

FROM SHANGHAI TO  
CORREGIDOR:  
MARINES IN THE DEFENSE OF  
THE PHILIPPINES

MARINES IN  
WORLD WAR II  
COMMEMORATIVE SERIES

BY J. MICHAEL MILLER







# From Shanghai to Corregidor: Marines in the Defense of the Philippines

by J. Michael Miller

**"T**he Government of the United States has decided to withdraw the American Marine detachments now maintained ashore in China, at Peiping, Tientsin, and Shanghai. It is reported that the withdrawal will begin shortly."

President Franklin D. Roosevelt  
Press Conference, 14 November 1941

President Roosevelt's announcement formally ended almost 15 years of duty by the 4th Marine Regiment in Shanghai. Clouds of war were quickly closing in on the China Marines as Japan and the United States edged ever closer to active hostilities. "One could sense the tenseness in the air," Lieutenant Colonel Curtis T. Beecher remembered, "There was a general feeling of uneasiness and uncertainty in the air."

In September 1941, Colonel Samuel L. Howard, USMC, Commanding Officer, 4th Marines, recommended to Admiral Thomas Hart, USN, Commander-in-Chief, Asiatic Fleet, that Howard's regiment be evacuated from its longtime duty station in Shanghai. The regiment com-

prised two small battalions, made up of approximately 800 Marines and attached naval personnel, and was dangerously exposed to Japanese attack should war come.

Hart had anticipated the withdrawal from Shanghai by no longer replacing individual members of the 4th Marines as they left China. Instead, he attached all replacements to the 1st Separate Marine Battalion in the Cavite Navy Yard, Philippine Islands. Hart had no official authorization for this plan, and later wrote, "If we couldn't get all the Regiment out of China we could at least stop sending any more Marines there until somebody bawled us out most vociferously. They never did." On 10 November 1941, Colonel Howard received the long-awaited orders to prepare the withdrawal of his regiment.

Thursday, 27 November 1941, dawned grey and gloomy in Shanghai. Sunrise was at 0631, but the rain and low-lying clouds obscured all but a hint of this fact. Adding to the gloom was the scheduled departure this day of the first element of the 4th Marines.

A steady drizzle fell as the first echelon to leave, Lieutenant Colonel Donald Curtis' 2d Battalion, formed ranks outside its Haiphong Street billet and prepared to board the double-decker buses of the China Omnibus Company. At 0900 the Marines loaded the vehicles for their last trip in Shanghai, down Bubbling Well Road, into Nanking Road,

and on to the Bund, where they boarded the lighter *Merry Moller* for the short steam down the Whangpoo, past the mouth of Soochow Creek, to the SS *President Madison*, bound for—the Marines knew not where.

At the Bund, friends and sweethearts bid the Marines tearful goodbyes as the Shanghai Refugee Institute's brass band struck up the "Marines' Hymn." Before boarding the lighter, Colonel Curtis was approached suddenly by a Chinese in a long black robe and wearing a little grey felt hat. The native waved his hand, said "Three cheers for Chiang Kai-shek! Three cheers for President Roosevelt!" and disappeared into the crowd.

Fully loaded at 1420, the *Madison* slowly made her way out to the Yangtze and the Yellow Sea beyond, her destination still unknown to the troops she was carrying.

The next day, the 28th, was bright and crisp as the regimental headquarters and Lieutenant Colonel Curtis T. Beecher's 1st Battalion formed up at Ferry and Avenue Roads. At 0900, the regimental commander, Colonel Howard, ordered "Forward march!" and the column stepped off to the sounds of "Glory of the Trumpets," followed by "The Marines' Hymn" and "Semper Fidelis." Led by Colonel Howard and his staff and followed closely behind by the 4th Marines band and colors, the remainder of the 4th Marines moved out through

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**On the Cover:** Two Marines relax outside a bunker on Corregidor before the heavy Japanese shelling destroyed most of the foliage on the island

**At left:** Col Samuel L. Howard and his regimental staff lead the 4th Marines to the Bund in Shanghai, 28 November 1941. John E. Drake Papers, Personal Papers Collection, MCHC





National Archives

*The commander of the Japanese guard in Shanghai bids farewell to Col Howard and the 4th Marines.*

streets lined with crowds of well-wishers waving American flags. On the mezzanine balcony of the Foreign YMCA was a Scot in full kit, kilt and all, playing his pipes in tribute to the departing Marines.

When the column neared Jimmy's Restaurant on Nanking near Szechuan Road, a complete orchestra of Americans dressed in cooks' and waiters' whites formed up behind the last rank of the Marines and joined the parade, playing American swing as they marched.

The scene at the Bund was much the same as the day before but the crowds were greater, with most of Shanghai's diplomatic and consular corps as well as prominent citizens of the International Settlement present to wish the 4th farewell. The same unhappy sweethearts and lovers—White Russians and Chinese—were there. Also present was the international press corps covering the departure of the Americans.

Colonel Howard made a short speech, and at 1400 the final elements of the 4th Marines boarded the tender for the short trip to where the SS *President Harrison* was waiting to carry the Marines to the Philippines.

## *Arrival in the Philippines*

Once at sea, orders came from Admiral Hart for the 4th Marines to land at Olongapo Navy Yard. The voyage to the Philippines proved to be uneventful, although both ships traveled under war conditions. The vessels were darkened at night with several of the regiment's machine guns lashed to the railings as anti-aircraft defense. Two Navy submarines escorted the ships, and although several Japanese aircraft and ships were sighted, no incidents occurred.

