gunners minimized the loss, and the next day par' of the 57th Field Artillery Battalion arrived, giving the 7th Division one 155-mm. and four 105-mm. batteries to support what had now become a major defensive effort.

Despite heavy casualties, the Japanese mounted two more attacks on consecutive nights. Not until the morning of 27 November were American troops able to take the offensive, counting at the time some 400 enemy dead outside of their perimeter and discovering over 100 more along with 29 abandoned machine guns as they advanced farther northwards that day. The 7th Division soldiers dubbed the successful defense of the Damulaan area "the Shoestring Ridge battles" after the precarious supply system that supported them rather than after the terrain fought over.

After a few days' rest and a rotation of units, General Arnold finally began in earnest his advance toward Ormoc with a novel tactic. On the night of 4 December vehicles of the 776th Amphibian Tank Battalion put to sea and leaped-frogged north along the coast 1,000 yards ahead of the ground units. The next morning, the tanks moved to within 200 yards of the shore and fired into the hills in front of the advancing 17th and 184th regiments. This tactic proved effective, greatly disorganizing the defenders, except where ground troops encountered enemy pockets on reverse slopes inland, shielded from the offshore tank fire.

As the 7th Division pushed north with a two-regiment front, the 17th Infantry inland encountered heavy enemy fire coming from Hill 918, from which the entire coast to Ormoc City could be observed. It took two days of intense fighting against enemy units supported by

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mortar and artillery fire for the 17th and 184th regiments to clear the strongpoint, after which the advance north accelerated. By 12 December, General Arnold's lead battalion was less than ten miles south of Ormoc City.

While the advance on Ormoc continued events both alarming and reassuring occurred at other locations on Leyte. In early December, elements of the Japanese 16th and 26th Divisions in the central mountains combined with the 3d and 4th Airborne Raiding Regiments from Luzon to attack the airfields in the Burauen area, which the 7th Division had taken in October. Some 350 Japanese paratroopers dropped at dusk on 6 December, most of them near the San Pablo airstrip. Although the Japanese attacks were poorly coordinated, the enemy was able to seize some abandoned weapons and use them against the Americans over the next four days. Hastily mustered groups of support and service troops held off the Japanese until the 11th Airborne Division, reinforced by the 1st Battalion, 382d Infantry, and the 1st and 2d Battalions, 149th Infantry, 38th Infantry Division, concentrated enough strength to contain and defeat the enemy paratroops by nightfall of 11 December. Although the Japanese destroyed a few American supply dumps and aircraft on the ground and delayed construction projects, their attacks on the airfields failed to have any effect on the overall Leyte Campaign.

Meanwhile, on the west side of Leyte, the XXIV Corps received welcome reinforcements on 7 December with the landing of the 77th Infantry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Andrew D. Bruce, three and a half miles south of Ormoc City and one mile north of 7th Division positions. The 77th Division's 305th, 306th, and 307th Infantry Regiments came ashore unopposed' although naval shipping was subjected to kamikaze air attacks. As the newly committed unit landed and moved inland' the 7th Division resumed its march north, and the defenders were quickly squeezed between the two forces.

The commitment of the 77th Division proved decisive. As soon as he learned of the new American landing, General Suzuki ordered those forces then attacking the Burauen airfields to break contact and cross the mountains to help hold Ormoc Valley. Only small groups of these troops, exhausted and malnourished' reached the west coast in time to be of any great use. The strongest opposition facing the 77th Division came from a force of about 1,740 soldiers, sailors, and paratroops at Camp Downes, a prewar Philippine constabulary post. Supported by the 305th and 902d Field Artillery Battalions, General Bruce's troops pushed through and beyond Camp Downes to enter Ormoc City on 10 December, just three days after landing. In the final

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drive on Ormoc, the 77th Division killed some 1,506 enemy and took 7 prisoners while losing 123 killed wounded and 13 missing.

With the entrance of the 77th Division into Ormoc City, the XXIV Corps and X Corps stood only sixteen miles apart. In between, the 12th Independent Infantry Regiment, with its defenses anchored on a blockhouse less than a mile north of the city, represented the last organized Japanese resistance in the area. For two days the enemy positions resisted heavy artillery fire and repeated assaults. Finally, on 14 December, the 305th Infantry, following heavy barrages from the 304th, 305th, 306th, and 902d Field Artillery Battalions, and employing flamethrowers and armored bulldozers, closed on the strongpoint. Hand-to-hand combat and the inspiring leadership of Capt. Robert B. Nett cleared the enemy from the blockhouse area. For leading Company E, 2d Battalion, 305th Infantry, forward through intense fire and killing several Japanese soldiers himself, Captain Nett was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Once out of the Ormoc area, the 77th Division rapidly advanced north through weakening resistance. Moving along separate axes through Ormoc Valley, its three regiments took Valencia airfield, seven miles north of Ormoc, on 18 December, and continued north to establish contact with X Corps units

At the northern end of Ormoc Valley, the 32d Division had met continued determined opposition from the defending 1st Division along Highway 2. Moving south past Kilay Ridge on 14 December, General Gill's troops entered a heavy rain forest, which limited visibility and concealed the enemy. Because tree bursts in the dense foliage reduced the effectiveness of artillery, assaults

were preceded by massed machine-gun fire. Troops then used flamethrowers, hand grenades, rifles, and bayonets to scratch out daily advances measured in yards. In five days of hard fighting, the 126th and 127th Infantry advanced less than a mile south of Kilay Ridge. On 18 December, General Sibert ordered the 1st Cavalry Division to complete the drive south. The 12th Cavalry Regiment pushed out of the mountains on a southwest track to Highway 2, then followed fire from the 271st Field Artillery Battalion to clear a three-mile stretch of the road. Contact between patrols of the 12th Cavalry and the 77th Division's 306th Infantry on 21 December marked the juncture of the U.S. X and XXIV Corps and the closing of the Sixth Army's pincer maneuver against Ormoc Valley.

While the 77th and 32d Divisions converged on the valley, the 11th Airborne Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Joseph M. Swing, had moved into the central mountain passes from the east. After estab-

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lishing blocking positions in the southern Leyte Valley on 22-24 November, the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment pushed farther west into the mountains on the 25th. After an arduous advance through steep gorges and hills, heavy rains, and enemy pockets, the regiment reached Mahonag, ten miles west of Burauen, on 6 December, the same day Japanese paratroops landed at the Burl and San Pablo airfields. On 16 December, the 2d Battalion, 32d Infantry, moved into the mountains from the Ormoc Bay area to meet the airborne regiment and assist its passage westward. The 2d Battalion made slow but steady progress first through stubborn enemy pockets and at higher elevations, the same nearly impassable terrain that was slowing the airborne troops. But on the 22d after two days of battling scattered Japanese defenders on ridges and in caves, the 7th Division infantrymen met troops from the 2d Battalion, 187th Glider Infantry Regiment, which had passed through the 511th, to complete the cross-island move. Seven weeks of hard fighting through the central and northern mountains had come to an end and the defeat of Japanese forces on Leyte was now assured.

The successful X Corps drive south from Carigara Bay and the XXIV Corps drive north through Ormoc Valley and across the island left only the bypassed mountains west of Ormoc Valley under Japanese control. Most enemy troops in that sector were from the 5th Infantry Regiment, but remnants of at least four other units had also made their way there. These surviving troops were in poor condition, having to subsist largely on coconuts and grasses, and their numbers had been slowly reduced by disease and desertion. To destroy this final pocket of Japanese resistance, Krueger ordered the 77th Division to clear the road connecting the northern Ormoc Valley and the port of Palompon on the northwest coast, while to the north and south other units policed up remaining Japanese forces along the coast.

