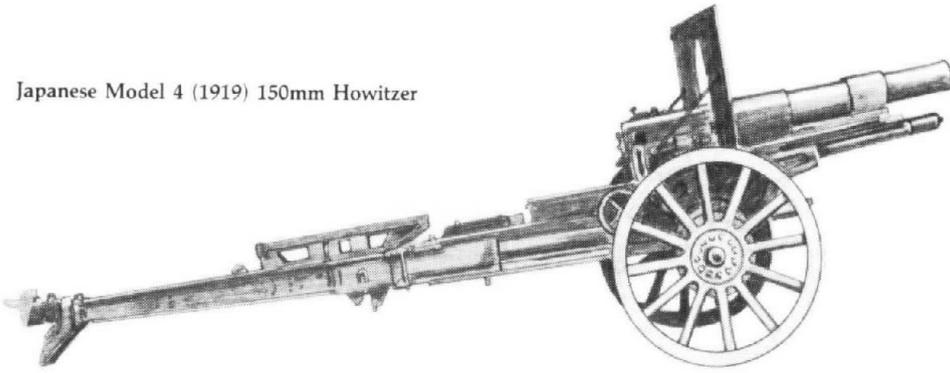


Japanese Model 4 (1919) 150mm Howitzer



officer, the new division chief of staff, and had a short time earlier given Edson the 5th Marines. Many of the older, senior officers, picked for the most part in the order they had joined the division, were now sent back to the States. There they would provide a new level of combat expertise in the training and organization of the many Marine units that were forming. The air wing was not quite ready yet to return its experienced pilots to rear areas, but the

vital combat knowledge they possessed was much needed in the training pipeline. They, too – the survivors – would soon be rotating back to rear areas, some for a much-needed break before returning to combat and others to lead new squadrons into the fray.

October and the Japanese Offensive

On 30 September, unexpectedly, a B-17 carrying Admiral Nimitz made

an emergency landing at Henderson Field. The CinCPac made the most of the opportunity. He visited the front lines, saw Edson's Ridge, and talked to a number of Marines. He reaffirmed to Vandegrift that his overriding mission was to hold the airfield. He promised all the support he could give and after awarding Navy Crosses to a number of Marines, including Vandegrift, left the next day visibly encouraged by what he had seen.

The next Marine move involved a punishing return to the Matanikau, this time with five infantry battalions and the Whaling group. Whaling commanded his men and the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, in a thrust inland to clear the way for two battalions of the 7th Marines, the 1st and 2d, to drive through and hook toward the coast, hitting the Japanese hold-

Visiting Guadalcanal on 30 September, Adm Chester W. Nimitz, CinCPac, took time to decorate LtCol Evans C. Carlson, CO, 2d Raider Battalion; MajGen Vandegrift, in rear;

and, from left, BGen William H. Rupertus, ADC; Col Merritt A. Edson, CO, 5th Marines; LtCol Edwin A. Pollock, CO, 2d Battalion, 1st Marines; Maj John L. Smith, CO, VMF-223.

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 50883





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 61534

A M1918 155mm howitzer is fired by artillery crewmen of the 11th Marines in support of ground forces attacking the enemy. Despite the lack of sound-flash equipment to locate hostile artillery, Col del Valle's guns were able to quiet enemy fire.

ing along the Matanikau. Edson's 2d and 3d Battalions would attack across the river mouth. All the division's artillery was positioned to fire in support.

On the 7th, Whaling's force moved into the jungle about 2,000 yards upstream on the Matanikau, encountering Japanese troops that harassed his forward elements, but not in enough strength to stop the advance. He bypassed the enemy positions and dug in for the night. Behind him the 7th Marines followed suit, prepared to move through his lines, cross the river, and attack north toward the Japanese on the 8th. The 5th Marines' assault battalions moving toward the Matanikau on the 7th ran into Japanese in strength about 400 yards from the river. Unwittingly, the Marines had run into strong advance elements of the Japanese 4th Regiment, which had crossed the Matanikau in order to establish a base from which artillery could fire into the Marine perimeter. The fighting was intense and the 3d Battalion,

5th, could make little progress, although the 2d Battalion encountered slight opposition and won through to the river bank. It then turned north to hit the inland flank of the enemy troops. Vandegrift sent forward a company of raiders to reinforce the 5th, and it took a holding position on the right, towards the beach.

Rain poured down on the 8th, all day long, virtually stopping all forward progress, but not halting the close-in fighting around the Japanese pocket. The enemy troops finally retreated, attempting to escape the gradually encircling Marines. They smashed into the raider's position nearest to their escape route. A wild hand-to-hand battle ensued and a few Japanese broke through to reach and cross the river. The rest died fighting.

