

FIRST OFFENSIVE:
THE MARINE CAMPAIGN
FOR GUADALCANAL

MARINES IN
WORLD WAR II
COMMEMORATIVE SERIES

BY HENRY I. SHAW, JR.





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In the early summer of 1942, intelligence reports of the construction of a Japanese airfield near Lunga Point on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands triggered a demand for offensive action in the South Pacific. The leading offensive advocate in Washington was Admiral Ernest J. King, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). In the Pacific, his view was shared by Admiral Chester A. Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (CinCPac), who had already proposed sending the 1st Marine Raider Battalion to Tulagi, an island 20 miles north of Guadalcanal across Sealark Channel, to destroy a Japanese seaplane base there. Although the Battle of the Coral Sea had forestalled a Japanese amphibious assault on Port Moresby, the Allied base of supply in eastern New Guinea, completion of the Guadalcanal airfield might signal the beginning of a renewed enemy advance to the south and an increased threat to the lifeline of American aid to New Zealand and Australia. On 23 July 1942, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in Washington agreed that the line of communications in the South Pacific

had to be secured. The Japanese advance had to be stopped. Thus, Operation Watchtower, the seizure of Guadalcanal and Tulagi, came into being.

The islands of the Solomons lie nestled in the backwaters of the South Pacific. Spanish fortune-hunters discovered them in the mid-sixteenth century, but no European power foresaw any value in the islands until Germany sought to expand its budding colonial empire more than two centuries later. In 1884, Germany proclaimed a protectorate over northern New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago, and the northern Solomons. Great Britain countered by establishing a protectorate over the southern Solomons and by annexing the remainder of New Guinea. In 1905, the British crown passed administrative control over all its territories in the region to Australia, and the Territory of Papua, with its capital at Port Moresby, came into being. Germany's holdings in the region fell under the administrative control of the League of Nations following World War I, with the seat of the colonial government located at Rabaul on New Britain. The Solomons lay 10 degrees below the Equator—hot, humid, and buffeted by torrential rains. The celebrated adventure novelist, Jack London, supposedly muttered: "If I were king, the worst punishment I could inflict on my enemies would be to banish them to the Solomons."

On 23 January 1942, Japanese forces seized Rabaul and fortified it extensively. The site provided an excellent harbor and numerous positions for airfields. The devastating enemy carrier and plane losses at the

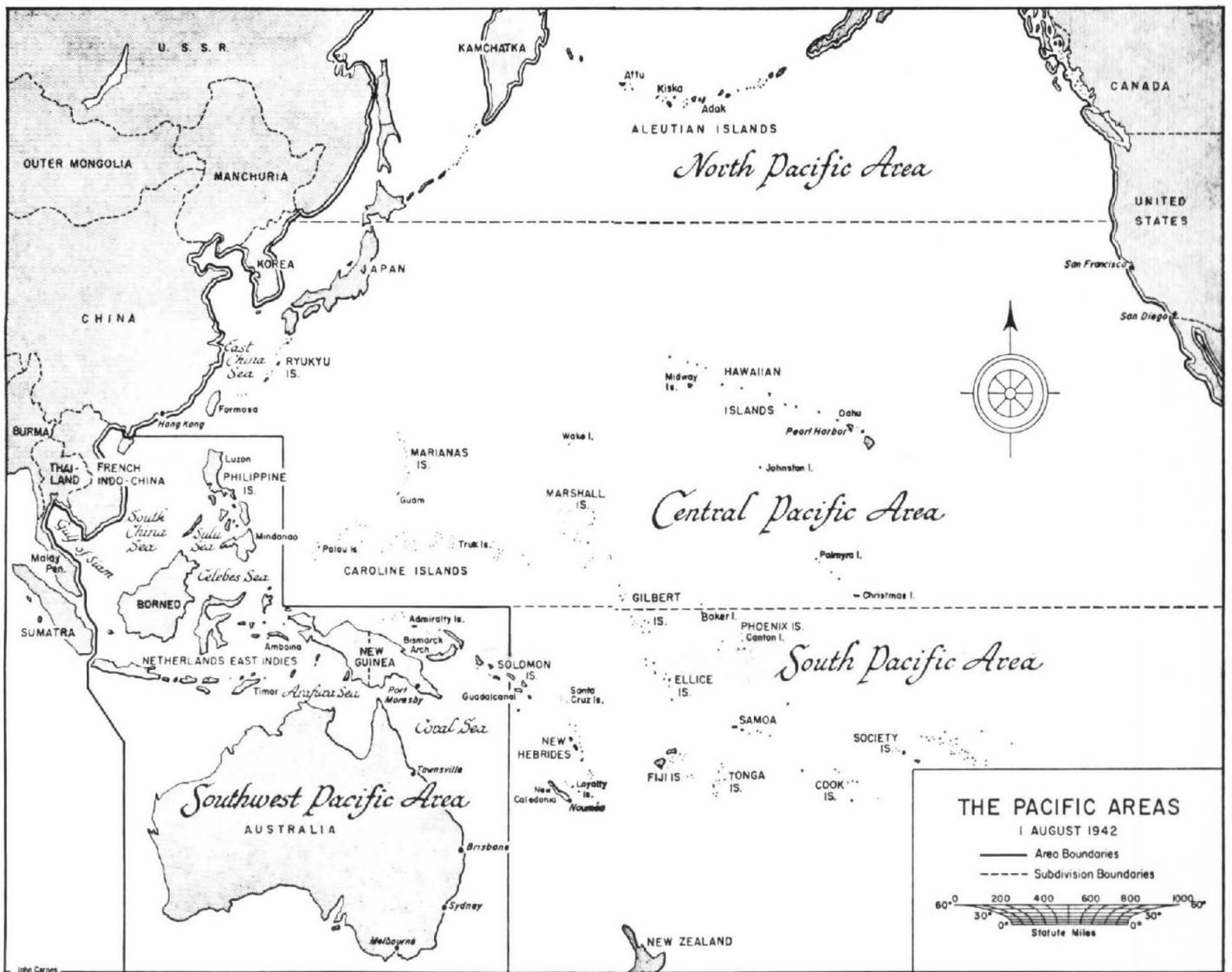
Battle of Midway (3-6 June 1942) had caused *Imperial General Headquarters* to cancel orders for the invasion of Midway, New Caledonia, Fiji, and Samoa, but plans to construct a major seaplane base at Tulagi went forward. The location offered one of the best anchorages in the South Pacific and it was strategically located: 560 miles from the New Hebrides, 800 miles from New Caledonia, and 1,000 miles from Fiji.