General Bruce opened the drive on Palompon by sending the 2d and 3d Battalions, 305th Infantry, with armor support, west along the road on the morning of 22 December. The 302d Engineer Battalion followed repairing and strengthening

bridges for armor, artillery, and supply vehicles. Assault units progressed rapidly through sporadic enemy fire until they hit strong positions about eight miles short of Palompon. To restore momentum, General Bruce put the 1st Battalion, 305th Infantry, on Navy landing craft and dispatched it from the port of Ormoc to Palompon. Supported by fire from mortar boats of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade and from the 155-mm. guns of the 531st Field Artillery Battalion, the infantrymen landed at 0720, 25 December, and secured the small coastal town within four hours.

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Learning of the seizure of the last port open to the Japanese, General MacArthur announced the end of organized resistance on Leyte. But Japanese defenders continued to fight as units until 31 December.

Farther north, other American forces made faster progress against more disorganized and dispirited enemy troops. Elements of the 1st Cavalry Division reached the coast on the 28th, and two days later met patrols of the 32d Division. Also on the 28th, companies of the 34th Infantry, 24th Division, cleared the last enemy positions from the northwest corner of Leyte. On 26 December, as these sweeps continued³ General MacArthur transferred control of operations on Leyte and Samar to the Eighth Army. Although Japanese forces no longer posed a threat to American control there, the mop-up of stragglers continued until 8 May 1945.

The campaign for Leyte cost American forces a total of 15,584 casualties, of which 3,504 were killed in action. In their failed defense of Leyte, the Japanese lost an estimated 49,000 troops, most of them combat forces. Although General Yamashita still had some 250,000 troops on Luzon, the additional loss of air and naval support at Leyte so narrowed his options that he now had to fight a defensive, almost passive, battle of attrition on Luzon, clearly the largest and most important island in the Philippines. In effect, once the decisive battle of Leyte was lost, the Japanese themselves gave up all hope of retaining the Philippines, conceding to the Allies in the process a critical bastion from which Japan could be easily cut off from her resources in the East Indies and from which the final assaults on the Japanese home islands could be launched.

Analysis

The campaign for Leyte proved the first and most decisive operation in the American reconquest of the Philippines. The Japanese invested heavily in Leyte, and lost. The campaign cost their army four divisions and several separate combat units, while the* navy lost twenty-six major warships, and forty-six large transports and merchantmen. The struggle also reduced Japanese land-based air capability in the Philippines by more than 50 percent, forcing them to depend on suicidal kamikaze pilots.

For the U.S. Army, the results of the campaign were mixed. The fight for Leyte

lasted longer than expected, and the island proved difficult to develop as a military base. These and other setbacks had their basis in several intelligence failures. Most important, MacArthur's headquarters had failed to discern Japanese intentions to fight a deci-

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sive battle on Leyte. Thus, not enough covering air and naval support was available to prevent the substantial enemy troop influx between 23 October and 11 December. This reinforcement, in turn, lengthened the fight on the ground for Leyte and forced the commitment of units, such as the 11th Airborne Division, held in reserve for subsequent operations. Of course, an ever present factor was the dedication of the individual Japanese soldier, the tactical skills he displayed in defensive warfare, especially in using the difficult terrain to his own advantage, and the willingness of his commanders to sacrifice his life in actions that had little chance of being decisive.

In their first combat test, the U.S. field army and corps headquarters generally performed well, with only a few notable errors. One error concerned the attack of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 21st Infantry, during the typhoon of 8-9 November; the effort wasted troop energy and morale in conditions that made a coordinated assault nearly impossible. In contrast, the XXIV Corps' use of amphibious assaults during the campaign showed both innovation and flexibility. But there were also shortcomings at the tactical level. Unit leaders, for example, discovered many problems with available maps, which had distance discrepancies as high as 50 percent. Patrolling and interrogations compensated only partially for such inadequacies, and the thick vegetation and inclement weather limited the value of aerial reconnaissance.

One of General Krueger's operational decisions has also been a topic of considerable debate. His 4 November order for X Corps to remain on the north coast of Leyte to counter a possible Japanese amphibious assault rather than immediately beginning the southward advance through the mountains toward Ormoc gave the recently arrived Japanese 1st Division two days to strengthen its defenses. Had the advance taken place earlier, the X Corps might have taken the defenders of Breakneck Ridge by surprise and avoided the typhoon as well. But the unpredictable nature of the Japanese defenders' use of kamikazes and airborne units to the commitment of almost their entire surface fleet without air cover was underlined repeatedly during the campaign, at times making caution appear the wisest American course of action.

Supply problems also plagued the Sixth Army throughout the campaign. They actually began weeks before the invasion, when the two-month acceleration of A-day resulted in the disorganized loading of transports in staging areas. This in turn caused a disorderly pile-up on beaches of items not yet needed as troops searched for supplies of more immediate importance. In addition, enemy resistance on A-day forced the diversion of the 24th Division's LSTs to

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the 1st Cavalry Division's beaches, which disrupted shore party operations and overloaded the cavalry's supply dumps.

The progress of combat operations inland raised new problems as the distance between combat units and beach depots steadily increased. Many were solved by a combination of innovation and labor-intensive methods, but more effective solutions would have to await development of better air and ground delivery systems as well as the organizational reforms necessary to accommodate them.

The largest single category of problems, however, were those the engineers dealt with during the continuous struggle with terrain and weather. Despite long U.S. Army experience in the Philippines, Sixth Army construction planning proved deficient. Most areas thought to be ideal for airfield and road development, especially those in the southern Leyte Valley, proved too wet to sustain traffic. General Casey's ASCOM engineers began work on three airfields—Burl, San Pablo, and Bayug—only to be halted by General Krueger on 25 November when it became obvious they could not be made serviceable. The Japanese had built the Tacloban airfield³ but in order for the Fifth U.S. Air Force to make full use of it, the engineers had to undertake a huge landfill operation to redirect and lengthen the runway. In the end only one new airfield was built on Leyte—at Tanauan on the east coast, the initial site of Sixth Army headquarters. Moreover, this project necessitated moving and rebuilding General Krueger's command post.

The situation was not much better for road construction. The best existing routes were gravel, and quickly broke down under the weight of American heavy weapons and equipment. The torrential rains of the typhoon season, totaling thirty-five inches in forty days, accelerated their deterioration and delayed all types of construction.

Finally, the slow progress of combat operations ashore also complicated the construction program. As the assault inland and on the west coast continued more engineer units had to be detached from airfield and road construction on the east coast to maintain supply routes, further delaying construction of not only airfields but hospitals, troop shelters, and other projects as well. Thus, as a ready supply base or a stepping stone to Luzon and the other Philippine Islands, Leyte proved less than satisfactory.

Yet, in balance, the Sixth Army's performance on Leyte had more to commend than to criticize. Throughout the campaign Army units demonstrated great skill at amphibious operations and combined arms tactics in challenging terrain and climate. The rotation of combat units ensured that the American ground offensive rarely lost its momentum, while the Japanese Army commanders were never able to

concentrate

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for anything close to a serious counterattack, despite the size of the combat forces that they committed. The only real threat to the campaign occurred at sea, when the U.S. fast carrier task forces were lured north and the Sixth Army's support vessels lay briefly at the mercy of the Japanese surface fleet.

In the end the Japanese decision to stake everything on the battle for Leyte only hastened their final collapse as they lacked the ability to coordinate the mass of air, ground and naval forces that they committed to the struggle. Even before the fighting on Leyte ended, MacArthur's forces had moved on to invade Luzon and the rest of the Philippines, thereby consolidating their hold on this former Japanese bastion and completing a final major step toward Japan itself.

