

The 1st Battalion immediately received heavy enfilade fire from Agingan Point on its right flank, causing many casualties. Agingan Point was a virtual beehive of enemy installations, with all their weapons firing into the flank of the 1st Battalion. The battalion was not able to make any headway. An air strike called in by Lieutenant Colonel Mustain, combined with the mighty fires of the USS *Tennessee*, were used to counter the enemy efforts. The 1st Battalion was badly in need of a total reorganization, but this was prevented by the incoming artillery fire.²¹ This artillery fire was coming from enemy positions located 800 yards inland on the high ground. The hard-pressed 1st Battalion had penetrated no more than a dozen yards in some places and was extremely vulnerable, but it held on tightly.²² At about 0930 an enemy force counterattacked, but with the help of some tanks from the 4th Tank Battalion, the assault was repulsed. The going continued slow, but by the end of the day the battalion had reached its objective.

The 2d Battalion, still commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Hudson, had greater success with its initial thrust over the landing beaches. About one-half of the 2d Battalion was carried inland from 500-700 yards by the LVTs. The remainder of the 2d Battalion had little protection from the heavy fires as it moved across the beach. Shells were bursting overhead fired by antiaircraft guns that were depressed to fire at ground targets. To add to the 2d Battalion problems, mortars were being fired into the battalion positions from bypassed positions to its rear. Carrier planes spotted these positions and wiped them out.

As Lieutenant Colonel Chambers' 3d Battalion crossed the line of departure, he was directed to send one company to assist the hard-put 1st Battalion. Company K was designated for this assignment but in the confusion of landing under such heavy fire, 1st Battalion guides instead had led two platoons from Company I and two platoons from Company L to the aid of the beleaguered battalion. Later in the day, around 1300, Company K was again designated to assist the 1st Battalion in clearing the enemy from Agingan Point. This time there was no mix-up. Still later, the balance of Company I was also attached to the 1st Battalion.

The 4th Marine Division plan called for the LVTs carrying the assault troops to cross the beaches and to continue inland to the high ground, a distance of about 1,200-1,500 yards to the front. In light of the unexpected heavy fires this plan proved to be overly



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Brigadier General Lewis C. Hudson, Jr. As a lieutenant colonel he commanded the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines during World War II.

ambitious. Some of the LVTs did manage to move a considerable distance inland, but the majority of them were forced to discharge their passengers on the beach. The terrain was also a deterrent to the LVTs. Not far inland there was an incline rising vertically, in some places four to five feet, heights the LVTs could not surmount.

One other problem developed in that the 2d Marine Division in landing shifted its area to the left about 1,000 yards. This left an unoccupied stretch initially, that developed into an unconquered corridor as the divisions moved inland and created an exposed flank for each. This situation was remedied when the 1st Battalion, 23d Marines moved into the gap to mop up the bypassed enemy. The deadly 75mm and 105mm fire hitting along the entire 4th Marine Division front came from excellently emplaced artillery on the high ground approximately 1,500 yards to the front. These positions were ideal in that they offered good observation and concealment. Moreover, the crew's living quarters and the ammunition dumps were located on the reverse slope, and, as such, immune to all but direct hits.



USMC Photo 15192

With tanks in the lead, Marine riflemen drive across a field on Saipan. The hills would be different.

The infantry units needed tank support. The LCMs should have had no problem at all in carrying the tanks of 2d and 4th Tank Battalions ashore since there was a convenient channel through the reef. The Japanese, however, were not playing the role of gracious host and had the channel interdicted with murderous mortar and artillery fires. Because of this, the tanks were brought in across the reef. This crossing became more perilous as the afternoon wore on because of the ground swells that developed. The last tank finally landed on the beach at about 1530. Some had been lost to enemy fire, some were put out of action when seawater got into their electrical systems, and still others simply disappeared in the sea.

Company A of the 4th Tank Battalion moved out to support the 1st Battalion in its hard-fought battle for Agingan Point. As noted earlier, the first tanks arrived just as two companies of enemy soldiers attacked the 1st Battalion from Agingan Point. The fires of the 1st Battalion now assisted by Company A tanks destroyed the entire Japanese force.

At 1315 the 14th Marines began landing and continued moving ashore until dusk. The enemy with their excellent observation of the entire beachhead area rained heavy fires on the artillery units of both Marine divisions as they landed.²³ By late afternoon, the 24th Marines, which had taken part in the demonstration off Tanapag Harbor, landed. Companies A and B were put in between the 2d Battalion, 23d Marines and 2d Battalion, 25th Marines. The 25th Marines had doggedly inched forward during the day and by 1700 had reached the initial ob-

jective line, but the regiment's extreme right flank was still being harassed by the enemy. The 25th Marines had heavy casualties for the day; the total 4th Marine Division losses reached 2,000—caused mostly from mortars and artillery. The Japanese registration points had taken their toll. LVTs were kept busy carrying wounded out to the reef edge where they were transferred to LCVPs and LCMs.

As darkness came on, it found both Marine divisions stretched out in a 10,000-yard beachhead with a depth of about 1,500 yards. The landing had been successful, but it was painfully obvious that the Japanese were going to fight for every inch of ground. The Japanese soldier was a dedicated warrior, seasoned by the *Senjinkun* (Battle Ethics), which, among other things, gave both courage and battle-death an aura of holiness. One enemy soldier commented in his diary that he was "pleased to think . . . [that he would] die in true *Samurai* style."²⁴ The toughness of the Japanese soldier was not news to the Marines; they knew he was tough, and tougher still as long as he occupied the dominating ridgeline to their front. The Japanese counterattacked in various strengths and intensities throughout the night along the entire front. The 25th Marines' center was attacked at 0320 and again at 0430. In the latter attack, the Japanese drove civilians before them, using them as shields. This was a new experience for the Marines and they were reluctant to harm the civilians but they had no choice except to open fire. The artillery of the 1st Battalion, 14th Marines opened up on the attackers, firing until out of ammunition at which time the 3d

Battalion, 14th Marines took over the mission. These artillery fires, combined with the aggressive response of the 25th Marines destroyed the Japanese force. In another part of the line, blasts from Japanese bugles and high-pitched screams heralded an all-out attack on the 6th Marines. With the help of illumination shells fired by U.S. destroyers, the 6th Marines repulsed the attack with devastating fire. With the failure of these counterattacks, the opportunity to destroy the American landing force on the beach was lost. Had these enemy efforts been well coordinated and of sufficient size, the story might have been different. The Marines were on the island, and they meant to stay.

Perhaps the Japanese defenders would have had another chance to destroy the invading force if a U.S. submarine had not spotted an enemy fleet steaming toward Saipan. The mission of this Japanese task force of carriers, battleships, cruisers, and destroyers was obvious: destroy the U.S. fleet and relieve the Saipan garrison.²⁵ Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, Commander of the Fifth Fleet, knew what action he had to take to counter the threat of the enemy task force: destroy it. Rear Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's Task Force 58 fast carriers were ordered to sortie and engage the enemy in what was to become known as the First Battle of the Philippine Sea. While the Fifth Fleet had the strength to handle the situation, some changes appeared prudent. Accordingly, the Guam assault scheduled just 2 days later on 18 June was canceled.²⁶ Further, as an added safety measure, the transports at Saipan would put out to sea and into safer waters. This, in turn, meant that these ships would have to stop the general unloading, at dusk on 17 June, to resume at a later time not yet known. Only those transports carrying supplies and equipment vital to the immediate operation would remain behind and continue to unload. The escort carriers would remain in the vicinity to provide aerial support to the land operations.

The battle continued to rage back on Saipan as the 4th Marine Division prepared to surge inland toward the east coast on D plus 1. To reinforce the hard-hit 25th Marines, Lieutenant Colonel Alexander A. Vandegrift, Jr.'s 3d Battalion, 24th Marines was put in the line relieving the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines which had been fighting steadily since landing. As the 1st Battalion came off the line, those units which had been attached since the previous day reverted back to 3d Battalion, 25th Marines' control. His battalion now intact, Lieutenant Colonel Chambers

turned his attention to reorganizing his scattered units just to the rear of the 2d Battalion lines. As 3d Battalion units began to arrive in the area, several hundred Japanese were spotted moving through a gap between the 24th and 25th Regiments. A firefight developed. In this action, Company L and 6 tanks from Company A, 4th Tank Battalion destroyed 5 machine guns, and 2 mountain guns, and killed 60 of the enemy. Compared to the activity of D-day, things were relatively quiet along the lines of the two Marine divisions, the only sustained action of the day being the successful push of the 8th Marines in clearing the enemy from Afetna Point. The Japanese did not discourage easily and in the small hours of the next morning a sizable force of tanks, infantry, and naval landing force troops struck the 6th Marines lines in a frenzied attack that lasted all through the early morning hours until about 0700 on 17 June. The 6th Marines not only held fast, but its fires exacted a heavy toll from the attackers.²⁷

In view of the imminent departure of the transports, Lieutenant General Smith had the 27th Division land on 16 June. The 165th Infantry of the 27th Division was put into the line on 17 June to the right of the 25th Marines. The NTLF order for the day was to attack along the entire front. The 25th Marines, with the 2d Battalion in the lead, attacked in a column of battalions, advancing 1,500 yards to the day's objective. The 24th Marines to the left of the 25th had reached the day's objective but then had withdrawn 600 yards to avoid heavy enemy rifle, machine gun, and knee mortar fire. At this new position the 24th Marines dug in for the night. With the faster movement of the 25th Marines during the day, a gap developed between it and the 165th Infantry. Colonel Batchelder filled the gap with Companies I and L, sending one platoon of Company L, under Lieutenant Maurice W. Savage to make contact with the 165th. When contact was made, Lieutenant Savage recommended to the commanding officer, Colonel Gerard W. Kelley, that his regiment should move onto Aslito airfield since it was clear of the enemy. In view of the hour (late afternoon), Colonel Kelley decided that it would be prudent to remain where he was on the high ground for the night. Colonel Batchelder moved the rest of his 3d Battalion into the gap on the right flank. The regiment then dug in for the night.

