

Wake Under Siege¹

Scarcely had the VMF-211 planes returned to the field before it was time for Lieutenants Davidson and Kinney to fly the only two serviceable fighters on the early midday combat patrol. It was then nearly 1000, almost time for the Japanese bombers to arrive, and the Marines soon spotted 30 of these enemy planes coming out of the northwest at 18,000 feet. Davidson downed two of these aircraft, and Kinney turned a third homeward with smoke trailing behind it. Then the fliers pulled away as the enemy formation entered the range of the Wake guns.

This antiaircraft fire splashed one bomber in the water off Wilkes and damaged three others. Bombs hit close to Battery D on Peale, and others exploded on Wake. There were no Marine casualties, and damage was slight, but the pattern of the attack convinced Devereux that the Japanese had spotted the position of Battery D. As soon as the attack ended he ordered this unit to displace from the neck of Toki Point to the southeastern end of Peale.² Marines and civilians be-

gan this displacement after dark. Sandbags at the old position could not be reclaimed, and cement bags and empty ammunition boxes had to serve this purpose at the new location. The work was finished by 0445, and Battery D again was ready to fire.

On 12 December the Japanese came to work early. Two four-engine Kawanishi patrol bombers arrived from Majuro at about 0500 and bombed and strafed Wake and Peale Islands. Bombs hit the airstrip but caused little damage. Captain Tharin, who had just taken off on the morning reconnaissance patrol, intercepted one of the big flying boats and shot it down. After this raid the Wake defenders went on with their work. Beach defenses were improved on Wilkes, and the ordnance officer, Gunner Harold C. Borth, serviced Battery L's battered 5-inch guns. At the airfield Lieutenant Kinney managed to patch up one of VMF-221's cripples, and this brought the strength of the Wake air force up to three planes. Such work continued for the remainder of the day. To the surprise of everyone on the atoll, the

¹ Unless otherwise noted the material in Chap 3 is derived from *Devereux Rept*; *Putnam Rept*; (*officer's name*) *Repts.*, especially 1stLt J. F. Kinney *Rept*, Major W. L. J. Bayler *Rept*, and LtCol B. D. Godbold *Rept*; *Devereux Story*.

² At 1700, just prior to Battery D's displacement, a smoke bomb and a chain-flare of three red balls was sighted about two miles northeast of Toki Point. This signal was re-

peated twice in the next 20 minutes. The significance of these signals has not been established. Japanese submarines were operating in the vicinity of Wake, however and it may be that the signals had something to do with rescue operations in which these boats were trying to aid survivors from a bombing raid or from the surface action.

enemy did not arrive for the usual noon raid.³

This freedom from attack was a welcome and profitable interlude for the garrison. Captain Freuler, who had been attempting since the opening of the war to devise some means of employing welder's oxygen to augment the dwindling supply for the fighter pilots, finally managed, at great personal hazard, to transfer the gas from commercial cylinders to the fliers' oxygen bottles. Without this new supply the pilots could not have flown many more high altitude missions.

Another important experiment failed. Marines tried to fashion a workable aircraft sound locator out of lumber. It was "a crude pyramidal box with four uncurved plywood sides," by Major Deveureux's description. It was too crude to be of any value; it served only to magnify the roar of the surf.

That evening Lieutenants Kinney and Kliewer and Technical Sergeant Hamilton readied Wake's three planes for the final patrol of the day. Kliewer drew a plane that was always difficult to start,⁴ and his takeoff was delayed for nearly fifteen minutes. While he was climbing to overtake the other fliers he spotted an enemy submarine on the surface some 25 miles southwest of the atoll. He climbed to 10,000 feet and maneuvered to attack with

the sun behind him. He strafed the Japanese boat with his .50 caliber guns, and then dropped his two bombs as he pulled out of his glide. Neither bomb hit, but Kliewer estimated that they exploded within fifteen feet of the target. Bomb fragments punctured his wings and tail as he made his low pull-out, and while he climbed to cruising altitude he saw the enemy craft submerge in the midst of a large oil slick.⁵

After their various activities on 12 December, the atoll defenders ended the day with a solemn ceremony. A large grave had been dug approximately 100 yards southwest of the Marine aid station, and in this the dead received a common burial while a lay preacher from the contractor's crew read simple prayers.

Next day the Japanese did not bother Wake at all, and Marine officers thought it possible that Kliewer's attack on the enemy submarine had brought them this day of freedom. The tiny atoll, frequently concealed by clouds, was a diffi-

³ From 12 December until about 20 December, another day on which the enemy did not raid Wake, the recollections of surviving defenders sometimes are confused beyond any possible reconciliation. This condition is acute for the period of 12-14 December inclusive. Sources reconstructing the events of those dates arrive at few compatible accounts. This volume attempts to draw the best possible compromise from these conflicts.

⁴ *Last Man off Wake Island*, 120.

⁵ The fate of this submarine is not known. Enemy records are not clear. But after the fall of Wake, Kinney and other pilots were questioned by a Japanese officer who asked them if they knew anything about a Japanese submarine that had disappeared in the vicinity of the atoll. This led Kliewer to believe that concussion from his bombs had finished off the submarine. The Japanese list two of their submarines (RO-66 and RO-62) sunk 25 miles southwest of Wake on 17 Dec 1941. RO-66 was lost not to enemy action but to disaster, the Japanese said. The cause of the loss of RO-62 is not known, and it therefore may be assumed that there was some confusion as to the date. And since the Wake Marines had trouble remembering exact dates in their postwar reconstruction of specific events, it may be that Kliewer's bombs sank the RO-62. MilHistSec, SS, GHQ, FEC, Japanese Studies in WWII No. 116, The IJN in WWII, February 1952 (located at OCMH).

cult place to find, and the Marines reasoned that the Japanese were using submarine radios as navigational homing aids. Accurate celestial navigation would have been possible at night, but the bombers had been making daylight runs of from 500 to 600 miles over water with no landmarks. By dead reckoning alone this would have been most difficult, yet the bombers hit at about the same time each day. This convinced some of the Marines, including Lieutenant Kinney, that the submarine had been leading them in.⁶

But even this quiet day⁷ did not pass without loss. While taking off for the evening patrol, Captain Freuler's plane swerved toward a group of workmen and a large crane beside the runway. To avoid hitting the men or this crane, Freuler made a steep bank to the left. The plane lost lift and settled into the brush, a permanent wash-out. It was set up in the bone yard with other wrecks which were parked to draw bombs.

December 14 started explosively at 0330 when three four-engine Kawanishi 97 flying boats droned over from Wotje⁸ and dropped bombs near the airstrip. They caused no damage, and the garrison made no attempt to return fire. But later that day the pilots of the *Twenty-Fourth Air Flotilla* resumed their bombing schedule. Thirty shore-based bombers arrived from Roi at 1100, and struck Camp One, the lagoon off Peale, and the west end of the airstrip. Two Marines from VMF-211

were killed and one wounded, and a direct bomb hit in an airplane revetment finished off another fighter plane, leaving the atoll's aviation unit only one plane that could fly.⁹ Lieutenant Kinney, VMF-211's engineering officer, sprinted for the revetment where he was joined by Technical Sergeant Hamilton and Aviation Machinist's Mate First Class James F. Hesson, USN,¹⁰ his two assistants. Despite the fire which engulfed the rear end of the plane, these men accomplished the unbelievable feat of removing the undamaged engine from the fuselage and dragging it clear.

During his morning patrol flight of 15 December, Major Putnam sighted another submarine southwest of Wake. But it appeared to have orange markings, and Putnam did not attack. He thought it might be a Netherlands boat because he had observed markings of that color on Dutch airplanes in Hawaii in late 1941. Putnam's examination of the craft caused it to submerge, however, and Marines later took significant notice of this when the regular bombing raid did not arrive that day. This seemed to add credence to the theory that submarines were providing navigational "beams" for the bombers.

But the Kawanishi flying boats kept the day from being completely free of Japanese harassment. Four to six of these four-motored planes came over at about 1800, and one civilian was killed when the planes made a straling run along the atoll.

⁶ *Kinney Interview*, 4.

⁷ On this date hot rations cooked in the contractor's galley were delivered to all battery positions by a "chuck wagon." This service continued for as long as possible thereafter. It was one of Mr. Teters' many contributions to the defense.

⁸ *Enemy Notes*, 1.

⁹ *Wake File*.

¹⁰ Hesson was a Navy aviation instrument repairman sent over to VMF-211 from the Naval Air Station after the first attack had played such havoc among the fighter squadron's ground personnel. He turned out to be an outstanding general aviation maintenance man.

Their bombing was less effective. They apparently tried to hit Battery D on Peale Island, but most of the bombs fell harmlessly into the lagoon and the others caused no damage.

Meanwhile defensive work continued during every daylight hour not interrupted by such bombing raids. Another aircraft was patched up, personnel shelters for all hands had been completed in the VMF-211 area, and at Peacock Point Battery A now had two deep underground shelters with rock cover three feet thick.¹¹ And before nightfall on 15 December the garrison completed its destruction of classified documents. This security work began on 8 December when the Commandant of the 14th Naval District ordered Commander Cunningham to destroy reserve codes and ciphers at the Naval Air Station,¹² but codes remained intact in the VMF-211 area. Now Major Bayler and Captain Tharin shredded these classified papers into an oil drum and burned them in a gasoline fire.¹³

On the 16th the Japanese made another daylight raid. Twenty-three bombers from Roi came out of the east at 18,000 feet in an attempt to bomb Peale Island and Camp Two. Lieutenants Kinney and Kliewer, up on air patrol, warned the garrison of this approach, but the Marine fliers had no luck attacking the enemy planes. They did radio altitude information for the antiaircraft gunners, however, and the 3-inch batteries knocked down one bomber and damaged four others. The Japanese spilled their bombs into the waters of the lagoon and turned for home.

¹¹ *Wake File*.

¹² *Cunningham Interview*, 4.

¹³ *Last Man Off Wake Island*, 112.

But experience had taught the atoll defenders not to expect a rest after this daylight raid was over. The flying boats had become almost as persistent as the shore-based bombers, and at 1745 that afternoon one of the Kawanishis came down through a low ceiling to strafe Battery D on Peale Island. Poor visibility prevented the Marines from returning fire, but the attack had caused little damage. The plane dropped four heavy bombs, but these fell harmlessly into the lagoon. Marines who were keeping score—and most of them were—marked this down as Wake's 10th air raid.

After this attack Wake had an uneasy night. It was black with a heavy drizzle, and maybe this put sentinels on edge just enough to cause them to "see things"—although no one could blame them for this. At any rate lookouts on Wilkes passed an alarm at 0200 that they had sighted 12 ships, and everybody fell out for general quarters. Nothing came of this alarm and postwar Japanese and U. S. records indicate that there were no ships at all around Wake that night.

At 0600 on 17 December Lieutenant Kinney reported proudly that his engineering crew had patched up two more airplanes. This still left the atoll with a four-plane air force, but fliers and other aviation personnel could hardly have been more amazed if two new fighter squadrons had just arrived. Major Putnam called the work of Kinney, Hamilton, and Hesson "magical."¹⁴

. . . With almost no tools and a complete lack of normal equipment, they performed all types of repair and replacement work. They changed engines and propellers from one airplane to another, and even completely built up new

¹⁴ *Putnam Rept*, 15.

engines and propellers from scrap parts salvaged from wrecks. . . . all this in spite of the fact that they were working with new types [of aircraft] with which they had no previous experience and were without instruction manuals of any kind. . . . Their performance was the outstanding event of the whole campaign.¹⁵

"Engines have been traded from plane to plane, have been junked, stripped, rebuilt, and all but created," another report said of Kinney's engineering work.¹⁶

At 1317 that afternoon 27 Japanese bombers from Roi came out of the southwest at 19,000 feet. Their bombs ignited a diesel oil tank on Wilkes and destroyed the defense battalion messhall as well as much tentage and quartermaster gear at Camp One. A bomb explosion also damaged one of the evaporator units upon which Wake depended for its water supply. The 3-inch guns brought down one of these planes.

Later that day one of the Kinney-patched fighter planes washed out during take-off, and it had to be sent back to the boneyard. Then at 1750 came the heaviest raid the Kawanishi flying boats ever put into the air against Wake.¹⁷ Eight of these planes bombed and strafed the atoll but inflicted little damage.

As if the Wake defenders did not already have their hands full, construction authorities in Pearl Harbor wanted to know how things were going with the lagoon dredging. They also asked for a specific date on which the atoll would have certain other

improvements completed. The island commander prefaced his preliminary reply to this query with an account of the latest air raid, and followed this with a damage report which summarized his battle losses since the beginning of the war. He pointed out that half of his trucks and engineering equipment had been destroyed, that most of his diesel fuel and dynamite were gone, and that his garage, blacksmith shop, machine shop, and building supplies warehouse either had been blasted or burned to the ground.

In a supplementary report sent later, Commander Cunningham told the Pearl Harbor authorities that everybody on Wake had been busy defending the atoll and keeping themselves alive. They could not do construction work at night, he pointed out, and if they used too much heavy equipment during the day they could not hear the bombers approaching. Besides, he reiterated, much of his equipment had been destroyed by the bombing raids, and most of his repair facilities had met the same fate. On top of all this, he added, civilian morale was bad. Cunningham said he could not promise a completion date on anything unless the Japanese let up the pressure.¹⁸ The originator of this Pearl Harbor query might have found a pointed hint in this reference to a let-up of pressure. But at any rate Cunningham never again was asked how his construction work was coming along.