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Further Readings

The official history of the Leyte Campaign has been augmented by many popular and scholarly accounts. The views of senior American ground commanders on the campaign are presented in Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (1964), and Walter Krueger, *From Down Under to Nippon: The Story of Sixth Army in World War II* (1953). The strategic debate over objectives in the Western Pacific is explained by Robert Ross Smith in "Luzon Versus Formosa," Chapter 21 of Kent Roberts Greenfield, ed., *Command Decisions* (1960). A readable overview of the campaign is Stanley L. Falk, *Decision at Leyte* (1966). In the 1970s, the declassification of cryptanalytic documentation relating to the Pacific war allowed fuller treatment of the intelligence background to the Leyte Campaign. A scholarly example of such is "The Missing Division: Leyte, 1944," Chapter 6 of Edward J. Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA; Codebreaking and the War Against Japan, 1942-1945* (1992). The most extensive treatment of the campaign itself remains M. Hamlin Cannon, *Leyte: The Return to the Philippines* (1987), a volume in the series *United States Army in World War II*.

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Cover: U.S. Navy landing craft unload supplies.
(National Archives)

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The following is a story written by an airborne trooper who served on Leyte at the exact same time as Sergeant Allen. His story is very similar to Sergeant Allen's and I have included it to verify some of what Sergeant Allen has said and to clarify and add to the accounts presented

by Sergeant Allen.

No One Smiled on Leyte

By Deane E. Marks - HQ2-511 PIR

These events took place starting early November 1944, on the island of Leyte. They cover action of a Light Machine Gun Platoon that was assigned to HQ2-511th Parachute Infantry Regiment. The exact dates are almost impossible to reconstruct due to the length of time and the fact all track of time was lost on the day by day actions taking place. We knew when Thanksgiving Day took place, also Christmas, but in between, each day was like the one before. On Leyte, there was rain, rain, rain, mud and a wet jungle, or I guess more like a rain forest in a high mountain terrain.

On November 18, 1944 we went ashore on Leyte in landing barges, between Dulag and

Abuyog at a place called Bito Beach, having departed from Oro Bay, New Guinea on November 7, 1944. The ship we sailed on from New Guinea, was an APA (Attack Personnel Transport) named the "Golden City." The Golden City was a navy transport, that was quite comfortable compared to the Sea Pike which we sailed on from San Francisco to New Guinea five or six months previously.

We loafed around the beach area for a day or two getting our equipment in order and unloading barges and generally just following this order or that. There were no Japanese in the immediate area. Early one morning the entire 511th PIR was sent up the road by truck to a town called Burauen, which was located about ten miles due west of the beach. We took over positions of another unit (the 7th Infantry) which had been holding the area. At this point it was sort of a phony war, such as existed on the French-German border in 1939. We had sort of sat around all day shooting the breeze, eating our "C" rations and improving our fox holes for better sleeping. Still haven't seen any Nips, nor signs of them. Lots of Filipinos wandering around telling tall tales of their fierce resistance during the Japanese occupation, most of which was "bull shit. Everyone was a guerrilla, now that the U.S. Army was back. No doubt there WERE many guerrillas, but I suspect they kept a low profile.

The equipment we carried amounted to six or seven pair of socks, some handkies, a few sets of shorts and underwear tops and an extra set of fatigues. We wore jump boots, which we would soon to find them to be, not so great in the wetness of Leyte. As for combat equipment each man had a rifle of some kind. I, like a dummy, traded my M-1 Carbine for a M-1 Garand rifle. Boy! What a mistake that was. I traded a 5 pound weapon for a 9 ½ pound weapon, plus a bayonet. Most everyone had carbines. Some of the noncoms had Thompson submachine guns and there were a few M-3s

around. Everyone had from four to six hand grenades. We kept the handles taped down most of the time. Grenades could be very dangerous if handled carelessly. At night, while in defensive positions, grenades were used out front of one's foxhole, as booby traps. We would tie or tape the grenade to a tree at about hip level, tie a trip wire to the ring, tie the wire to another tree and secure it. If one walked into the wire, he is dead or mortally wounded. The big problem was the next morning going out to pick up the grenades. Gees! You had to remember EXACTLY where you rigged them up or you were in just as much trouble as some Nip trying to infiltrate. There WERE cases of people getting tangled up in these things, and in panic just took off in any direction and then hit the dirt when they would hear the "pop" of the firing pin.

Then there were the gas masks. I would guess there are no less than two thousand of those things scattered over the trails from Burauen to Ormoc. Some of the guys saved the carrying case and used it for a musette bag, after they had discarded the large d get the shivers. Sometimes my teeth would chatter so much I would have to bite a handkerchief to keep my fillings from vibrating out, but still the poncho was indispensable.

During the day time, (as we sat in those 7th Infantry positions) when it would began to rain a little bit, we built little bench-like beds to keep our fannies dry. Sometimes it worked, other times you would sag into the mud. I guess it was three or four days when word came down that we were to move out. We had been under intruder air attacks at night, since we sailed into the Leyte Gulf. As a matter of fact, the day we landed at Bito Beach, six or seven "Betty" Mitsubishi medium bombers tore into the convoy. The Navy fired its 40mm and other "Ack Ack." There was shooting all over the place with nothing getting hit. Soon some P-38s and P-47s came to the rescue, like the cavalry and shot three down. Our fighters, would bore into a bomber and soon you would see a wisp of smoke, (black) then an orange-red blob of flame would envelop the whole plane. Then off towards the horizon, we could see the bomber splash into the sea. The other "Betty's" skedaddled over the coast line west toward Cebu Island. During the night, raids were fun to watch because the search lights would pick up the Nip bombers, at around eight or nine thousand feet and then the Army would start shooting. Never saw them hit a thing. One day, maybe the second day after landing at Bito, this Nip twin engine bomber came in from the south, right on the deck heading for the ships in the Gulf. The Army shore guns, 20s and 40s started shooting. It was noisy as hell. Here this Betty was twenty feet off the deck at about 300 mph, again missed by the Army gunners, then Wham, in come a P-38. One pass and the Betty cartwheeled in the Gulf. That Betty was probably one of first Kamikazes, as I found out years later. It was during this action that the Nips started their Kamikaze raids.

Getting back to our present situation. Rumors started to come down that our First Battalion, from the 511th PIR, had advanced in a blind draw and was ambushed with heavy casualties. We heard that a couple troopers were dropped in from L-4s. Hell! We didn't even know what our objective was. We still hadn't seen a Nip, dead or alive. Then one day, we started up a hill into the jungle, I don't know the date, but we were on our way to relieve the First Battalion, wherever they were.

It was still daylight, but raining as we moved along. To keep my old M-1 rifle dry, I slung it upside down with a condom over the muzzle. We were relatively dry, our feet were dry, but we stunk, mainly from sweat and mosquito repellent. The trail was heading up a slight grade, that was muddy and slippery, but the smokers kept puffing away. Some of the guys were eating, issued the day before. It was still raining. We had no idea of where we were going. Someone mentioned Ormoc, wherever that was. Now, we heard that somewhere ahead, part of C-511th was surrounded by the Nips. We didn't have any idea of what the hell was going on. After a day or two of walking, sleeping along the trail at night, we arrive to where C-511th had been. Now, I see my first dead man. I didn't know who he was. All I heard was that, he was a C-511th trooper, just laying along the trail face down in a crawling position. One pant leg had come out of his boot and his calf was laid open. Probably from a mortar shell. Now, I realize what was going on. It was real, real real. Somehow, the mud seemed wetter, the rain colder and the stomach emptier. I felt that butterfly feeling you get; before the kickoff or before you are asked to make that speech in school! We saw several C-511th troopers, they looked pale and tired. I do not know exactly how many casualties they had. We just kept on tramping up and down on this six or eight foot wide path or trail, or whatever you want to call it. Up until now we had made an attempt to keep dry and clean. But after hitting the deck, whenever the lead scout would see something, or thought he had seen something, you were really covered with mud from head to toe -- literally. It rained all day.