The NTLF operation order for D plus 3 was relatively simple — all three divisions attack. The 4th Marine Division, with the 25th Marines on the division's right flank, began its move at 1000 with all



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Brigadier General Samuel C. Cumming, Assistant Division Commander, 4th Marine Division (left),

views action at Hill 500 with the 25th Marines Commanding Officer, Colonel Merton J. Batchelder.

three regiments abreast. The 25th Marines made good progress during the day and reached the coast of Magicienne Bay. In order to keep moving fast in the attack, the 24th Marines had bypassed a heavily defended cliff line. This area had to be cleared out and the task was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, the division reserve. The main task was in clearing the enemy out of caves. This process usually was handled by teams of four or five Marines. When a team was unable to flush or kill the inhabitants, it would seal the cave.²⁸ At this point in the operation it was painfully apparent that this was going to be a long, tedious, hard-fought battle. Total casualties for the assault divisions were already over 5,000.

The 19th and 20th of June were workdays for Rear Admiral Mitscher's Task Force 58, and as usual, it earned its pay. The Japanese lost three aircraft carriers, two of these sunk by submarines, one by aircraft, and a tanker was severely damaged. The bombs and torpedoes that had struck the hulls of the doomed carriers also served to sound the death knell

for the defenders of Saipan; the last chance for relief now rested on the floor of the Philippine Sea.

The 4th Marine Division made a pivoting attack on 20 June as it struck to the north. As soon as its mopping up duties around Magicienne Bay had been assumed by the 27th Infantry Division, the 25th Marines replaced the 23d Marines in the line. With Hill 500 as the objective, the 25th Marines moved to the attack with the 3d Battalion in the lead, reaching its objective before nightfall. The 1st battalion chore for the day was to clear the cliff line leading to the hill. Preparatory fires were furnished by the Regimental Weapons Company, the battalion's organic 81mm mortars, the 1st Provisional Rocket Detachment, and the 1st Battalion, 14th Marines. Smoke was used to cover advances across any flat terrain encountered along the way. The end of the day found both Marine divisions facing north. During the night the 3d Battalion repelled several small, uncoordinated attacks. The next morning 31 dead Japanese soldiers were found in the front of the

Marine perimeter. The following day the 3d Battalion concentrated on clearing out the caves on Hill 500.

The 4th Marine Division continued the attack north at 0600 on 22 June. The 25th Marines was on the division left in a column of battalions. Progress was excellent with the 3d Battalion reaching its intermediate objective by 0630.²⁹ Company K, situated on the battalion left, was attacked and a ferocious hand-to-hand fight developed. One enemy tank was knocked out and 90 enemy soldiers were killed. In the day's action, Company K had one commanding officer killed and two others wounded. As the 25th Marines approached its objective, enemy machine gun fire halted the advance. Company L, caught between two fires, was forced to withdraw. A short time later, an enemy ammunition dump exploded injuring, among others, the 3d Battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Chambers. Major James Taul, the executive officer, took over and ordered a resumption of the attack. The fires from the slopes of the battalion's intermediate objective continued heavy and prevented forward movement and the 25th called it a day. The regiment had made gains during the day of roughly 2,000 yards. All during the ensuing night infiltrators harassed the regimental lines, preventing any rest from the strain and rigor of the day's continuous action.

On the next day, 23 June, the 25th Marines was ordered back to Hill 500 to serve as the division reserve. As the regiment passed through the 27th Infantry Division, it reverted to NTLF reserve. Lieutenant Colonel Chambers, who had been evacuated earlier with a concussion, returned to resume command of the 3d Battalion.

The attack order on 24 June was to continue the drive to the division objective. Once accomplished, the Kagman Peninsula would be under U.S. control and thereby narrow the entire front. This maneuver involved the division in a swing to the east right onto the Kagman Peninsula. Meanwhile, the 2d Marine Division and the 27th Infantry Division would strike directly north. The attack was launched at 0800. By hard fighting the 4th Division reached its intermediate objective by 1630 but could not move further since there was no contact on the left flank with the 27th Infantry Division. Contact was finally achieved with the 165th Infantry by nightfall. The 106th Infantry, in an area formerly held by, 3d Battalion, was held up by enemy fires coming from a cliff line on its left flank. Company F, 106th Infantry finally did tie in with the 2d Marine Division but a

vertical gap of several hundred yards stretched back to the lines of the balance of the 27th Infantry Division. The 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, concentrating on Nafutan Point, was unable to make substantial headway.

The objectives for the following day, 25 June, were both the Kagman Peninsula and Mt. Tapotchau. The 0815 planned kickoff was delayed 45 minutes in order for tanks to move up in position to support the day's action. The 23d and 24th Marines surged forward toward Mt. Kagman and the high ground on the eastern tip of the peninsula. The 24th Marines advanced rapidly, but the 23d ran into difficulty, being hit from the rear by isolated pockets of enemy infantry in the 27th Division's area of responsibility. Finally by 1530 the entire peninsula had fallen to the Marines. The success on the Kagman Peninsula and the 2d Marine Division's winning of Mt. Tapotchau were morale boosters for the men in these divisions. To the south, the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry was still having trouble on Nafutan Point.

On 26 June the 23d and 24th Marines mopped up bypassed pockets of the enemy on the Kagman Peninsula. Artillery rounds were dropping in on the peninsula, fired from positions in the 27th Infantry Division's zone, the so-called Purple Heart Ridge. The 4th Division requested permission to fire into the 27th's zone, but the affirmative reply was so delayed that by then the enemy had changed the gun positions. During the day, the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines was attached to the 8th Marines until 1500 when it reverted back to NTLF reserve. It would rejoin the 8th Marines on the following day.

As Captain Sasaki, commanding the *317th Independent Infantry Battalion*, reviewed his situation on Nafutan Point, the picture was not bright. His troops were receiving fire from all sides and their food and water were just about gone. His only course was to break out and join with the main Japanese force which he, mistakenly, thought was on Hill 500. The resulting plans called for a breakout at midnight 26 June. The password assigned for the operation was *Shichi Sei Hokoku* (seven lives for one's country). As planned, the breakout commenced at 2400. The enemy movement remained undiscovered until about 0200 when the enemy force came upon the CP of the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry. In the resulting melee, 24 soldiers and 27 enemy were killed. At 0230 a part of the force hit Aslito airfield but determined Seabees and engineer troops successfully fought them off. Upon reaching Hill



USMC Photo 88773

Marines pushing forward on Saipan pause for a rest. Mt. Tapotchau, site of heavy battles, looms in the

500, another part of the enemy force discovered, to its dismay, that the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines and not the *47th Independent Mixed Brigade* was in possession of the hill. A fierce small arms and hand grenade battle ensued for the remainder of the night. During the entire breakout 500 of the enemy lost their lives. U.S. losses were light.³⁰

Progress was rapid as three divisions abreast attacked on D plus 12. At 1000 the 2d Battalion of the 25th Marines was attached to the 2d Marine Division, replacing the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines on the right boundary. Before nightfall, the 4th Marine Division advanced 3,000 yards, creating a supply problem without serious consequences, thankfully. The 165th Infantry made the greatest advance of the 27th Division to the point where its reserve battalion was stretched very thin in order to avoid a vertical gap with the balance of the division. The 2d Marine Division made only modest gains as it traversed the western slope of Mt. Tapotchau. The big problem of the 2d Marine Division was on its right flank where contact with the 27th Division was nonexistent. All divisions dug in for the night and all was quiet.

background, dominating the island and blocking the way.

At 0730 the next morning, 28 June, the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines again reverted to NTLF reserve. The orders for the day had the 4th Marine Division holding its positions ready to assist the advance of the 27th Division with its fires. The steady plodding since 15 June was taking its toll and a sluggishness was evident in the troops. They were tired. At the close of the day, the 27th Division was still well behind the Marine divisions.