The 18th of December was quiet.¹⁹ One enemy plane was sighted in the vicinity of

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ CO VMF-211 Rept to CO MAG-21, 20Dec41, 2.

¹⁷ As an example of how memories can grow dim, not a single defender remembered to mention this raid in accounts prepared after the war ended. Yet there is no doubt that the raid occurred, because the garrison reported it to Pearl Harbor that same afternoon. *Wake File*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Likewise typical of the day-to-day confusion which exists in the Wake records and recollections is the fact that contemporary records—the Wake dispatches and Maj Bayler's official narrative report prepared in December 1941—

Wake, however, and the defenders considered its activity ominous. It was almost directly overhead at about 25,000 feet when first sighted. Well beyond anti-aircraft or fighter range, it flew northwest along the axis of the atoll, and then turned south, presumably returning to Roi. Defenders believed this to be a photo-reconnaissance flight.

Next morning the defenders continued their routine work, trying to add to their defensive installations before the bombers were due. This was a routine now familiar to them. After being cleared from morning general quarters, the men went about their work until the midday raid sent them to gun positions or to cover. After that raid was over, the men cleaned up after the bombs or went ahead with their other duties. Then late in the afternoon they had to take time out to deal with the flying boats. At night they could usually sleep when they were not on sentry duty, or standing some other type of watch. Following this pattern, crew members of the various batteries had completed their sturdy emplacements, and everybody had contributed to the construction of primary and alternate positions for beach defense. They had built more beach positions than they could possibly man, but many of these were to be manned only under certain conditions.²⁰ The shortage of trained fighting men was so critical that a well coordinated Japanese landing attack would require them to be everywhere at once.

indicate that the memories of the survivors have almost unanimously transposed the events of 17 and 18 December.

²⁰ LtCol A. A. Poindexter reply to HistSec, HQMC questionnaire, 8Apr47.

At 1050, 27 bombers from Roi came in from the northwest at about 18,000 feet. They worked over the VMF-211 area south of the airstrip, finished off the Marines' messhall and tentage at Camp One, and struck the PanAir area. Batteries D and E hit four of these bombers, and observers on the atoll saw one of them splash after its crew bailed out over the water. Bomb damage at Camp One was serious, but elsewhere it was slight, and there were no casualties.

December 20 dawned gloomily with heavy rain, and ceilings were low and visibility poor all day. This wide weather front apparently dissuaded the Japanese from attempting their usual noon visit, but it did not stop a U. S. Navy PBV which arrived that day and provided Wake with its first physical contact with the friendly outer world since the start of the war. This plane landed in the lagoon at 1530 to deliver detailed information about the planned relief and reinforcement of the atoll. These reports contained good news for nearly everyone. All civilians except high-priority workers were to be evacuated. A Marine fighter squadron (VMF-221) would fly in to reinforce VMF-211, which was again down to a single plane. And the units from the 4th Defense Battalion would arrive on the *Tangier* to reinforce the weakened detachment of the 1st Defense Battalion. The PBV fliers had a copy of the *Tangier's* loading plan,²¹ and this list made the ship seem like some fabulous floating Christmas package that was headed for the atoll.

That night Commander Cunningham, Majors Devereux and Putnam, and Lieu-

²¹ Capt W. S. Cunningham, USN, ltr to Capt S. E. Morison, USNR, 7Feb47; *McMorris Interview*, 2; CinCPac OPlan 39-41, 15Dec41.

tenant Commander Greey prepared reports to send back to Pearl Harbor. Major Bayler, his mission long since completed, would carry the papers back as he complied with his orders directing him to return from Wake "by first available Government air transportation." Mr. Hevenor, the Bureau of the Budget official who had missed the *Philippine Clipper* on 8 December, also planned to leave on the PBY, but someone pointed out that he could not travel in a Naval aircraft without parachute and Mae West, neither of which was available. So Mr. Hevenor missed another plane.

At 0700 next morning, 21 December, the PBY departed. Within less than two hours, at 0850, 29 Japanese Navy attack bombers, covered by 18 fighters, lashed down at Wake through the overcast and bombed and strafed all battery positions. These were planes from *Carrier Division 2* (*Soryu* and *Hiryu*), called in by the Japanese to help soften Wake's unexpected toughness.²² Due to the low ceiling, the attack was consummated before the 3-inch batteries could get into action, but the .50 caliber antiaircraft machine guns engaged the enemy. The attack caused little damage, but its implications were ominous.

Only three hours later, 33 of the shore-based Japanese bombers arrived from Roi, and again they concentrated on Peale Island and Camp Two. They approached from the east at 18,000 feet in two main formations, and the bombs from the second group plastered Battery D's position on Peale. This unit had fired 35 rounds in half a minute and had hit one bomber when a bomb fell squarely inside the director emplacement of the battery. This explosion killed the firing battery execu-

tive, Platoon Sergeant Johnalson E. Wright, and wounded the range officer and three other Marines.

Now there was only one firing director mechanism left on the atoll, and it belonged to Battery E located in the crotch of Wake Island. But Battery E had no height finder, although Battery D still had one of these. Thus the two 3-inch batteries had only enough fire control equipment for one battery. Because of Battery E's more desirable location, and because it had escaped damage since its move to this spot, Major Devereux decided to maintain it as his primary antiaircraft defense of the atoll. Thus by taking over Battery D's height finder, certain other fire control gear, one gun, and the necessary personnel, Battery E became a fully manned and fully equipped four-gun battery. Two other Battery D guns were shifted to a new position on Peale Island where they could assume beach-defense missions, and the fourth gun remained at the original battery position. Dummy guns also were mounted there to create the impression that the battery was still intact. As a further measure of deception, Battery F on Wilkes, also reduced to two guns, would open fire by local control methods whenever air raids occurred. Battery D was parceled out that night, and by next morning the garrison on Peale had been reduced to less than 100 Marines and a small group of civilians who had been trained by Marine noncommissioned officers to man one of Battery D's guns.²³

²² *Capture of Wake*, II, 372.

²³ Of these civilians the Peale Island commander, Capt Godbold, later wrote: "The civilians who served with this battery were of inestimable value . . . under the capable leadership of Sergeant Bowsher, they soon were firing their gun in a manner comparable to the Marine-manned guns. Before the surrender of the is-

By 22 December VMF-211 again had two airplanes capable of flight, and Captain Freuler and Lieutenant Davidson took them up for morning patrol. Davidson had been out almost an hour and was covering the northern approaches to Wake at 12,000 feet when he spotted enemy planes coming in. He called Captain Freuler, who was then south of the atoll, and the Marines began independent approaches to close with the enemy. The Japanese flight consisted of 33 carrier attack planes (dive bombers) escorted by six fighters, all from the *Soryu-Hiryu* carrier division. The fighters were at 12,000 feet and the dive bombers at 18,000. The fighters were of a sleek new type, the first Zeros to be encountered over Wake.

Captain Freuler dived his patched-up F4F-3 into a division of six fighters, downing one and scattering the others. Coming around quickly in a difficult opposite approach, Freuler attacked another of the Zeros and saw it explode only 50 feet below. This explosion temporarily engulfed the Grumman in a cloud of flames and flying fragments. The Marine plane was badly scorched, its manifold-pressure dropped, and the controls reacted sluggishly. As the captain turned to look for the atoll, he saw Lieutenant Davidson attacking the dive bombers. The lieutenant was diving at a retreating bomber, but a Zero was behind him closing on the Marine Grumman. This enemy fighter probably downed Davidson, because the lieutenant did not return to the atoll.

Meanwhile a Zero got on Freuler's tail while he took in Davidson's plight, and

fire from the Japanese plane wounded the Marine pilot in the back and shoulder. Freuler pushed his plane over into a steep dive, managed to shake off his pursuer, and dragged the shattered, scorched F4F into the field for a crash landing. In the words of Lieutenant Kinney, whose shoestring maintenance had kept VMF-211 flying for fifteen days: "This left us with no airplanes." In spite of the Marine squadron's last blaze of heroism, the enemy dive bombers came on in to strike at all battery positions. But the atoll pilots were not much impressed by the work of the Japanese naval aviators. "We who have been used to seeing only the propeller hub are a bit taken aback by their shallow dives and their inaccuracies," Lieutenant Barninger said. The Japanese bombs did not cause much damage, and there were no casualties on the ground.

But now that carrier air was being brought to bear against them, the Wake defenders concluded that it would not be long before the Japanese came back with a bigger task force and a better amphibious plan. Ground defense preparations intensified that afternoon. VMF-211's effectives—less than 20 officers and men—were added to the defense battalion as infantry, Peale Island completed its beach defense emplacements, and Captain Platt drew up final detailed orders for his defense of Wilkes. Platt ordered Marine Gunner McKinstry, who commanded Battery F, to fire on enemy landing boats as long as his guns could depress sufficiently, and then to fall back to designated positions from which his men would fight as riflemen. There these men from the 3-inch battery would be joined by the personnel from Battery L. After that it would be an infantry fight. "All that can be done

land, some of these men were slated to be evacuated to Honolulu; however, the entire gun crew offered to stay on the island and serve with the battery." LtCol B. D. *Godbold Rept*, 14.

is being done," noted one of the Wake officers, "but there is so little to do with."²⁴

*ENEMY PLANS AND ACTIONS,
11-21 DECEMBER*²⁵

Wake defenders were correct in assuming that the Japanese soon would be back with a stronger effort than the one which had failed for Rear Admiral Kajioka. The admiral began to mull a few plans for his next attack while he withdrew toward Kwajalein on 11 December, and he had his staff in conference on 13 December while his battered fleet still was anchoring in that Marshall atoll. Rear Admiral Kuniori Marushige, who had commanded *Cruiser Division 18* (including the light cruisers *Tatsuta* and *Tenryu* as well as the flagship *Yubari*), analyzed the causes of failure as follows: The landing attempt had failed, he said, because of the vigorous seacoast artillery defense, fighter opposition, adverse weather, and because of insufficient Japanese forces and means.

But Admiral Kajioka was more interested in the success of the next operation, and so was *Fourth Fleet* Commander Inouye at Truk. While the ships remaining in Kajioka's task force were being patched up at Kwajalein, Admiral Inouye sent destroyers *Asanagi* and *Yunagi* over to replace the destroyers lost in the Wake action. He also added the *Oboro*, a much more powerful and newer ship of destroyer-leader characteristic which was armed with six 5-inch guns.²⁶ The mine layer *Tsugaru* came over from Saipan

with the *Maizuru Special Landing Force Number Two*; and the transport *Tenyo Maru* and the float-plane tender *Kiyokawa* also joined the force. Troop rehearsals began on 15 December, but Admiral Inouye still was not convinced that his force was large enough, and he asked the Commander in Chief of the *Combined Fleet* to send him more ships.

Inouye's superior officer, now apparently convinced that Wake would be hard to crack, sent to the *Fourth Fleet* admiral the fleet carriers *Soryu* and *Hiryu* of *Carrier Division 2*, heavy cruisers *Aoba*, *Furutaka*, *Kako*, and *Kinugasa* of *Cruiser Division 6*, heavy cruisers *Tone* and *Chikuma* of *Cruiser Division 8*, and a task force screen of six destroyers.²⁷ The commander of the *Combined Fleet* assigned over-all command of this Wake task force to Rear Admiral Koki Abe, commander of *Cruiser Division 8*. Rear Admiral Kajioka retained his command of the amphibious force.

Plans for the second attack against the American atoll called for more softening up than Wake had received previous to Kajioka's first attempt to land troops there. On 21 December, two days prior to the proposed landing, the aircraft of *Carrier Division 2* would work over the atoll's defenses to destroy first the U. S. air capability and then the shore batteries and the antiaircraft weapons. Then the amphibious force would move up for the landing, and in order that the atoll might be surprised²⁸ there would be no preliminary naval bombardment on 23 December.

To make sure that troops got ashore, the two destroyer-transport (*Patrol Craft*

²⁴ LtCol C. A. *Barninger Rept.*

²⁵ Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Capture of Wake; Enemy Notes.*

²⁶ ONI 222-J, "A Statistical Summary of the Japanese Navy," 20Jul44, 56.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 47, 49.

²⁸ *Capture of Wake*, II, 372.

32 and 33) would run aground on the south shore of the atoll near the airstrip, and the approximately 1,000 men of the special naval landing force²⁹ would then be carried to the beach in four to six landing barges. Two of these would land on Wilkes Island, two on Wake Island between the airstrip and Camp One, and the other two probably provided for would put their troops ashore just west of Peacock Point.³⁰ If these special landing force troops ran into serious trouble on the atoll, the naval force would send in 500 men organized from ships' landing forces. And if this combined force failed to subdue the atoll defenders, more help would be sent by means of an ultimate and desperate expedient. The destroyers of the task force would be beached, and their crews would swarm ashore. Admiral Inouye was determined that this second attack should not fail.

The possibility of U. S. naval surface intervention was taken into consideration. This possibility had been dismissed during planning for the attack of 11 December because the Japanese reasoned that the shock of Pearl Harbor would immobilize American surface operations for some time. But now the Japanese assumed that U. S. surface opposition was probable. To guard against such threat, the four heavy cruisers of *Cruiser Division 6* would act as a covering force east of Wake. If a major surface action developed, Rear Admiral Abe would enter the fight with *Cruiser Division 8* and conduct the battle. As on the first attempt, submarines would precede the invasion force to reconnoiter

²⁹ *Wake Attack*, 2.