The outposts at Tulagi and Guadalcanal were the forward evidences of a sizeable Japanese force in the region, beginning with the *Seventeenth Army*, headquartered at Rabaul. The enemy's *Eighth Fleet*, *Eleventh Air Fleet*, and *1st, 7th, 8th, and 14th Naval Base Forces* also were on New Britain. Beginning on 5 August 1942, Japanese signal intelligence units began to pick up transmissions between Noumea on New Caledonia and Melbourne, Australia. Enemy analysts concluded that Vice Admiral Richard L. Ghormley, commanding the South Pacific Area (ComSoPac), was signalling a British or Australian force in preparation for an offensive in the Solomons or at New Guinea. The warnings were passed to Japanese headquarters at Rabaul and Truk, but were ignored.

The invasion force was indeed on its way to its targets, Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and the tiny islets of Gavutu and Tanambogo close by Tulagi's shore. The landing force was composed of Marines; the covering force and transport force were U.S. Navy with a reinforcement of Australian warships. There was not much mystery to the selection of the 1st Marine Division to make the landings. Five U.S. Army divisions were located in the South and Southwest Pa-

On the cover: A Marine machine gunner and his Browning .30-caliber M1917 heavy machine gun stand guard while 1st Marine Division engineers clean up in the Lunga River. (Department of Defense [USMC] Photo 588741)

At left: It was from a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress such as this that LtCol Merrill B. Twining and Maj William B. McKean reconnoitered the Watchtower target area and discovered the Japanese building an airfield on Guadalcanal. (National Archives Photo 80-G-34887)



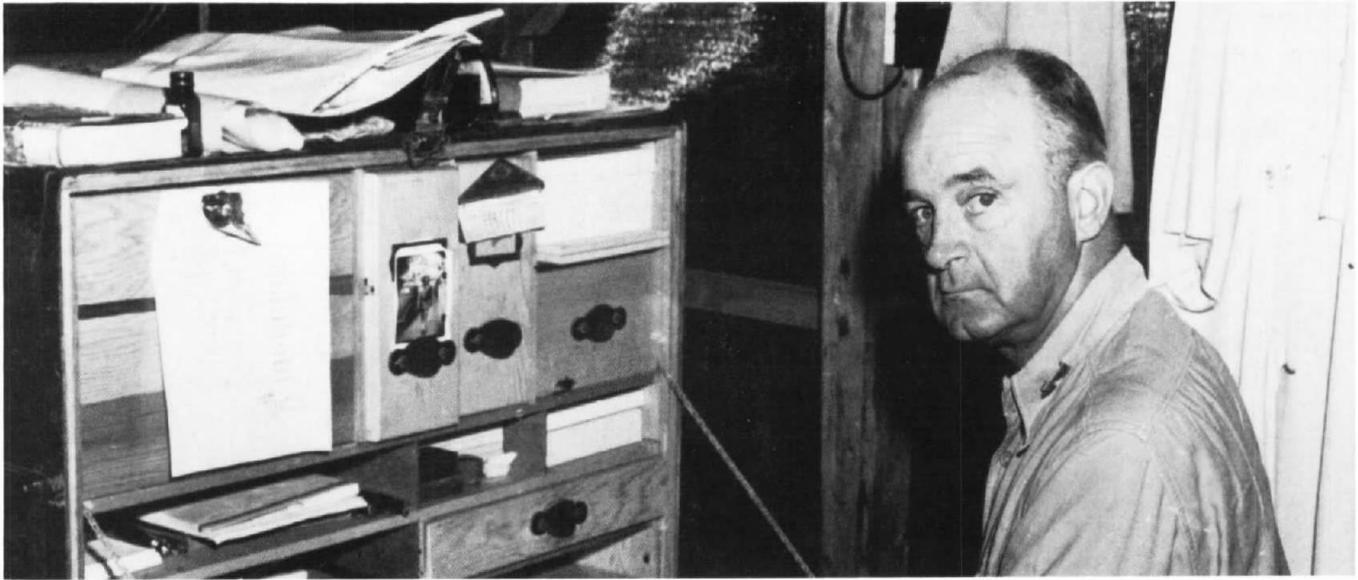
cific: three in Australia, the 37th Infantry in Fiji, and the Americal Division on New Caledonia. None was amphibiously trained and all were considered vital parts of defensive garrisons. The 1st Marine Division, minus one of its infantry regiments, had begun arriving in New Zealand in mid-June when the division headquarters and the 5th Marines reached Wellington. At that time, the rest of the reinforced division's major units were getting ready to embark. The 1st Marines were at San Francisco, the 1st Raider Battalion was on New Caledonia, and the 3d Defense Battalion was at Pearl Harbor. The 2d Marines of the 2d Marine Division, a unit which would replace the 1st Division's 7th Marines stationed in British Samoa, was loading out from San Diego. All three infantry regiments of the landing force had battalions of artillery at-

tached, from the 11th Marines, in the case of the 5th and 1st; the 2d Marines drew its reinforcing 75mm howitzers from the 2d Division's 10th Marines.