During the next 3 days, the attack went on. On 2 July, the 2d Marine Division captured Garapan, the largest town on the island. The next day it moved into the seaplane base. The 25th Marines rejoined the 4th Marine Division and immediately attacked to the west pinching out the 27th Division. The 3d Battalion in the center of the 25th Marines lines was hard hit. With the large number of casualties, Lieutenant Colonel Chambers reduced his battalion to two companies with three officers and fifteen men per unit. The 1st Battalion was passed through the 3d Battalion and the attack continued.

The Marines and soldiers had never known a quiet 4th of July, and this one was no different. Quite ap-

appropriately for this national holiday the American forces were winning as enemy resistance gave way. The 25th Marines objective for the day was Hill 767. As the regiment moved forward, the left of the 1st Battalion came under heavy rifle and machine gun fire. Lieutenant Colonel Mustain called for tank support. In moving up, the tanks in moving up became lost and found themselves 700 yards in front of the Marine position. The Japanese grabbed the opportunity to attack the unprotected tanks, knocking out two of them one after another in quick succession. Surrounded, the tank crewmen fought on until rescued by Major Fenton J. Mee, the battalion operations officer, some headquarters personnel, and a platoon of Company A. The 3d Battalion was taken out of reserve and put back in the line. On 5 July the attack was set for 1200 but got off to an uncertain start since the 25th Marines had to displace about 2 miles to the east then fight 400 yards to reach the line of departure. The 24th Marines began its attack before the 25th even reached the line of departure, creating a separation that would last throughout the day. The 25th Marines covered the vertical gap by the use of a strong combat patrol. Additionally,

machine guns were emplaced and mortars and artillery registered to cover the 400-yard separation. The big job, however, for Colonel Batchelder's 25th Marines for the day was the 2-mile lateral move through the right half of the 23d Marines. A few anxious moments occurred when an enemy machine gun began firing bursts into the 1st Battalion CP. The engineers of the 1st Platoon, Company A, 20th Marines, fighting as infantry, knocked the machine gun out. The long hike in the hot and humid weather resulted in many cases of heat exhaustion.

Early on the morning of 6 July, Lieutenant General Saito, realizing that the end was only a matter of days, issued his last order to his troops:

I am addressing the officers and men of the Imperial Army on Saipan.

For more than twenty days since the American devils attacked, the officers, men, and civilian employees of the Imperial Army and Navy on this island have fought well and bravely. Everywhere they have demonstrated the honor and glory of the Imperial Forces. I expected that every man would do his duty.

Heaven has not given us an opportunity. We have not been able to utilize fully the terrain. We have fought in unison up to the present time but now we have no materials with which to fight and our artillery for attack has been completely destroyed. Our

Men of the 25th Marines push through a canefield on Saipan as Japanese mortars pound their flank.

The scattered canefields were in striking contrast to the rugged terrain on other parts of the island.

USMC Photo 83918



comrades have fallen one after another. Despite the bitterness of defeat, we pledge "seven lives to repay our country."

The barbarous attack of the enemy is being continued. Even though the enemy has occupied only a corner of Saipan, we are dying without avail under the violent shelling and bombing. Whether we attack or whether we stay where we are, there is only death. However, in death there is life. We must utilize this opportunity to exalt true Japanese manhood. I will advance with those who remain to deliver still another blow to the American devils, and leave my bones on Saipan as a bulwark of the Pacific.

As it says in the 'Senjinkun' (Battle Ethics), "I will never suffer the disgrace of being taken alive," and "I will offer up the courage of my soul and calmly rejoice in living by the eternal principle."

Here I pray with you for the eternal life of the Emperor and of the country and I advance to seek out the enemy.

Follow me!³¹

A few hours later Lieutenant General Saito bid farewell to his staff and following a last meal of canned crab meat and sake, committed hari-kiri.

Things began happening quickly. Drove of civilians came through the line, 800 in the 1st Battalion area alone. Company K got into a violent fire fight with a bypassed pocket of Japanese soldiers, killing 61 of the enemy. The enemy was trapped. The Marines knew it and the enemy knew it. The Marines also knew how the Japanese reacted in similar situations and, accordingly, were on the alert for an all-out attack, but none developed during the day. With darkness, activity began increasing all along the line seeming to build like a crescendo passage in music. The 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, on Mt. Petosukara beat off a furious assault by a Japanese rifle company. During the attack, the Marine's mortar shells were falling within 50 yards of the front lines. In the early morning hours the enemy struck again, this time hitting the battalion aid station. Corpsmen, doctors, and Marines beat off the attackers. During the entire night, the 2d Battalion accounted for 60-70 enemy killed. The enemy also hit the exposed left flank of the 24th Marines, but they were beaten off by aggressive return fires.

The largest assault, the *banzai* charge of both fact and fable, hit the front, flanks, and rear of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 105th Infantry. The very fanatical force of the attack carried the enemy troops right through the lines of the 1st and 2d Battalions, smashing up against the 3d Battalion. The 3d Battalion, located on the high ground, absorbed the shock but its lines did not dent. Ferocious fighting continued on into the afternoon. The combined casualties of the three battalions totaled 668, with only 25 percent of the command intact at the end of the battle. The *banzai* charge penetrated the U.S. lines and hit the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines. Battery

H was overrun by 400-500 of the enemy, forcing the Marines to abandon the firing positions. Severe losses were suffered by the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, including Major William L. Crouch who was killed during the action. The total *banzai* force, estimated at somewhere between 1,500-3,000 in number, was annihilated. The final American thrust came on 9 July when the 25th, 24th, and 2d Marines took Marpi Point. Beyond was the sea. In these last days hundreds of Japanese, both civilians and military, committed suicide. Some shot themselves while most jumped from the cliffs into the sea.

Mopping up the pockets of the enemy that remained on the island would continue on for months to come. For now, however, the eyes and thoughts of the V Amphibious Corps turned to the south, toward Tinian.

Three Miles to the White Beaches

For 25 days the V Amphibious Corps had slugged it out on Saipan against a dedicated and stubborn enemy. The tenacity of the Japanese defense had turned each inch of ground into a costly piece of real estate. The U.S. forces had paid the heavy cost for victory, but another job remained. Complete victory required seizure of Tinian 3 miles to the south of Saipan. As was true with Roi-Namur, the Saipan and Tinian area was a joint tactical locality and was considered so by Japanese and Americans alike.

The invasion of Tinian was an integral part of the operation as evidenced by the wording of the Expeditionary Troops operations plan, "... seize ... Saipan, then be prepared to seize Tinian on order" The Marine divisions of VAC were prepared and the order came as scheduled. Its capture would deny the enemy the use of the four airfields on the island, in turn, making them available as U.S. bases from which attacks could reach the Japanese home islands. Further, because of Tinian's location, the enemy would be denied a perfect observation post with resulting intelligence loss to the Japanese high command in Tokyo.³²

About two-thirds of the size of Saipan, Tinian differs in other geographical respects as well. Words such as "rugged" or "mountainous" aptly describe Saipan, but not so Tinian, which has a low, open terrain over most of the island, most of which was cultivated with 10-foot-high sugar cane. Another difference is in the heavy, jungle-like vegetation, so



USMC Photo 151854

Marine tanks assist in the battle for Marpi Point. The victory here signalled the end of Japanese resistance

on Saipan. The American cost of Saipan was over 3,000 killed and 11,000 wounded.

abundant on Saipan but found only in the higher elevations on Tinian. These higher elevations are located only on the extreme northern and southern ends of the island. This new target was $12\frac{1}{4}$ miles long with its widest point being approximately 5 miles, covering an overall area of 50 square miles. Forbidding cliffs, reaching from the sea to heights varying from 6 to 100 feet, border the entire island except for a few beach areas. The terrain on Tinian did not have the treacherous geographical aspects of Saipan, but instead a low, open, rolling landscape ideal for the employment of tanks. The tanks of the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions were far superior in quality and number, hence the land favored the U.S. forces.³³

The Japanese troops on Tinian were well trained and considered to be of a higher quality than the defenders of Saipan. The principal enemy unit on the island was the *50th Infantry Regiment*, recently transferred from Manchuria. The unit was commanded by a talented professional soldier, Colonel Kiyochi Ogata. Other units were the *1st Battalion, 135th Infantry* led by Captain Izumi and the *56th Naval Guard Force*, commanded by Captain Goichi Oya. This defense force was about one-half Army

and one-half Navy, the highest ranking Japanese officer on the island was Vice Admiral Kakuji Kakuda.