On the 9th, Whaling's force, flanked by the 2d and then the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, crossed the Matanikau and then turned and followed ridge lines to the sea. Puller's

battalion discovered a number of Japanese in a ravine to his front, fired his mortars, and called in artillery, while his men used rifles and machine guns to pick off enemy troops trying to escape what proved to be a death trap. When his mortar ammunition began to run short, Puller moved on toward the beach, joining the rest of Whaling's force, which had encountered no opposition. The Marines then recrossed the Matanikau, joined Edson's troops, and marched back to the perimeter, leaving a strong combat outpost at the Matanikau, now cleared of Japanese. General Vandegrift, apprised by intelligence sources that a major Japanese attack was coming from the west, decided to consolidate his positions, leaving no sizable Marine force more than a day's march from the perimeter. The Marine advance on 7-9 October had thwarted Japanese plans for an early attack and cost the enemy more than 700 men. The Marines paid a price too, 65 dead and 125 wounded.



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 50963

More than 200 Japanese soldiers alone were killed in a frenzied attack in the sandspit where the Tenaru River flows into Ironbottom Sound (Sealark Channel).

There was another price that Guadalcanal was exacting from both sides. Disease was beginning to fell men in numbers that equalled the battle casualties. In addition to gastroenteritis, which greatly weakened those who suffered its crippling stomach cramps, there were all kinds of tropical fungus infections, collectively known as "jungle rot," which produced uncomfortable rashes on men's feet, armpits, elbows, and crotches, a product of seldom being dry. If it didn't rain, sweat provided the moisture. On top of this came hundreds of cases of malaria. Atabrine tablets provided some relief, besides turning the skin yellow, but they were not effective enough

to stop the spread of the mosquito-borne infection. Malaria attacks were so pervasive that nothing short of complete prostration, becoming a litter case, could earn a respite in the hospital. Naturally enough, all these diseases affected most strongly the men who had been on the island the longest, particularly those who experienced the early days of short rations. Vandegrift had already argued with his superiors that when his men eventually got relieved they should not be sent to another tropical island hospital, but rather to a place where there was a real change of atmosphere and climate. He asked that Auckland or Wellington, New Zealand, be considered.

For the present, however, there was to be no relief for men starting their third month on Guadalcanal. The Japanese would not abandon their plan to seize back Guadalcanal and gave painful evidence of their intentions near mid-October. General Hyakutake himself landed on Guadalcanal on 7 October to oversee the coming offensive. Elements of Major General Masao Maruyama's *Sendai Division*, already a factor in the fighting near the Matanikau, landed with him. More men were coming. And the Japanese, taking advantage of the fact that Cactus flyers had no night attack capability, planned to ensure that no planes at all would rise from Guadalcanal to meet them.

On 11 October, U.S. Navy surface ships took a hand in stopping the "Tokyo Express," the nickname that had been given to Admiral Tanaka's almost nightly reinforcement forays. A covering force of five cruisers and five destroyers, located near Rennell Island and commanded by Rear Admiral Norman Scott, got word that many ships were approaching Guadalcanal. Scott's mission was to protect an approaching reinforcement convoy and he steamed toward Cactus at flank speed eager to engage. He encountered more ships than he had expected, a bombard-

By October, malaria began to claim as many casualties as Japanese artillery, bombs, and naval gunfire. Shown here are the patients in the division hospital who are ministered to by physicians and corpsmen working under minimal conditions.



ment group of three heavy cruisers and two destroyers, as well as six destroyers escorting two seaplane carrier transports. Scott maneuvered between Savo Island and Cape Esperance, Guadalcanal's western tip, and ran head-on into the bombardment group.

Alerted by a scout plane from his flagship, *San Francisco* (CA 38), spottings later confirmed by radar contacts on the *Helena* (CL 50), the Americans opened fire before the Japanese, who had no radar, knew of their presence. One enemy destroyer sank immediately, two cruisers were badly damaged, one, the *Furutaka*, later foundered, and the remaining cruiser and destroyer turned away from the inferno of American fire. Scott's own force was punished by enemy return fire which damaged two cruisers and two destroyers, one of which, the *Duncan* (DD 485), sank the following day. On the 12th too, Cactus flyers spotted two of the reinforcement destroyer escorts retiring and sank them both. The Battle of Cape Esperance could be counted an American naval victory, one sorely needed at the time.

Its way cleared by Scott's encounter with the Japanese, a really welcome reinforcement convoy arrived at the island on 13 October when the 164th Infantry of the Americal Division arrived. The soldiers, members of a National Guard outfit originally from North Dakota, were equipped with Garand M-1 rifles, a weapon of which most overseas Marines had only heard. In rate of fire, the semiautomatic Garand could easily outperform the single-shot, bolt-action Springfields the Marines carried and the bolt-action rifles the Japanese carried, but most 1st Division Marines of necessity touted the Springfield as inherently more accurate and a better weapon. This did not prevent some light-fingered Marines from acquiring Garands when the occasion presented itself. And

such an occasion did present itself while the soldiers were landing and their supplies were being moved to dumps. Several flights of Japanese bombers arrived over Henderson Field, relatively unscathed by the defending fighters, and began dropping their bombs. The soldiers headed for cover and alert Marines, inured to the bombing, used the interval to "liberate" interesting cartons and crates. The news that the Army had arrived spread across the island like wildfire, for it meant to all Marines that they eventually would be relieved. There was hope.