On 30 November the *Madison* arrived at Subic Bay, followed on 1 December by the *Harrison*. The regiment hurriedly disembarked with only two lighters of supplies and field equipment taken from each ship. Unloading the 1st Battalion became a mass of confusion as every non-commissioned officer tried to be the first to get his unit's gear on the lighter. Lieutenant Colonel Beecher, commanding 1st Battalion, observed the scene from the railing of the *Madison* and sent for one of his non-com-

*Marine officers waiting on board to disembark to Olongapo.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 321-T





missioned officers. Beecher told him, "Duncan, go down and straighten that mess out. Get this stuff off and move it." Word of Beecher's displeasure was quickly passed and the unloading progressed smoothly.

The rest of the equipment went to the Manila port facilities and was trucked back to Olongapo. Admiral Hart expressed specific orders for the regiment to get into

the field as quickly as possible without all of its heavy equipment. "We all knew," Hart wrote later, "that they had been cooped up in Shanghai through all those years where conditions for any sort of field training were very poor—and we thought that not much time remained."

The Marines found temporary wooden barracks, converted from warehouses, that were nearing

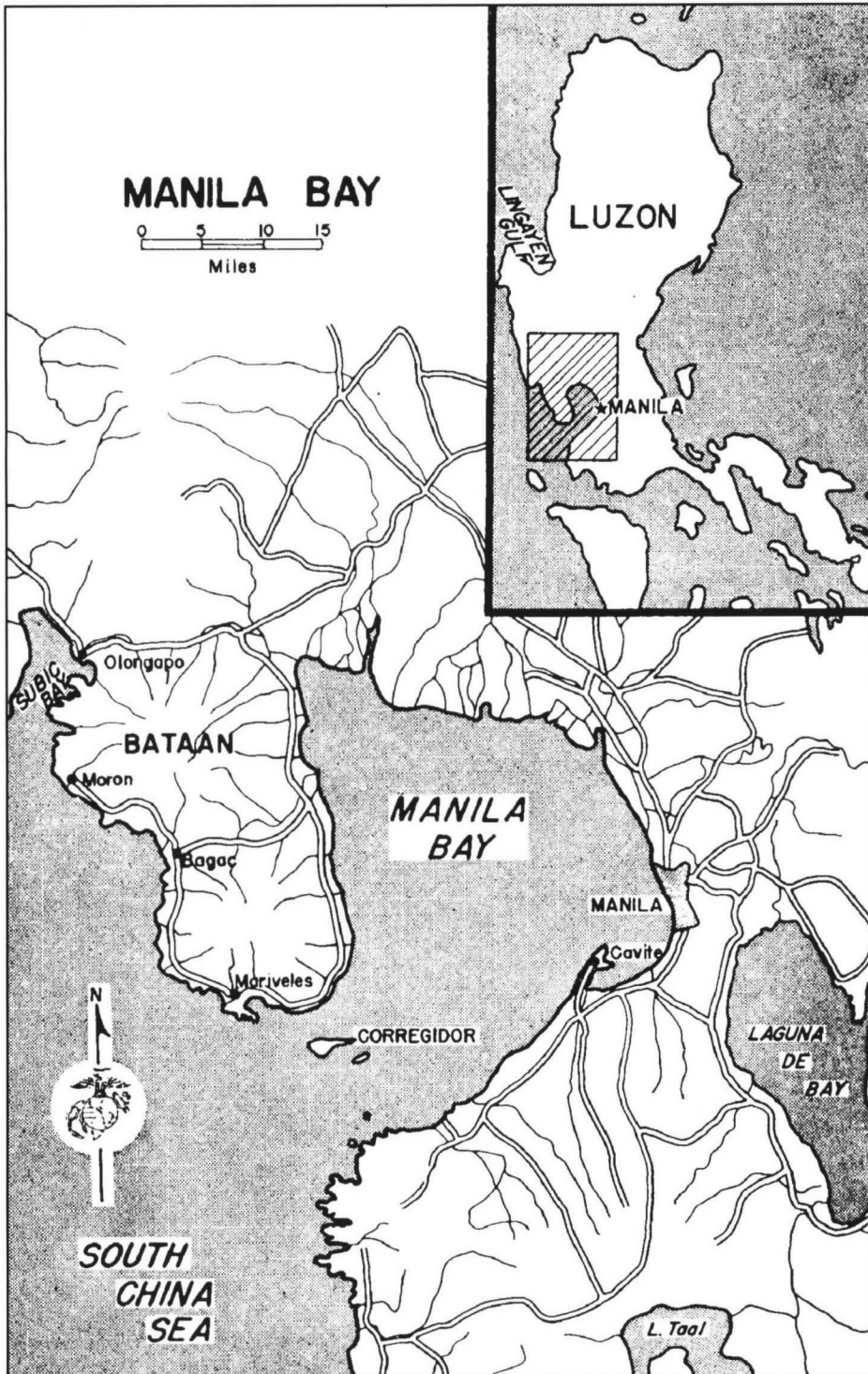
completion, but half the regiment was put under canvas on the rifle range and naval station. The regiment was quickly put into field training in the surrounding bush, with the two battalions alternating days and nights in the field.