³⁰ HistSec, HQMC interview with Col J. P. S. Devereux, 12Feb47, 8, hereinafter cited as *Devereux Interview*.

the island and to look out for U. S. surface forces.

With these final plans issued, the invasion force well rehearsed, and carriers *Soryu* and *Hiryu* on their way down from north of Midway, the operation against Wake was ready to go. At 0900 on 21 December Admiral Kajioka cleared Roi with the ships of his amphibious force and headed back up toward the American-held atoll.

THE RELIEF ATTEMPT,
15-23 DECEMBER³¹

Now the U. S. commanders taking help to Wake were in a race with Admiral Kajioka, even if they did not know it. Admiral Fletcher's Task Force 14 sortied from Pearl Harbor in two task groups on 15 and 16 December,³² rendezvoused southwest of Oahu during the afternoon of this second day, and sailed westward toward Wake. Fletcher's force was to arrive at the atoll on 23 December (east longitude time). There the pilots of Major Verne J. McCaul's VMF-221 would fly in from the carrier *Saratoga* while the *Tangier* anchored off Wilkes channel to unload supplies, equipment, and the Marines from the 4th Defense Battalion.³³ After taking wounded men

³¹ Principal sources bearing on the Relief Expedition are: CinCPac OPlan 39-41, 15Dec47; *McMorris Interview*; *Saratoga* log; LtCol R. D. Heintz, Jr., "We're Headed for Wake," *MC Gazette*, June 1946.

³² Dates in this section are either west or east longitude as applicable to the location of events identified by dates. Where confusion is possible the type of date will be indicated.

³³ Troops and equipment would be transported to the atoll on lighters, and if the *Tangier* were seriously damaged by enemy action she would be run aground so the cargo would not be lost.

and certain civilians on board, these ships then would return to Pearl Harbor.

But the advance was aggravatingly slow. The old fleet oiler *Neches*, in the train with the *Tangier*, could not manage more than 12 knots, and the fleet's zig-zag evasive tactics further slowed the rate of advance. To the Marines and seamen in this first westward sally of the war, the waters beyond Oahu seemed very lonely and ominous, and there was no contact, either friendly or enemy, to vary the tense monotony of the run. Each day on the *Tangier* began with general quarters and then lapsed into normal shipboard routine. Marines received such training and instruction as could be fitted into this schedule, and part of this educational program included lectures by the few radar technicians on board.

The few available maps and charts of Wake received intense study. In anticipation that Wake's 3-inch guns might have to deliver direct fire on ships or ground targets, improvised sights were designed and constructed in the ship's machine shops. The officer commanding the machine-gun detachment contrived with the ship's force to construct special slings with which his .50 caliber antiaircraft machine guns could be hoisted from ship to barges while remaining ready to ward off possible enemy attacks during unloading. The 5-inch seacoast men stayed in practice by standing their share of watches on the after 5-inch gun of the *Tangier*. All Marine antiaircraft machine guns were set up and manned on the superstructure.

On 18 December CinCPac ordered U. S. submarines which were patrolling in the vicinity of Wake to move south out of the area. These boats of Task Force 7 were

to patrol around Rongelap in the Marshalls until the relief expedition reached Wake. CinCPac wanted to avoid any possibility of one U. S. force confusing another for the enemy.³⁴ Three days later, on the 21st, intelligence information which had been arriving at Pearl Harbor indicated that a large force of shore-based Japanese planes was building up in the Marshalls, and that enemy surface forces might be east of Wake where they could detect the approach of Fletcher's Task Force 14. Other reports indicated the presence of Japanese carriers, including possibly the *Soryu*, northwest of the atoll. Fletcher's mission, now about 650 miles east of Wake, appeared to be growing more hazardous with each hour. CinCPac ordered the carrier *Lexington* and other ships of Task Force 11 over from the southeast to give Fletcher closer support.³⁵

By 0800 on 22 December, Task Force 14 was within 515 miles of Wake, and Admiral Fletcher in the cruiser *Astoria* kept up on the news about his race by monitoring the CinCPac radio nets. Ominous reports of Japanese surface operations around the atoll continued to filter in at Pearl Harbor, but conditions at Wake were unchanged. Fletcher decided to refuel. Although his destroyers still had a reasonable supply of oil, it might not be enough if they had to fight. But this very act of fueling, which took most of the day, kept them out of the fight. By the time the U. S. ships moved on toward Wake, Admiral Kajioka was only about 50 miles from the atoll with his amphibious force. Fletcher had lost the race.

³⁴ Paraphrased file of CinCPac dispatches concerning Wake relief, December 1941.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

The Fall of Wake¹

At Wake, 23 December began with intermittent rain squalls, and shortly after 0100 the defenders saw a succession of vivid, irregular flashes beyond the horizon north of Peale Island. Men on the atoll could hear nothing above the rain and the boom of the surf, but it was obvious that the flashes were not signals or searchlights. They were too brilliant and irregular for that. Old fleet-duty hands were reminded of night battle practice at sea. Was there a naval battle, or were the Japanese coming back? The defenders could only guess.

By this time the Marines were used to seeing lights, even though these were unusual. But at 0145 came a more urgent alarm. The word over the "J"-line announced that the Japanese were landing at Toki Point on Peale. Major Devereux alerted all units and then telephoned Lieutenant Kessler at Toki Point for additional information. The Battery B commander told Devereux that he could see lights in the distance but that there was no landing in progress. The beach positions had been manned, Kessler added, because boats were "believed" to be some-

where offshore. By this time all units had sent their men to general quarters, and at Camp One, Second Lieutenant Poindexter loaded his scanty mobile reserve unit of eight Marines² and four .30 caliber machine guns into their truck, reported his actions to the command post, and moved out toward Peale Island. But the word from Kessler had convinced Devereux that if the enemy were landing, they were not doing it on Peale Island. He put a damper on the general alarm, and ordered that Poindexter be intercepted when his truck passed the command post. He held the mobile reserve there to await developments.

THE JAPANESE APPROACH

Developments were not long in coming. Admiral Kajioka's amphibious force had at last sighted the atoll's faint outline, and the ships were reducing speed. Moments later, in the words of a Japanese "combat correspondent" who was moved to poetry by this amphibious venture, "The honorable, first order of 'CHARGE' was given, and the daring officers and men, with white sashes, bravely went down to the surface of the sea."³

¹ Unless otherwise noted the material in Chap 4 is derived from *Devereux Rept*; *Putnam Rept*; (*Officer's name*) *Repts*, especially LtCol W. McC. Platt *Rept*, 1stLt J. A. McAlister *Rept*, MG C. B. McKinstry *Rept*; *Devereux Interview*; replies to HistSec questionnaire by Col G. H. Potter, LtCol W. McC. Platt, LtCol A. A. Poindexter; *Capture of Wake*; *Wake Attack*; *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*; *Devereux Story*.

² This unit, along with a few Marines from supply and administration sections and 15 Navy enlisted men commanded by BM 1stCl James E. Barnes, was also responsible for the defense of Camp One.

³ This latter-day Masefield was Kayoshi Ibushi of the Japanese Naval Information Section.

Approximately 800 of the *SNLF* troops were distributed between the two destroyer-transport.⁴ The other 200 presumably were embarked on board one or more of the transports or the float-plane tender *Kiyokawa*, and the 500 sailors of the provisional reserve force apparently were to remain at their normal duties unless called to reinforce the landing effort.⁵ The *Maizuru Second Special Naval Landing Force*, now brought to full strength by reinforcements from Saipan, was essentially a Japanese version of the battalion landing team (BLT). Its three rifle companies had numerical designations but were more commonly identified by the names of their commanders. Thus the *1st Company*, commanded by Lieutenant Kinichi Uchida, was often called the *Uchida unit*. Similarly, the *2d* and *3d Companies* were styled respectively the *Takano unit* and the *Itaya unit*.

The *Uchida* and *Itaya companies* would assault Wake Island while 100 "picked men" of the *Takano unit* seized Wilkes.⁶

"This reporter," as he later said of himself, ". . . was able to have the honor of taking the first step upon the island as a man of letters . . . the capture of Wake Island . . . was so heroic that even the gods wept." *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*, 32.

⁴ One account says 500 men of this force were on the two destroyer-transport. At this time all *SNLF* units attached to the Fourth Fleet were concentrated for the seizure of Wake in much the same manner that U. S. Fleet Marine Force units would have been employed.

⁵ The exact number of Japanese troops who fought on Wake has not been determined. Adm Morison cites Marine estimates that "at least 1,200 troops landed early on the 23rd," and that others came ashore after the surrender. *Rising Sun in the Pacific*, 245.

⁶ Itaya's name and that of his company appears in one Japanese source as "Itatani." *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*, 28.

The balance of the *Takano company* presumably would back up the other two companies on Wake Island. At about the time the premature landing alarm was sounded on the atoll, the amphibious force was putting landing craft over the side. The weather was giving them trouble, but at about 0200 the *SNLF* troops clambered down into these craft. "The hardships encountered in lowering the landing barges were too severe even to imagine," reported correspondent Ibushi. "Now we, the Naval Landing Force, on the barges which we were in, must charge into enemy territory and carry out the final step of securing a landing point after touching the shore."⁷

As the landing craft pitched through the breakers, the destroyer-transport turned to make their final runs onto the reef south of the airstrip. These vessels, *Patrol Boats 32* and *33*, mounted the reef in a smother of breakers and foam, and went aground near the west end of the airstrip. Two of the landing barges scraped bottom as they approached the reef near Camp One, and still there was no sign that the atoll defenders were awake. But suddenly tracers pencilled from the beach at Wilkes Island and .50 caliber slugs splattered through the gunwales of one barge. Then a searchlight from Wilkes flared on to silhouette the picked men of the *Takano unit* landing on that island. It was then 0245, and the battle for Wake was on. (See Map 5, Map Section)

THE DEFENSE OF WAKE ISLAND

Since 0215 Marines had been confident that a landing against them was in prog-

⁷ *Ibid.*

ress. Lights could be seen offshore north of Peale Island and all along the south coasts of Wake and Wilkes Island. At about 0230 Marines on Peacock Point thought they could see the outlines of two barges heading along the coast toward the airfield, but these evidently were the patrol craft heading in toward the reef. By now Major Devereux, Major Potter, his executive officer, a radioman, and a switchboard operator in the defense detachment command post were swamped by reports of sounds, lights, and shapes. As he collected this information and relayed reports to Commander Cunningham, Devereux saw that the greatest threat was developing along the south coast of the atoll, and he dispatched Lieutenant Poindexter's eight-man mobile reserve to defensive positions between Camp One and the airstrip.

Poindexter's men had not left the truck, and the lieutenant had them transported down the island and into position within 15 minutes. The area into which they moved was just west of the road junction near the west end of the airstrip. There this small force commanded the south shore road as well as the critical beach section south of the field. The lieutenant reported that this area was being bombarded when he reached his defensive positions, but there were no signs of a landing.

But at 0235⁸ defenders on Wilkes reported that they could hear barge engines

⁸ The Japanese list 0235 as the official time of their landing. Statements of Marine officers do not agree. Some say the landings came at about 0130, while others place the time almost an hour later. In his official report, Devereux gives the time of landing on Wilkes at 0215, but his published narrative says 0120. Yet a subsequent study convinced him that the time of 0235 was

above the surf, and Marine Gunner McKinstry opened fire with a .50 caliber machine gun at a dark shape near the beach below. Ten minutes later Captain Platt requested permission to illuminate the beach with his 60-inch searchlight, and the landing was discovered. Two barges could be seen on the beaches at Wilkes, the lights also revealed the patrol craft aground off Wake.

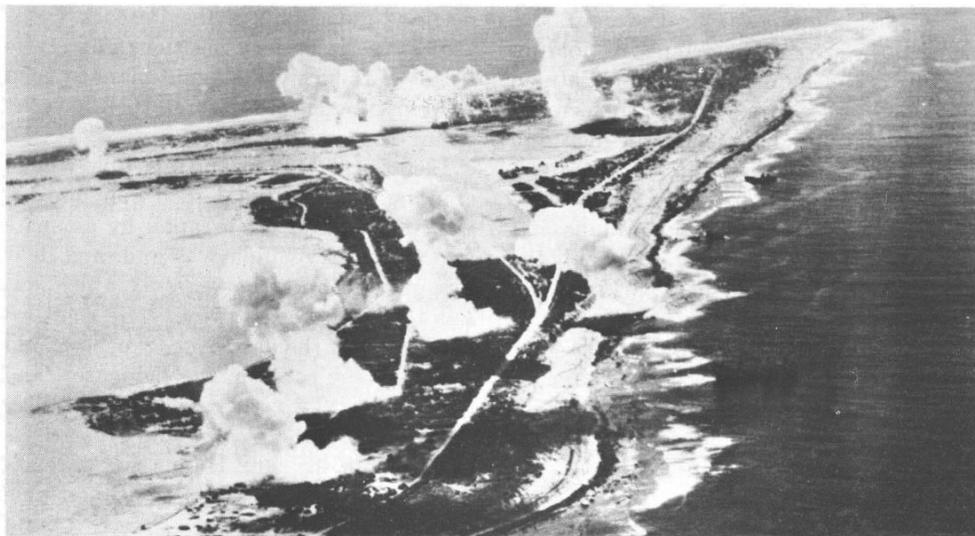
Neither of the 5-inch batteries which commanded the south approaches to Wake⁹ could bear against the landings. Terrain masks likewise prevented them from firing at *Patrol Craft 32* and *33* on the reef.¹⁰ The only weapon larger than a machine gun that could engage these destroyer-transport, already beginning to spew out their human cargo, was the 3-inch gun emplaced on the rise between the beach road and VMF-211's hard-stand parking area. But this gun was not manned. Realizing the importance of this weapon, Second Lieutenant Robert M. Hanna, in command of the anti-aircraft machine guns about the field, gathered a scratch crew consisting of one Marine, Corporal Ralph J. Holewinski, and three civilians¹¹ and

closer to the fact. Excepting the variances concerning events during these dark early hours of the battle, Marine accounts agree generally as to events after daylight.