As if the bombing was not enough grief, the Japanese opened on the airfield with their 150mm howitzers also. Altogether the men of the 164th got a rude welcome to Guadalcanal. And on that night, 13-14 October, they shared a terrifying experience with the Marines that no one would ever forget.

Determined to knock out Henderson Field and protect their soldiers landing in strength west of Koli Point, the enemy commanders sent the battleships *Kongo* and *Haruna* into Ironbottom Sound to bombard the Marine positions. The usual

Maj Harold W. Bauer, VMF-212 commander, here a captain, was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor after being lost during a scramble with Japanese aircraft over Guadalcanal.

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 410772



Japanese flare planes heralded the bombardment, 80 minutes of sheer hell which had 14-inch shells exploding with such effect that the accompanying cruiser fire was scarcely noticed. No one was safe; no place was safe. No dugout had been built to withstand 14-inch shells. One witness, a seasoned veteran demonstrably cool under enemy fire, opined that there was nothing worse in war than helplessly being on the receiving end of naval gunfire. He remembered "huge trees being cut apart and flying about like toothpicks." And he was on the frontlines, not the prime enemy target. The airfield and its environs were a shambles when dawn broke. The naval shelling, together with the night's artillery fire and bombing, had left Cactus Air Force's commander, General Geiger, with a handful of aircraft still flyable, an airfield thickly cratered by shells and bombs, and a death toll of 41. Still, from Henderson or Fighter One, which now became the main airstrip, the Cactus Flyers had to attack, for the morning also revealed a shore and sea full of inviting targets.

The expected enemy convoy had gotten through and Japanese transports and landing craft were everywhere near Tassafaronga. At sea the escorting cruisers and destroyers provided a formidable anti-aircraft screen. Every American plane that could fly did. General Geiger's aide, Major Jack Cram, took off in the general's PBX, hastily rigged to carry two torpedoes, and put one of them into the side of an enemy transport as it was unloading. He landed the lumbering flying boat with enemy aircraft hot on his tail. A new squadron of F4Fs, VMF-212, commanded by Major Harold W. Bauer, flew in during the day's action, landed, refueled, and took off to join the fighting. An hour later, Bauer landed again, this time with four enemy bombers to his credit. Bauer, who added to his score of Japanese aircraft kills in later air battles, was subsequently lost in action. He was award-



Department of Defense (USMC) Photos 304183 and 302980

Two other Marine aviators awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism and intrepidity in the air were Capt Jefferson J. DeBlanc, left, and Maj Robert E. Galer, right.

A Marine examines a Japanese 70mm howitzer captured at the Battle of the Tenaru. Gen Maruyama's troops "had to lug, push, and drag these supporting arms over the miles of broken

ground, across two major streams and through heavy underbrush" to get them to the target area — but they never did. The trail behind them was littered with the supplies they carried.

Photo courtesy of Col James A. Donovan, Jr.



started the trek along the Maruyama Trail which had been partially hacked out of the jungle well inland from the Marine positions. Maruyama, who had approved the trail's name to indicate his confidence, intended to support this attack with heavy mortars and infantry guns (70mm pack howitzers). The men who had to lug, push, and drag these supporting arms over the miles of broken ground, across two major streams, the Mantanikau and the Lunga, and through heavy underbrush, might have had another name for their commander's path to supposed glory.

General Vandegrift knew the Japanese were going to attack. Patrols and reconnaissance flights had clearly indicated the push would be from the west, where the enemy reinforcements had landed. The American commander changed his dispositions accordingly. There were Japanese troops east of the perimeter, too, but not in any significant strength. The new infantry regiment, the 164th, reinforced by Marine special weapons units, was put into the line to hold the eastern flank along 6,600 yards, curving inland to join up with 7th Marines near Edson's Ridge. The 7th held 2,500 yards from the ridge to the Lunga. From the Lunga, the 1st Marines had a 3,500-yard sector of jungle running west to the point where the line curved back to the beach again in the 5th Marines' sector. Since the attack was expected from the west, the 3d Battalions of each of the 1st and 7th Marines held a strong outpost position forward of the 5th Marines' lines along the east bank of the Matanikau.

In the lull before the attack, if a time of patrol clashes, Japanese cruiser-destroyer bombardments, bomber attacks, and artillery harassment could properly be called a lull, Vandegrift was visited by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant General Thomas Holcomb. The Commandant flew in on



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 13628

During a lull in the fight, a Marine machine gunner takes a break for coffee, with his sub-machine gun on his knee and his .30-caliber light machine gun in position.