### *The 1st Separate Marine Battalion*

The 1st Separate Marine Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John P. Adams, was based at the Cavite Navy Yard. These 700 Marines were organized both as a defense and an infantry battalion. On Sangley Point, Company A organized Battery D for anti-aircraft defense. Company B operated out of the Cavite Yard, with its internal Battery A also located on Sangley Point. Company C had Batteries B and C which were located in Carridad and Binakayan, respectively. Company D had two batteries, E and F, in the Navy Yard. All of the batteries were armed with 3-inch dual purpose guns, 3-inch anti-aircraft guns, or .50-caliber machine guns.

### *Preparing for War*

On 3 December, Colonel Howard reported to Admiral Hart in Manila to discuss the mission of the regiment. The 4th Marines was put under the command of Rear Admiral Francis W. Rockwell, commanding the 16th Naval District, and given the mission of protecting the naval stations on the island of Luzon, primarily Olongapo and the Navy Section Base at Mariveles. The Commander-in-Chief, Asiatic Fleet, stressed a more important mission to Howard. That mission was to prepare his men for mobile field operations. Hart also underscored the proximity to war with the Japanese







National Archives

*Members of the 4th Marines debark at the Olongapo Navy Yard.*

Howard returned and informed his staff that Hart felt that war was only "a matter of days if not hours away." Howard emphasized the point by emphatically stating, "We

will be at war with the Japanese within a week." After the staff had left, he revealed to Major Reginald H. "Bo" Ridgely the anticipated finality of their mission, saying,

"they would never see their families again."

On 5 December, Colonel Howard attended a meeting with Admiral Rockwell at the Cavite Navy Yard to discuss the immediate preparations for war. Rockwell ordered him to send one battalion of Marines to Mariveles as a guard for that installation. The following day a reconnaissance was made of the Mariveles area, camp sites were selected, and preparations made to deploy Lieutenant Colonel Beecher's 1st Battalion there by sea on 8 December.

On 7 December, Colonel Howard put into effect a combat training schedule for the regiment. Marine Barracks, Olongapo, was reduced in strength with men transferred to the 4th Marines, but Howard retained the organization to allow for a constant defense of the yard, releasing Lieutenant

*A working party unloads the accumulated gear brought by the 4th Marines to the Philippines.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) COR-11003





National Archives

*Cavite Navy Yard, 10 June 1940. The yard is located on the island at the bottom and the Sangley Point installations at the top of the photograph. Note the PBVs in the harbor.*

Colonel Herman R. "Red" Anderson's 2d Battalion for quick movement into the field.

### War

At 0257, 8 December, a message arrived at Asiatic Fleet Headquarters announcing the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Notification of the attack and instructions to all ships and stations began at 0315. Shortly after 0300, Lieutenant Colonel Adams at Cavite received word from Admiral Rockwell that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. He instantly placed the 1st Separate Marine Battalion on Condition One Alert until 30 minutes past daylight. At 0350 a message came into the 4th Marines' communications center in Olongapo from Commander-in-

Chief Asiatic Fleet, stating, "Japan started hostilities, govern yourselves accordingly." Colonel Howard was notified without delay and then passed the word on to his officers.

First Lieutenant Austin C. Shofner came through the officer's billet area awakening the men by telling them they were at war. An unidentified Marine shouted, "Why don't you get out of here and let us sleep?" Shofner soon had all the officers on duty. The next duty was to inform the regiment. Major Frank P. Pyzick, officer of the day, rode through the Navy Yard in the side car of a motorcycle, shouting, "War is declared! War is declared!"

The Marine Barracks Olongapo gong sounded through the night. Many Marines had no idea what

this alarm was about. Corporal Chester C. Alderman remembered thinking, "What kind of new fangled reveille is this?" until an Olongapo Marine yelled out, "That's General Alarm," and the 4th Marines tumbled from its racks half asleep to stand formation in the dark. Lieutenant Colonel Samuel W. Freeny, executive officer of the 1st Battalion, stood before the assembled Marines still in his night shirt. He announced Pearl Harbor had been bombed and the United States and Japan were at war. For many Marines the news was anticlimactical, as one wag was heard to remark, "They got us up for that?"