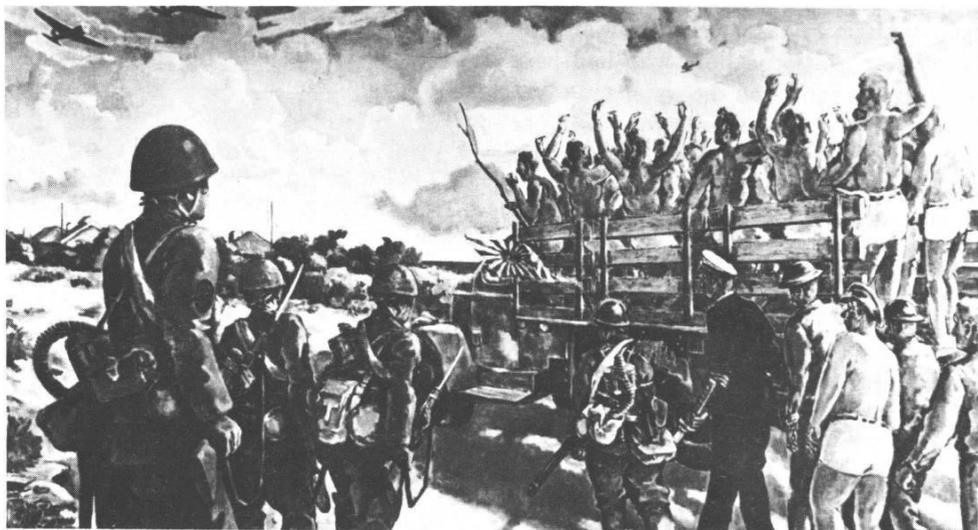
⁹ Btry A (Peacock Point) and Btry L (Wilkes).

¹⁰ One of the advantages of the Navy 5"/51 for seacoast defense missions was that it had 360° train, as contrasted to the limited traverse of the 155mm field guns used by the Army for this role. In this instance, however, terrain masks, slight though they were, prevented either A or L from bearing.

¹¹ 1stLt R. M. Hanna *Rept* to CO, 1st DefBnDet, 11Oct45, 2. Of these three civilians, two (Paul Gay and Bob Bryan) were subsequently killed in action, and the third, Eric Lehtola, was wounded. Hanna states that they fought with "exceptional gallantry."



JAPANESE PATROL CRAFT *lost in the assault on Wake Island are silent witnesses to an American carrier raid during the last days of the war.* (USN 495560)



JAPANESE NAVAL TROOPS *who took Wake Atoll are shown in a contemporary propaganda painting taking their prisoners toward a collecting point.* (SC 301066)

raced to this gun. Major Devereux also realized the critical importance of holding this area, and he ordered Major Putnam and the 20 men of VMF-211 to form an infantry support between the 3-inch gun and the enemy landing.

All defense units on Wake Island were disposed to meet the enemy. Hanna and the VMF-211 "infantrymen" held the left flank south of the airfield parking area. To the west, and squarely in the path of the enemy's initial rush toward the west end of the field, were Second Lieutenant Kliewer and three aviation Marines. They guarded one of the generators which was wired to detonate the mines buried in the airstrip. At the road junction farther west Poindexter's mobile reserve was already firing its four machine guns eastward along the beach at *Patrol Craft 32* where the enemy troops had revealed themselves by injudicious use of pyrotechnic signals. At Camp One four .30 caliber machine guns were manned for beach defense by Battery I's gun shed crew and the Naval Air Station sailors who had been serving as lookouts on the water tank OP. Behind this general line, two .50 caliber machine-gun sections (each of two guns) guarded the airstrip. One section held the west end of the strip near Lieutenant Kliewer's generator, and the other section was located on the east end of the strip.¹² These two sections could command the length of the field, and could partially interdict movement across the field. Other

¹² These two sections had been sited to provide antiaircraft fire as well as final protective fire along the airstrip. This conformed with defense battalion practice, but the light of hindsight prompted Devereux to wish that he had moved these sections closer to the beach where they could have been tied in with the general line.

machine guns were in the Peacock Point area. At the battery positions gun crews stood by their weapons and manned such local perimeter defenses as their meager strength permitted.

Lieutenant Hanna and his jury-rigged crew quickly got the 3-inch gun into action. They laid the weapon by estimate and "Kentucky windage",¹³ and fired their first round at *Patrol Craft 33* which was less than 500 yards away. The shell hit the bridge of the destroyer-transport, and wounded the captain, the navigator, and five seamen. Two other sailors were killed. While men of the *Uchida* and *Itaya units* swarmed off the ship, Hanna and his crew fired 14 more rounds into the superstructure and hull of the craft. Finally it burst into flames, illuminating the landing area. "The scene was too beautiful to be a battlefield," reported a Japanese observer on board the cruiser *Yubari*.¹⁴

Flames from this ship lighted *Patrol Craft 32* farther west along the beach, and Hanna shifted his fire to this vessel. Three-inch shells hulled this transport-destroyer, and crews from both these ships joined the *SNLF* troops landing on the island. This added possibly 100 extra men to the battle ashore, and Hanna's gun already was seriously threatened by the *Uchida unit* which had made the beach assault. Major Putnam's aviators fought off these early attempts to silence the 3-inch gun, but the Japanese continued to attack. Alternating between creeping infiltration tactics and screaming rushes, the *Uchida* troops drove the Marines back on each side

¹³ These 3-inch Army antiaircraft guns were equipped only for indirect fire at aerial targets, and they had no sights or other fire control equipment to facilitate direct sighting by local control.

¹⁴ *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*, 33.

of the gun until the defenders were in a position which Devereux later described as "a box-shaped thing." Here they continued to hold.

But farther west Japanese troops had reached the south shore road between the mine field generator and Lieutenant Poindexter's small mobile reserve, and by the light from the burning patrol craft Poindexter could see these enemy cross the road and disappear into the brush beyond. The lieutenant was directing machine-gun fire into this brush area when he heard other firing from the direction of Camp One. He left Gunnery Sergeant T. Q. Wade in charge of the reserve force and headed toward the camp. There he found that two large landing craft had grounded on the reef some 30 yards offshore southeast of the camp.¹⁵ Four machine guns from Camp One fired at the barges, but the rounds ricocheted off. This fire evidently discouraged the craft from attempting a landing at this point, however, because they backed off the reef and nosed about as if seeking a better site.

While these two boats floundered about in the surf, Lieutenant Poindexter formed two teams of grenadiers to move down to the water's edge and lob hand grenades into the barges. One team consisted of himself and Boatswain's Mate First Class James E. Barnes, while the other consisted of Mess Sergeant Gerald Carr, and a civilian, R. R. Rutledge, who had served as an Army officer in France during World War I. The machine guns suspended fire, and the grenadiers attacked. By this time the Japanese had landed a short distance farther east, and Boatswain's Mate Barnes managed to throw at least one grenade inside a barge just as the enemy

debarkation commenced. The explosion inflicted heavy casualties, but some 75 to 100 enemy splashed ashore and entered the underbrush east of Camp One. This heavy growth north of the road soon became a sort of no man's land into which the Japanese continued to infiltrate and expand their beachhead.

All this Poindexter managed to report back to Major Devereux in a final message from Camp One before wire communication was lost. But shortly after this a panicky civilian who had managed to pick his way through the brush from Camp One to Devereux's command post brought in reports—totally untrue—that Camp One was being overrun and that he had seen Japanese troops bayoneting the machine gunners of the mobile reserve.

The loss of communications was not localized at Camp One. Devereux's command post had lost contact with Lieutenant Hanna, the VMF-211 infantrymen, the CP of the .50 caliber machine-gun battery near the airstrip, and Battery A at Peacock Point. The tactical line to Wilkes Island also went out at this time, but the "J"-line, which lay north of the airfield, still linked the defense battalion CP with that of Captain Platt on Wilkes. Nobody knows exactly what caused this communications failure, but the nature of the trouble suggests that it might have been caused by a single break. The location of this major break, if there was one, must have been near the battalion command post where lines were close together. But all Wake survivors hold the opinion that the Japanese cut the lines; and they point out that the Wilkes "J"-line did not go out until some time after this failure of the line south of the field. Thus defenders believe that the lines were being

¹⁵ *Lewis.*

cut as the enemy attack progressed inland. Devereux tried to contact his Wake Island positions by radio, but this inter-island net never had been reliable, and the sets characteristically failed to function that morning. There were no communications personnel in the command post to trouble-shoot lines,¹⁶ and for the remainder of the battle Devereux had no communications with his defensive line along Wake's south coast.

It was now obvious to Devereux at his "blacked-out" CP that fights were in progress all along the west leg of Wake Island, and that he must sacrifice a defensive unit from some other area to reinforce his effort in the critical zone. Lieutenant Lewis' Battery E in the crotch of Wake Island could not be disbanded. It was the only completely equipped and up-to-strength¹⁷ anti-aircraft battery on the atoll. Battery B's 5-inch guns on Peale Island also should remain manned for possible missions against enemy ships. But Captain Godbold's Battery D might be used as infantry. This unit had two 3-inch guns, but no fire control equipment; and Peale Island did not appear to be threatened. Two officers and some 40 men from this battery became the atoll reserve, and at 0300 Major Devereux ordered Godbold to send one gun section (about nine men) from this reserve force to the aid of Hanna's untrained crew. Corporal Leon Graves brought these men around from Peale Island in a truck driven by

one of the civilians, and Major Devereux directed them toward Hanna's position.

By this time the Japanese had made at least two penetrations through the Marine "line" along the south edge of Wake Island, and it is possible that the enemy was also landing inside the lagoon in rubber boats. Several defenders speak of seeing red flares rising from within the lagoon, and after the surrender Marine working parties found rubber boats on these interior beaches. If these landings were taking place, it is probable that they occurred on the north beaches of Wake Island's west leg.¹⁸ From such sites the men landing in rubber boats could join up with those landing on the south beaches.

Captain Godbold on Peale Island was one of the defenders who saw these red flares inside the lagoon, and he had Battery B at Toki Point send a two-man patrol down the interior coast of that island to investigate. Godbold then sent a three-man patrol from his own battery down the outer coast of Peale. These two patrols met at the southeast end of the island without encountering any enemy. The captain then established a three-man outpost to cover the bridge between Peale and Wake Islands.

¹⁶ MSgt R. M. June reply to HistSec, HQMC, questionnaire, 11Mar47, 2.

¹⁷ "Up-to-strength" was a relative term on Wake. The 1941 tables of organization allowed such batteries two officers and 75 enlisted men. At this time Battery E had two officers and about 50 men.

¹⁸ Although Japanese sources do not mention such interior landings the evidence to support them is generally convincing. The rubber boats did not enter the lagoon through the channel between Wilkes and Wake Island, because this narrow channel was covered throughout the battle. Devereux surmises that the boats entered the lagoon at the open end of the atoll between Kuku and Toki Points. Such landings would explain, without necessarily ruling out infiltration, the early presence of individual Japanese at various points along the lagoon shore. One Japanese source does mention that red rocket flares were to be used as a signal that "We have succeeded in landing." *Hawaii-Mataya NavOps*, 33.

But interior landings or no, the Wake defenders had their hands full. Japanese cruisers began to bombard the atoll's main island at about 0330. The landings continued in spite of the fact that Battery E now fired air bursts over the beaches, and enemy infantry continued to press closer to Hanna's 3-inch gun south of the airstrip. The VMF-211 troops still held, but their partial perimeter was being compressed tighter and tighter around the gun. This action was now little more than a battle for preservation of the weapon and the Marines involved. Major Putnam's men could not check the Japanese penetration farther to the west, nor could they prevent the enemy from moving behind them or into the island triangle above Peacock Point. And the Japanese wanted to concentrate in this triangle so they could launch an attack up the island's east leg. The VMF-211 troops could only hope to cling to the slight hillock of their position, and stay there as long as possible.¹⁹

Meanwhile Corporal Graves and his detached gun squad from Battery D were trying to reach Hanna's 3-inch gun. Devereux had told them to detruck at the road junction some 600 yards below the end of the strip and west of Peacock Point. From there they were to go through the underbrush to the gun position. But the squad detrucked considerably short of this junction—probably less than 200 yards below the strip. From there the men struck out through the brush in the general direction of the Hanna-VMF-211 area. They were soon stopped,

however, by enemy machine-gun and small-arms fire which killed one Marine and pinned down the others.²⁰ After a time Graves withdrew his unit northward toward the command post where it later participated in defensive efforts commanded by Major Potter.