I don't know the date, but while we were coming up to the crest of a hill, it was mid-morning and we were tired and wet. All of a sudden a grenade popped. Everyone hit the dirt. A few seconds later that metallic "blang" rocked the area. Then I heard this sorrowful moan, not a scream, a moan. It was HQ2 Battalion's first casualty. Ivan Benderwald, a mortar gunner from Ellendale, ND. Ivan's hip, was blown away. He had a six inch diameter and four inch deep hole where his hip once was. He was conscious. I looked at him and felt he couldn't possibly survive. A medic scrambled up and poured sulfa powder into the wound and put a huge pressure-pad bandage on it. While all this was going on, we just laid around along the side of the trail. I gave up my poncho to make a litter for Ivan. Six of us picked up Ivan and lugged him back

towards Burauen to an Aid Station. I guess we carried him a half mile. By that time Ivan had been given plenty of morphine and was feeling no pain. At the aid station, the surgeons, probably Capt. Matt Platt, operated on Ivan's hip. Being that he was about 190 pounds plus, he was too heavy to be evacuated from the field hospital by an L-4, so he had to lay around for a week or so until he lost a few pounds so the L-4 could take off with him from a short landing strip. (I found this out years later.) Anyway, Benderwald was gone and we all felt good that it wasn't one of us. To this day, nobody knows where that grenade came from. There certainly were Nips in the area, as every now and then they would open up with their "woodpeckers." (This was the name given the Japanese Nambu 6.5mm light machine gun.) When this would happen, the only thing you could do was drop to the ground and roll over a time or two so that when you lifted your head to peek ahead and around, you would not be in the sights of whoever was shooting at you. Generally, a Nip "woodpecker" was always protected by infantry. As this Nip was giving us sporadic bursts, ole Vigbert D. Sharpe, starts wiggling up the side of the slope to where we were with his M-1. Sharpe was the LMG. platoon Sgt.. He stopped, peered up ahead, saw a sniper in a tree, then another, and with two quick shots, using Kentucky windage, he got both of those Nips. When this happened, Sherlock (John Sherlock, our Sqd. leader) had us wiggle up behind Sharpe with the LMG. We wiggled and crawled up this slope for about fifty yards. We means: Dub Westbrook, Dave Bailey, D'Arcy Carolyn, Bill Porteous and myself, which constituted a machine gun squad. Everyone lugged two boxes of ammo, plus their personal ammo and weapons. In other words, we were loaded down. It is hard as hell to set up a LMG on an upward uneven slope. Unlike the movies, it is very difficult to fire a LMG from the hip. The first problem you have, is that the cooling jacket gets so hot you can't touch it, much less hold it. We did have some big asbestos mittens, which were intended to be used when the gun had to be moved to a different position, but they were never around when you needed one. The second problem was, the ammo belts held 250 rounds and were in a metal box, mainly to keep it clean and in a position that would allow it to be fed into the left side of the receiver. The third and most important item, if you did fire from the hip, you had to stand and anyone who stood up in any kind of fire fight, was usually dead before long. Anyway, we kept wiggling up this slope to what was the C-511th perimeter and made contact. There were a few dead Nips laying around and several wounded C-511th troopers. The Nips, the first I'd seen, were flopped around in grotesque positions. They wore leggings and tennis shoes that had one "big toe" partition. All the dead Nips had their shirts ripped open and their pants half off due to searches by S-2 and anyone looking for souvenirs. Their helmets were sort of like ours, except not quite as low in the back. Their mess gear amounted to one quart, kidney shaped aluminum can with a cover. In this, they cooked rice, which was their main staple. Some Nip cigarettes (Anchor Brand) were strewn around. I didn't smoke

then, but the smokers said they were very strong. Each cig. had its own stiff paper holder, so they could be smoked down to nothing. Their fatigue pants and jacket were like ours, although the color was brown. So far, after all the shooting getting up to where C-511th was, no one in our platoon or company, for that matter, was hit. We pushed on, I don't know to where. Just follow the guy in front of you and hope you don't get ambushed.

A day or two later, the sun came out. Elmer Trantow was climbing up the side of a river bank towards a small hut, when all of a sudden a Nip came flying out of the door toward the "Tumbler." (Elmer Trantow was known as Trantow the Tumbler," due to his expertise in gymnastics done in Camp Mackall and New Guinea.) The Tumbler brought his M-3 to bear and emptied it into this unfortunate. Elmer later said, "he just froze on the trigger." You have to imagine what a person looked like after absorbing about twenty .45 caliber low velocity slugs. By day's end, it grew gray and started raining again.

One day we climbed up a very large plateau and moved up the LMG. We didn't know why, shucks we never knew WHY we did anything. We just kept putting out feet in the mucky brown foot print in front of us. Our feet seemed to be always soggy. About two or three hours after we set up our LMG, we looked out into this valley and "holy cow" here came this C-47 barreling at eye level at perhaps a thousand yards to our front. Right in front of us a slew of red and yellow parapacks dropped and troopers started jumping out of the plane. We could actually see their little white faces. They couldnt have been higher then four or maybe five hundred feet. This went on for some time. At the time we did not know what unit they were from, because we knew where the rest of the 511th PIR (the 1st and 3rd Bn.) parachutists were at. We finally figured it out that they were the 457th Airborne Artillery from the 11th Airborne. Their asses were soon soaking in the mud like ours. We were glad to see them bring in their 75mm pack howitzers, but wondered how they were going to move them. (They probably are still there in the mud.)

One day, in the rain and sloppy stinky mud, we went traipsing around an area called Anonang, looking for a C-47 that went down in the forest due to engine failure. We found the wreck late in the afternoon. All aboard were dead, but the Nips had gotten there before and stole everything of value and/or food to eat. As we headed back to our perimeter around another place called Lubi, we heard a number of planes overhead. We looked up to see at least six C-47s flying at six to eight hundred feet overhead. It was dusk and we could see the blue exhaust trail from the engines. In a few seconds they were gone. We assumed they were bringing in planes into the area and that we had a jump coming up. I found out much later that they were Japanese (a

licensed DC-2 built in Japan) loaded with a few hundred Nip paratroopers headed for the airstrips around Burauen. They jumped on the San Pablo and Buri airstrips where they burned up a bunch of our planes, raised hell for a few days and nights and were finally driven off by the 11th Airborne Division Headquarters troops, cooks, etc.

Up and down the mountain trails we went. Wet to the bone and being ambushed just about daily. Bumbling into the Nips here and there. Part of HQ2-511th got themselves caught in a potato patch near a place called Mahonag. We lost some good troopers: McGraw, Fleming and Yeager. We couldn't get them out during the firefight. That night Baldy (Baldy was the code name for our C.O., Capt. Charles Jenkins) took a squad down looking for the three casualties. He went through the area calling "Dave, Dave." It was to no avail, they were all dead. It looked like Yeager may have died from exposure, but the other two were hit many times. We found it hard to accept, but had to. You didn't get any "madder" at the Nips, just hated them a bit more. As we hiked along the trails, we noted many dead Japanese and also some Filipinos. We passed a Filipino farmer laying along the trail, with a couple of half dead chickens tied to him. Laying next to the farmer was a basket full of the largest bananas. This was a case of someone being in the wrong place, when the Nips went by or perhaps he was a mortar victim.