21 October to see for himself how his Marines were faring. It also proved to be an occasion for both senior Marines to meet the new ComSoPac, Vice Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey. Admiral Nimitz had announced Halsey's appointment on 18 October and the news was welcome in Navy and Marine ranks throughout the Pacific. Halsey's deserved reputation for elan and aggressiveness promised renewed attention to the situation on Guadalcanal. On the 22d, Holcomb and Vandegrift flew to Noumea to meet with Halsey and to receive and give a round of briefings on the Allied situation. After Vandegrift had described his position, he argued strongly against the diversion of reinforcements intended for Cactus to any other South Pacific venue, a sometime factor of Admiral Turner's strategic vision. He insisted that he needed all of the Americal Division and another 2d Marine Division regiment to beef up his forces, and that

more than half of his veterans were worn out by three months' fighting and the ravages of jungle-incurred diseases. Admiral Halsey told the Marine general: "You go back there, Vandegrift. I promise to get you everything I have."

When Vandegrift returned to Guadalcanal, Holcomb moved on to Pearl Harbor to meet with Nimitz, carrying Halsey's recommendation that, in the future, landing force commanders once established ashore, would have equal command status with Navy amphibious force commanders. At Pearl, Nimitz approved Halsey's recommendation—which Holcomb had drafted—and in Washington so did King. In effect, then, the command status of all future Pacific amphibious operations was determined by the events of Guadalcanal. Another piece of news Vandegrift received from Holcomb also boded well for the future of the Marine Corps. Holcomb indicated



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 513191

On the occasion of the visit of the Commandant, MajGen Thomas Holcomb, some of Operation Watchtower's major staff and command officers took time out from the fighting to pose with him. From left, front row: Col William J. Whaling (Whaling Group); Col Amor LeRoy Sims (CO, 7th Marines); Col Gerald C. Thomas (Division Chief of Staff); Col Pedro A. del Valle (CO, 11th Marines); Col William E. Riley (member of Gen Holcomb's party); MajGen Roy S. Geiger

(CG, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing); Gen Holcomb; MajGen Ralph J. Mitchell (Director of Aviation, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps); BGen Bennet Puryear, Jr. (Assistant Quartermaster of the Marine Corps); Col Clifton B. Cates (CO, 1st Marines). Second row (between Whaling and Sims): LtCol Raymond P. Coffman (Division Supply Officer); Maj James C. Murray (Division Personnel Officer); (behind Gen Holcomb) LtCol Merrill B. Twining (Division Operations Officer).

that if President Roosevelt did not reappoint him, unlikely in view of his age and two terms in office, he would recommend that Vandegrift be appointed the next Commandant.

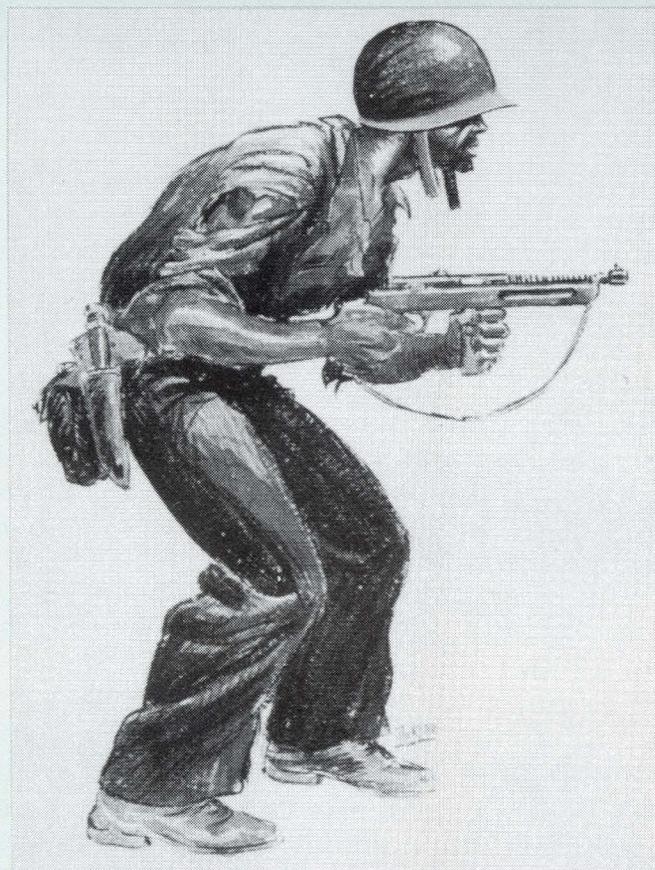
This news of future events had little chance of diverting Vandegrift's attention when he flew back to Guadalcanal, for the Japanese were in the midst of their planned offensive. On the 20th, an enemy patrol accompanied by two tanks tried to find a way through the line held by Lieutenant Colonel William N. McKelvy, Jr.'s 3d Battalion, 1st Marines. A sharpshooting 37mm gun crew knocked out one tank and the enemy force fell back, meanwhile shelling the Marine positions with ar-