It is not clear what sort of an enemy force Corporal Graves encountered in the Peacock triangle, or how the Japanese got there. There are indications that a landing might have been made in that area, with barges coming in on the south coast between Battery A on Peacock Point and the Hanna-VMF-211 position. Devereux said after the war that he believed a landing took place at this point, but the matter never has been confirmed. Some Japanese accounts, including those of Captain Koyama and a correspondent,²¹ mention a landing "near the southeast tip of Wake" to overrun Battery A, which must have been remembered from the action of 11 December—especially by men in the cruiser *Yubari*. But Captain Koyama also insisted that the Japanese made only two barge landings with a total of four barges. And these are accounted for by the landings near Camp One and at Wilkes Island. Discounting a third barge landing, this force must have been built up by the rubber boat landings within the lagoon, or by wholesale infiltration behind the position held by Putnam and Hanna.

But at any rate, Devereux soon learned from Corporal Graves that there was an

¹⁹ *Kinney Interview*. At about this time Maj Putnam, already wounded, told his men, "This is as far as we go." Six hours later, when the island fell, they still held.

²⁰ Col Devereux suggests that some of the machine-gun fire which swept through the Peacock triangle might have come from friendly weapons. He points out that Marines had .30 or .50 caliber machine gun sections on virtually the entire perimeter of the triangle.

²¹ *Capture of Wake*, II, 372.

enemy force in the triangle. And from there the Japanese threatened the entire eastern rim of the atoll. Battery E was now receiving light mortar and long-range machine-gun fire, and Battery A likewise began to receive enemy mortar fire.²² In the face of this, Captain Barninger armed his range section with two .30 caliber machine guns and formed an infantry outpost line on the high ground behind his 5-inch guns.

The enemy fire against Battery E seemed to come from the thick brush on the other side of an inlet southwest of the battery position. Direct 3-inch fire into this area silenced one automatic weapon, but this did not seem to ease the pressure much. Lieutenant Lewis then sent a patrol of approximately 10 men under Sergeant Raymon Gragg to investigate. Gragg went out to the road north of the airstrip, and patrolled to the southwest along this road. Within 50 yards of the battery Gragg's patrol ran into heavy Japanese fire which forced the Marines to deploy. Answering the enemy fire, the patrol held here until the surrender.

At about 0430 the .50 caliber machine-gun section at the east end of the airstrip, still in communication with Devereux, reported that the Japanese were attacking in company strength up the road from Peacock Point. Corporal Winford J. McAnally, in charge of the six Marines and three civilian volunteers at this position, was trying to hold the Japanese south of the airstrip. Fire from the .50 caliber gun position had halted the enemy advance

²² Barninger's report also speaks of occasional fire from "a small field piece." Lt Col C. A. Barninger *Rept*, 6. This may have been a 70mm howitzer of the type organic to Japanese infantry battalions.

along the road, but the enemy now attempted to infiltrate around the strong point. McAnally contacted another machine gun position some 400 yards to the south on the atoll's east shore, and these two sections alternated in firing at the enemy.

This Japanese force probably was the *Itaya unit*. This reinforced company evidently infiltrated behind the Putnam-Hanna position at the 3-inch gun while the *Uchida company* remained near the beach to deal with that weapon which had fired on the patrol craft. The enemy at first had trouble locating McAnally's gun section, but before daylight they were all around the position. McAnally's men continued to hold, however, and the corporal's reports to Devereux gave the major his only link with the action south of the command post.

By 0500, a half hour before dawn, it was clear that the Japanese had a superior force firmly established on the atoll, and that the enemy was free to infiltrate almost at will around and between the isolated positions of the defenders. At this time Commander Cunningham sent his message, "Enemy on island issue in doubt."²³ But actually there was little doubt, although the defenders were far from admitting it at that point. The 500 defenders on the atoll were then outnumbered approximately two to one by the enemy; but what was worse, the Marines had their mission and their own atoll against them. "Little Wake" has a vulnerable shore line about 21 miles in length, and the defenders had insufficient men to man even a minimum of their antiaircraft and seacoast guns and at the same time the beach defenses. On Wake Island alone, nearly

²³ *Wake File*.

half of the 200 defenders had to remain at Batteries A and E, and another 15 Marines manned machine guns and searchlights at Heel Point where the island's east leg crooks toward Camp Two. Thus only about 85 men could oppose the enemy landing force, and half of these were machine-gun crewmen. Marines serving as riflemen against the enemy on Wake Island numbered between 40 and 45.

When Cunningham sent his message, Major Putnam still held the position around Hanna's gun, but the Japanese now had these Marines surrounded. Here the defenders had sustained a number of casualties, including the death of Captain Elrod.²⁴ Camp One also continued to hold, and Lieutenant Poindexter had rejoined his small mobile reserve force near the road junction west of the airstrip. There at first dawn the Marines were taken under heavy fire from the brush off their left (north) flank. Light mortar shells began to fall around the gun positions, and one of the .30 caliber weapons was put out of action. In danger of being outflanked here, Poindexter ordered a withdrawal to Camp One where he would consolidate for his final stand. The unit displaced by section in 150-yard bounds, and arrived at Camp One shortly after daybreak. There Poindexter organized his defenders along a semi-circular line facing seaward and to the southeast. In this line he had about 40 riflemen and 10 machine guns.

Lieutenant Kliever and his three Marines had survived the night beside the mine field generator, but a heavy Japanese attack threatened them just before dawn.

²⁴ The Japanese sustained at least 62 casualties trying to take this gun position, and one of them was Lt Uchida, the company commander.

This was repulsed by close-in fighting with submachine guns and grenades, but the Japanese came back again at dawn. This time the enemy made a shouting bayonet charge against the Marines, but again Kliever and his men, now aided by the .50 caliber machine guns at the west end of the airstrip, managed to halt the attack.

Enemy pressure against McAnally's machine-gun position east of the airstrip also increased during the hour before dawn. The Marine strong point now had been located, and the defenders were under heavy attack by small-arms fire and grenades. McAnally's gunners already had broken up a number of enemy rushes by holding their fire until it would be most effective, but these 10 men could not expect to hold out for long against the reinforced company opposing them.

This was clear also to Devereux at the command post, and at 0530 he directed Major Potter, who until now had assisted in the command post, to assemble every headquarters, service, supply, or casual Marine in the command post area, including Corporal Graves' detached squad from Battery D, and to form a final defensive line approximately 100 yards south of the command post. This force of approximately 40 men would take up positions astride the north-south main road. Devereux then telephoned Captain Godbold on Peale and directed him to truck his entire Battery D, plus the few .50 caliber gunners, to the battalion command post for immediate employment as infantry. With these orders, the atoll's final reserve, totaling approximately 30 officers and men, was committed.

By 0600 McAnally's position was nearly surrounded and under continual infan-

try²⁵ attack. Unless he was to lose these personnel, Major Devereux had no alternative but to pull them back. This he did shortly after 0600, when McAnally was ordered to withdraw northward and join Major Potter's line.

After Captain Godbold's reserve force left Peale Island, First Lieutenant Kessler became commander there since his Battery B was all that remained on the island. In the light of dawn Kessler could see on Wilkes a line of Japanese flags across the center of the island, and a large enemy flag waving from the approximate position of Marine Gunner McKinstry's provisional Battery F. This he reported to Major Devereux, who could only conclude that Wilkes, which had been silent since about 0300, had shared the fate which now appeared imminent for Wake Island.

Above the brush and slight rise of ground which topped the west leg of Wake Island, Kessler could also see the superstructure of *Patrol Craft 32*. Observing that the ship appeared intact, Kessler at 0600 requested Major Devereux's permission to fire on it. Although the line of fire and intervening partial mask²⁶ made this hazardous, the request was approved, and on the first salvo Battery B shot away the ship's mainmast. As a result of subsequent adjustment, the ship was hit about the superstructure and upper hull. It finally caught fire.

²⁵ Among the Japanese killed before his position at about this time were two flame-thrower operators. Although use of flame is not recorded, this was perhaps the earliest tactical employment of this weapon in the Pacific island war.

²⁶ Kessler had to train the flat-trajectory 5"/51's so as to fire across Flipper Point and just clear the crest of Wake Island. The line of fire passed less than 250 yards to the west of Lt Kliewer's position at the generator.

Meanwhile Second Lieutenant Robert W. Greeley had reached the command post with the first 20 men from Battery D. There Major Potter, trying to piece out and extend his sparse line to the right (west), directed that the reinforcements be placed on that flank around the edge of the clearing originally dozed out to prepare for the north-south leg of the airstrip. Captain Godbold arrived with other reinforcements at about 0700,²⁷ and these men joined those already emplaced by Greeley. This line now turned to the right (north) to refuse the flank along the edge of the clearing. Potter's line, now containing about the equivalent of a rifle platoon, thus extended from near the beach, across the two roads south of the CP, and to the airstrip clearing where it made a northward turn. Thus a gap of approximately 450 yards existed between the skirmish line and the shore of the lagoon. This gap the defenders would attempt to cover by fire.

By daylight the atoll defenders could make out the large task force which supported the landing operations. There were then 13 ships at various positions around the island (the four cruisers of *Cruiser Division 6* were out of sight east of Wake), and all of them were keeping a safe distance from the 5-inch shore batteries. "Due to the previous experience with the American shore batteries," a senior Japanese officer said later, "we did

²⁷ Like so many other questions as to exact times of events during the defense of Wake, this one is subject to conflicting testimony. Maj Potter states that Godbold reached the command post at 0600. Godbold gives 0715 as the time. Other sources, while not giving times, put the arrival of Battery D shortly after daybreak. Balancing all accounts against each other, 0700 or shortly before seems to be the best synthesis.

not want to come within range.”²⁸ In spite of this caution, however, the destroyer *Mutsuki* began at 0654 to lead two other destroyers (probably the *Yayoi* and the *Mochizuki*) in toward Wilkes Island, possibly to fire shore bombardment missions. But fire from Battery B on Peale quickly hit the *Mutsuki*, and the formation turned and scurried away. Observers believed that Kessler’s fire also hit the second destroyer in the formation after the ships turned, and that the *Mutsuki* later sank, but Japanese records do not confirm this.

Farther to the northwest the two Japanese carriers *Soryu* and *Hiryu* headed upwind with their cruiser and destroyer escort,²⁹ and at 0700 “the gallant Eagles of the Navy,” as the Japanese Naval Information Service styled them, approached Wake at 6,000 feet. As the formation wheeled over Peacock Point, Battery E opened fire in what was the last anti-aircraft action of the battle. The formation split into component groups according to mission, and commenced a methodical and unceasing series of air strikes in close support of the special landing force. Wilkes, Peale, and Wake Island were hit repeatedly.

Dive bombers now battered Kessler’s 5-inch gun battery on Peale Island, and the air-supported enemy troops began to move rapidly against Major Potter’s line south of the defense battalion command post. Battery E also was being attacked by the carrier planes, and Devereux believed that Wilkes Island and most of the

west leg of Wake Island already had fallen to the Japanese. Shortly after 0700 the major called Commander Cunningham and told him that organized resistance could not last much longer. Was there a chance that the relief expedition might yet arrive? No chance at all, Cunningham said.

And there was no chance, although up until two and a half hours earlier than this the men in Task Force 14 thought there might be. During the night of 22–23 December (21–22 December at Hawaii) Vice Admiral William S. Pye, acting CinCPac pending the arrival of Admiral Nimitz from Washington, had been in conference about this relief force for Wake. The officers at Pearl Harbor knew that Admiral Fletcher was running a close race, and they were concerned that this task force would be lost, along with Wake, if the race ended in a dead heat. At one point they decided to order the *Tangier* to make a solitary dash for the atoll while the *Saratoga*, then some 425 miles short of Wake, launched Major McCaul’s planes from that distance. But this order was countermanded before Fletcher could begin its execution; and finally at 0811 Hawaiian time (some two and a half hours before Wake was to surrender) Task Force 14 was recalled. The force spent most of the day refueling its cruisers, and that night retired toward Midway.

Commander Cunningham and Major Devereux decided that additional defense efforts would be hopeless, and the island commander made the decision to surrender. Acting on these orders, Devereux carried a white flag out of his CP at 0730 and walked south along the shore road to meet the Japanese.

²⁸ *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*, 29.

²⁹ In addition to the two carriers, this task force was composed of the new 12,000-ton heavy cruisers *Chikuma* and *Tone*, and six destroyers, two of which were *Tanikaze* and *Urakaze*.

*THE FIGHT ON
WILKES ISLAND*

"At this time," states a Japanese report, "Wilkes Island was the scene of a fierce and desperate battle."³⁰ Here at 0245 Gunner McKinstry fired the first shots in the battle of Wake when he saw barges approaching to land at a point just west of the new channel. After this first burst from gun 10 (see Wilkes map) a Marine searchlight flashed on to reveal the 100 men of the *Takano unit* coming through the surf and onto the beach. But by this time the Wilkes detachment was completely disposed to repel a landing, thanks to the earlier and erroneous report of a landing on Peale Island. (See Map 6)

When that false alarm sounded, Captain Platt ordered two Battery L gun sections (each about the size of a rifle squad) to positions on the lagoon side of the island, and pulled the remainder of Battery L personnel back to defensive positions along the road near the new channel. Extra ammunition and grenades were issued, and the Battery F personnel were instructed to fire against any landing for as long as they could, and then to pull back across the road to join the men of Battery L. Thus the Battery L position, commanded by Lieutenant McAlister, was well prepared when the Japanese barges hit the beach near that defensive site.