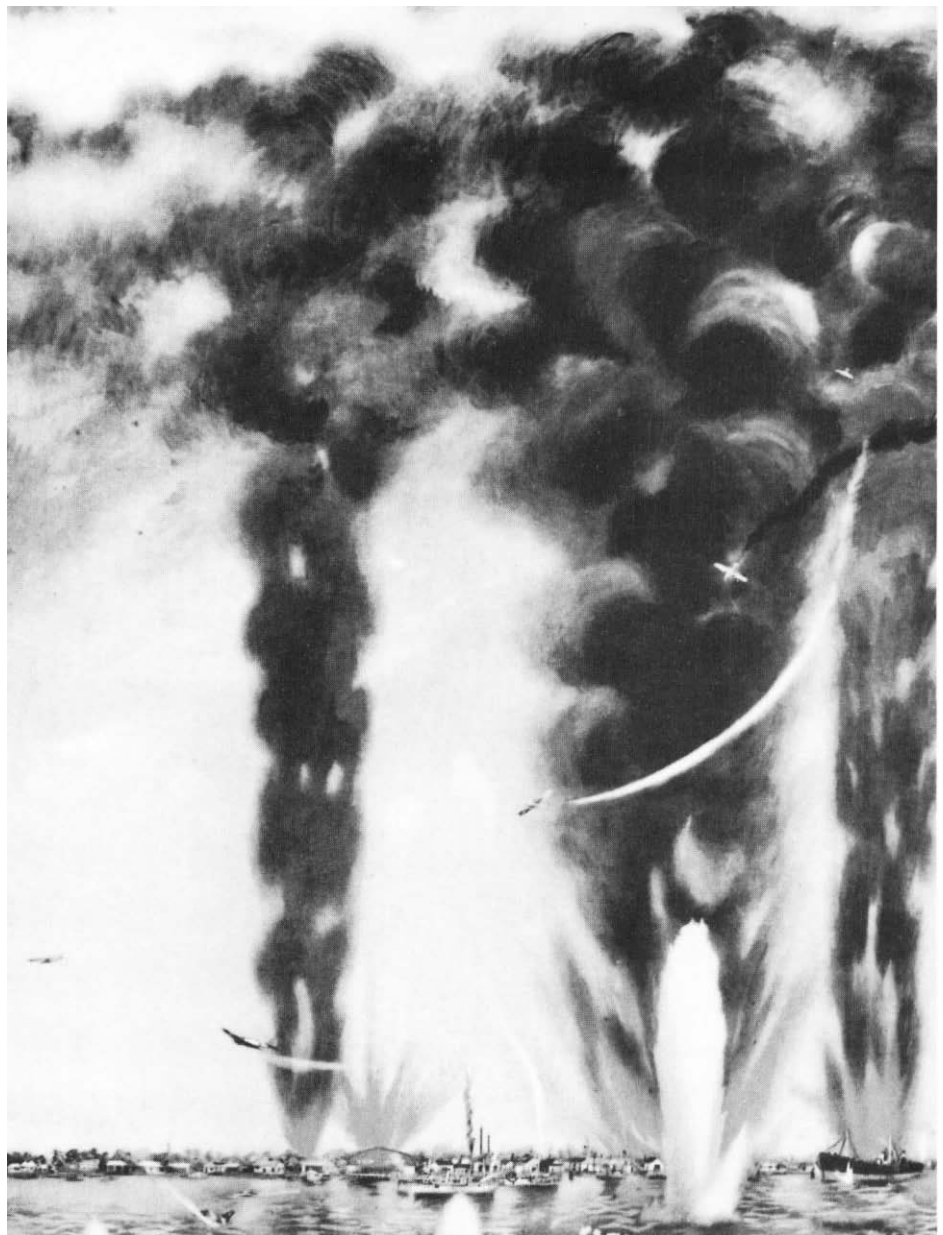
All regimental headquarters company personnel were broken out of their bunks at 0400 and assembled outside the barracks.



Sergeant Pat Hitchcock remembered, "every 15 minutes a quartermaster came by passing out ammunition . . . they first passed out a 5-round clip . . . a little later they gave us enough ammunition to fill our rifle belts. Later still they passed out bandoliers to drape over our shoulders. We looked like Mexican bandits."

The 1st Battalion was awakened at 0300 to be ready for the daylight move to Mariveles at 0730. Power for the battalion's lights was cut with no explanation, and it readied for the move in blackness. All personnel were prepared to move by daylight except Company D, the heavy weapons company, which would join the battalion later. The Marines were leaving the dock at Olongapo on board the USS *Vaga* when Beecher was formally informed of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The battalion sailed for the section base at Mariveles without air support. Beecher was concerned about a possible Japanese attack, but the 1st Battalion arrived without incident at 1130.

In the following two days, the 4th Marines and 1st Separate Marine Battalion worked on their defensive positions. Howard placed 36 machine guns of Lieutenant Colonel Anderson's 2d Battalion around the Olongapo Navy Yard as anti-aircraft defense, prepared beach defense positions at Calapacuan Point, and established a bivouac site two miles outside the Navy Yard. Fire-fighting parties were organized in Cavite and Olongapo and demolition details were formed to destroy the bridges north of Olongapo should the Japanese land there. Other war measures included assigning the regimental band to Company E as a rifle platoon and Captain Lewis H. Pickup was assigned as liaison officer to coordinate with the neighboring



Clifton B. Cates Papers, Personal Papers Collection

*A Japanese artist's rendition of the bombing of Cavite, 10 December 1941.*

31st Philippine Army Division.

On 8 December, Company D arrived at Mariveles by truck to unite the 1st Battalion. The men prepared positions in the surrounding jungle, but also worked 10 to 12 hours a day unloading the many barges bringing rations, ammunition, and equipment. On 9 December, Howard ordered that the regiment be fed only twice a day, "breakfast before daylight and dinner after dark," to conserve supplies.

On 10 December, a Japanese force was reported approaching along the Bagac Road within 20

miles of the Section Base. Lieutenant Colonel Beecher without delay deployed the 1st Battalion into blocking positions along the highway. Only two Marines were left behind, a cook and the battalion armorer, Sergeant Louis E. Duncan, who guarded the camp with two .50-caliber machine guns. The reports turned out to be false alarms and the battalion returned to camp.

The Marine positions were not immediately attacked as the Japanese, who were indeed attacking the Philippines, were concentrating on airfields and Manila,





National Archives Photo SC 130991

*Small arms ammunition explodes in burning warehouses on the Cavite Navy Yard waterfront.*

the capital. However, an average of six air-raid alarms occurred daily. Lieutenant Colonel Beecher at first ordered his men to scatter at the sound of the air-raid siren, but had to rescind the order as no work could be accomplished under the constant sirens. Work continued, siren or no siren. Air-raid shelters were constructed, instructions issued in the event Japanese aircraft should appear, and blackout procedures were strictly followed. The military police company at Cavite took registered and suspected enemy aliens and foreign agents into custody.