The news that his division would be the landing force for Watchtower came as a surprise to Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift, who had anticipated that the 1st Division would have six months of training in the South Pacific before it saw action. The changeover from administrative loading of the various units' supplies to combat loading, where first-needed equipment, weapons, ammunition, and rations were positioned to come off ship first with the assault troops, occasioned a never-to-be-forgotten scene on Wellington's docks. The combat troops took the place of civilian stevedores and unloaded and reloaded the cargo and passenger vessels in an increasing

round of working parties, often during rainstorms which hampered the task, but the job was done. Succeeding echelons of the division's forces all got their share of labor on the docks as various shipping groups arrived and the time grew shorter. General Vandegrift was able to convince Admiral Ghormley and the Joint Chiefs that he would not be able to meet a proposed D-Day of 1 August, but the extended landing date, 7 August, did little to improve the situation.

An amphibious operation is a vastly complicated affair, particularly when the forces involved are assembled on short notice from all over the Pacific. The pressure that Vandegrift felt was not unique to the landing force commander. The U.S. Navy's ships were the key to success and they were scarce and invaluable. Although



General Alexander A. Vandegrift

A distinguished military analyst once noted that if titles were awarded in America as they are in England, the commanding general of Marine Corps forces at Guadalcanal would be known simply as "Vandegrift of Guadalcanal." But America does not bestow aristocratic titles, and besides, such a formality would not be in keeping with the soft-spoken, modest demeanor of Alexander A. Vandegrift.

The man destined to lead the 1st Marine Division in America's first ground offensive operation of World War II was born in 1887 in Charlottesville, Virginia, where he grew up fascinated by his grandfather's stories of life in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. It was axiomatic that young Alexander would settle on a military career. Commissioned a Marine lieutenant in 1909, Vandegrift received an early baptism of fire in 1912 during the bombardment, assault, and capture of Coyotepe in Nicaragua. Two years later he participated in the capture and occupation of Vera Cruz. Vandegrift would spend the greater part of the next decade in Haiti, where he fought Caco bandits, and served as an inspector of constabulary with the Gendarmerie d'Haiti. It was in Haiti that he met and was befriended by Marine Colonel Smedley D. Butler, who called him "Sunny Jim." The lessons of these formative years fighting an elusive enemy in a hostile jungle environment were not lost upon the young Marine officer.

He spent the next 18 years in various posts and stations in the United States, along with two tours of China duty at Peiping and Tientsin. Prior to Pearl Harbor, Vandegrift was appointed assistant to the Major General Commandant, and in April 1940 received the single star of a brigadier general. He was detached to the 1st Marine Division in November 1941, and in May 1942 sailed for the South Pacific as commanding general of the first Marine division ever to leave the United States. On 7 August 1942, after exhorting his Marines with the reminder that "God

favors the bold and strong of heart," he led the 1st Marine Division ashore in the Solomon Islands in the first large-scale offensive action against the Japanese.

His triumph at Guadalcanal earned General Vandegrift the Medal of Honor, the Navy Cross, and the praise of a grateful nation. In July 1943 he took command of I Marine Amphibious Corps and planned the landing at Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville, Northern Solomons, on 1 November 1943. He then was recalled to Washington, to become the Eighteenth Commandant of the Marine Corps.

On 1 January 1944, as a lieutenant general, Vandegrift was sworn in as Commandant. On 4 April 1945 he was promoted to general, and thus became the first Marine officer on active duty to attain four-star rank.

In the final stages of the war, General Vandegrift directed an elite force approaching half-a-million men and women, with its own aviation force. Comparing his Marines with the Japanese, he noted that the Japanese soldier "was trained to go to a place, stay there, fight and die. We train our men to go to a place, fight to win, and to live. I can assure you, it is a better theory."

After the war, Vandegrift fought another battle, this time in the halls of Congress, with the stakes being the survival of the Marine Corps. His counter-testimony during Congressional hearings of the spring of 1946 was instrumental in defeating initial attempts to merge or "unify" the U.S. Armed Forces. Although his term as Commandant ended on 31 December 1947, General Vandegrift would live to see passage of Public Law 416, which preserved the Corps and its historic mission. His official retirement date of 1 April 1949 ended just over 40 years of service.