The searchlight beam lasted for only a minute in the face of the Japanese attack, but McKinstry continued to fire at the landing craft he could see on the beach, and McAlister sent two men down toward the beach to hurl grenades at the Japanese. Enemy fire killed one of these men and wounded the other. Battery F then began

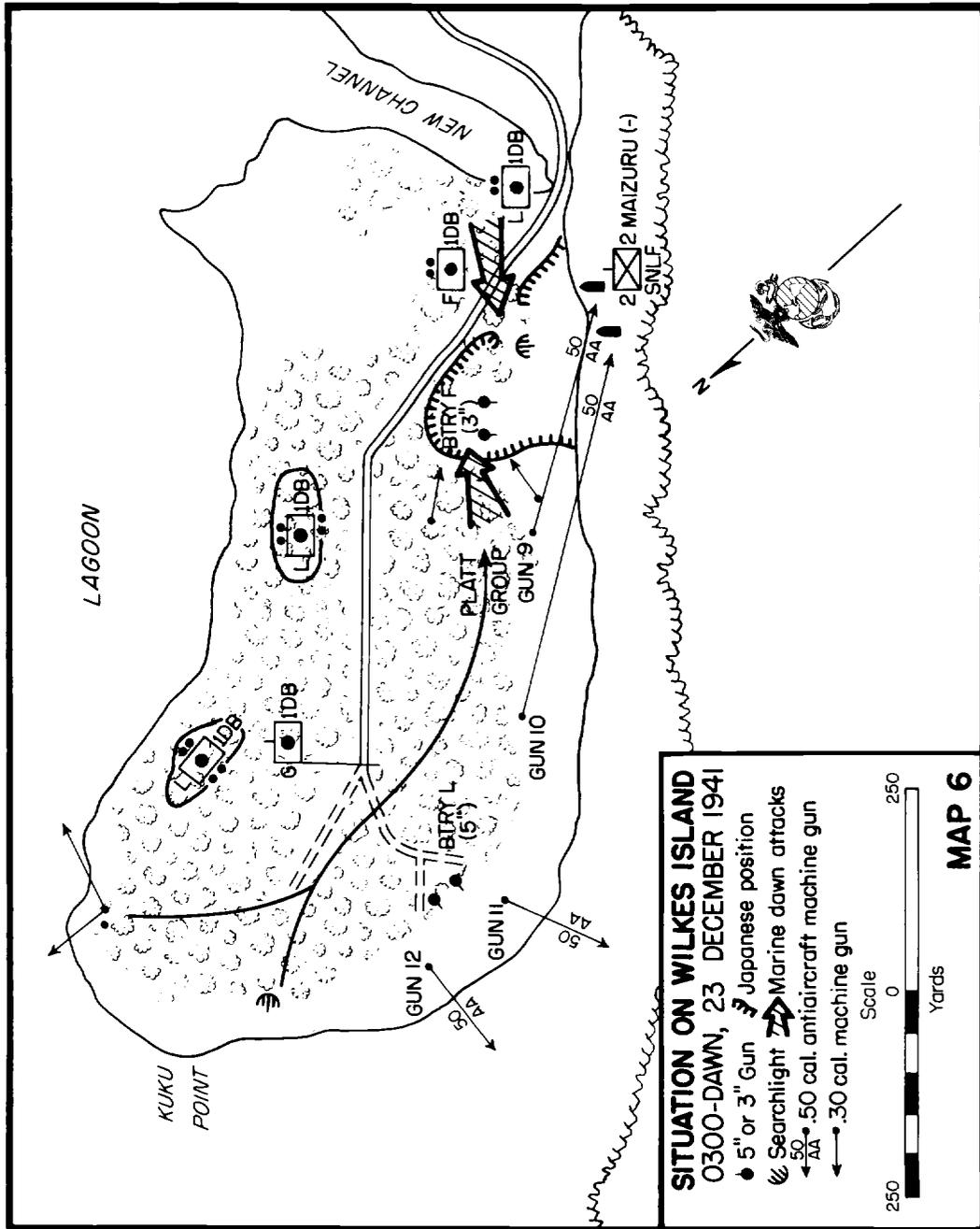
to fire into the landing area with their 3-inch shells cut for muzzle-burst, but the attack came on up the beach so rapidly that these guns soon were unable to depress sufficiently to engage the Japanese.

Gunner McKinstry had crossed to the 3-inch guns to direct this air-burst fire, but it soon became apparent to him that the position could not hold. The enemy continued to expand their beachhead, and a strong force near Battery F was throwing grenades in among the Americans. The gunner removed the firing locks from the 3-inch guns, and then directed his men to retire to their designated infantry position on the right flank of McAlister's line beyond the road. Japanese tried to pursue this withdrawal, but McKinstry's men drove them back.

McKinstry and McAlister now were in good position to protect themselves and to guard the road to Wake Island, but there was little to stop the Japanese from moving farther west and spreading out over all of Wilkes Island unless fire from machine-guns 9 and 10 could aid the main defense line to keep the enemy bottled up around the abandoned 3-inch guns. Gun 9 was already delivering flanking fire against these Japanese, and the enemy advance was temporarily checked. The Takano troops now turned their attacks to knock out this machine gun, but its position was well prepared and well camouflaged. Although nearly surrounded, the Marines on this gun continued to hold and to repel attacks which kept up until dawn.

Meanwhile Captain Platt, in his CP behind the former positions of Battery L, was having the same sort of communications trouble that plagued Major Devereux on Wake Island. By 0300 the captain had lost contact with every position except that

³⁰ *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*, 29.



of the beleaguered men on Gun 9. From them he learned that the enemy were building up pressure to extend their beachhead farther inland. At about 0400 Captain Platt moved out to the Gun 11 position near the beach, and from there he crept through the brush to a vantage point east of Gun 10. It was now about 0500, and Platt decided quickly that he must mount a counterattack if the Japanese were to be prevented from staging daylight attacks which would enable them to overrun Gun 9 and spread out into the interior of the island.

He hurried back to Gun 10 and ordered Platoon Sergeant Raymond L. Coulson to round up the .30 caliber machine-gun crews and searchlight personnel from Kuku Point, plus anyone else he could lay hold of, and assemble them at Gun 10 for the counterattack. In 25 minutes Coulson was back with the two machine-gun crews and eight riflemen—about a squad in all. These men the captain led back through the underbrush toward the Japanese.

The Marines crept and crawled to within 50 yards of the Japanese. Platt then placed his two machine guns on each flank of his line of departure, and ordered the gunners to fire their short bursts close to the ground so this fire would not endanger the McAlister and McKinstry line farther to the east. By this time dawn was breaking, and Platt quickly drew up his skirmish line of eight Marines. He signalled the machine guns to open fire, and then he led his riflemen forward against the 100 men of the *Takano unit*.

At about this time on the other side of the Japanese position, Lieutenant McAlister had observed a six-man enemy patrol moving toward his Marines, and he or-

dered his line to open fire. One enemy was killed and the others sought cover behind a large coral rock near the beach. McAlister's men continued to fire into this area to keep the Japanese pinned down while Gunner McKinstry and Private First Class William C. Halstead worked their way out to this rock and finished off the rest of the patrol.

Meanwhile Platt's counterattack had surprised the other flank of the penetration, and the Japanese at that point were in trouble. Obviously they had expected no opposition from the west, and their light machine guns had been sighted for fire to the east against the McAlister-McKinstry line. Platt's attack carried the Marines into the former position of Battery F, and the Japanese were driven back toward the beach and toward the Marine defense line by the island road.

It was now daylight, and McAlister could see this Marine attack on the far side of the Japanese position. When his men finished mopping up the enemy around the rock near the beach, the lieutenant gathered 24 Marines into a skirmish line of his own and launched a counter-attack from his side of the battlefield. The men of the *Takano landing force* panicked. Organized resistance evaporated in front of the two Marine attacks, and the forces of Platt and McAlister soon joined. About 30 Japanese fled to shelter around the Marine searchlight truck southeast of the Battery F guns, and there the Marines under Platt and McAlister flushed them out and killed them. The *Takano unit* on Wilkes had been destroyed.

McAlister counted four officer and 90 enlisted bodies while his men policed up the battlefield and removed the flags the Japanese had placed in the ground to mark

their front lines. Two wounded Japanese were captured. The other four Japanese—if the *Takano unit* actually included an even 100—were not accounted for. Marines found several small maps of Wake in the effects of the dead Japanese, and Marine positions were marked accurately on these maps. The photographic missions over the atoll had obviously paid off well.

By 0800 Captain Platt had reorganized his Wilkes defenders, and he again tried to establish contact with Wake Island. He was able to contact the motor pool at Camp One where Poindexter's force had managed to hold throughout the night, but he could not get through to Devereux at the defense battalion CP. At about noon the men on Wilkes observed Japanese landing boats headed for Wake Island and several ships approaching toward Wilkes channel. Platt ordered McAlister to get his 5-inch guns into action against these vessels, but the gun crews found that the weapons were beyond use. The training mechanism on Gun 1 was wrecked, and the Gun 2 recoil cylinder had been riddled by bomb fragments.

Wilkes had been under attack by the dive bombers which had arrived over the atoll at about 0700, but sign language interrogation of the wounded prisoners indicated that the enemy planned no more landings against this section of the atoll. Platt decided to go find the enemy. He ordered McAlister, McKinstry, and Coulson to round up all the men and to strike out east toward the old channel. Dive bombers attacked this route column as it moved down the island, and a destroyer moved in to open up from 2,000 yards. One Marine, Private First Class Robert L. Stevens, was killed by this bombing, but the

action against the Marines suddenly ceased.

Platt moved the men forward again in a dispersed formation, and near the old channel he saw three men advancing from the other direction. Two were obviously Marines, Platt decided, but the figure in the rear was a Japanese officer armed with a large sword. The captain moved forward and soon recognized Major Devereux who told him that the island had been surrendered. It was then shortly after 1330. Platt's force did not get a chance to help in the fighting on Wake Island, but it had given such a good account of itself in earlier action that a Japanese officer was prompted later to make this estimate of the Wilkes fighting: "In general, that part of the operation was not successful."³¹

THE SURRENDER AND AFTER

Prior to moving down the road toward the Japanese, who were still receiving determined small-arms fire from the few Marines south of the command post, Major Devereux passed word of the surrender to all units in communication with his command post. These were Batteries A and E on Wake Island, Battery B on Peale, and other small detachments including those at Heel Point, and some of the .50 caliber positions on Wake Island. Communications with Battery A had been restored at about daybreak. All units were ordered to destroy their materiel as best they could prior to actual surrender.

These instructions were carried out with all possible thoroughness. At Battery E an attempt was made to damage the 3-inch antiaircraft guns by stuffing blankets into the muzzles and then firing a round or two. When this failed to produce appreciable

³¹ *Capture of Wake*, II, 372.

results, the firing locks were removed and smashed, and grenades were rolled down the muzzles to explode inside and damage the rifling. All electrical fire control data receivers were smashed, electric cables chopped up, and the battery commander fired twenty rounds of .45 caliber ammunition through the delicate optical and electro-mechanical parts of the height finder and director. After completing these measures, Lieutenant Lewis assembled the men of Battery E and marched them under a white flag to the battalion command post.

At Battery A, the 5-inch firing locks were broken and buried, and all gun telescopes smashed. The range keeper was damaged beyond repair. After that a white flag was run up, and Lieutenant Barninger ordered his men to eat as much as they could hold. He then held his men on the position to await arrival of the Japanese. Elsewhere, the hard-pressed riflemen stripped the bolts from their rifles and flung them into the brush.

It was after 0800 before all this had been attended to, and the rifle fire of Potter's line was still covering the final operations of the command post. Major Devereux then tried to contact the Marine aid station located some 300 yards south of the CP. He believed that the Japanese advance must have reached this point, and he wanted to instruct the battalion surgeon to contact the Japanese. But there was no response from the aid station, and it became apparent that a surrender party must go forward from the CP. Major Devereux and Sergeant Donald Malleck, who carried a white rag tied to a mop-handle, then made their way down the road toward the fighting. At the Marine line Devereux ordered Potter's men to hold their fire, and

he and Malleck walked on toward the Japanese.

Near the hospital Devereux and the sergeant were halted by a Japanese rifleman who motioned for them to throw down their arms and helmets. Then the soldier took them to the hospital where the Japanese already were in charge. They had killed one patient and wounded another while capturing the hospital, and now they had all the patients outside trussed up with telephone wire. Commander Cunningham arrived by truck while Devereux was explaining his mission to an English-speaking Japanese officer, and the Marine major turned over his surrender duties to the island commander. A Japanese officer then escorted Devereux and Malleck forward to pass the surrender order to Marine units on the west leg of Wake Island and on Wilkes Island.

They found the VMF-211 riflemen and Hanna's unit still holding around the 3-inch gun in spite of continuing efforts by the Japanese. The Japanese, unable to advance, had taken up positions behind nearby plane revetments, and the fighting here was a deadlock. Captain Tharin was the only officer unwounded in the Marine position, and he was directing the action when Major Devereux contacted him at 0930. There were now but 10 Marines surviving, and nine of them were wounded.

At 1014 Devereux reached Lieutenant Kliever and his three men beside the mine field generator. These men had been trying since 0900 to coax some life into the gasoline generator so they could blow up the airfield, but the rain during the night had given it a thorough soaking and it would not operate. "Don't surrender, lieutenant," one of the men told Kliever. "Marines never surrender. It's a hoax."