At about this time, some problems started to make themselves obvious. Our jump boots weren't standing up to the wear of being soaking wet twenty-four hours a day. The tops were fine, but the soles started to come off. You just had to tie or tape them to your shoe. Some troopers had real bad problems with their boots, but only a few were fortunate enough to have them replaced. Socks were also getting scarce. You would wash them and try to dry them out in your musette bag, but without the sun, it was a losing battle. Most of the troopers had two piece coveralls, which kept you a little cleaner in that your top would not come out of your pants while crawling around in the goop. At this point, we really begin to smell like a sewer. It was a combination of sweat, mud and mosquito repellent, the latter we showered ourselves with, to keep the skeeters away. We had mosquito nets, but most of us shied away from them, as it cut down on hearing what was going on. At night you needed your ears. Personal sanitation was a chore, with the coveralls. You had to strip to the knee, when nature called, which meant you had to remove your web harness to which your musette bag, canteen, first-aid kit, trench knife (or bayonet) was attached to. This became a big problem about halfway through the Leyte campaign, when just about everyone had dysentery. We also carried an entrenching tool, usually a small shovel, which had two uses: one to dig a foxhole with, and the other to dig your own private latrine. If you were on the move and had to go, you just ran off the trail a yard or so, did your thing, then ran to catch up with your squad. All this time it is raining, but everyone was in

the same boat, including the Nips. Taking a leak was easy.

When dusk approached, we generally would halt and start to dig in. The more time you spent digging, the more secure you felt when it started to get dark. I mean black dark, there were no shadows, no moon, no nothing. We usually dug in by two, or in some cases, threes. With all the rain, there was always a couple of inches of water at the bottom. Our foxholes were a good four feet deep. We would pose in the thing, half sitting, half leaning and peering out front into the total blackness. Dub Westbrook, Dave Bailey and myself usually shared “watch” out of our foxhole. Dave was a couple years younger (about 18) than Dub and myself. Dave was a replacement that came in just before we went overseas. He was very naive and trusting. The idea of watch at night was to always have someone awake in the hole. If everyone slept, you had a potential break in security of the perimeter you were holding. Each guy was supposed to stay awake two hours: then wake the next guy, sleep four hours, then watch for another two hours, and so on till day break. We did this by passing a watch, with a luminous dial, back and forth. I would watch for a period, set the watch ahead, wake Westbrook, give him the watch and go to sleep. I later found out that he was doing the same thing. Dave never did catch on. Perhaps he couldn’t tell time. Maybe that was why he was tired all the time.

Harry Briggs got hit in the thigh today from a sniper. A sniper also hit Martin Offmiss, a radioman, in his shoulder. We called them snipers, but I suppose they were just Nips in a good, well-concealed position near the trail. During this period, Pete Kut, a squad leader was hit badly from a “woodpecker.” He later died from loss of blood and exposure. When someone was killed, we would bury them, but some of the dead we never did find. The wounded we carried on litters. (The troopers that we did bury were exhumed after the campaign and sent to various military sites. This was done by a special unit of the U.S. Army. Most of our guys were buried on “Rock Hill”.) This whole affair was really getting rough on us, but our morale was high, because we knew we were winning. Each day, we would move further west toward our objective, Ormoc.

We established a good size perimeter at a place called Mahonag. This really was not a town or anything like that. It was a relatively cleared area on a slightly sloped field. I would guess the area was about 150 to 200 yards long and maybe 100 to 125 yards wide, at its widest place. It was sort of egg-shaped. The center of the area was pretty free of activity during the day, because you could get yourself picked off by snipers that were in trees outside the perimeter. The 2nd Bn. of the 511th was dug in just inside the tree line around the entire circumference. Our foxholes were 10 to 15 yards apart. Most of the guys dug in deep enough so they could add a sitting step. Bailly,

Westbrook and myself dug a three-seater with the LMG staked in for night shooting. (Staking in, meant plotting your field of fire in the day time and pounding a stake in the ground at the extreme traverse of each side, right and left. Next to this stake, you drive in another for elevation. This worked well even in the blackest of the night you could cover your field of fire with the gun next to you. This type of staking in” took place around the entire perimeter, making busting through by the Nips next to impossible.) All the time the rain kept falling. We are all half damp, not soaked, just damp and cold. After dark, one’s eyes got as big as saucers. You couldn’t see five feet in front of you and your imagination would run rampant. You would visualized a Nip right out in front of you, getting ready to lob a grenade at you. There were Japanese out there and one consolation was, they were just as wet, muddy and cold as we were. I always felt that they were “scared” of us. We certainly were not afraid of them, but felt eager to search them out and do them in. Sitting in your foxhole at night and waiting to see if they would try to slip through was something else. You just were full of anxieties and had the feeling that a particular Nip was out to get you. Anyway, this particular night, it was raining exceptionally hard and my morale was getting low. Westbrook and I spent the night playing our “watch” game with Bailey; but even at that I didn’t sleep at all. I was cold and as I sort off slumped down, leaning against the sloped rear of our three seated foxhole and wondered if I’d ever get out of this alive. It was a case of just feeling sorry for one’s self. The only consolation was, everyone was in the same boat, although we heard that some of the higher ups had been sleeping under canvas and on cots. It could have been possible. I even heard rumors of some guys heating water in their helmets for certain higher ups so they could take warm baths. I feel that most of these reports, were just old fashioned “shit house” rumors.

Morning finally came, so we dug out our Ks and started thinking about breakfast. The best way to heat water for coffee (Nescafe Powder) was to start the fire with the heavily waxed cardboard box that the K-ration came in. These boxes burned well. The mosquito repellent was also flammable and could be used to get a good hot fire going. Dry twigs were hard to come by, but once the K-ration box was going good, small twigs would start to burn. Once you had the fire going, you could increase the diameter size of the twigs and soon have a good sized fire. I used to get a canteen cup of water boiling, pop an envelope of bullion powder in and then put all the saltine crackers into the boiling bullion, along with whatever meat I had. Sometimes it was chopped pork with egg yolk added, other times it was spam. The meat came in an O.D. colored can about the size of a tuna can seen today. It was good and had plenty of nutrition and would stick to your ribs. For desert, the Ks contained a fruit bar (dried raisins, apricots, pressed together in a bar about 3/4” square and 3” long) to munch on. Another menu had a Hershey Tropical Chocolate “D” Bar. A solid

chocolate (hard as a rock) lump which you could chomp on or could melt it in boiling water and you'd end up with a cup of rather flat cocoa. There were also six little rock hard candy wafers, about 3/4" square x 3/16" thick that you could suck on. Half of these were plain dextrose pills and the other three were chocolate flavored. They gave instant energy, neas they were pure sugar. Also, in one of the menus was a little tuna can of American processed cheese. Dub Westbrook loved this stuff and always toasted it on the end of his G.I. fork. The cheese menu also had an envelope of grape powder or lemonade mix. I remember these well as they were made by "Miles Laboratories" who brings us Alka-Seltzer. You topped all this off with a stick of Wrigley's gum in an O.D. wrapper, as you sat back and enjoyed your Luckies or Camels, which were also included. There were only 4 cigs. in a box, like the ones we used to get on the airlines. I didnt smoke, so mine were up for grabs. Also included, was a little packet of O.D. colored toilet paper, which you would tuck into your breast pocket for later use.