General Vandegrift outlived both his wife Mildred and their only son, Colonel Alexander A. Vandegrift, Jr., who fought in World War II and Korea. He spent most his final years in Delray, Florida. He died on 8 May 1973. — *Robert V. Aquilina*

the Battles of Coral Sea and Midway had badly damaged the Japanese fleet's offensive capabilities and crippled its carrier forces, enemy naval aircraft could fight as well ashore as afloat and enemy warships were still numerous and lethal. American losses at Pearl Harbor, Coral Sea, and Midway were considerable, and Navy admirals were well aware that the ships they commanded were in short supply. The day was coming when America's shipyards and factories would fill the seas with warships of all types, but that day had not arrived in 1942. Calculated risk was the name of the game where the Navy was concerned, and if the risk seemed too great, the Watchtower landing force might be a casualty. As it happened, the Navy never ceased to risk its ships in the waters of the Solomons, but the naval lifeline to the troops ashore stretched mighty thin at times.

Tactical command of the invasion

force approaching Guadalcanal in early August was vested in Vice Admiral Frank J. Fletcher as Expeditionary Force Commander (Task Force 61). His force consisted of the amphibious shipping carrying the 1st Marine Division, under Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner, and the Air Support Force led by Rear Admiral Leigh Noyes. Admiral Ghormley contributed land-based air forces commanded by Rear Admiral John S. McCain. Fletcher's support force consisted of three fleet carriers, the *Saratoga* (CV 3), *Enterprise* (CV 6), and *Wasp* (CV 7); the battleship *North Carolina* (BB 55), 6 cruisers, 16 destroyers, and 3 oilers. Admiral Turner's covering force included five cruisers and nine destroyers.

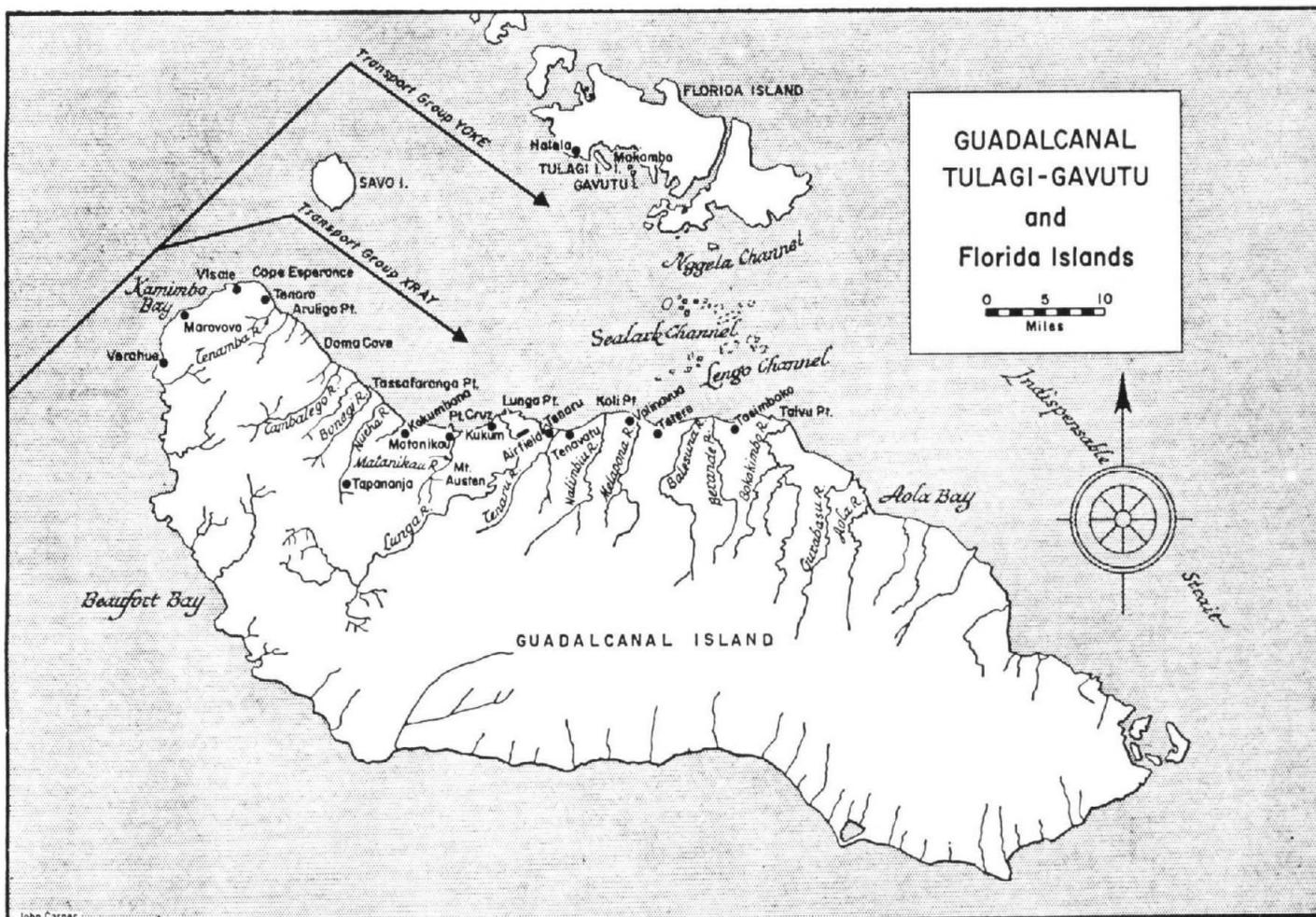
The Landing and August Battles

On board the transports approaching the Solomons, the Marines were looking for a tough fight. They knew little about the targets, even less

about their opponents. Those maps that were available were poor, constructions based upon outdated hydrographic charts and information provided by former island residents. While maps based on aerial photographs had been prepared they were misplaced by the Navy in Auckland, New Zealand, and never got to the Marines at Wellington.