As was the case with other Japanese joint Army-Navy commands elsewhere in the Pacific, interservice rivalries prevailed to prevent joint planning for the defense of Tinian. Kakuda operated independently of the Army, and Colonel Ogata, with his larger Army command, filled the role of island commander. As a matter of fact both Ogata and Oya had their own separate defense plans, independent of each other and with no coordination whatsoever. This division of forces almost certainly guaranteed U.S. success in the upcoming operation. Hence, in violating the basic tactical maxim relating to unity of force, the Tinian defenders ensured their own destruction.³⁴

The plans for the Tinian operation were an adjunct of those prepared for the Saipan campaign. These plans provided for a continuous gathering of intelligence that went on right up until the actual landings. Aerial photographic missions were regularly assigned and flown. The resulting photographs were closely studied and evaluated by NTLF intelligence officers who were thus able to monitor changes in defense installations and movement of

troops. Another source of intelligence was the abundant supply of enemy documents captured on Saipan. Adding to this, commanders assigned to the operation were flown over the island enabling them to make a personal reconnaissance of their future target area.

Tinian received other attention as well, for beginning on 11 June Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's Task Force 58 bombarded the island for 43 days prior to the landing. Destroyers and Saipan-based artillery, the latter beginning on 20 June, contributed to the bombardment. The intensity of these attacks increased right up until the day of the landing 24 July. On 23 July, Brigadier General Arthur M. Harper's XXIV Corps Artillery fired 155 missions and even this increased on 24 July when all 13 artillery battalions on Saipan blasted the target. Added to the sea- and land-based bombardment was assault from the air. Army Air Forces Republic P-47 "Thunderbolts" of the 318th Fighter Group flew 131 sorties on Jig minus 1 while an additional 249 sorties were flown by planes from 4 carriers.

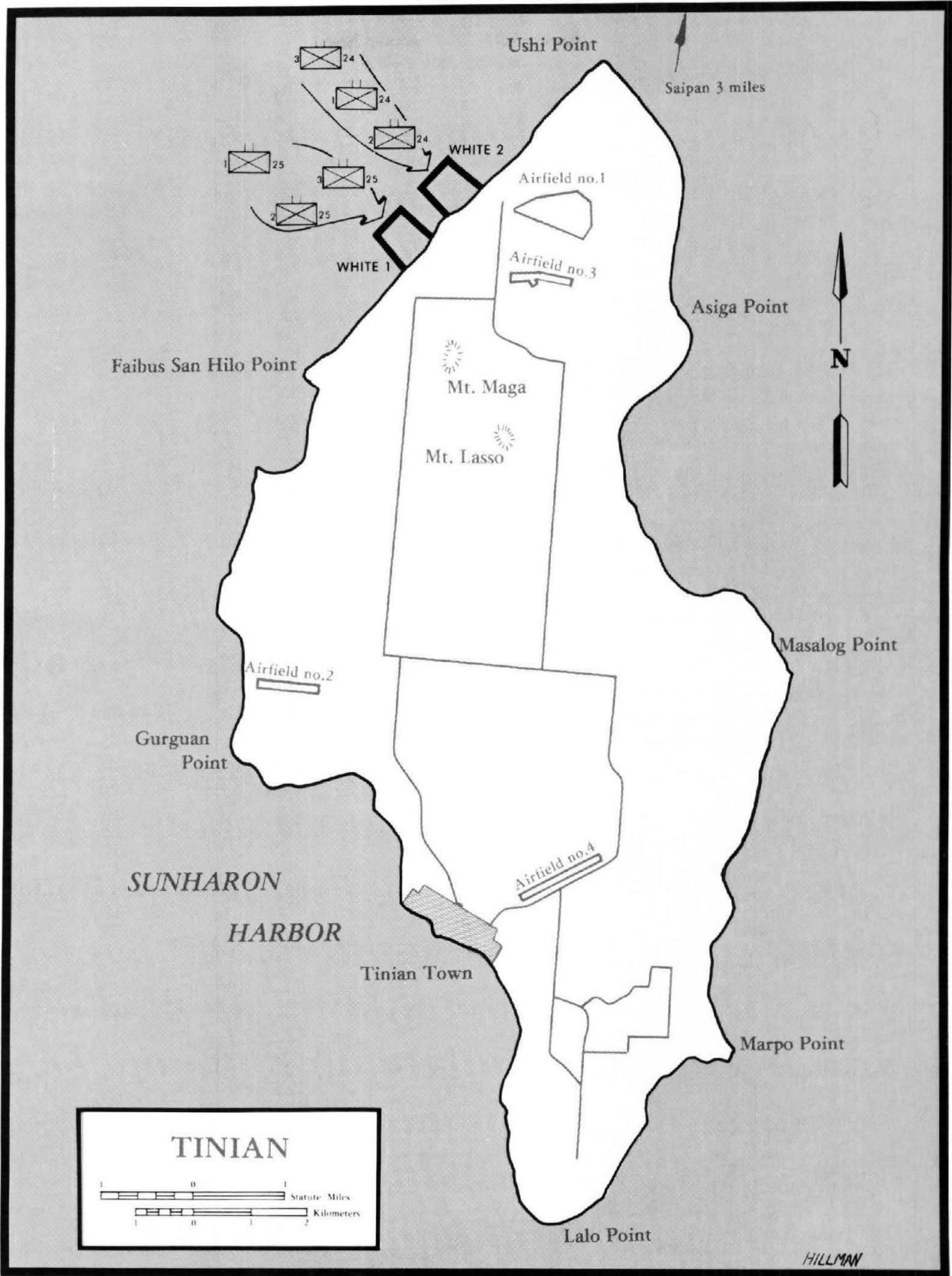
The P-47s carried out still another mission on Tinian. *Reconnaissance photograph of White Beach 2 on Tinian. On Jig-Day the 25th Marines would assault*

the island, adding a new word to the vocabulary and another page to military history. These aircraft dropped containers of a new highly incendiary substance called napalm. Napalm was a powder and when mixed with fuel and exploded by a detonator became a deadly fire bomb. On Jig minus 1, P-47s dropped 30 of these new bombs on the landing beaches. They burned out foliage and defenders alike. The V Amphibious Corps would have still another shock in store for the enemy.

Good landing beaches were at a premium on Tinian. There were only two beach areas on the whole coastline that were considered adequate under normal doctrine. One was located on the west coast near Tinian Town and the other was at Asiga Harbor. That one of these two beaches would be the invasion point seemed so obvious to Colonel Ogata that he was blind to any other possibility. In fact, Ogata had only two contingency defense plans, one assuming a landing at Tinian Town and the other based on the premise that an invading force had landed at Asiga Harbor. More fortunate yet for the Marines was that the defense installations at these locations were fixed *the 160-yard beach, followed by two light artillery battalions and the 23d Marines.*

USMC Photo 151970





to fire in only one direction. Marine observers had also noted these two landing areas but disregarded them to finally settle on two small beaches on the northwest side of the island. For the upcoming operation, the Marines dubbed them White Beach 1, only 60 yards wide, and White Beach 2, 160 yards wide.

Just prior to the Tinian operation, certain changes were made in the Marine command structure. Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith was named to head the new Fleet Marine Force, Pacific command (FMFPac). The organization of such a new command was necessitated by the step-up in tempo and expansion of future Marine operations. Major General Harry Schmidt stepped up to the NTLF command and Major General Clifton B. Cates, future Marine Corps Commandant, was given command of the 4th Marine Division.³⁵

The fast operational pace did not permit a leisurely familiarization of their duties by the new commanders—but none was needed; they were experienced professionals. The intensified shelling by the XXIV Corps Artillery and the gathering invasion force gave proof of the imminence of battle. The ships, landing craft, and other amphibious vessels and vehicles assigned to the Tinian operation numbered over 900. The NTLF plan designated the 4th Marine Division as the assault division, and it would make the 3-mile, island-to-island amphibious landing in 37 LSTs. Before their final dash to the shore, the assault regiments of the division would transfer to LVTs.

On Jig minus 1, 23 July, the Marines moved on-board their assigned ships. The landing called for the 24th Marines to attack over White Beach 1 while the 25th Marines landed over White Beach 2. The 23d Marines would remain afloat as the division reserve. Also on Jig-Day, but prior to the actual landing, the 2d Marine Division would stage a sunrise demonstration landing off of Tinian Town. The ruse worked successfully as planned. The Japanese lost valuable hours while attempting to oppose a landing that was never to be. Had the enemy not been so duped, many Marines would have been killed by the defenders of the White Beaches.

The trip covering the 3 miles between Saipan and Tinian aboard the LSTs was an uneventful one. By 0600 the assault regiments of the 4th Marine Division were in their assigned areas off of the landing beaches. The sounds of the Saipan-based artillery could be heard as round after round exploded on the island. For 3 weeks this artillery had been firing on

targets on Tinian. Air strikes and naval bombardment had plagued the enemy for 6 weeks, the combination of air, ground, and sea making this one of the longest periods of preparation fire in the Pacific War.³⁶

Naval gunfire support ships firing from their assigned sectors lifted their fires at 0620 as fighters and torpedo bombers dove in bombing and strafing the landing beaches. Once the air attack was ended, the artillery and naval ships resumed their bombardment in an ever-increasing tempo. The time had come for the Sunday punch; at 0717 the first 24 LVTs carrying the assault waves of the 24th and 25th Marines crossed the line of departure and churned the remaining 3,000 yards to White Beaches 1 and 2. As the LVTs approached the shore, an east wind blew thick smoke and dust, byproducts of the bombardment for the most part, into their path. The coxswains, blinded, were confused as to distance until Army P-47s, flying low over the attacking force, led the way to shore. Armored amphibians leading boat waves kept firing as they turned to the flanks 300 yards from the beach. The attack waves rolled on to the shore.