### *Bombing of Cavite*

Three Marine-manned anti-aircraft positions were located outside the Cavite Navy Yard: Battery A, across the bay at Canacao Golf Course on the tip of Sangley Point; Battery B at Carridad; and Battery C at Binacayan one mile south. Each held four 3-inch, .50-caliber, dual-purpose guns with a range of about 15,000 feet. Battery D was

divided to support each position with five .50-caliber machine guns.

On 10 December, two Japanese combat teams came ashore in northern Luzon, securing airfields for their Army aircraft to support more landings. However, there was no alarm in Cavite. As usual, civilian workers came into the Navy Yard and quickly went to work. The only sign of war was a detachment of Filipino workers digging an air-raid trench in the yard of the Commandancia, Admiral Rockwell's headquarters. The half-completed trench was the only air-raid shelter in the Navy Yard. Only the anti-aircraft weapons had been retested. Four 3-inch anti-aircraft guns were mounted at the ammunition depot in the yard, as well as numerous .50-caliber machine guns mounted around the yard.

A little past noon the droning of numerous aircraft engines was heard, followed by an air-raid siren. Marines rushed to the veranda of the Marine Barracks

and watched 54 aircraft in three large "V" formations approach. All eyes in the Yard were focused on the aircraft which were widely assumed to be Army Air Corps. The first suspicious sign was a dogfight below the formation. Someone then yelled, "Look at those leaflets come down." Almost in unison, many voices yelled out, "leaflets, hell—they're bombs!" The naval base was rocked by the first bombs striking the ground. Marines, sailors, and civilians crouched under the nearest cover with no formal shelters available.

The first stick of bombs hit the water, as did most of the second, but the rest of the bombs criss-crossed the Navy Yard and small fires began to spread among the wreckage. The Marines of Battery E, on top of the Naval Ammunition Depot, opened fire as bombs hit first on one side of their building and then on the other, splashing mud and water over them. Private First Class Leslie R. Scoggin called out the plotting data for the nearby battery, but found the aircraft were flying above 23,000 feet, far above the range of the battery. Luckily, no bombs actually hit the depot.

The Marine on the rangefinder at Battery C, stationed at Binacayan, reported to First Lieutenant Willard B. Holdredge that the aircraft were above the range of the guns. Holdredge ordered the Marine to take the reading again. When given the same answer, the lieutenant took the reading himself. Holdredge knew then that the Japanese aircraft were flying at 21,000-25,000 feet but his guns had a range of only 15,000 feet. He ordered the battery to fire anyway.

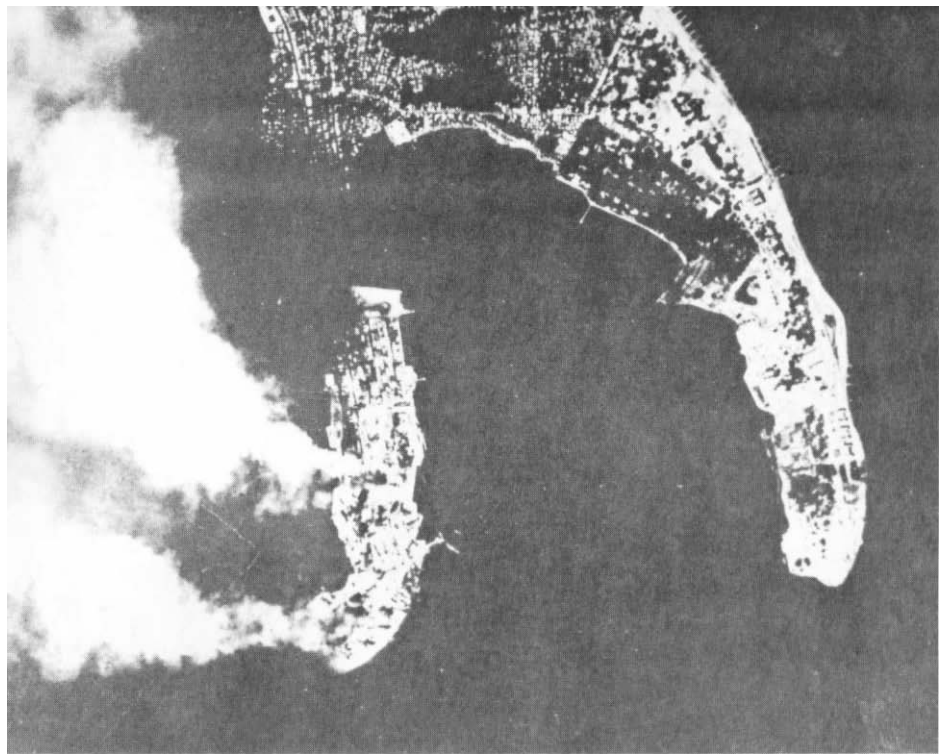
First Lieutenant Carter Simpson at Binacayan later wrote, "We were left with a sense of fatality which was renewed every time our eyes fell on the Yard across the

bay . . . A toy pistol would have damaged their planes as much as we did." Battery A on Sangley Point ceased fire after the first wave passed untouched. Battery B on Carridad also tried to hit the Japanese aircraft, but the 280 rounds expended during the raid fell short.