On 17 July, a couple of division staff officers, Lieutenant Colonel Merrill B. Twining and Major William McKean, had been able to join the crew of a B-17 flying from Port Moresby on a reconnaissance mission over Guadalcanal. They reported what they had seen, and their analysis, coupled with aerial photographs, indicated no extensive defenses along the beaches of Guadalcanal's north shore.

This news was indeed welcome. The division intelligence officer (G-2), Lieutenant Colonel Frank B. Goettge, had concluded that about 8,400



First Marine Utility Uniform Issued in World War II

The United States Marine Corps entered World War II wearing essentially the same summer field uniform that it had worn during the "Banana Wars." The Marines defending America's Pacific outposts on Guam, Wake Island, and in the Philippines in the late months of 1941 wore a summer field uniform consisting of a khaki cotton shirt and trousers, leggings, and a M1917A1 steel helmet. Plans to change this uniform had been underway for at least one year prior to the opening of hostilities.

As had the Army, the Marine Corps had used a loose-fitting blue denim fatigue uniform for work details and some field exercises since the 1920s. This fatigue uniform was either a one-piece coverall or a two-piece bib overall and jacket, both with "USMC" metal buttons. In June 1940, it was replaced by a green cotton coverall. This uniform and the summer field uniform were replaced by what would become known as the utility uniform. Approved for general issue on the Marine Corps' 166th birthday, 10 November 1941, this new uniform was made of sage-green (although "olive drab" was called for in the specifications) herringbone twill cotton, then a popular material for civilian work clothing. The two-piece uniform consisted of a coat (often referred to as a "jacket" by Marines) and trousers. In 1943, a cap made of the same material would be issued.

The loose-fitting coat was closed down the front by four two-piece rivetted bronze-finished steel buttons, each bearing the words "U.S. MARINE CORPS" in relief. The cuffs were closed by similar buttons. Two large patch pockets were sewn on the front skirts of the jacket and a single patch pocket was stitched to the left breast. This pocket had the Marine Corps eagle, globe, and anchor insignia and the letters "USMC" stencilled on it in black ink. The trousers, worn with and without the khaki canvas leggings, had two slashed front pockets and two rear patch pockets.



The new uniform was issued to the flood of new recruits crowding the recruit depots in the early months of 1942 and was first worn in combat during the landing on Guadalcanal in August 1942. This uniform was subsequently worn by Marines of all arms from the Solomons Campaign to the end of the war. Originally, the buttons on the coat and the trousers were all copper-plated, but an emergency alternate specification was approved on 15 August 1942, eight days after the landing on Guadalcanal, which allowed for a variety of finishes on the buttons. Towards the end of the war, a new "modified" utility uniform which had been developed after Tarawa was also issued, in addition to a variety of camouflage uniforms. All of these utility uniforms, along with Army-designed M1 helmets and Marine Corps-designed cord and rubber-soled rough-side-out leather "boondocker" shoes, would be worn throughout the war in the Pacific, during the postwar years, and into the Korean War. — *Kenneth L. Smith-Christmas*

Japanese occupied Guadalcanal and Tulagi. Admiral Turner's staff figured that the Japanese amounted to 7,125 men. Admiral Ghormley's intelligence officer pegged the enemy strength at 3,100—closest to the 3,457 actual total of Japanese troops; 2,571 of these were stationed on Guadalcanal and were mostly laborers working on the airfield.

To oppose the Japanese, the Marines had an overwhelming superiority of men. At the time, the tables of organization for a Marine Corps division indicated a total of 19,514 officers and enlisted men, including naval medical and engineer (Seabee)

units. Infantry regiments numbered 3,168 and consisted of a headquarters company, a weapons company, and three battalions. Each infantry battalion (933 Marines) was organized into a headquarters company (89), a weapons company (273), and three rifle companies (183). The artillery regiment had 2,581 officers and men organized into three 75mm pack howitzer battalions and one 105mm howitzer battalion. A light tank battalion, a special weapons battalion of antiaircraft and antitank guns, and a parachute battalion added combat power. An engineer regiment (2,452 Marines) with battalions

of engineers, pioneers, and Seabees, provided a hefty combat and service element. The total was rounded out by division headquarters battalion's headquarters, signal, and military police companies and the division's service troops—service, motor transport, amphibian tractor, and medical battalions. For Watchtower, the 1st Raider Battalion and the 3d Defense Battalion had been added to Vandegrift's command to provide more infantrymen and much needed coast defense and antiaircraft guns and crews.

Unfortunately, the division's heaviest ordnance had been left behind in



Naval Historical Photographic Collection 880-CF-117-4-63

Enroute to Guadalcanal, RAdm Richmond Kelly Turner, commander of the Amphibious Force, and MajGen Alexander A. Vandegrift, 1st Marine Division commander, review the Operation Watchtower plan for landings in the Solomon Islands.

New Zealand. Limited ship space and time meant that the division's big guns, a 155mm howitzer battalion, and all the motor transport battalion's two-and-a-half-ton trucks were not loaded. Colonel Pedro A. del Valle, commanding the 11th Marines, was unhappy at the loss of his heavy howitzers and equally distressed that essential sound and flash-ranging equipment necessary for effective counterbattery fire was left behind. Also failing to make the cut in the battle for shipping space, were all spare clothing, bedding rolls, and supplies necessary to support the reinforced division beyond 60 days of combat. Ten days supply of ammunition for each of the division's weapons remained in New Zealand.