When Kut, McGraw, Yeager and Fleming were killed (around December ninth or tenth), Captain Jenkins declared a private war against the Japanese. Patrols were actually like little squirrel or rabbit hunting trips. He would take a patrol out towards the west to reconnoiter the trails to Ormoc. There never was trouble finding the Nips. The forest was full of them. We knew we were better then they were in offensive movements. It seemed they were good, when hiding alongside of the trail or in some other kind of ambush position. In a face to face confrontation, they would beat it into the bush. I remember Dub Westbrooks first confrontation with a Nip near Mahonag. All of a sudden Dub was face to face with one, no warning. The guy just appeared on the trail. He just looked at Dub in terror. Dub plugged him with his carbine, firing from the hip. Capt. Jenkins, our C.O. was ecstatic. He, himself must of bagged a half a dozen during the several "patrols" he had conducted.

All of our wounded at Mahonag were grouped together under cargo chutes. Most were laying on litters covered with ponchos. There were some blankets, but not many. Some of the wounded that could still walk, were gathered, on one of those numberless days. Capt. Jenkins got a squad to walk them back to a field hospital at another clearing called Manarawat. There was a short airstrip (home made) for L-4 and L-5 cubs. Some of the guys were flown out in special cubs from Manarawat. I was picked for one squad, where my job was "ass-end Charlie", the last scout down the trail to cover any sniping etc. from the rear. We started about nine in the morning, a two hour walk each way. A lot of the wounded, understandably, would tire after a few hundred up and down yards. It was difficult with the mud without being wounded. So one can imagine how tough it was on the guys that had lost blood or had chunks out of their arms, shoulders or other parts of their anatomy. Some of the

“limpers” had homemade canes of sorts. The last guy, who was in front of me, had a bad flesh wound in his left upper thigh. They had cut his fatigues off all the way up, and when he would stagger or slow down (when we were going uphill) my face was practically in his bandage. Around noon we arrived at Manarawat with our wounded. Fearless Fosdick (that was our nickname for 1st Romain T. Alsbury) our platoon leader. He got us up on our feet around one o’clock and started us back to our perimeter, but on a different trail than what we had come in on. It didn’t make any difference to us, because the rain was coming down and who cared. It did not take long before our attitude changed and we felt whoever decided that we should go back another route must have been nuts. We walked up this side of the mountain, down the other side, up another one etc.. The trail was an ooze of mud and the trees and vegetation along the sides of the trail, was not as thick as the other one. This was good in one sense as you could see perhaps twenty-five yards to the front and both side of you. We had a decent field of fire BUT the Nips did also. We walked for four hours and had no idea how far we were from Mahonag. Fearless Fosdick kept saying “It’s coming up.” Now it started to rain harder, and we’re wetter and “madder” (if there is such a word). It started to get dark. Moving along any trail in the jungle is scary; because when it starts to get dark, the shadows play tricks on you. It is plain and simple suicide to walk along any trail at night. By this time, we had been on the march since one o’clock and now it was around six or six-thirty. We were dead tired, wet, muddy and pissed off at Fearless Fosdick. I guess we were what would be and under strength section (two squads). There was Ray Brehm, Dave Bailey, W.C. Westbrook, Bill Porteous, Red (Pete) Peters, D’Arcy Carolyn, Elmer Burgett, John Sherlock and Jay V. Florey plus our Fearless Fosdick. Finally Fearless told us to fall out on one side of the trail for the night. We did not dig in. There didn’t seem to be any point to do it. Our plans were to continue on the next morning. Most of the guys rolled up in their ponchos. I half-slumped against a tree trying to hide under my helmet. As usual, it was raining. Soon it was pitch black and the rain finally stopped. The jungle at night is usually very noisy, with the various types of animals, birds and insects. For some reason, there was none of that this time. It seemed and felt that someone was around. I froze all night and it was a long night. Just before dawn and there after, we could periodically hear noises that sounded like voices. We didn’t eat when we got up, just fell in a single file and started down and up the trail again. We didn’t walk more than five minutes when we ran into our Mahonag perimeter. We had slept about a hundred yards from our line. Live and learn. When we arrived in our area, Baldy (code name for Capt. Jenkins) was getting a patrol together to go and try again to bring back McGraw and Fleming (from the potato patch) where the ambush took place. I was sitting on a log eating a K-ration when Jenkins came over looking for a couple of guys to go out with him. He said, “Come on Marks let’s go.” I got up and started to follow him and then for no reason I could think of, he turned around

and said, “Go on back and sit in your hole and get some rest.” Which is what I did.

Along about four o’clock, a day or so later, the battalion set off on a trail to push through, to where the 3rd Bn. 511th PIR was positioned. They were located on another hill closer to Ormoc. Evidentially, we were sitting on and blocking the main Nip supply line for their attack across the island towards Burauen. We route marched up and down the trail till night fell., then we pulled off to the side of the trail for the night. It was black, but at least it wasn’t raining. Some idiot decided that it was time to have a cup of hot coffee or soup so they actually got a fire going. As soon as the flames shot up, I heard Jim Wentink scream out, “Put that fire out or I’m going to shoot it out. The fire WAS put out. As we tried to sleep that night, we heard L-4s going over but thought nothing of it. The next morning at dawn, we got up and ate on the move as we headed for Rock Hill. We were about five or ten minutes down the trail when three huge explosions hit our area. Shit, we were being shelled by artillery. The first salvo, which we didn’t hear coming, were all tree bursts. Casualties were high and very selective. Ship (LTC Norman Shipley’s code name) had a leg ripped half off. Dr. Platt cut it off on the spot. Captain Jenkins was hit in the upper chest. He lived about a minute. We then heard a distant muffled “boom, boom, boom.” This was salvo number two. We all hit the deck. I hit an undercut in a stream bed right next to a half rotted out carabao. The three rounds came in, but up the trail a hundred yards or so. It was SHZZZ-BLAM, almost like a snarl rather than an explosion. That was all we took, just six rounds. Sherlock was hit in the leg. Burgett was severely wounded in the leg. Dr.’s Platt or Chambers cut it off. A trooper from F-511th lost an arm and a leg. His name was James Hard. I remember him from a boxing match he was in with a guy named “Jonesy” from D-511th. Hard died. I cant remember all of the wounded. We had to abandon our attack towards Rock Hill. We had at least a dozen dead and close to forty wounded, some very gravely wounded. Platt and Chambers saved a number of the seriously wounded. We assembled litters with ponchos and tree limbs and started back to Mahonag.

Other parts of the Sixth Army had landed at Ormoc and chased a good portion of a division of Nips back towards us. When we arrived at Mahonag, we found Nips in the perimeter we had earlier vacated. D and F-511th pushed them out in a short fire fight with help from HQ2’s eight-one mm mortars. We flopped back into our holes and dragged the dead Nips out into the jungle away from the perimeter. The next day we found out that we did not drag them far enough, the stench was almost overwhelming.

We made an aid station, in a high ground area, in a patch of trees. Cargo chutes were used to cover the aid shelter. The day we took the walking wounded back to Manarwat, we carried Sgt. Stewart (from the mortar squad) back. He was very sick

and later they found it was his appendix. He died from peritonitis at Manarawat. Being our 2nd battalion was now understrenght, we pulled our perimeter in by twenty-five or thirty yards. This brought our foxholes closer together. Naval gunfire and pressure from the U.S. 77th Division landings had forced more Nips in our area than we could handle. There were enough of them around, and they had our supply trails back toward Burauen, Lubi, Anonang and Manarawat cut.