Captain Ted E. Pulos commanded Battery F, which had two .50-caliber machine guns located on the Guadalupe Pier near the Navy Communications building. He ordered his men to open fire on the first wave of planes, but after the initial bombing ordered his men to cease fire as the aircraft were obviously above range. Private First Class Thomas L. Wetherington was killed by bomb fragments, becoming the first Marine to lose his life in defense of the Philippines. Private First Class George Sparks was on guard duty at the Naval District Headquarters when the bombs hit. He was able to take cover in a worn path beside the building as the bombs began to fall. Trees were blown down and one fell over Sparks. Although the path was only a few inches deep, it was enough to save

*One of two .50-caliber machine gun mounts of Battery F located on Guadalupe Pier, Cavite Navy Yard. Capt Ted Pulos successfully evacuated his men from the pier after being trapped by fire.*

Navy Historical Center 80-G-46883



*Cavite Navy Yard burns in this Japanese photograph taken after the bombing on 10 December 1941.*

him from serious injury. One other Marine was wounded during the bombing.

Captain John Clark ran to the barracks and ordered the Marines not on duty to draw ammunition and get outside to fire on enemy aircraft which might strafe the Yard. They ran to the quartermaster's office and formed in line to receive ammunition. As bombs fell nearby, the Marines dove for cover, and then returned to the line, repeating the process several times. Bombs struck close to them as Private Jack D. Thompson later remembered, "When you hear one of those bombs coming down, you think it's coming down the back of your neck." The effort proved fruitless as the buildings restricted the fields of fire for small arms.

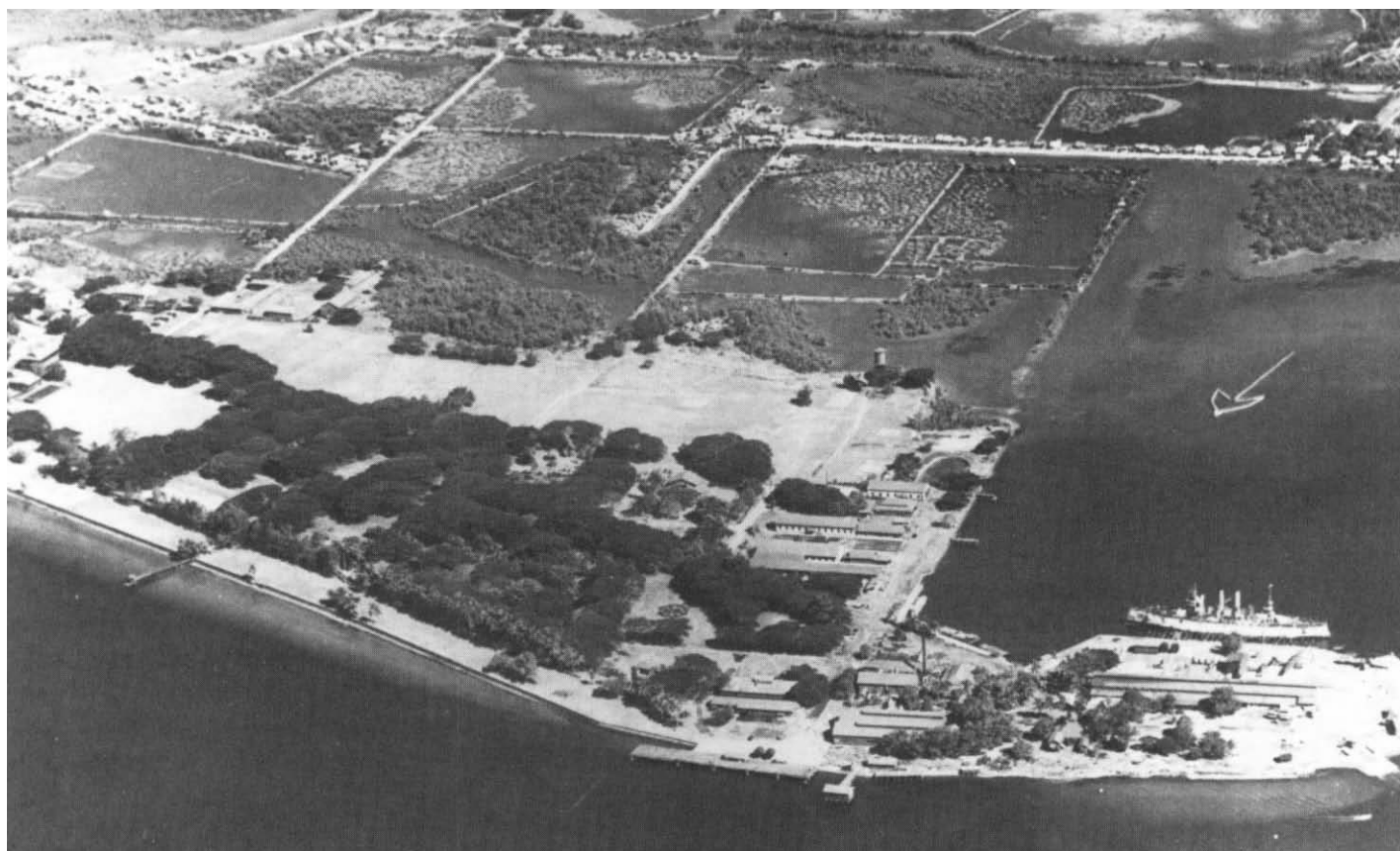
The Yard continued to burn as the last Japanese aircraft departed. An aid station was set up in the library of the Marine Barracks as the hospital had received a direct hit. Approximately 1,000 civilians were reported killed and more than 500 wounded were treated in

the aid station. Marines formed firefighting parties to put out the raging fires. The Filipino fire companies surrounded the ammunition dump and prevented fire from reaching the explosives, but the torpedo warehouse burned and the warheads sporadically exploded, preventing the firefighting parties from putting out the fire.