"It was a difficult thing to do," Kliever reported later, "but we tore down our guns and turned ourselves over."³²

Shortly before 1115 the surrender party, now west of the airstrip, came upon the rear of a Japanese skirmish line facing westward and evidently engaged in a fire fight against Marines in the brush beyond the west end of the strip. After some confusion during which the Japanese fired on the surrender group, Major Devereux passed through the lines and made contact with Lieutenant Poindexter. The lieutenant's mobile reserves, in ignorance of the surrender, had retaken the ground between Camp One and the west end of the strip during the morning's fighting. When Devereux came upon Poindexter, the 30-odd Marines in this force had just completed a steady eastward advance from Camp One, fighting their way forward along the beach with the edge of the brush to their left. Special naval landing force troops were in the thick brush to the north, but they had not attempted to attack the Marines. Divided into three 10-man squads, Poindexter's improvised platoon had advanced with two squads in assault, one on the seaward side of the road and the other north of the road. The support squad protected the exposed left flank by advancing in rear of the left assault squad.

³² 1stLt D. D. Kliever Rept.

During the advance, particularly as he neared the airfield and retraced by daylight the scenes of his fighting during the night, Lieutenant Poindexter counted approximately 80 enemy dead.

After assuring the surrender of this force, Major Devereux led the Japanese toward Camp One, still held by machine-gun sections of Poindexter's group. There the Marine prisoners watched a Japanese climb up the water tank and cut down the American flag which had been flying there throughout the battle.

The surrender group, followed by approximately 30 Japanese, then crossed Wilkes channel by launch. No Marines were to be seen when Devereux landed at about 1300, and the party began walking cautiously westward. At this time the enemy destroyer began firing on the island, but this fire was soon checked by a Japanese signalman who flagged the ship to silence. At 1330, almost midway between the new and old channels on Wilkes, Major Devereux saw "a few grubby, dirty men who came out of the brush with their rifles ready . . ." These were Platt's Marines who had annihilated the *Takano landing party* on Wilkes and now were advancing eastward to repel what they thought was still another landing. Thus all resistance had been silenced, and Wake now was in Japanese hands.

Conclusions

The defense of Wake was the first war-time operation conducted by the Marine Corps in defense of an advanced naval base. It was also the first combat test of the Marine defense battalion, although the strength of the Wake detachment was greatly reduced. The main reason for the fall of Wake seems obvious. The enemy in greatly superior strength, supported by ample surface and air forces, was able to effect a lodgement on the atoll and then to apply his ground superiority to overwhelm the dispersed defenders in detail. Had it been possible for U. S. surface forces to intervene, or for substantial reinforcements to reach Wake, the results might have been entirely different. But military lessons of some value still may be drawn by a survey of certain specific reasons why the defense was handicapped. These factors were interacting, of course. No single one of them can be clearly isolated within the framework of events which brought military defeat to the atoll.

Japanese procedure for the reduction and seizure of Wake, if not executed with the skill or standards that U. S. forces later attained, was nevertheless orthodox. It consisted essentially of two phases, the preliminary bombardment and the assault landing. The enemy's first landing plan underestimated the amount of preparation required, and he paid for this miscalculation in the defeat of 11 December. But this he corrected in his second attempt.

Lack of radar and other early-warning equipment severely handicapped Marines during preliminary aerial bombardment, and it would be difficult to overstate the seriousness of this shortage. It enabled the initial Japanese raid to destroy over half of VMF-211's fighters on the ground, and the same lack of early warning continued to hamper the effectiveness of those fighter planes which remained in operation. Thus the VMF-211 pilots never had a chance to plan effective fighter interception against the enemy bombers, and the Japanese could proceed quite methodically with their program for the aerial softening of Wake.

This lack of early warning and the shortage of aircraft can be lumped together as matters of air defense, and air defense depends upon coordinated employment of fighter aircraft, antiaircraft artillery, and the essential warning systems. But on Wake only the antiaircraft artillery—undermanned and partially operational though it was—could be considered fully and consistently effective, and nobody ever expected antiaircraft weapons alone to defend an advanced naval base against air attack. They were there to provide close-in protection to the aviation facilities; the planes were to be the important factor in keeping the enemy away from an island base. Determination and stubbornness of the fighter pilots could not avert the final outcome. The fliers could only exact from the enemy a maximum cost for every bomb dropped. This was

done until the last Grumman was destroyed by massed enemy fighters on 22 December. After that, landing operations against Wake could proceed.

Once the ground combat began, the fundamental weakness of the defense battalion concept as it then existed became starkly underlined. The unit had no infantry component to act as an effective mobile reserve. Most garrison personnel were tied to weapons and battery positions, and Major Devereux could muster only a fraction of his manpower against the invaders even after enemy intentions became apparent. On Wake Island, for example, only about 85 of 200 Marines were readily available to check the assault landing of a thousand Japanese. Militarily speaking, there is something pathetic in the spectacle of Lieutenant Poindexter and his "mobile reserve" of eight men and four machine guns dashing by truck from one threatened point to another in the face of such fantastic odds.

True, at that time trained infantry was almost as scarce as radar. But the fault lay in the defense battalion tables of organization. Later this omission was corrected, and Midway had both infantry and light tanks. Had even one Marine infantry company reinforced with tanks been on Wake, it is possible that the garrison might have thrown the Japanese back into the sea. This is borne out by what happened on Wilkes Island, where Captain Platt was able to annihilate twice his numbers of the enemy by shrewd, coordinated counter-attack. And after daylight on Wake Island, Poindexter, with the makeshift defenders of Camp One added to his "mobile reserve," had assumed the offensive, driven back the Japanese to his front, and regained most of

the ground given up during the confused hours of darkness.

After the Japanese had landed in force on the south coast of Wake Island, it appears that the coast artillery and antiaircraft missions of Batteries B and D, respectively, had become of secondary importance in light of the serious enemy ground threat. The military reader might wonder why all available personnel from Batteries B and D, with whom Devereux was still in communication, were not early in the battle brought down to the vicinity of the airfield and employed, together with such few other available Marines, as a mobile reserve to counterattack the main Japanese beachhead. This was partially accomplished at 0530 on the final morning when Captain Godbold was directed to bring the personnel of his battery (D) to the command post for employment as infantry. By this time, however, it was too late for such a small number to influence the outcome of the battle. In this connection, Major Devereux later pointed out that because of the partial failure of communications he never had anything like a clear picture of the situation during the final Japanese attack. For several hours he was in doubt as to the location of the main enemy landing and hence did not consider himself justified in stripping Peale Island of all defenders.

As alluded to above, another major lesson to be derived from this phase of the operation was a re-emphasis of Admiral Mahan's famous dictum that "Communications dominate war." The partial failure of communications, which occurred shortly after the Japanese landing, isolated the defense detachment commander from most of his subordinate units then in action. As a result he not only lost control

over much of the battle, but he also—and perhaps more important to this case—became unavoidably deceived as to the progress of the situation. In ignorance of what happened on Wilkes or at Camp One, he surmised that all was lost in those areas. Buried telephone lines and reliable field radios would have prevented this failure of communication, and the surrender decision would not have been made at that particular stage of the action. The Wake garrison, however, had neither the personnel to dig by hand, nor the machinery to dig by mechanical means, the many miles of ditches which would have been necessary to bury the telephone lines.

Perhaps one of the fundamental reasons for the state of the Wake defenses stemmed from the fact that base development had consistently received priority over defense preparations. That the defensive installations were in as good a condition as they were when the Japanese struck may be credited to the tremendous efforts of the small Marine garrison.

All things taken into account, however, the decision to surrender Wake was reasonable, especially when considered in light of the civilian situation and the fact that relief was no longer in prospect. Marines who fought through the Pacific campaigns would later see many examples of a totally unreasoning enemy who never surrendered but was always defeated. At the same time, insensibly, some might come to believe that unyielding refusal to surrender was the proper role of a defender. Of course this was neither true nor logical. Wake had exacted a full and more than honorable toll from the Japanese, but its defensive resources had been exhausted.

No fighter aircraft remained. Only one antiaircraft battery was effectively opera-

tional. Enemy dive bombers on 23 December had completely disabled one 5-inch battery (Wilkes) and largely destroyed the fire control instruments of the remaining two. Without airplanes, fire control instruments, radar, spare parts, and personnel to bring the defense to full strength Wake could not carry on. The only answer was surrender. This took place fifteen days after the initial attack, and it was eleven hours after the fighting commenced on shore before Wilkes Island surrendered.

During this period the Marines sustained almost 20 per cent casualties, but they exacted a heavy toll from the Japanese. Nearly 500 enemy had been lost in the abortive landing attempt of 11 December, the defenders on Wilkes Island accounted for nearly 100 in their defeat of the *Takano unit*, and Poindexter counted approximately 80 enemy bodies during his morning attack from Camp One. Give the Hanna-VMF-211 position credit for at least 20 more kills, and this would bring the Wake total to 700 enemy. Others must have lost their lives on Wake Island landing beaches and elsewhere on the island, although the figure probably would not be great. But in earlier action the atoll anti-aircraft and fighter plane fire had downed 21 enemy aircraft and claimed credit for damaging another 11.¹

Based on this record, Major Putnam's final VMF-211 report of 21 December would truthfully state that "All hands have behaved splendidly and held up in a manner of which the Marine Corps may well tell."

¹ A Japanese source says that 51 planes, in addition to those shot down, were damaged by flak over Wake. *Nakamura Notebook*.

PART IV

Marines in the Philippines

China and Luzon

In the first few months after Pearl Harbor, it seemed that nothing could stop the Japanese. One by one, the western outposts in the Far East were overwhelmed. Allied ground troops, in desperately unequal contests, were forced to retreat, fight, and retreat again; at sea and in the air the pitifully few ships and planes which had survived the initial onslaught were hoarded against the surety of further enemy advances. A grim holding battle was joined along a line protecting Australia and New Zealand and their South Pacific lifeline to the States. Yet, despite its strategic importance, this vital defensive action gave first place in the news to the outcome of a hopeless struggle hundreds of miles behind the enemy's forward positions.

For almost five months, two names—Bataan and Corregidor—dominated the headlines, taking fire in the minds of the Allied peoples as symbols of courage and devotion to duty. To the Japanese, who realized that they could starve out the embattled defenders at little cost to themselves, it became imperative that the issue be decided forthwith in battle. On the eve of the all-out offensive that brought the end on Bataan, the Japanese commander, addressing his combat leaders, clearly stated the importance of the isolated strong points in the eyes of the world:

The operations in the Bataan Peninsula and the Corregidor Fortress are not merely a local operation of the Great East Asia War. This

battle has lasted for about three months as compared with our speedy victories in Malaya, Dutch East Indies, and other areas in the Philippines. As the Anti-Axis powers propagandize about this battle as being a uniquely hopeful battle and the first step toward eventual victory, the rest of the world has concentrated upon the progress of the battle tactics on this small peninsula. Hence, the victories of these operations do not only mean the suppression of the Philippines, but will also have a bearing upon the English and Americans and their attitude toward continuing the war.¹

Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma was right: the outcome of the battle did have a direct bearing on the Allied attitude toward vigorous pursuit of the war. Perhaps in no instance since the defense of the Alamo stirred Americans in another century did an unsuccessful battle carry within its waging and its ending the source of so much national pride and dedication.

*THE SHADOW OF WAR*²

On 26 July 1941, shortly after Japan occupied military bases in Indo-China, President Roosevelt authorized the mobilization of the Philippine Army. The War

¹ HistSec, G-2, GHQ, FEC, Japanese Studies in WWII No. 1, 14th Army Ops, 2 vols., n. d. (located at OCMH), 141-142, hereinafter cited as *14th Army Rept.*

² Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from Adm T. C. Hart, Narrative of Events, AsFlt Leading up to War and From 8Dec41 to 5Feb42, written before 11Jun42 (located at NHD), hereinafter cited as *Hart Narrative*; Adm T. C. Hart, Supplementary Narrative to *Hart Narrative*, 8Oct46 (located at NHD); Gen J. C. Wainwright, Rept of Ops of

Department, which had requested this move, followed through with a directive organizing a new command, USAFFE (United States Army Forces in the Far East), which included all American Army and Commonwealth troops in the Philippines. To head USAFFE the Army called out of retirement its former chief of staff, General MacArthur, who had served as Military Advisor to the Commonwealth Government since 1935. He was given rank as a lieutenant general and with characteristic energy tackled the enormous job of putting the Philippines into a state of readiness against attack.

The bulk of USAFFE's troop strength was drawn from the Philippine Army which was, in July 1941, an army in name only. It consisted of the islands' police force, the 6,000-man Philippine Constabulary, a token air force and inshore naval patrol, and ten territorial reserve divisions. Since the start of the Commonwealth's defense training program in 1936 about 110,000 Filipinos had received a few months of basic military instruction, but most of these reservists had no experience with crew-served weapons and only rudimentary knowledge of their own pieces.

USAFFE and USFIP in the Philippine Islands 1941-42, 10Aug46 (located at TAGO), hereinafter cited as *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*; Annex VIII to *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*, MajGen G. F. Moore, Rept of CA Comd and the Harbor Defenses of Manila and Subic Bay, 19Feb41-6May42, 15Dec45 (located at TAGO), hereinafter cited as *Moore Rept*; BriGen S. L. Howard, "Report of the operation, employment and supply of the old 4th Marines from September, 1941 to the surrender of Corregidor, May 6, 1942," 26Sep45, hereinafter cited as *Howard Rept*; *14th Army Rept*; L. Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines—United States Army in World War II* (Washington: OCMH, DA, 1953), hereinafter cited as *Fall of the Philippines*; *Rising Sun in the Pacific*.