tillery. Near sunset the next day, the Japanese tried again, this time with more artillery fire and more tanks in the fore, but again a 37mm gun knocked out a lead tank and discouraged the attack. On 22 October, the enemy paused, waiting for Maruyama's force to get into position inland. On the 23d, planned as the day of the *Sendai's* main attack, the Japanese dropped a heavy rain of artillery and mortar fire on McKelvy's positions near the Matanikau River mouth. Near dusk, nine 18-ton medium tanks clanked out of the trees onto the river's sandbar and just as quickly eight of them were riddled by the 37s. One tank got across the river, a Marine blasted a track off

with a grenade, and a 75mm half-track finished it off in the ocean's surf. The following enemy infantry was smothered by Marine artillery fire as all battalions of the augmented 11th Marines rained shells on the massed attackers. Hundreds of Japanese were casualties and three more tanks were destroyed. Later, an inland thrust further upstream was easily beaten back. The abortive coastal attack did almost nothing to aid Maruyama's inland offensive, but did cause Vandegrift to shift one battalion, the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, out of the lines to the east and into the 4,000-yard gap between the Matanikau position and the perimeter. This move proved providential since

Reising Gun

The Reising gun was designed and developed by noted gun inventor Eugene Reising. It was patented in 1940 and manufactured by the old gun-making firm of Harrington and Richardson of Worcester, Massachusetts. It is said that it was made on existing machine tools, some dating back to the Civil War, and of ordinary steel rather than ordnance steel. With new machine tools and ordnance steel scarce and needed for more demanding weapons, the Reising met an immediate requirement for many sub-machine guns at a time when production of Thompson M1928 and M1 sub-machine guns hadn't caught up with demand and the stamped-out M3 "grease gun" had not yet been invented. It was a wartime expedient.



Captain Donald L. Dickson, USMCR

The Reising was made in two different models, the 50 and the 55. The Model 50 had a full wooden stock and a Cutts compensator attached to the muzzle. The compensator, a device which reduced the upward muzzle climb from recoil, was invented by Richard M. Cutts, Sr., and his son, Richard M. Cutts, Jr., both of whom became Marine brigadier generals. The other version was dubbed the Model 55. It had a folding metal-wire shoulder stock which swivelled on the wooden pistol grip. It also had a shorter barrel and no compensator. It was intended for use by parachutists, tank crews, and others needing a compact weapon. Both versions of the Reising fired .45-caliber ammunition, the same cartridge as the Colt automatic pistol and the Thompson.

In all, there were approximately 100,000 Reising sub-machine guns produced between 1940 and 1942. Small numbers of the weapons were acquired by both Great Britain and the Soviet Union. However, most were used by the U.S. Marine Corps in the Solomon Islands campaign. The Model 55 was issued to both Marine parachute battalions and Marine raiders, seeing service first on Guadalcanal. After its dubious debut in combat it was withdrawn from frontline service in 1943 due to several flaws in design and manufacture.

The Reising's major shortcoming was its propensity for jamming. This was due to both a design problem in the magazine lips and the fact that magazines were made of a soft sheet steel. The weapon's safety mechanism didn't always work and if the butt was slammed down on the deck, the hammer would set back against the mainspring and then fly forward, firing a chambered cartridge. The design allowed the entry of dirt into the mechanism and close tolerances caused it to jam. Finally, the steel used allowed excessive rust to form in the tropical humidity of the Solomons. Nevertheless, at six pounds, the Reising was handier than the 10-pound Thompson, more accurate, pleasanter to shoot, and reliable under other than combat conditions, but one always had to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. The Model 50 was also issued to Marines for guard duty at posts and stations in the United States.—*John G. Griffiths*

one of Maruyama's planned attacks was headed right for this area.

Although patrols had encountered no Japanese east or south of the jungled perimeter up to the 24th, the Matanikau attempts had alerted everyone. When General Maruyama finally was satisfied that his men had struggled through to appropriate assault positions, after delaying his day of attack three times, he was ready

on 24 October. The Marines were waiting.

An observer from the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, spotted an enemy officer surveying Edson's Ridge on the 24th, and scout-snipers reported smoke from numerous rice fires rising from a valley about two miles south of Lieutenant Colonel Puller's positions. Six battalions of the *Sen-dai Division* were poised to attack,

and near midnight the first elements of the enemy hit and bypassed a platoon-sized outpost forward of Puller's barbed-wire entanglements. Warned by the outpost, Puller's men waited, straining to see through a dark night and a driving rain. Suddenly, the Japanese charged out of the jungle, attacking in Puller's area near the ridge and the flat ground to the east. The Marines replied with



Marine Corps Personal Papers Collection

Five Japanese tanks sit dead in the water, destroyed by Marine 37mm gunfire during the abortive attempt to force the Marine perimeter near the mouth of the Matanikau River in late October. Many Japanese soldiers lost their lives also.

everything they had, calling in artillery, firing mortars, relying heavily on crossing fields of machine gun fire to cut down the enemy infantrymen. Thankfully, the enemy's artillery, mortars, and other supporting arms were scattered back along the Maruyama Trail; they had proved too much of a burden for the infantrymen to carry forward.