The fires trapped Captain Pulos' Battery F on the Guadalupe Pier and the exploding torpedo warheads threatened the Marines, sailors, and civilians who had escaped to the dock. Pulos ordered his Marines to build makeshift rafts and successfully evacuated men, weapons, and ammunition.

As night neared, all personnel, except a small group of Marines and Manila firemen, were evacuated out of the Yard and transported by truck to a site on the road leading to Manila. After travelling 15 miles the trucks stopped and the battalion set up camp. The following morning Marine detachments were sent back to guard the





Navy Historical Center Photo 80-G-1783219

*Olongapo Navy Yard, 27 October 1941. Note the water tank and the old cruiser Rochester (CA-2).*

abandoned Navy Yard. Field kitchens were established to feed civilians as well as Navy and Marine Corps personnel. Other detachments reinforced the Sangley Point radio station as well as the ammunition depot at Canancao. Marines were also posted at all the gasoline stations on the road to Manila to guard the fuel supplies for military use.

Marines patrolled the emptied Navy Yard, checking for looters and any new fires. At noon an administrative force returned and reopened the battalion offices. A bulldozer dug a trench near the Commandancia and working parties attempted to bury the civilian dead. Dump trucks were filled with bodies which were dumped into the trench as Marines buried more than 250 corpses with shovels. Once the burials in the Yard were finished, the mass grave was covered with dirt.

The Cavite area remained quiet

until 1247 on 19 December when nine Japanese bombers returned with Sangley Point as their target. The bombers hit the large radio towers and the fuel depot. Numerous 55-gallon fuel drums were stored on the golf course, in the hospital compound, and on the beach. Fuel drums exploded, forcing the evacuation of the wounded. One Marine remembered "the roar of the fire drowned the sound of the motors (of the bombers) and the sound of the bombs."

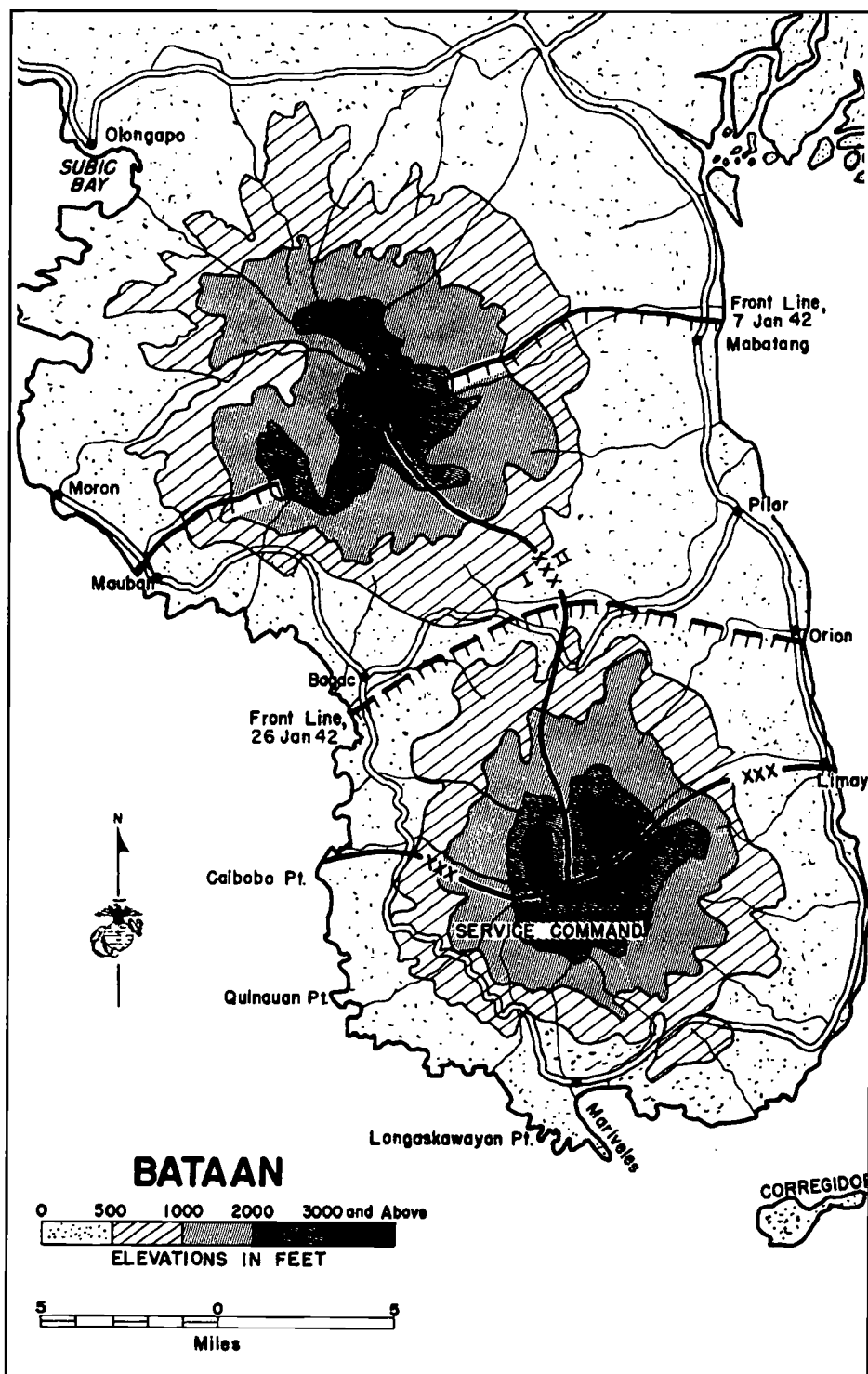
Mess Sergeant Milton T. Larios, Corporal Earl C. Dodson, and a Filipino cook named "Pop" were preparing rations for the Marines still in the Cavite Navy Yard when the air raid siren went off. Larios shouted, "Let's get this meat off the fire," and tried to load the beef into a nearby garbage can when the bombs hit. Corporal Dodson remembered running until hearing the whistle of the bombs com-