The next morning it was pretty quiet along the foxhole line of our perimeter. About nine in the morning the rain stopped, but then the fog rolled in very thick. You couldn't see more than twenty-five yards out into the jungle. Sometime during that morning, our scouts reported that trails to the other two 511th PIR battalions were jammed up with Japanese. During the first week, prior to the morning the artillery got us, most of our supplies, in fact all of it was dumped in from C-47s. We were able to retrieve most of our supplies, but a few of the cargo chutes drifted out into the jungle and the Nips got to them before we did. They, of course couldn't use our ammo, but they sure could eat our food. We found evidence of this on some of the dead ones later on. With the heavy fog, the planes were grounded as far as supplying the 2nd Bn. of the 511th PIR. We could hear them droning overhead and they would try drops, but were never successful. We had on hand about two days of supplies, this included both food and ammo. The mortars were low on anti-personnel rounds, but all us troopers had a good solid unit (a unit of fire was 120-150 rounds) of ammo. We had about two thousand rounds for our LMG. That sounds like a lot, but under heavy defensive fire you could eat it up in a hurry. The fog hung around for another two days, by this time the K-rations, for the most part were gone. The "wiser misers" had a can of this or that or a cracker or two; but for the most part, we were out of food. The potato patch yielded a few nice sweet potatoes called "camote," but soon they were all eaten up. There had been rumors floating around for years later, that dog was eaten. I don't think anyone was hungry enough to eat a dog. No one was any hungrier than I was and I sure as hell count not eat a dog. We did try some tiny wild red peppers. They did not have much food value, but it gave us something to chew on.

The fog hung on for four or five more days. After about two days of nothing to eat, the pangs of hunger begin to disappear. We would sit around and fantasize on what we were going to eat when we got home. Malted milks, ice cream, T-bone steaks and thousands of those greasy "White Castle" hamburgers were high on the list. Our morale was not at its highest and being most of the guys, myself included had dysentery, which did not help either. When you had to have a bowel movement, you just passed a lot of hot water. We used halazone tablets to purify our drinking water. We obtained it from a small stream below our perimeter. Once I remember filling my canteen, when I noticed a dead Nip a few yards up the stream rotting away. Some of

the guys picked up worms and liver fluke and got sicker than all hell. We were still shaving everyday and would wash daily. On occasion, we would just wade into the stream, clothes and all and wash up. Hell, we were wet anyway.

There were a lot insects creeping around. If you tried to sleep and felt something crawling on you, and could not reach it with your hands, you'd just roll on it until it was crushed or moved on. We never saw any snakes.

As quickly as the fog rolled in a few days ago, it dissipated. Within an hour, C-47s and L-4s started to drop food and ammo into our perimeter. Many cases of various items came loose from the cargo chutes and plummeted down into the trees. One person was killed from a falling case of food. We laid out panels (colored fluorescent plastic strips about a foot wide and 10-12 feet long) and from then on, the C-47s and L-4s hit the drop area much better. We all got sicker than hell from overeating, although we had been warned not to gobble too much food - there was a lot of puking and belly aches. The next day we moved west towards Ormoc, to hook up with the 3rd Bn. of the 511th PIR at Rock Hill.

During our "siege" at Mahonag, the Nips made nightly probes into our perimeter, for some reason these movements were by squads and could be easily repulsed. We even captured one of 'em and used him to help lug our mortar shells. Had the Japanese attacked in force, at one particular place, they may have very well been able to break in. We were only one foxhole deep. From what I saw, the Nips lost a lot of men at Mahonag. Between Mahonag, Lubi, Manarawat and later Rock Hill, I'd say I saw three to three hundred and fifty just laying around. We lost most of our men to snipers, around the potato patch and the water hole.

The hike to the 3rd Bn. of the 511th was about a half days march. During our advance, we ran into a Nip perimeter on one of the hills. It was here, that D-511th, with our LMG squad made the famous "Rats Ass" banzai attack. (See the "Rats Ass Charge" by Capt. Steve Cavanaugh on the Dropzone.) We stayed on the trail that night. It was here that the Nips would holler down at us, shoot firecrackers and shine flashlights. Some guys would shoot towards the noise and lights, but within a minute the Nips would start dropping 81mm mortar shells (their 81mm mortars were identical to ours, our ammo was interchangeable) into us. Jim Wentink was laying on the side of the hill when an 81 landed about five feet in front of him. Fortunately for Jim, it was a dud that buried itself in the mud. Early the next morning our Bn. Commander, Hacksaw Holcomb wanted a no nonsense attack up towards the 511th 3rd Bn. The Nip small arms and heavy machine gun fire was very heavy, but not accurate. We were pinned down. We were in one hell of a fire fight. Out of the blue

someone hollers "RATS ASS, who's with me? The trooper was John Bittorie from D-511th. John was from Brooklyn, NY and was about 6 foot 2 inches and skinny as a rail. His two front teeth were missing, courtesy of a brawl at Scotty's in Southern Pines, NC. Johnny's hair was brown, long and scraggly like the rest of us. He had no helmet, at this point, and his fatigues were rotted off at the boot tops and split on side up to his shoulder. The two or three inches of leg that was showing, between his boot tops and raggedy fatigues, was full of jungle ulcers that were bleeding. (We were given gentian violet for these ulcers, but that didn't seem to do as good as Barbasol Brushless Shaving Cream, that came in a tube. It was medicated, felt cool and there was a lot of it available.) Bittorie had slung his LMG over his should with a piece of webbing. He had split a belt of .30 calb. ammo and on his left he was wearing an asbestos mitten to hold the barrel. As he advanced, he hollered and began shooting. He was defying the Nips and certainly inspired us, as we were hugging the ground. He cut loose with two long bursts. Spontaneously the whole line jumped up and started laying down fire and hollering, "RATS ASS." A couple Nip "woodpeckers" opened up but our fire power overwhelmed them. When we got passed the Nip M.L.R. (Main Line of Resistance) we could see them laying all over the place and in grotesque positions. Half in and half out of their holes. Most were dead, some convulsing and some just moaning. A number of them did get away. One was pretty badly wounded in the upper thigh, and was taken prisoner. The medics bandaged him up and gave him sulfa. The whole fire fight lasted, just three or four minutes. We did not have a single KIA. Most of the Nips looked in worse shape then we were. They were as wet as us, their tennis shoes were soaked and rotted. Some had cast off their leggings. The only food they had was a little rice. They looked pretty young, but so did we. A lot of the Nip casualties (most likely previously wounded from our mortar fire) were laying on litters of a sort, under shelters. That was the end of the "Rats Ass" charge. We moved through the mess and kept pushing forward to some of their deep holes. Some of these holes were 10 - 12 feet deep with bamboo steps in them. During our mortar or artillery barrages, they could go down their bamboo pegged poles to the bottom and be completely safe from shrapnel. We found a number of them dead on the bottom of their holes. Dirt was kicked over these and my guess is they are still there. We settled down at this perimeter. We had our holes (at the crest of a hill) straddling the trail that let to Ormoc which couldn't be more then three miles away. The place was a place of the dead. The Japanese dead lay strewn all over and only a few in the deep foxholes were buried. All of our dead were buried on the hill with grave markers, for future retrieval by grave registration. Bodies exposed to the elements deteriorated to skeleton in just a few days. There was some kind of beetle larvae that appeared by the millions and ate the flesh clean to the bone. These insects didn't eat the cloth material, so the skeletons laying around were still in uniform - very macabre. The stench, the first day on Rock Hill was electrifying, but we got use

to it. What else could you do?