The 25th Marines hit White Beach 2 beginning at 0755 with Company G landing on the right and Company I on the left. The opposition to the 25th Marines' landing was greater than that being experienced by its sister regiment (the 24th) over on White Beach 1. The assault companies on White Beach 2 received fire from antiboat and antitank guns protected by two blockhouses spouting withering machine gun fire. There were about 50 enemy soldiers opposing the landing on White Beach 2. Other hazards facing the 25th Marines were antitank and antipersonnel mines and booby traps. The presence of mines forced all vehicular traffic to land over White Beach 1 until the engineers could clear White Beach 2. The assault companies bypassed the blockhouses and continued to press inland. Later waves would put the blockhouses out of business. By 0820 all of the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 25th Marines were ashore and attacking toward the high ground, Mt. Maga. The reserve battalion (1st) was hit by mortar, artillery, and small arms fire as it came ashore about 0930. The 1st Battalion's Lieutenant Colonel Mustain landed with his Marines and moved them about 300 yards inland. The 25th's regimental headquarters advance party landed at 1230.³⁷

The 1st Battalion, 14th Marines landed in the early afternoon. By 1430 this artillery battalion had moved 300 yards inland and was firing in support of



USMC Photo 88088

Additional Marines land on Tinian. Leisurely attitude is explained by the absence of resistance, as

the beach was secured by the 25th Marines the day before.

the 25th Marines. These fires were reinforced by those of the 1st Battalion, 10th Marines. The assault battalions moved steadily inland, but at 1630, General Cates ordered the advance halted so that the troops could set up a defense line in preparation for the inevitable counterattack. The 25th Marines, 1,000 yards short of its objective when the order was given, dug foxholes, strung barbed wire, and waited.

The entire 4th Marine Division was put ashore within a period of 9 hours. By 1630 the division had established a front 4,000 yards long and 2,000 yards deep. The day's action had cost the division 15 killed and 225 wounded. The known enemy dead numbered 438. Called the perfect landing operation by Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, it had achieved complete tactical surprise. American success was enhanced because of enemy miscalculation. However, the Japanese now knew where the Americans were, and they would strike at night in their traditional but futile fashion—in a *banzai* charge.

The 23d Marines, the division reserve, had landed about 1630 with orders to move into the line to the right of the understrength 25th. This it did, taking up positions to the right of and in contact with the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines.³⁸ At 1830 the 75mm

halftracks of 25th Marines' Regimental Weapons Company landed on White Beach 1 and moved directly to reinforce the defensive positions of its parent regiment. Company A, 4th Tank Battalion with attached flamethrower tanks (M3A1 light tanks) also moved up on the line with the 25th Marines.

The Marines of the 25th, their confidence bolstered still more by the presence of the tanks and halftracks, nevertheless wondered what the night would bring. Darkness arrived early and seemed endless, while rain periodically fell together with incoming enemy fire. At about midnight the shelling increased. Enemy patrols could be heard in the darkness as they kept probing for a weak spot along the lines of the 25th Marines. Two hours later a Japanese naval unit, its officers wearing white gloves, struck the extreme left flank of the 24th Marines in a violent counterattack. The lines of the 24th held and over 400 of the attackers died in the encounter. Another attack was made at 0230 by the *135th Infantry*, reinforced with a few tanks, against the boundary between the 24th and 25th Marines. The extreme left flank of the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines took the thrust and by superior fire power repulsed the enemy.

In a second attempt, 200 enemy soldiers broke



USMC Photo 93379

Once the White Beaches were cleared, amphibian tractors and heavy equipment moved steadily

ashore. Extreme narrowness of the beaches required rapid unloading of all materiel coming ashore.

through Company K lines and split into two groups. One group attacked Battery D, 2d Battalion, 14th Marines and a fierce firefight ensued. Marines from Batteries E and F joined the fray as infantry, and destroyed the enemy. The second force hit the rear of the 25th but was stopped in its tracks by the fires of a 3d Battalion rifle platoon. The fight was a fierce one and 91 of the enemy were killed. Still another attack was made on the lines of the 23d Marines, but this attack was beaten off with an assist from the 37mm Platoon of the 2d Battalion, 25th Marines. This force retreated but at 0330 hit again, this time plowing into the 2d Battalions of both the 23d and 25th Marines. The attackers this time had the added impetus of a force of five or six tanks. These Marines, however, were primed and ready and with deadly fire cut down 267 of the attackers. These desperate attacks, too little and too late, cost the enemy dearly. A total of 1,241 had fallen, one-seventh of Colonel Ogata's defense force.³⁹ Over 500 bodies were counted in the 3d Battalion area alone.

The Marines of the 25th were tired and wet as they greeted the sunrise. This was 25 July, and the objective for the day was Mt. Maga, a 390-foot hill. The 2d Battalion took up position directly in front of Mt. Maga while the 1st and 3d Battalions encircled the objective from the east and west approaches respec-

tively in a double envelopment. As the 1st Battalion started up to the top, heavy rifle and machine gun fire poured down upon it. Having no protection against this onslaught, the battalion was forced to withdraw. A short time later a road leading up the hill was discovered. Engineers were called up to clear the road of mines and when the job was completed the tanks attached to the 1st Battalion rolled up the road right to the top without encountering enemy troops. The tanks returned to escort their charges back up Mt. Maga but again murderous fire tore into the advancing Marines. Withdrawing a second time, the Marines put their 81mm mortars into action against suspected enemy positions while the tanks fired into caves spotted from the bottom of the hill. After a thorough shelling of the suspected positions by the mortars, the Marines cautiously ascended the hill again. It was noon when they started up, and it was soon obvious that the shelling by the mortars and tanks had done its job. The hill quickly became 25th Marines' property. The enemy however, was still active, for at 1330 machine guns and mortars began firing on the battalion's right flank. The deadly accurate enemy guns were located on a plateau to the south. The Marine tanks and mortars returned heavy fire, soon silencing the enemy. When the firing had begun, the battalion was forced

to move back about 200 yards to an area offering better cover, but now moved back to the top, this time to stay.⁴⁰

The 3d Battalion, in a column of companies, was moving along the western route and was being assisted by Army Air Forces P-47s which strafed and bombed ahead of the advancing Marines. Many of the enemy survived the air attack and remained to challenge the advancing troops, and challenge they did. Company I in the lead came under heavy fire and requested assistance. Lieutenant Colonel Chambers ordered tanks and combat engineers forward. The engineers were armed with bazookas, demolitions, and flamethrowers. This additional force went to work doing a thorough job so that Company I Marines were able to continue their advance. Later the 3d Battalion lost contact with the 23d Marines and stopped until the 23d moved up abreast. During the halt, Lieutenant Colonel Chambers called down naval gunfire and artillery upon suspected enemy positions to the front. Combat patrols were sent out by Company I and they discovered and destroyed three 47mm guns. Contact was reinstated with the 23d Marines at which time the 3d Battalion resumed the attack, swinging up the side of Mt. Maga and on to the top.

For two days the 2d Battalion was kept busy mopping up the northwestern face of Mt. Maga. On 26 July all three of the battalions moved out, the 1st Battalion to even higher ground, 540-foot Mt. Lasso. The attack began at 0800 after a 5-minute artillery preparation. The going was tough as the Marines slipped repeatedly on the muddy slope. The enemy withdrew and the 1st Battalion reached the summit unopposed. This was a fortunate day for the Marines. Had the enemy defended Mt. Lasso, he could have exacted a heavy price from the men of the 25th.

A problem of no contact with the 2d Marine Division still existed on the left flank. The 2d Marine Division, after taking Airfield 1 had made a wide swing to the left to encompass the northern end of the island. Upon reaching the northern shore the division swung to the right along the east coast. This was a sizable amount of real estate to cover and understandably resulted in a loss of contact with the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines. The 3d Battalion had been moving rapidly, circling Mt. Lasso when it was forced to stop because of the gap that existed. After making the wide swing across the northern end of the island, the 2d Division moved south, soon making contact with the 4th. Both divisions then moved



USMC Photo 87900
Marines find the slopes of Mt. Lasso on Tinian tough going. The mountain was the high point on an otherwise flat Pacific island.

down the long axis of the island, the 4th Division given responsibility for the western half. Neither division encountered any significant enemy opposition on 27 and 28 July. A new foe was upon them, cold rain driven by gusty winds beat down on the Marines. The wind and rain were especially severe on 28 July resulting from the fringes of a typhoon that was creating havoc off to the west. Also on 28 July the 24th Marines was moved up between the 23d and 25th. All the infantry regiments of the division were now on line and heading south.