In the opinion of the 1st Division's historian and a veteran of the landing, the men on the approaching transports "thought they'd have a bad time getting ashore." They were confident, certainly, and sure that they could not be defeated, but most of the men were entering combat for the first time. There were combat veteran officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) throughout the di-

vision, but the majority of the men were going into their initial battle. The commanding officer of the 1st Marines, Colonel Clifton B. Cates, estimated that 90 percent of his men had enlisted after Pearl Harbor. The fabled 1st Marine Division of later World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, and Persian Gulf War fame, the most highly decorated division in the U.S. Armed Forces, had not yet established its reputation.

The convoy of ships, with its out-riding protective screen of carriers, reached Koro in the Fiji Islands on 26 July. Practice landings did little more than exercise the transports' landing craft, since reefs precluded an actual beach landing. The rendezvous at Koro did give the senior commanders a chance to have a face-to-face meeting. Fletcher, McCain, Turner, and Vandegrift got together with Ghormley's chief of staff, Rear Admiral Daniel J. Callaghan, who notified the conferees that ComSoPac had ordered the 7th Marines on Samoa to be prepared to embark on four days notice as a reinforcement for Watchtower. To this decidedly good news, Admiral

Fletcher added some bad news. In view of the threat from enemy land-based air, he could not "keep the carriers in the area for more than 48 hours after the landing." Vandegrift protested that he needed at least four days to get the division's gear ashore, and Fletcher reluctantly agreed to keep his carriers at risk another day.

On the 28th the ships sailed from the Fijis, proceeding as if they were headed for Australia. At noon on 5 August, the convoy and its escorts turned north for the Solomons. Undetected by the Japanese, the assault force reached its target during the night of 6-7 August and split into two landing groups, Transport Division X-Ray, 15 transports heading for the north shore of Guadalcanal east of Lunga Point, and Transport Division Yoke, eight transports headed for Tulagi, Gavutu, Tanambogo, and the nearby Florida Island, which loomed over the smaller islands.

Vandegrift's plans for the landings would put two of his infantry regiments (Colonel LeRoy P. Hunt's 5th Marines and Colonel Cates' 1st Marines) ashore on both sides of the Lunga River prepared to attack inland to seize the airfield. The 11th Marines, the 3d Defense Battalion, and most of the division's supporting units would also land near the Lunga, prepared to exploit the beachhead. Across the 20 miles of Sealark Channel, the division's assistant commander, Brigadier General William H. Rupertus, led the assault forces slated to take Tulagi, Gavutu, and Tanambogo: the 1st Raider Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Merritt A. Edson); the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines (Lieutenant Colonel Harold E. Rosecrans); and the 1st Parachute Battalion (Major Robert H. Williams). Company A of the 2d Marines would reconnoiter the nearby shores of Florida Island and the rest of Colonel John A. Arthur's regiment would stand by in reserve to land where needed.

As the ships slipped through the

channels on either side of rugged Savo Island, which split Sealark near its western end, heavy clouds and dense rain blanketed the task force. Later the moon came out and silhouetted the islands. On board his command ship, Vandegrift wrote to his wife: "Tomorrow morning at dawn we land in our first major offensive of the war. Our plans have been made and God grant that our judgement has been sound . . . whatever happens you'll know I did my best. Let us hope that best will be good enough."

At 0641 on 7 August, Turner signalled his ships to "land the landing force." Just 28 minutes before, the heavy cruiser *Quincy* (CA 39) had begun shelling the landing beaches at Guadalcanal. The sun came up that fateful Friday at 0650, and the first landing craft carrying assault troops of the 5th Marines touched down at

0909 on Red Beach. To the men's surprise (and relief), no Japanese appeared to resist the landing. Hunt immediately moved his assault troops off the beach and into the surrounding jungle, waded the steep-banked Ilu River, and headed for the enemy airfield. The following 1st Marines were able to cross the Ilu on a bridge the engineers had hastily thrown up with an amphibian tractor bracing its middle. The silence was eerie and the absence of opposition was worrisome to the riflemen. The Japanese troops, most of whom were Korean laborers, had fled to the west, spooked by a week's B-17 bombardment, the pre-assault naval gunfire, and the sight of the ships offshore. The situation was not the same across Sealark. The Marines on Guadalcanal could hear faint rumbles of a firefight across the waters.