Right in the middle of the trail, in front of our foxhole was a dead Nip. He had been hit early in this skirmish and fell in the middle of the very, very muddy trail. The mud was 8 to 10 inches deep. The trail at this point was at about a 15 degree upward angle. As people would go up and down the trail, they would step around or over this guy. After a day or two, only his back was protruding out of the mud. His legs, arms, shoulders and head were completely covered. The brown uniform and greyish-brown mud had turned this body into a perfect stepping stone to people going up or down the trail. We would sit there and watch the look on the faces of people that, thinking it was a stone, would step on it, thus causing the most sickening noise you ever heard. This was especially gratifying when we were told to sit tight and let the 187th Regt. pass through the 511th (About every other person would step on supposed rock.) and be the first 11th Airborne troops to get to Ormoc, down by the west coast.

The Battle of Leyte was finally over for the 2nd Bn. of the 511th. The next day, we formed up, picked up our wounded, who were now all on G.I. litters. Six guys were used to carry each - two in the front, two in the middle and two in the back. It took about 250 troopers to carry our wounded. LTC. Norman Shipley was one of my patients for some of the way. He was in great pain most of the time and complained a lot, when we would slip and jostle him. At one point, I remember him saying, Platt! I'm giving you a direct order to stop the pain." I can't remember whether he was given morphine or not. Being it was very tiring walking in the mud, we would exchange off quite often. I spent the last mile helping to carry someone from E-511th. Our battalion stretched out at least a half mile as we came down the trail into the flatlands that adjoined Ormoc. There was a gathering place where we deposited the wounded and turned them over to the Medical Corps. I would say that there were a couple hundred people milling around to greet us. Most were curious Filipinos, some army brass and a few GIs from the 7th Division that we linked up with in the hills. There also was one newsreel cameraman, but I never did get to see the movies.

We then moved down the beach to a bivouac area, where we were issued new fatigues and jungle hammocks that were really neat. They were completely water and mosquito proof. The first night, in one of them, was better to us than in a feather bed. We also took a good swim that day. It felt so good to be clean and alive. Our company left twelve troopers in the jungle, including our Commanding Officer. There always was that feeling of, "I'm glad it wasn't me." We all felt bad, for a short time, when a buddy was killed, but deep inside, you were thankful to God that the shrapnel or bullet didn't take you. I never saw anyone who was willing to trade places with a corpse. We so tired and burned out that all we wanted to do was to be left alone.

On Christmas, General Swing (the 11th Airborne commander) had them serve us turkey with all the trimmings and pineapple ice cream, and it was probably the best Christmas dinner we ever ate. I can't recall all the names, but there was Ray Brehm, Merlin Guetzko, Dub Westbrook, Bill Porteous, Jim Wentnk, Rocky Shuster, Peter Peters, Bill Townsly, Bud Alsbury, Bill Demory, Pete Allisi, D'Arcy Carolyn, to name a few that walked across Leyte. Capt. Charles Jenkins, Lt. Robert Norris, Peter E. Kut, Robert F. Fleming, William A. Yeager, Donald Stewart, David F. McGraw, George W. Andrews, Walter R. Schmidt, Eugene H. Ladd and Lt. Evan W. Redman did not make it. James W. Outcalt, Dennis Hogan, Anderson Peters, Jack L. Hauser, Fred J. Liscum, Norman Jennings, George A. Spangler and a kid named Leonard R. Miller, who came all the way across Leyte, only to die on Luzon six weeks or so later. I will never forget the many friends that took that walk over Leyte, from Dulag to Ormoc, with a stop along the way, at Mahonag.

Then there were Dr.'s Capt. Matthew Platt and Major Wallace Chambers, that did serious surgery, during the day, night and in the rain. Sometimes they were shielded by only a poncho, being held by up by a few guys and the only light being a flashlight.

This sums up the activities that one light machine gun platoon had with the Japanese (on Leyte Island) during November and December of 1944. I'll never forget the agony caused by the rain, mud and terrain of the Mahonag trail and the troopers who gave their lives, to an enemy suffering just as much as we were. Official records showed, that about 45 Japanese were killed for every single 11th Airborne Division trooper that was KIA on Leyte.

About the Author: He was born, raised and educated in St. Paul, MN. He enlisted in the army at Fort Snelling, MN. After WWII he settled in Milwaukee, WI, after he retired he moved to Columbus, GA. Deane passed away on March 27, 2000.

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Hunger, Leyte-1944

by Ralph Ermatinger

An imposed fast began after the troops moved high into the mountains and

re-supplying them became difficult because of the terrain and the monsoon-like rains. Men gnawed bark and roots, dug commodes overlooked by the enemy and attempted to hunt deer and wild boar. But game was difficult to procure, for always the wily boar and wary deer slipped out of their resting places with the approach of the hunter. Birds, monkeys and reptiles appeared not to be present, and there were no Filipinos hawking fruits and vegetables. Friend and foe had the battlefield to themselves.

Early in the campaign, socks filled with polished rice often were recovered from the bodies of slain enemy soldiers, but as the campaign lengthened, even that uncertain source of food disappeared when the isolated Japanese army itself faced starvation and was forced to forage. The fast was broken for a few minutes one day when each soldier was issued one bite of red meat from two small deer carcasses and a wild boar captured in pits excavated on a game trail by Filipino guerrillas. Each soldier received about one ounce of meat which was his alone to cook or eat raw, nibble or wolf down in a gulp, or share with the wounded. Nothing was wasted. Even the bones were broken and boiled into a broth.

Troops daily heard the sound of Mosely's engine overhead as the intrepid pilot searched day after day for a hole in the clouds to plunge into and topple a box of rations to the hungry men below. Mosely knew the approximate location of the troops he sought to feed, but they were in the clouds that surrounded the mountains, and he dared not attempt a drop without a visual sighting lest it fall into the hands of the enemy. The rain persisted. But, one day the clouds parted slightly for a few minutes and in the brief interval of sunshine, Mosely swooped in as the troops dived into foxholes or took cover behind the trees. His plane was followed by others which kept up the bombardment until the clouds closed again. By this time, however, enough food had been dropped to feed the battalion and the fast was broken. Two men were struck and killed by the falling boxes. Mosely became an instant hero to the troops, and his name was known to every man.

Men function effectively after missing several consecutive meals; indeed hunger sharpens the senses - up to a point. But when hunger extend into starvation a pall of gloom settles over the mind and the body becomes listless. As a hungry day follows hungry day, the empty belly begins to bloat, the jowls swell, and a pervasive lassitude sets in. Eating is such a regular habit. Hunger subtly alters moral values instilled from childhood as the mind concentrates upon food for survival. Men were heard to mutter, and not in jest, "I'm going out and get some 'meat'." There is no doubt about the meat

that they had in mind, but it is unlikely that any of them followed through on their threats. The Japanese had fewer qualms, however, for they savaged two troopers they slew in a fire fight. The hunger experience illuminates the answer given by a 19th century mountain man in the American West when chided by his companions for eating flesh. "Meat's meat," he said.

To add to the woes of the troops, dysentery struck at the same time - the "squitters," it was called - while others were afflicted with malaria and dengue fever. Dengue was known also as "breakbone fever". It was particularly distressing to host dengue and dysentery simultaneously, for when a man stood up to "go", his bones would fail him and he would crumple to the ground - with the inevitable - and a trip to the creek became necessary. Yet, in the deepest trough of mental depression on "Hungry Hill" when ill and hungry men would say, "the enemy would do me a favor if he put a bullet through my head," the mere appearance of a Japanese soldier galvanized them into instant action. In the adrenaline of a fire fight, lethargy vanished and hunger and bodily ailments were forgotten as the troops set about accomplishing the mission for which they were so well trained - destroying the enemy.

Sources:

Courtesy of "WINDS ALOFT" quarterly publication of the 511th Parachute Association