On the following day, both divisions, led by tanks, moved out in attack at 0700. Pockets of Japanese soldiers kept harassing the advancing regiments with rifle and occasional machine gun fire. The 3d Battalion, 25th Marines ran headlong into enemy troops that were all dug in. After a sharp firefight and several American casualties, the defenders were overcome. The day ended with the 25th in defensive positions some 600 to 1,000 yards forward of the day's objective. Tinian Town could be seen in the distance. The combination of falling rain and mortar shells made certain that there was little rest during the night. An enemy night attack was discouraged by Marine mortars and artillery. The following morning 41 dead Japanese soldiers were found in front of the defense positions.⁴¹

The Marine attack resumed in the morning at 0745 following a violent 10-minute artillery preparation. The attack had originally been set for 0700, but additional time was needed for the men to clean their weapons. Colonel Batchelder headed his men for Airfield 4 encountering some mortar fire and harassment by isolated snipers. The airfield was taken and the regiment, less the 3d Battalion, reverted to NTLF reserve. The 3d Battalion was attached to the 23d Marines and took up position on the left flank of the regimental front.

As the Marines neared the end of the island, resistance stiffened. The final drive was made on 1 August, when the 23d and 24th Marines abreast pushed to the southern tip of the island. The desperate enemy fought on to the very end but by 1955 the island was declared secured. Over 5,000 dead Japanese defenders attested to the violence of the battle. Over 1,800 Marines had been wounded and 389 of the Leathernecks had fought their last battle. The 25th Marines suffered 59 killed and 269 wounded in action.

A little over a year later a bomber would take off from the airfield near White Beach 1. With the massive air raids that were devastating the Japanese mainland, perhaps few would give special attention to the *Enola Gay* as she took off into history from this little airfield captured by United States Marines. This flight to Hiroshima would signal the end of an age and the beginning of another.

On 5 August, the 4th Marine Division left Tinian. These battle-weary Marines had fought and defeated the best the Japanese had to offer on two strongly defended islands. For its exemplary performance the 4th Marine Division was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation. The Marines were proud of what they had

achieved, but that was yesterday; today the important thing was that they were going back to Maui.

Maui Marines

The distance from the Marianas to Kahului Bay could not be measured solely in miles; the 4th Division Marines had traveled from one world to another.⁴² The tropical splendor of Maui surrounded the returning Marines as division trucks wound up the long dirt road to Camp Maui. The delights of this island reassured the Marines that they were alive and they basked in the beauty. The extinct volcano, Haleakala, towering behind the camp looked down in silence on her returning Marines. In the embrace of this peaceful island the Marines gradually relearned how to relax.

These were not the same Marines that left San Diego in January 1944. That was another era and three battles had changed them. The pleasures that once seemed endless were now known to be ephemeral and, accordingly, the Marines lived for the moment, savoring each day, for the long hours of training made them realize what must come on some tomorrow. After an early reveille, the Marines would spend numerous hours on field problems. At day's end the mud-Marines would drop into the luxurious comfort of their cots.

Daily, busses and trucks drove liberty-bound Marines to the nearby towns of Makawao, Haiku, Kahului, and Wailuku. Those back at Camp Maui on any one day had to be satisfied with the daily ration of two bottles of beer and the nightly outdoor movie. It was miraculous how a couple of beers and a class "D" movie could ease the soreness of muscles and the gnawing uncertainties of the war. It seemed more often than not that the movies were endured in the rain, the wind-driven wetness finding its way into the camouflaged ponchos. Things could be worse; they had been worse before and the Marines knew instinctively that they would be worse again. How right they were! But all in all, Maui was quite a place and problems here seemed somehow more manageable. The Marines enjoyed the island, and they were truly fond of the people.

The days and weeks sped by, measured by liberties and hard marches. On 28 October Colonel John R. Lanigan relieved Colonel Batchelder as Commanding Officer, 25th Marines. Colonel Batchelder, in turn, moved up to division as Chief of Staff.

Replacements arrived to fill the depleted ranks of the regiment. The Christmas season came and departed and the training went on. It would have been nice to have spent the holidays at home, but that was the least of their worries, for time was running out. Soon the Maui Marines would be going back to work.

As suddenly as the Marines had been immersed in the beauty and serenity of this Hawaiian island, they departed. Pearl Harbor was the first stop. The Marines on the decks of the transports looked hard for vestiges of the December 7th attack, but the war had moved on since that time and the naval base had been almost wholly restored. But so much for Pearl Harbor, the thoughts of the Marines turned rapidly to the possibility of a liberty in Honolulu. The dream was realized by only a few when, on 6 January, the transports sailed for Maalaea Bay to take part in a practice amphibious landing. On 9 January the troops returned to Pearl Harbor and, finally, all of the Marines spent precious liberty hours in Honolulu. From 13-18 January the Marines were back at Maalaea Bay where a full dress rehearsal of the coming invasion took place. Returning once again to Pearl Harbor, the Marines tried to cram a possible lifetime of liberty into a few hours; many did a good job of trying.

But now the time had come to go back to war and on 22 January, the LSMs and LSTs headed west, with the balance of the 4th Marine Division departing 5 days later. An unknown fate waited over the horizon on Island X or Sulphur Island, or, in Japanese, Iwo Jima.

The monotony of shipboard life soon displaced the memories of the pleasures of Honolulu. Each Marine experienced a varying degree of loneliness as he inhaled the sea air, felt the deck roll beneath his feet, and tasted the salt as the misty spray swept over the bow. The waking hours included the usual long chow lines, periods of calisthenics, rifle inspections, and schooling. With these activities, somehow time was squeezed in to permit the reading of paperback novels, a hand or two of poker or pinochle, and for a few, the inevitable crap game. Each day was just like the last as the convoy forged more deeply into the Pacific. The 5th of February 1945 found the transports anchored in the unbelievably large natural harbor of Eniwetok. The war was coming closer and closer as the convoy headed to sea again, this time towards the Saipan-Tinian area. Arriving in the Marianas, a last dress rehearsal was executed from choppy seas onto the western beaches of Tinian on 13 February. Three days later the armada headed for

the island of sulphur. Perhaps there were those who reflected that another name for sulphur was brimstone and further that the words "fire and brimstone" are reputed in rhyme and fable to be the ingredients of hell.

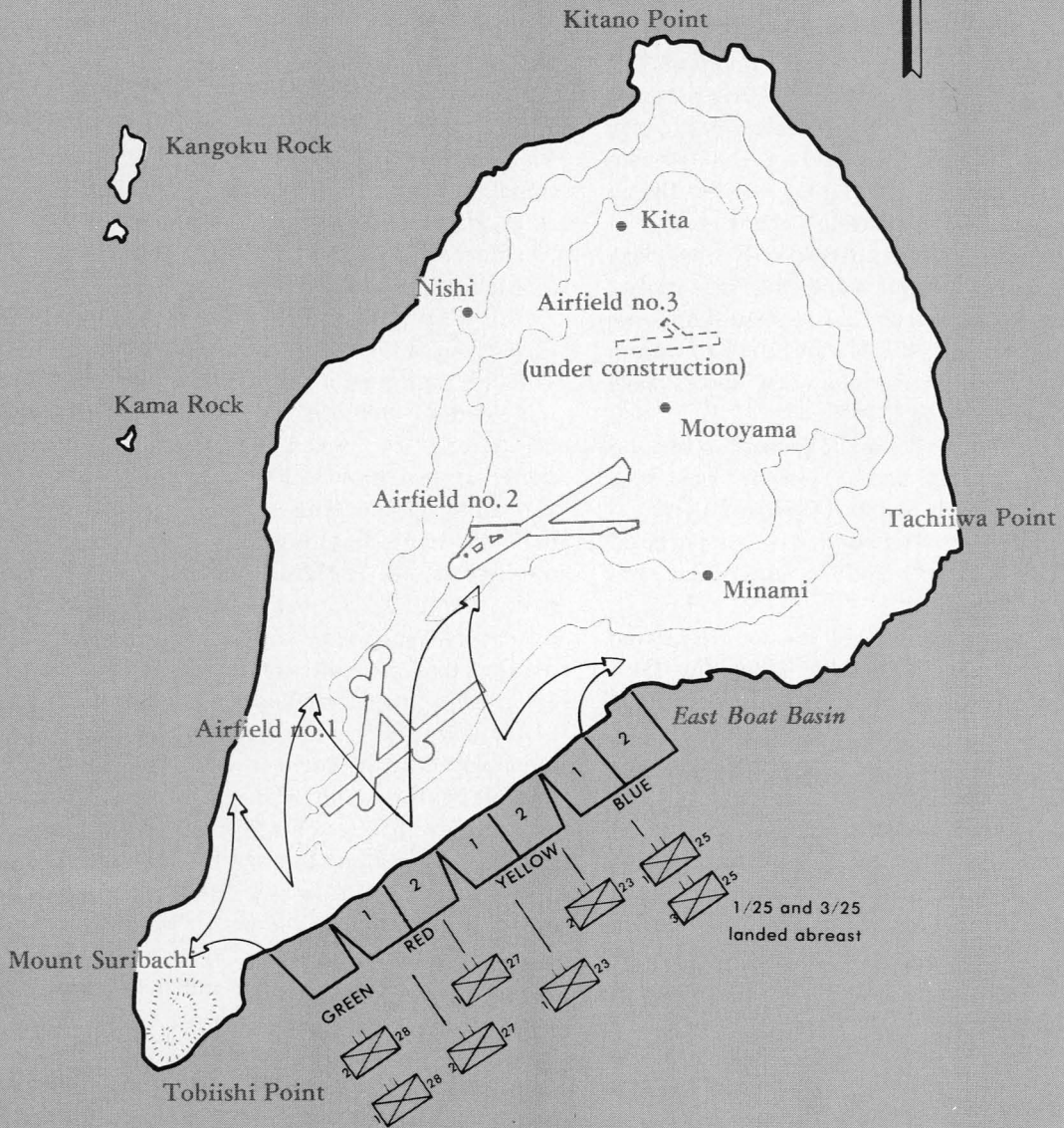
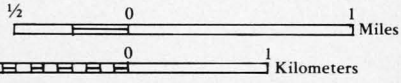
Iwo Jima