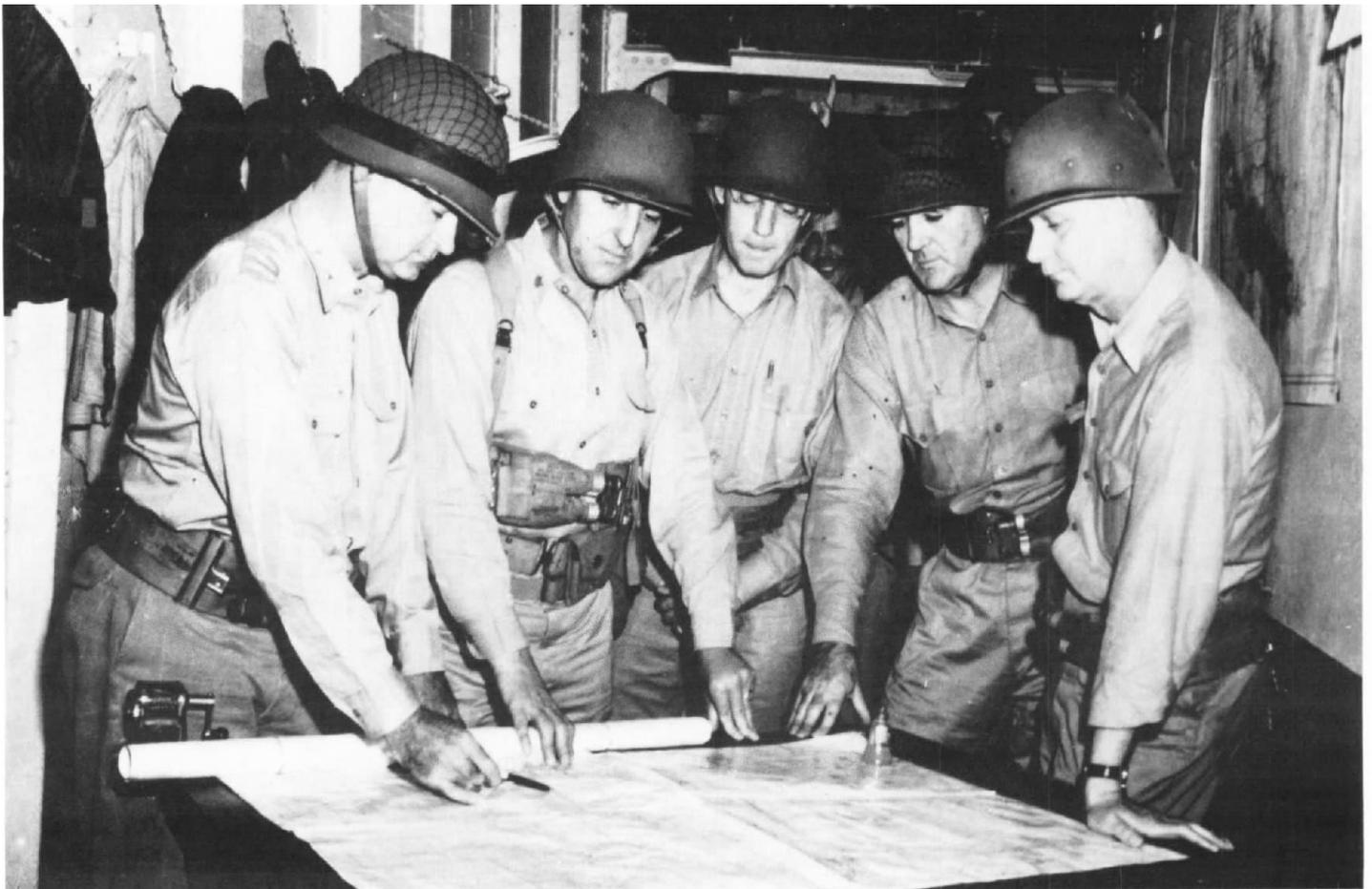
The Japanese on Tulagi were spe-

cial naval landing force sailors and they had no intention of giving up what they held without a vicious, no-surrender battle. Edson's men landed first, following by Rosecrans' battalion, hitting Tulagi's south coast and moving inland towards the ridge which ran lengthwise through the island. The battalions encountered pockets of resistance in the undergrowth of the island's thick vegetation and maneuvered to outflank and overrun the opposition. The advance of the Marines was steady but casualties were frequent. By nightfall, Edson had reached the former British residency overlooking Tulagi's harbor and dug in for the night across a hill that overlooked the Japanese final position, a ravine on the island's southern tip. The 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, had driven through to the northern shore, cleaning its sector of enemy; Rosecrans moved into posi-

MajGen Alexander A. Vandegrift, CG, 1st Marine Division, confers with his staff on board the transport USS McCawley (APA-4) enroute to Guadalcanal. From left: Gen Vandegrift;

LtCol Gerald C. Thomas, operations officer; LtCol Randolph McC. Pate, logistics officer; LtCol Frank B. Goettge, intelligence officer; and Col William Capers James, chief of staff.

National Archives Photo 80-G-17065





National Archives Photo 80-CF-112-5-3)

First Division Marines storm ashore across Guadalcanal's beaches on D-Day, 7 August 1942, from the attack transport Barnett (AP-11) and attack cargo ship Fomalhaut (AK-22). The invaders were surprised at the lack of enemy opposition.