A wedge was driven into the Marine lines, but eventually straightened out with repeated counterattacks. Puller soon realized his battalion was being hit by a strong Japanese force capable of repeated attacks. He called for reinforcements and the Army's 3d Battalion, 164th Infantry (Lieutenant Colonel Robert K. Hall), was ordered forward, its men sliding and slipping in the rain as they trudged a mile south along Edson's Ridge. Puller met Hall at the head of his column, and the two officers walked down the length of the Marine lines, peeling off an Army squad at a time to feed into the lines. When the Japanese attacked again as they did all night long, the soldiers and Marines fought back together. By 0330, the Army battalion was completely integrated into the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines' lines

and the enemy attacks were getting weaker and weaker. The American return fire—including flanking fire from machine guns and Weapons Company, 7th Marines' 37mm guns remaining in the positions held by 2d Battalion, 164th Infantry, on Puller's left—was just too much to take. Near dawn, Maruyama pulled his men back to regroup and prepare to attack again.

With daylight, Puller and Hall re-ordered the lines, putting the 3d Battalion, 164th, into its own positions on Puller's left, tying in with the rest of the Army regiment. The driving rains had turned Fighter One into a quagmire, effectively grounding Cactus flyers. Japanese planes used the "free ride" to bomb Marine positions. Their artillery fired incessantly and a pair of Japanese destroyers added their gunfire to the bombardment until they got too close to the shore and the 3d Defense Battalion's 5-inch guns drove them off. As the sun bore down, the runways dried and afternoon enemy attacks were met by Cactus fighters, who downed 22 Japanese planes with a loss of three of their own.

As night came on again, Maruya-

ma tried more of the same, with the same result. The Army-Marine lines held and the Japanese were cut down in droves by rifle, machine gun, mortar, 37mm, and artillery fire. To the west, an enemy battalion mounted three determined attacks against the positions held by Lieutenant Colonel Herman H. Hanneken's 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, thinly tied in with Puller's battalion on the left and the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, on the right. The enemy finally penetrated the positions held by Company F, but a counterattack led by Major Odell M. Conoley, the battalion's executive officer, drove off the Japanese. Again at daylight the American positions were secure and the enemy had retreated. They would not come back; the grand Japanese offensive of the *Sendai Division* was over.

About 3,500 enemy troops had died during the attacks. General Maruyama's proud boast that he "would exterminate the enemy around the airfield in one blow" proved an empty one. What was left of his force now straggled back over the Maruyama Trail, losing, as had the Kawaguchi force in the same situation, most of its seriously wound-

ed men. The Americans, Marines and soldiers together, probably lost 300 men killed and wounded; existing records are sketchy and incomplete. One result of the battle, however, was a warm welcome to the 164th Infantry from the 1st Marine Division. Vandegrift particularly commended Lieutenant Colonel Hall's battalion, stating the "division was proud to have serving with it another unit which had stood the test of battle." And Colonel Cates sent a message to the 164th's Colonel Bryant Moore saying that the 1st Marines "were proud to serve with a unit such as yours."

Amidst all the heroics of the two nights' fighting there were many men who were singled out for recognition and an equally large number who performed great deeds that were never recognized. Two men stood out above all others, and on succeeding nights, Sergeant John Basilone of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, and Platoon Sergeant Mitchell Paige of the

2d Battalion, both machine gun section heads, were recognized as having performed "above and beyond the call of duty" in the inspiring words of their Medal of Honor citations.

November and the Continuing Buildup

While the soldiers and Marines were battling the Japanese ashore, a patrol plane sighted a large Japanese fleet near the Santa Cruz Islands to the east of the Solomons. The enemy force was formidable, 4 carriers and 4 battleships, 8 cruisers and 28 destroyers, all poised for a victorious attack when Maruyama's capture of Henderson Field was signalled. Admiral Halsey's reaction to the inviting targets was characteristic, he signaled Rear Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, with the *Hornet* and *Enterprise* carrier groups located north of the New Hebrides: "Attack Repeat Attack."