The nights grew colder as the 800-ship convoy steamed north to Iwo Jima. Frequent school sessions on board the transports familiarized the troops with the size, shape, relief, and landmarks of the island, but no amount of lectures or study could have prepared the 25th Marines for the ferocity of the coming battle. Their destination was one of the Volcano Islands which were, in turn, part of an archipelago named Nanpo Shoto. This archipelago extends from the Japanese homeland southward for 700 miles. A beachhead on Nanpo Shoto would be a foot in the door of the homeland itself.

Iwo Jima was born in violence, being thrust, lifeless, out of the ocean bottom 10,000 years before. This ugly pork chop shaped island has been variously compared to the surface of the moon, a devil's playground, and even hell itself. The island is anchored at the narrow southern tip by Mt. Suribachi, an extinct volcano. This 550-foot-high landmark is dark and forbidding, unlike its lush tropical green counterpart, Mt. Haleakala, back on Maui. Looking north from Mt. Suribachi's base the land rises, dramatically in places, with a broad plateau stretching along most of the central section of the island. Steep ridges are plentiful on the northern part of the island constituting natural fortresses and they were so employed by the enemy commander. Finally, the extreme northern end of the island drops abruptly into the sea. The rotten-egg smell of the sulphuric fumes, eerily spewing through fissures from the fiery core far below the surface, seemingly attested to the island's relationship to the nether world.⁴³

Two suitable landing beaches exist on Iwo Jima, one located on the east coast and the other on the west coast. Because of the narrowness of the southern end of the island, the Japanese guns on Suribachi could defend either beach. Additionally, both beaches are surrounded by commanding ground, a fact not lost to the enemy. The Marines were destined to land on the southeastern shore, but a landing on either beach would have found them poised against a determined enemy occupying high ground.

IWO JIMA



HILLMAN

No matter where the Marines landed, there would be nowhere to go but up.

This island was the key to the air war against Japan. Iwo Jima was an unsinkable carrier from which Japanese fighters could intercept American bombers heading to and from the homeland. In Allied hands, the use of Iwo's three airfields would shorten the bombing run considerably, permitting the carrying of additional bombs in place of the decreased fuel load. Fighters from these airfields could escort the bombers all the way to Japan. The airfield could also be used as a haven for damaged aircraft, which were, up until now, forced to ditch into the sea, the survival of the crew depending on the fortuitous location of friendly naval units. Both sides appreciated the significance of Iwo Jima, and girded their respective forces accordingly.

Selected to conduct the defense of Iwo Jima was 54-year-old Lieutenant General Tadamichi Kuribayashi. General Kuribayashi, a cavalry officer with extensive line and staff experience, significantly, had great respect for American fighting ability. Perhaps this appreciation was gained when the general served as a military attache with the Japanese Embassy in the United States 20 years earlier. A true *samurai*, he considered it a great honor to have been selected for this important post, an assignment from which he did not expect to return. The general had been further honored by being accorded the rare privilege of an audience with Emperor Hirohito before his departure for Iwo Jima.

General Kuribayashi arrived on Iwo Jima sometime between 8-10 June 1944, in time to witness an air raid by U.S. carrier aircraft. The severe losses of Japanese aircraft both in the air and on the ground vividly demonstrated that the Americans had won air and sea superiority and could bomb and shell at will. The Japanese defenders, realizing the vulnerability of their installations, began moving them all underground.⁴⁴

Not long after General Kuribayashi arrived on the island, news was received of Saipan's fall. Feverish activity followed in setting up Iwo's elaborate system of defense. The black volcanic ash covering the island was ideal for making concrete, the result being that the island, like the mythical Phoenix, rose stronger than ever from its own ashes. Miles of tunnels also were built. Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith in his *Coral and Brass* referred to the Japanese defenses as the "most ingenious, elaborate and indestructible system of underground fortifications ever devised."⁴⁵

Facing the Marine invasion was the most heavily fortified island in the Pacific: 21,000 defenders, the majority of whom were the best soldiers the Japanese had to offer, and to top it off, a brilliant leader steeped in the *samurai* tradition. The invading force, on the other hand, had 71,000 well-trained and disciplined Marines and the advantages of air and sea superiority. The ingredients were there for the epic struggle that ensued.

Beginning on 19 February, both sides would battle relentlessly for 36 torturous, death-filled days. The dogged aggressiveness of the attacking Marines would overcome the natural and manmade defensive positions, and the *yamato* (warrior) spirit of the Japanese who held them; but at battle's end the news of the staggering casualty figures would horrify the American people.

Air strikes against Iwo Jima began in the early summer of 1944.⁴⁶ American carrier planes bombed and strafed and Army Air Force's B-24s, B-25s, and B-29s dropped tons of bombs and, as the date of the invasion drew nearer, these attacks intensified. Unfortunately, the damage to the island's defenses was not significant, a fact the Marines would soon discover to their chagrin. Even the airfields were never completely knocked out at any time.

General Smith and the planners of the V Amphibious Corps requested a 10-day naval gunfire bombardment of the island. This was considered essential by the Marine planners, but the request was denied. A simultaneous carrier strike on Toyko was also planned and, therefore, ships would only be available for a 3-day bombardment to commence on D minus 3. All of General Smith's efforts to get the desired 10-day bombardment failed.⁴⁷

On D minus 3, 16 February, the naval bombardment of Iwo Jima began. When it ended, the defenses still remained formidable. On 18 February, two battleships, the USS *Tennessee* (BB 43) and the USS *Idaho* (BB 42) fired more than 600 rounds into the base of Mt. Suribachi and into an area north of the eastern landing beaches known as the Quarry. The damage brought by the battleships was considerable, but 18 February was the last of the promised 3 days of naval gunfire and the landing was scheduled for the next day.

By dawn on 19 February the flotilla of invasion ships had taken up positions off the eastern beaches. Corporal Kofuku Yamakage, one of the island's defenders, wrote, "I have never seen so many ships in my life." The fact that all of the defenders could see the ships and, subsequently, all of the troops as



USMC Photo 110108

Men of the 25th are pinned down as they hit the beach. Making their fourth assault in 13 months, the veteran fighters are ready to secure the beachhead's night flank on Iwo Jima.

they landed would have dire consequences for the Marines. At 0640 the battleships, the USS *North Carolina* (BB 55), USS *Washington* (BB 56), USS *New York* (BB 34), USS *Texas* (BB 35), USS *Arkansas* (BB 33), and the USS *Nevada* (BB 36) began shelling the island fortress. Less than an hour later other ships fired salvo after salvo of rockets. The naval fires lifted at about 0800 as 120 fighters and bombers, in their turn, raked the landing beaches and the adjoining high ground, as well as the giant blister-shaped Mt. Suribachi.⁴⁸

Following the by now almost regulation pre-invasion breakfast of steak and eggs, the Marines of the assault battalions retrieved their weapons and packs below decks then reported to debarkation stations. The bombardment was still going on as they went over the side into the waiting assault craft. The first assault wave crossed the line of departure at 0830 and churned toward the beach 4,000 yards away. Other waves followed at 250-300 yard intervals. The naval bombardment shifted into the interior of the island as the amphibious tractors covered the last 400 yards to the macabre blackness of the Iwo beach.