ing down and then fell to the ground. Explosions covered him with dirt and debris but he escaped the blast unhurt. He ran back to the mess area where he found Larios dead and "Pop" dying. He carried the bleeding Filipino to a collection point where 15 wounded Americans and Filipinos were lying together.

Admiral Rockwell ordered First Lieutenant James W. Keene to make a fire break in the rows of barrels to save as much fuel as possible. Keene took 12 Marines into the area of the exploding barrels and began work when another "stick" of bombs hit, killing Private First Class George D. Frazier. The bombs started new fires, which forced Keene to pull his men out. Total Marine casualties were five killed, eight wounded.

### *Olongapo*

On 12 December, Japanese



troops made another landing in southeastern Luzon. At 1020, Headquarters, 4th Marines, was notified by rifle range personnel of the approach of enemy aircraft. Air-raid sirens sounded swiftly. Five minutes passed, and with no aircraft sighted, the field music sounded "secure." At once, the roar of Japanese aircraft was heard. Seven Japanese fighters followed a flight of PBYS of Navy

Patrol Wing 10 to the base, waited for them to land, and attacked. All of the PBYS were soon in flames and the Japanese then turned to the Olongapo naval station. A single aircraft flew low over the station to test the level of anti-aircraft fire.

Marines opened fire on the Japanese aircraft with automatic rifles, rifles, and light machine guns, but with little effect.

Sergeant Pat Hitchcock remembered, "They evidently were not impressed because they were very casual about their strafing runs." The Japanese fighters attacked the base for almost an hour.

Private First Class Thomas S. Allender was stationed on the water tower armed with a .30-caliber machine gun and soon engaged the aircraft as they strafed the Navy Yard. "That god-dam plane was shooting at him. He'd run around to the other side of the tank and the guy would go by," recalled Master Technical Sergeant Ivan L. Buster, "and then the guy would come back and he'd run around to the other side of the tank again." Allender remained on the tower for the entire raid untouched, although the tank itself was riddled with machine gun fire, "with water spraying everywhere." A Marine gunnery sergeant lay in a ditch on his back firing his .45-caliber pistol at the aircraft on their strafing runs. When asked between attacks why he was firing at all, he responded, "This makes me feel better."

On 13 December, 27 bombers appeared over Olongapo at 1155 and bombs began to hit the Navy Yard and the civilians in the town. No installations were hit, although bombs straddled the regimental hospital located at the Riverside Cabaret. Again, no weapons in the Navy Yard could reach the altitude of the enemy aircraft. Corporal Earl W. Hettgar remembered staring up at the Japanese aircraft, which were flying so low the Marines could "look up into the bomb bays" of the aircraft. Many houses in the town were destroyed with 13 civilians killed and 40 wounded.

Private First Class Neil P. Iovino became the first 4th Marines casualty when bomb fragments struck him in the abdomen. The frag-



ments shattered his gun stock first, preventing a more serious injury. Two other Marines were also wounded. That night, the men of the 2d Battalion were amused when they heard Radio Tokyo announce that the 4th Marines had been annihilated.

After the bombing, most of Lieutenant Colonel Anderson's 2d Battalion moved to the hills on the Manila Road five miles outside the Navy Yard. Several times, portions of the 2d Battalion were rushed to the beach front to repel reported landings near Calapacuan Point and permanent defensive positions were set up along Mauquinaya Beach. Lieutenant Colonel "Red" Anderson calmed his men by walking among them as they dug, saying, "That's okay men, they got nothin' bigger than 8-inch shells to throw at us!"

The battalion also formed

blocking positions on the Manila Road at Mount Panaigar in the Zambales Mountains in coordination with the Philippine Army's 31st Division. On 22 December, the Japanese landed their 48th Division north of Olongapo at Lingayen Gulf and the main body of the 2d Battalion returned to protect the Naval Station from any supporting Japanese landing.

The Japanese quickly crushed American and Philippine resistance at Lingayen Gulf, and united with the troops previously landed on northern Luzon. On 24 December, another major force, the 16th Division, landed just 60 miles from Manila at Lamon Bay. General Douglas MacArthur, commanding USAFFE (United States Army Forces in the Far East), knew the situation was hopeless. He decided to withdraw all American and Philippine forces to the peninsula of Bataan where a

final stand would be made, in conjunction with the fortified islands in Manila Bay.

### Mission

The intended use of Marines in the joint defense plan for the Philippines called for the transfer of the regiment to Army operational control. Admiral Hart believed that the 4th Marines "were the strongest infantry regiment in the Philippines," because of the experience of their veteran officers and noncommissioned officers. In an 8 December formal letter Admiral Hart reminded MacArthur that the 4th Marines regiment was available, but the USAFFE commander requested only a battalion to serve as a guard for USAFFE headquarters. MacArthur further offered to allow the Fleet Commander to retain jurisdiction over the unit.