Early on 26 October, American SBDs located the Japanese carriers at

about the same time Japanese scout planes spotted the American carriers. The Japanese *Zuiho's* flight deck was holed by the scout bombers, cancelling flight operations, but the other three enemy carriers launched strikes. The two air armadas tangled as each strove to reach the other's carriers. The *Hornet* was hit repeatedly by bombs and torpedoes; two Japanese pilots also crashed their planes on board. The damage to the ship was so extensive, the *Hornet* was abandoned and sunk. The *Enterprise*, the battleship *South Dakota*, the light cruiser *San Juan* (CL 54), and the destroyer *Smith* (DD 378) were also hit; the destroyer *Porter* (DD 356) was sunk. On the Japanese side, no ships were sunk, but three carriers and two destroyers were damaged. One hundred Japanese planes were lost; 74 U.S. planes went down. Taken together, the results of the Battle of Santa Cruz were a standoff. The Japanese naval leaders might have continued their attacks, but in-

Heavy tropical downpours at Guadalcanal all but flood out a Marine camp near Henderson Field, and the field as well.

Marines' damp clothing and bedding contributed to the heavy incidence of tormenting skin infections and fungal disorders.

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 74093

Marine engineers repair a flood-damaged Lunga River bridge washed out during a period when 8 inches of rain fell in 24 hours and the river rose 7 feet above normal.

stead, disheartened by the defeat of their ground forces on Guadalcanal, withdrew to attack another day.

The departure of the enemy naval force marked a period in which substantial reinforcements reached the island. The headquarters of the 2d Marines had finally found transport space to come up from Espiritu Santo and on 29 and 30 October, Colonel Arthur moved his regiment from Tulagi to Guadalcanal, exchanging his 1st and 2d Battalions for the well-blooded 3d, which took up the Tulagi duties. The 2d Marines' battalions at

Tulagi had performed the very necessary task of scouting and securing all the small islands of the Florida group while they had camped, frustrated, watching the battles across Sealark Channel. The men now would no longer be spectators at the big show.

On 2 November, planes from VMSB-132 and VMF-211 flew into the Cactus fields from New Caledonia. MAG-11 squadrons moved forward from New Caledonia to Espiritu Santo to be closer to the battle scene; the flight echelons now could operate forward to Guadal-

canal and with relative ease. On the ground side, two batteries of 155mm guns, one Army and one Marine, landed on 2 November, providing Vandegrift with his first artillery units capable of matching the enemy's long-range 150mm guns. On the 4th and 5th, the 8th Marines (Colonel Richard H. Jeschke) arrived from American Samoa. The full-strength regiment, reinforced by the 75mm howitzers of the 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, added another 4,000 men to the defending forces. All the fresh troops reflected a renewed emphasis at all levels of command on making sure Guadalcanal would be held. The reinforcement-replacement pipeline was being filled. In the offing as part of the Guadalcanal defending force were the rest of the Americal Division, the remainder of the 2d Marine Division, and the Army's 25th Infantry Division, then in Hawaii. More planes of every type and from Allied as well as American sources were slated to reinforce and replace the battered and battle-weary Cactus veterans.

The impetus for the heightened pace of reinforcement had been provided by President Roosevelt. Cutting through the myriad demands for American forces worldwide, he had told each of the Joint Chiefs on 24 October that Guadalcanal must be reinforced, and without delay.

On the island, the pace of operations did not slacken after the Maruyama offensive was beaten back. General Vandegrift wanted to clear the area immediately west of the Matanikau of all Japanese troops, forestalling, if he could, another buildup of attacking forces. Admiral Tanaka's Tokyo Express was still operating and despite punishing attacks by Cactus aircraft and new and deadly opponents, American motor torpedo boats, now based at Tulagi.

On 1 November, the 5th Marines, backed up by the newly arrived 2d Marines, attacked across bridges engineers had laid over the Matanikau



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 56749

2dLt Mitchell Paige, third from left, and PltSgt John Basilone, extreme right, received the Medal of Honor at a parade at Camp Balcombe, Australia, on 21 May 1943. MajGen Vandegrift, left, received his medal in a White House ceremony the previous 5 February, while Col Merritt A. Edson was decorated 31 December 1943. Note the 1st Marine Division patches on the right shoulders of each participant.

during the previous night. Inland, Colonel Whaling led his scout-snipers and the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, in a screening movement to protect the flank of the main attack. Opposition was fierce in the shore area where the 1st Battalion, 5th, drove forward toward Point Cruz, but inland the 2d Battalion and Whaling's group encountered slight opposition. By nightfall, when the Marines dug in, it was clear that the only sizable enemy force was in the Point Cruz area. In the day's bitter fighting, Corporal

Anthony Casamento, a badly wounded machine gun squad leader in Edson's 1st Battalion, had so distinguished himself that he was recommended for a Navy Cross; many years later, in August 1980, President Jimmy Carter approved the award of the Medal of Honor in its stead.