The coarse volcanic ash, the sands of Iwo Jima, seemed to swallow the field shoes of the Marines as they left the amtracs for the greater uncertainty of the beach. It was planned that the amtracs would carry the assault troops further inland, but the steep terrace of volcanic ash running the length of the

beach stopped them. The tractors were unable to climb the slopes.⁴⁹

Colonel Lanigan's 25th Marines landed on Blue Beach 1 at the extreme right of the invading force. The 1st Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Mustain, was on the left, while the 3d Battalion led by Lieutenant Colonel Chambers was on the right, infringing slightly onto Blue Beach 2.* The landing took place shortly after 0900. The Japanese quickly responded to the landing; mortar and machine gun fire ranged across the volcanic sand. Unseen enemy defenders in cleverly camouflaged positions and in pillboxes swept the beach with deadly fire.

On the far left of the beachhead, the 28th Marines was making good progress as it headed toward Mt. Suribachi. The mountain suddenly appeared to explode as heavy mortars and artillery opened up on the attackers. It was obvious that this regiment had its own piece of hell to worry about. By now the entire beachhead had come under fire; the debris of battle along the dark beach gave mute testimony to the violence encountered.

In spite of heavy fire from the front and the right flank, the 25th Marines moved inland. The 3d Battalion swung to the right so that its right flank was along Blue Beach 2. The left flank, in contact with the 1st Battalion, was receiving heavy and continuous fire. By noon a gap of about 100 yards developed between the two battalions. The 2d Battalion led by Lieutenant Colonel Hudson, was ordered ashore to fill the gap and to seize the high ground located about 500 yards inland from Blue Beach 2 and southwest of a quarry. From there the 2d Battalion would assist the advance of the 3d Battalion into the quarry. The fire hitting the 25th Marines was the heaviest faced by the entire landing force. Moving into the quarry, the 3d Battalion was hit by murderous flanking fire, causing severe losses. Before nightfall the 3d Battalion was in a disorganized state, only 150 effectives remained. Twenty-two of the battalion's officers had been killed or wounded. The total casualty count for the battalion was 750 dead or wounded. There was no choice but to take the battalion out of the line. Accordingly, the 1st Battalion, 24th Marines which had already sent in two companies was ordered to make the relief. The relief was completed around midnight.⁵⁰

At 1700, all units were ordered to stop their ad-

*Blue Beach 2 was not used for landing because of its proximity to the high ground on the right, which was to be neutralized by supporting fires.



USMC Photo 109817

A short distance inland, Marines struggle to increase their hold on Iwo Jima as their tanks move north.

vance and to dig in in anticipation of the usual *banzai* charge. Japanese military doctrine called for the destruction of a landing force on the beach. General Kuribayashi, however, did not subscribe to this doctrine, consequently the traditional charge did not take place. The Japanese commander would exact a heavier price for each defender of Iwo Jima than heretofore experienced by Marines in other Pacific battles.

The ferocity of the day's battle kept up during the long night as enemy artillery and mortars continued to pound the Marine positions. The weather grew colder as the night progressed and the Marines, fresh from the tropics, shivered in their foxholes. At about 0400 an enemy shell hit the 25th Marines' ammunition dump, causing a tremendous explosion. Three hours later, another shell landed squarely in the 2d Battalion command post. Lieutenant Colonel Hudson, commanding officer of the battalion, his executive officer, Major William P. Kaempfer, and Major Donald K. Ellis, the operations officer, were all seriously wounded. Lieutenant Colonel James Taul, the 3d Battalion executive officer, was sent to take over the 2d Battalion.

So ended the first 24 hours. On the first of 36 terrible days, 30,000 Marines were landed. Of this number, 500 were killed and 1,775 wounded in the first day's battle. The tenacious and accurate mortar, artillery, and machine gun fires had claimed a grisly toll.

When the long, cold night ended, artillery, air, and naval gunfire opened up on the enemy defenders. All along the line the Marines of the 4th and 5th Divisions attacked following preparatory fires. The 25th Marines, with the 23d Marines on its left, surged forward at 0830 with three battalions abreast. On the left of the regimental line was the 1st Battalion; the 2d Battalion in the center, was now commanded by Lieutenant Colonel James Taul. The 1st Battalion, 24th Marines was on the right. The 3d Battalion, 25th Marines now formed the regimental reserve.

The 2d Battalion was ordered to seize the high ground to the front, then support Lieutenant Colonel Mustain's 1st Battalion with fire. Tanks from Company B, 4th Tank Battalion, supported the regimental attack, but were ineffective on the rough terrain. Worse, the armored vehicles attracted heavy

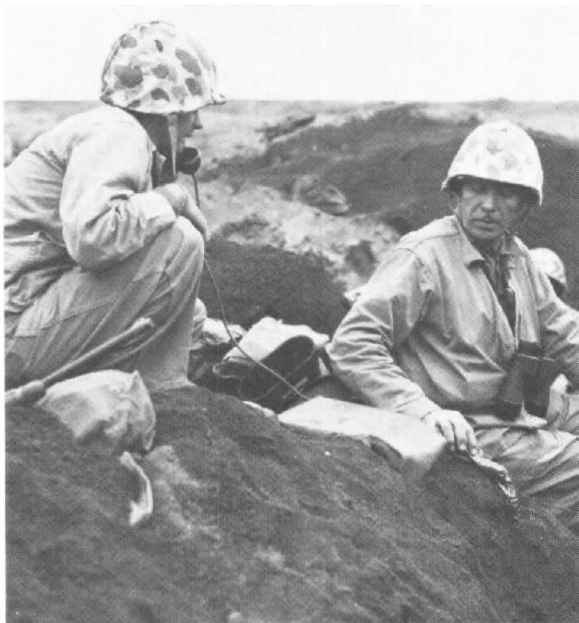
mortar and artillery shelling. Progress was difficult, the attacking Marines were caught in a deadly crossfire from machine guns and rifles. The enemy's positions afforded them perfect observation. In the rear of the line, an artillery shell hit the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines' aid station killing six hospital corpsmen and wounding seven others. Gains made by the 25th Marines on D plus 1, 20 February, ranged from 200 to 300 yards. The day's attack was halted at 1800 to allow the Marines to dig in for the night.⁵¹ Casualties for the 4th Marine Division during the first 2 days were over 2,000.

The night of the second day was a repeat of the first with the damp air chilling the Marines as they huddled in their foxholes. Enemy mortar and artillery fire continued throughout the night. The 25th Marines' left flank was hit hard at about 0500 when an enemy force of about 100 struck the 1st Battalion line. After a sharp encounter, the enemy attackers were effectively repulsed.

D plus 2 action began with carrier planes flying close air support missions. Artillery furnished additional preparation fire as a prelude to the day's attack. The 25th Marines moved forward shortly after 0800 to be greeted by heavy and accurate fires. By 1000, Marine casualties were heavy. The 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, striking northeast lost among others its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Mustain,

On Iwo, 400 yards inland, Colonel John R. Lanigan, Commanding Officer, 25th Marines, discusses the situation with his operations officer.

USMC Photo 109819



who was killed in action. Major Fenton J. Mee, the battalion executive officer, took over the battalion. During the morning because of varied yardage gains, a gap developed between the 1st and 2d Battalions. To permit the 1st Battalion to reorganize, the 3d Battalion was inserted into the line, between the other two battalions, pinching out the 1st Battalion. This called for a renewed effort from the 3d Battalion due to the mauling it received on D-day. Further attempts to move forward were deferred to the next day to permit the regiment to consolidate. The cold drizzle during the long night added to the misery of the Marines.⁵²

On D plus 3, 22 February, the drizzle turned into torrents of cold rain, reducing visibility to a bare minimum which was a mixed blessing. The 25th was ordered to attack at 0800 or when 3d Marine Division units came abreast on the left. The 3d Marine Division had landed during the night and was advancing slowly against heavy enemy action.

The 3d Battalion on the regiment's left was in a position along a ridgeline separated by a shallow valley leading to another ridgeline (Charlie-Dog) some 300 yards to the front. The ridgeline to the front was a part of the Japanese main line of resistance. The 3d Battalion, with all of its automatic weapons in its frontline, directed fire into the enemy line. Artillery and naval gun fires joined in the attack on Charlie-Dog Ridge. Lieutenant Colonel Chambers contacted regiment at 1600 suggesting that the jumpoff be put off until the following morning when the 3d Marine Division would be in position to join the assault. Regiment concurred and so ordered. The rocket platoon launched 128 rockets into the enemy position within a 3-minute period. Enemy soldiers could plainly be seen wandering about their positions in a dazed and shocked condition. Fires of the 3d Battalion opened up on the visible enemy troops. Lieutenant Colonel Chambers at about this time was severely wounded by enemy machine gun fire. Chambers was evacuated with Captain James C. Headley taking command of the battalion for the balance of the battle.

The 2d Battalion remained in position throughout the day, but was pelted with a heavy mortar barrage during the morning, resulting in many casualties. The night of the third day was a repeat of the previous one with the Marines trying to stay warm in the cold dampness, without much success. The wet and the cold seemed to spur the activities of the enemy; about 100 Japanese soldiers tried to infiltrate the lines of the 2d and 3d Battalions during the early