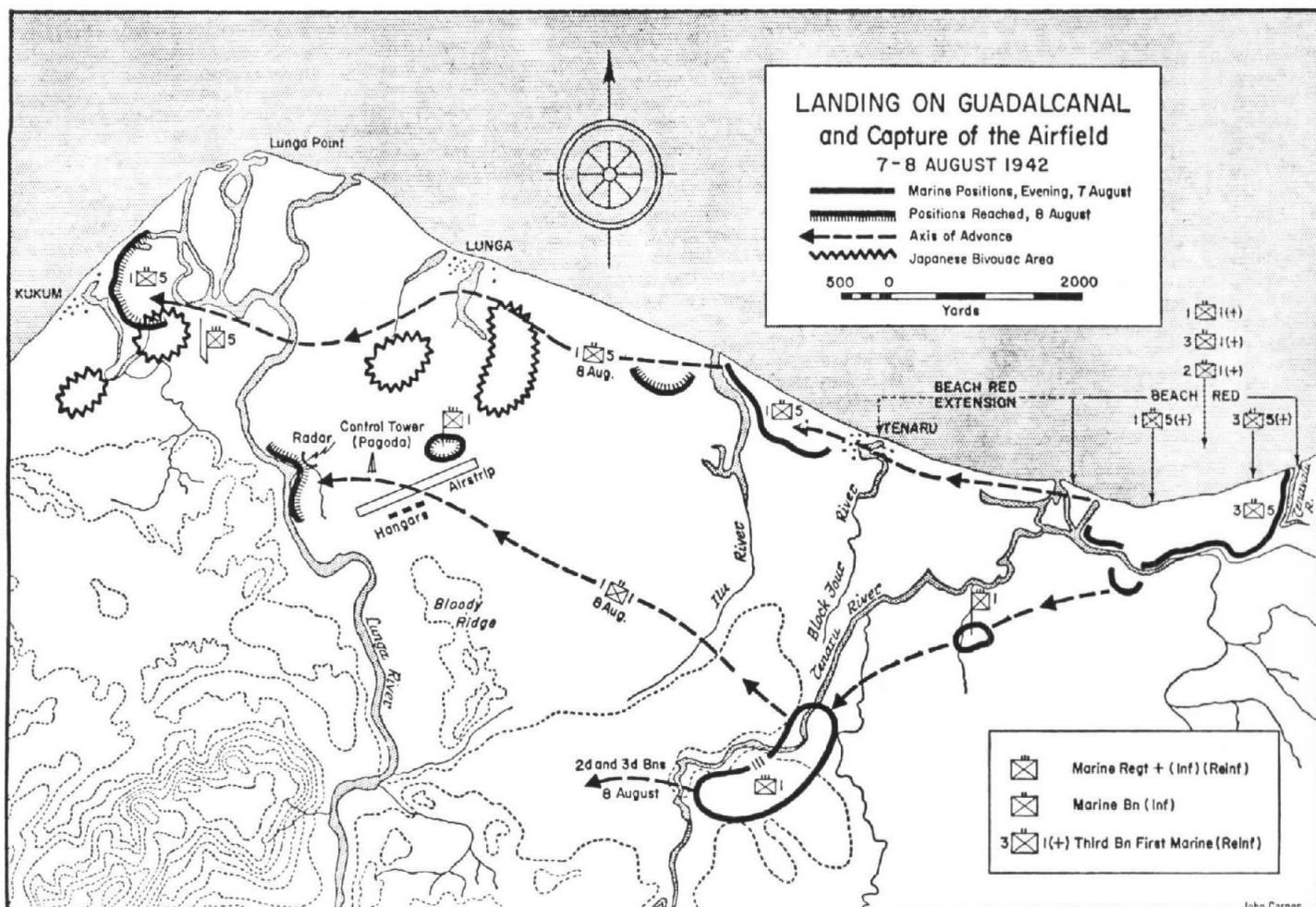




Photo courtesy of Col James A. Donovan, Jr.

When the 5th Marines entered the jungle from the beachhead, and had to cross the steep banks of the Ilu River, 1st Marine

Division engineers hastily constructed a bridge supported by amphibian tractors. Though heavily used, the bridge held up.

Photographed immediately after a prelanding strike by USS Enterprise aircraft flown by Navy pilots, Tanambogo and

Gavutu Islands lie smoking and in ruins in the morning sun. Gavutu is at the left across the causeway from Tanambogo.

National Archives Photo 80-G-11034





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 52231

After the battle, almost all palm trees on Gavutu were shorn of their foliage. Despite naval gunfire and close air support hitting the enemy emplacements, Japanese opposition from caves proved to be serious obstacles for attacking Marines.

tion to back up the raiders. By the end of its first day ashore, 2d Battalion had lost 56 men killed and wounded; 1st Raider Battalion casualties were 99 Marines.

Throughout the night, the Japanese swarmed from hillside caves in four separate attacks, trying to penetrate the raider lines. They were unsuccessful and most died in the attempts. At dawn, the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, landed to reinforce the attackers and by the afternoon of 8 August, the mop-up was completed and the battle for Tulagi was over.

The fight for tiny Gavutu and Tanambogo, both little more than small hills rising out of the sea, connected by a hundred-yard causeway, was every bit as intense as that on Tulagi. The area of combat was much

smaller and the opportunities for fire support from offshore ships and carrier planes was severely limited once the Marines had landed. After naval gunfire from the light cruiser *San Juan* (CL 54) and two destroyers, and a strike by F4F Wildcats flying from the *Wasp*, the 1st Parachute Battalion landed near noon in three waves, 395 men in all, on Gavutu. The Japanese, secure in cave positions, opened fire on the second and third waves, pinning down the first Marines ashore on the beach. Major Williams took a bullet in the lungs and was evacuated; 32 Marines were killed in the withering enemy fire. This time, 2d Marines reinforcements were really needed; the 1st Battalion's Company B landed on Gavutu and attempted to take Tanambogo; the

attackers were driven to ground and had to pull back to Gavutu.

After a rough night of close-in fighting with the defenders of both islands, the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, reinforced the men already ashore and mopped up on each island. The toll of Marines dead on the three islands was 144; the wounded numbered 194. The few Japanese who survived the battles fled to Florida Island, which had been scouted by the 2d Marines on D-Day and found clear of the enemy.

The Marines' landings and the concentration of shipping in Guadalcanal waters acted as a magnet to the Japanese at Rabaul. At Admiral Ghormley's headquarters, Tulagi's radio was heard on D-Day "frantically calling for [the] dispatch of surface