On the 2d, the attack continued with the reserve 3d Battalion moving into the fight and all three 5th Marines units moving to surround the enemy defenders. On 3 Novem-

ber, the Japanese pocket just west of the base at Point Cruz was eliminated; well over 300 enemy had been killed. Elsewhere, the attacking Marines had encountered spotty resistance and advanced slowly across difficult terrain to a point about 1,000 yards beyond the 5th Marines' action. There, just as the offensive's objectives seemed well in hand, the advance was halted. Again, the intelligence that a massive enemy reinforcement attempt was pending forced Vandegrift to pull back most of his men to safeguard the all-important airfield perimeter. This time, however, he left a regiment to outpost the ground that had been gained, Colonel Arthur's 2d Marines, reinforced by the Army's 1st Battalion, 164th Infantry.

Emphasizing the need for caution in Vandegrift's mind was the fact that the Japanese were again discovered in strength east of the perimeter. On 3 November, Lieutenant Colonel Hanneken's 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, on a reconnaissance in force towards Koli Point, could see the Japanese ships clustered near Tetera, eight miles from the perimeter. His Marines encountered strong Japanese resistance from obviously fresh

75mm Pack Howitzer – Workhorse of the Artillery

During the summer of 1930, the Marine Corps began replacing its old French 75mm guns (Model 1897) with the 75mm Pack Howitzer Model 1923-E2. This weapon was designed for use in the Army primarily as mountain artillery. Since it could be broken down and manhandled ashore in six loads from ships' boats, the pack howitzer was an important supporting weapon of the Marine Corps' landing forces in prewar landing exercises.

The 75mm pack howitzer saw extensive service with the Marine Corps throughout World War II in almost every major landing in the Pacific. Crewed by five Marines, the howitzer could hurl a 16-pound shell nearly 10,000 yards. In the D Series table of organization with which the 1st Marine Division went to war, and through the following E and F series, there were three pack howitzer battalions for each artillery regiment. —Anthony Wayne Tommell and Kenneth L. Smith-Christmas





Marine Corps Historical Photo Collection

In a White House ceremony, former Cpl Anthony Casamento, a machine gun squad leader in the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, was decorated by President Jimmy Carter on 22 August 1980, 38 years after the battle for Guadalcanal. Looking on are Casamento's wife and daughters and Gen Robert H. Barrow, Marine Commandant.

troops and he began to pull back. A regiment of the enemy's 38th Division had landed, as Hyakutake experimented with a Japanese Navy-promoted scheme of attacking the perimeter from both flanks.

As Hanneken's battalion executed a fighting withdrawal along the beach, it began to receive fire from the jungle inland, too. A rescue force was soon put together under General Rupertus: two tank companies, the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, and the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 164th. The Japanese troops, members of the 38th Division regiment and remnants of Kawaguchi's brigade, fought doggedly to hold their ground as the Marines drove forward along the coast and the soldiers attempted to outflank the enemy in the jungle. The running battle continued for days, supported by Cactus air, naval gunfire, and the newly landed 155mm guns.

The enemy commander received new orders as he was struggling to hold off the Americans. He was to break off the action, move inland, and march to rejoin the main Japanese forces west of the perimeter, a tall order to fulfill. The two-pronged attack scheme had been abandoned. The Japanese managed

the first part; on the 11th the enemy force found a gap in the 164th's line and broke through along a meandering jungle stream. Behind they left 450 dead over the course of a seven-day battle; the Marines and soldiers had lost 40 dead and 120 wounded.

Essentially, the Japanese who broke out of the encircling Americans escaped from the frying pan only to fall into the fire. Admiral Turner finally had been able to effect one of his several schemes for alternative landings and beachheads, all of which General Vandegrift vehemently opposed. At Aola Bay, 40 miles east of the main perimeter, the Navy put an airfield construction and defense force ashore on 4 November. Then, while the Japanese were still battling the Marines near Tetera, Vandegrift was able to persuade Turner to detach part of this landing force, the 2d Raider Battalion, to sweep west, to discover and destroy any enemy forces it encountered.

Lieutenant Colonel Evans F. Carlson's raider battalion already had seen action before it reached Guadalcanal. Two companies had reinforced the defenders of Midway Island when the Japanese attacked there in June. The rest of the battalion had

landed from submarines on Makin Island in the Gilberts on 17-18 August, destroying the garrison there. For his part in the fighting on Makin, Sergeant Clyde Thomason had been awarded a Medal of Honor posthumously, the first Marine enlisted man to receive his country's highest award in World War II.

In its march from Aola Bay, the 2d Raider Battalion encountered the Japanese who were attempting to retreat to the west. On 12 November, the raiders beat off attacks by two enemy companies and then relentlessly pursued the Japanese, fighting a series of small actions over the next five days before they contacted the main Japanese body. From 17 November to 4 December, when the raiders finally came down out of the jungled ridges into the perimeter, Carlson's men harried the retreating

Sgt Clyde Thomason, who was killed in action participating in the Makin Island raid with the 2d Raider Battalion, was the first enlisted Marine in World War II to be awarded the Medal of Honor.

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