The divisions had never operated as such in field maneuvers and were scantily provided with arms and equipment. In order to mold an effective fighting force from the Philippine Army, MacArthur needed just about everything in the military supply catalogs, but most of all he needed time—time for training, time for materiel and men to reach the Philippines from the United States.

The instructors and cadres needed for training the Philippine Army were drawn from the Constabulary and the regular Army units available to USAFFE. Most of the 22,000 U. S. Army troops in the islands were serving in Coast Artillery regiments, the Army Air Corps, or the Philippine Division, sole regular infantry division in the islands. Over half of these men were members of crack Philippine Scout units.³ The regulars suffered, too, from a general lack of up-to-date weapons and equipment,⁴ but they were well trained to use what they had.

The War Department supported MacArthur's requests for additional troops and supplies to the fullest extent possible in light of the country's world-wide commitments; USAFFE received priority in almost every man power and materiel category. More than 7,000 men, mostly members of service and air units, and the

³The Philippine Scouts was a U. S. Army organization in which the enlisted men were native Filipinos and most of the officers were Americans. The Scouts had and merited a high reputation for fielding units with good morale, excellent discipline, and a consistently superior level of combat readiness.

⁴At the outbreak of the war, "the Philippine Division, less than two-thirds strength, had only three (3) new 37mm automatic firing cannon, three (3) 81mm mortars per infantry regiment and no (0) 60mm mortars . . ." *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*, 94.

major portion of the United States' heavy bomber strength reached the Philippines prior to the outbreak of war. Much more was promised and planned, but the Japanese surprise attack effectively cut off the flow of reinforcement. It also forced a revision of MacArthur's defensive strategy.

In view of his healthy reinforcement prospects, the USAFFE commander had adopted an aggressive defense plan that conceded the enemy nothing. He did not expect the Japanese to attack before April 1942⁵ and by that time he considered that his air and ground strength would be such that he could successfully hold his position against any attacking force. He was confident that the Philippine Army, when adequately trained and equipped, would be a match for the Japanese.

The Commander in Chief of the U. S. Navy's Asiatic Fleet (CinCAF), Admiral Thomas C. Hart, was in substantial agreement with MacArthur's philosophy of an aggressive defense. He recommended that in the event of war his fleet units remain based at Manila Bay and fight the Japanese in Philippine waters. The Navy Department, however, adhered to its long-established plan that the major ships of the fleet would retire to the south at the imminence of war, to a base of operations in the Netherlands East Indies or Malaya, where they could cooperate with Allied naval units.⁶ Hart's slim collection of

⁵ Gen J. C. Wainwright, *General Wainwright's Story*, R. Considine, ed. (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1946), 13, hereinafter cited as *Wainwright's Story*.

⁶ After the war, in supplementary comments to his original report, Adm Hart agreed that the Navy Dept decision was the best that could have been made considering the situation at the time. He added, however, that if his original proposal of 27Oct41 to continue to base at Manila had been

cruisers, destroyers, submarines, and auxiliaries, was certainly no match for the Japanese fleet, nor was it intended to be. The U. S. Pacific Fleet, based at Pearl Harbor, was the American striking force, and war plans envisaged its fighting advance to the Philippines if the Japanese attacked.

The Asiatic Fleet's major shore installations were located at Olongapo on Subic Bay and at Mariveles and Cavite within Manila Bay. Since denial of Manila Bay to the enemy was a key point in war planning, the activities of the 16th Naval District (Rear Admiral Francis W. Rockwell), the shore establishment supporting the Asiatic Fleet, were closely coordinated with USAFFE's defensive preparations. Contact mines were laid to connect with controlled mine fields of the Army's harbor defenses, completely closing Manila Bay. On Corregidor, site of the prospective command post for the defense of Luzon, protected installations for naval headquarters, a radio intercept station, and a torpedo replenishment depot were prepared and equipped. Large quantities of fuel and ammunition stored at Cavite were moved to dumps away from the naval base to lessen their vulnerability to bombing. (See Maps 7 and 8, Map Section)

If the Japanese attacked, the most dangerously exposed elements of the Asiatic Fleet were those stationed in China: seven Yangtze River gunboats; Colonel Samuel L. Howard's 4th Marine Regiment at Shanghai; and the Marine embassy guard detachments at Peiping and Tientsin.

turned down sooner he might well have made a better disposition of his fleet units; he had acted on the assumption that his proposal would be accepted until it was disapproved in late November.

Admiral Hart had begun making informal proposals that his China forces be withdrawn early in 1941, and after July, when he was "entirely convinced that the war was coming,"⁷ he followed up with emphatic official recommendations that his men be gotten out before it was too late. Japanese war preparations were so evident by 1 September that the American Consul-General at Shanghai, the commander of the Yangtze Patrol, and Colonel Howard jointly recommended that all naval forces in China be withdrawn. Hart naturally concurred and further recommended to the Navy Department that the troops be evacuated in late September when the transport *Henderson* made a routine call on Chinese ports to pick up short-timers and other returnees.

Hart's request was turned down as far as withdrawal on the *Henderson* was concerned. He was told, however, that joint State-Navy conferences would be held within a couple of weeks time to consider the problem of a withdrawal and its effect on negotiations for a settlement of Japanese-American differences. Despite CinCAF's protest that this "was not a question that could be delayed for weeks but must be acted upon immediately,"⁸ he did not receive permission to withdraw the gunboats and the Marines until 10 November, "embarrassingly late" as he later noted.⁹ Five of the gunboats were able to reach Manila without hinderance once clearance to leave was given.¹⁰

⁷ Adm T. C. Hart ltr to CMC, 10Oct56, herein-after cited as *Hart Comments*.

⁸ Quoted in *Howard Rept*, 1.

⁹ *Hart Narrative*, 29.

¹⁰ The smallest of the gunboats, the *Wake*, was stripped and left at Shanghai to be used as a station ship and radio outlet for the remaining

Two President liners, the *Madison* and the *Harrison*, were chartered to transport the Marines, attached naval personnel, and their supplies and equipment; provision was also made to evacuate some American civilians from Shanghai on the same ships. After it reached the Philippines and unloaded, the *Harrison* was to return to North China and pick up the embassy guards and their gear at Chinwangtao. All signs pointed to the necessity for haste in the withdrawal.

The Japanese were replacing their seasoned troops around Shanghai with recruits, and large numbers of special armored landing barges which had previously been seen near the city disappeared; intelligence pointed to movement southward of both veteran units and landing craft. Intelligence also indicated that the Japanese Army was eager to take over the International Settlement, by force if necessary, and that it was only being restrained by the Nipponese Navy's desire for an "incident" which would seem to justify such action. Several attempts were made to manufacture incidents, but the Marines refused to knuckle under to the pressure, and Colonel Howard initiated prompt action which kept the American defense sector clear. A copy of a Japanese warning order was obtained which stated that "in the event of war the 4th Marines would attempt to break through [our] lines;"¹¹ ample evidence of this belief was seen in the increase in size and number of the patrols in the city and in the construc-

Americans; it was captured on 8 December. The *Tutuila* at Chungking was turned over to the Chinese Nationalist Government under lend-lease since it could not get downstream through the Japanese blockade.

¹¹ *Howard Rept*, 3.

tion of concrete blockhouses on all roads leading out of Shanghai.

Both the *Madison* and *Harrison* needed to be converted to troop use after their arrival at Shanghai, and the first ship was not ready until 27 November. By 1600 that date, the *Madison* with half the regiment and half its equipment on board sailed for Olongapo. While this forward echelon, the 2d Battalion and half of the Regimental Headquarters and Service Companies, was loading out, a message was received from CinCAF to expedite the evacuation. Even though the conversion work on the *Harrison* was three days short of completion, the decision was made to clear Shanghai the following day with the rest of the regiment and its remaining equipment.

Despite the short notice and the harassing tactics of the Japanese,¹² the Regimental R-4 and Quartermaster, Major Reginald H. Ridgely, Jr., was able to load all organizational gear, over 500 tons, by 1300 on the 28th. At 0900 that morning, the regiment assembled at the 1st Battalion's billet, formed up behind its band, and marched down Bubbling Well-Nanking Roads to the President Line's dock on the Bund. Thousands of cheering people lined the route of march, and the banks of

¹² "All supplies had to pass through the Japanese Sector on the way to the Customs dock. About 3:00 p.m. November 27th they closed the Garden Bridge over Soochow Creek to traffic and our trucks were delayed nearly an hour before contact could be made with the Japanese Admiral to get this bridge reopened to traffic. Customs officials ostensibly at the instigation of the Japanese were insistent that our supplies pass through the Custom House, but we ignored such orders and loaded them on lighters. The Japanese instigated three strikes during the night by the laborers loading the lighters." *Ibid.*, 4.

the river were alive with flag-waving Chinese as a power lighter took the Marines downstream to their ship. At 1400 the *Harrison* weighed anchor and sailed for the Philippines, marking the end of a colorful era in Marine annals.

As soon as the *Harrison* cleared the Whangpoo River, machine guns were broken out and manned for antiaircraft defense, and blackout regulations were put into effect.¹³ Flights of Japanese aircraft checked the liner regularly as it moved out into the China Sea, but there were no incidents, and contact was made on the 29th with submarine escorts dispatched by Admiral Hart. On 30 November and 1 December the two transports arrived at Olongapo where the troops disembarked. Only a few supplies were unloaded at the naval station, ostensibly because CinCAF had issued orders that the ships must pass through the mine field into Manila Bay by nightfall on the day of arrival. Actually, Admiral Hart had given oral orders to his staff that the Marines were to be landed with field equipment only, because it was his intention that:

. . . they would get into the field, near Olongapo, as soon as they could. We [Hart and his staff] all knew 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.¹⁴

While the regiment's heavy equipment was unloaded at Manila and trucked to Olongapo, the *Harrison* was readied for a return voyage to pick up the Marines from Peiping and Tientsin. It was al-

¹³ No special defensive arrangements were made by the 4th Mar elements on the *President Madison*. CWO C. R. Jackson ltr to CMC, 10Oct56, hereinafter cited as *Jackson*.

¹⁴ *Hart Comments*.

ready too late, however, to rescue the North China Marines. The Japanese war plans had been activated, and the carrier task force that would strike Pearl Harbor was at sea en route to its target. The troops, ships, and planes that would be sent against the Philippines were concentrated at Formosa, the Ryukyus, and the Palaus with orders to begin their attack on X-Day—8 December 1941 (Manila Time).¹⁵

8 DECEMBER 1941¹⁶

When the dawn of the first day of the Pacific War reached the China Coast, the attack on Pearl Harbor was over and the troops in the Philippines had been alerted to their danger. At the Chinwangtao docks, Second Lieutenant Richard M. Huizenga was supervising the stockpiling of supplies for the expected arrival of the *President Harrison*. A truck driver brought him word that the radio at his railhead, Camp Holcomb, was full of news of Pearl Harbor. Although the Japanese made half-hearted attempts to stop him on his three-mile drive back to the camp, Huizenga was able to get through to his unit. He found the 21 Marines of the loading detail surrounded, at a respectful distance, by a cordon of Japanese troops. The men, under Chief Marine Gunner William A. Lee, were setting up a strong point amid the boxcars of supplies; two

machine guns and several Tommy guns and BARs had already been broken out of their cosmoline packing. Despite their desperate situation the Marines were ready to fight.

Huizenga and a Japanese captain held an armed parley where the lieutenant was given time to communicate to his superior at Tientsin, Major Luther A. Brown, the enemy's demand that he surrender the detachment. Orders soon came back to offer no resistance and the Marines were stripped of their weapons. Later in the day they were returned under Japanese guard to the Marine barracks at Tientsin.¹⁷

The situation of the detachments at Tientsin and Peiping was similar to that of the one at Camp Holcomb; Japanese troops surrounded their barracks in strength and demanded their surrender. Since the embassy guard was not required to maintain a continuous watch on CinCAF's command radio circuit,¹⁸ the first word that the senior Marine officer, Colonel William W. Ashurst, had of the outbreak of hostilities came from the Japanese. He was given till noon to make his decision whether to fight or not and was allowed to communicate by radio with CinCAF and by phone with Major Brown. In a sense Ashurst had been given a Hobson's choice: he could surrender or he could let his troops, fewer than 200 officers and men, be overwhelmed. If discipline and spirit would have won the day,

¹⁵ *Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 26–27, 50.

¹⁶ Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Hart Narrative*; *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*; *14th Army Rept*; *Howard Rept*; *4th Mar Jnl and Rec of Events*, 8Dec41–2May42, hereinafter cited as *4th Mar Jnl*; *Capt A. F. Metze Rept to CMC*, "Surrender of U. S. Marine Forces in North China," 23Aug42; *Fall of the Philippines*; *Rising Sun in the Pacific*.

¹⁷ MIS, G-2, WD, Escape Rept No. 665, Capt R. M. Huizenga, 12Jul45.

¹⁸ LtCol W. T. Clement Rept to CMC, "Dispositions and employment of U. S. Marines on the Asiatic Station during the initial stages of the war," 6Apr42, hereinafter cited as *Clement Rept*.

Ashurst could have opened fire on the besiegers—his men had already demonstrated at Camp Holcomb that they were willing to take on hopeless odds. But there was no purpose in fighting if the end result could only be useless bloodshed.

In the absence of instructions to the contrary, Colonel Ashurst took the only sensible course open to him and ordered his men to lay down their arms. A strong possibility existed that if no resistance was offered the embassy guards would be considered part of the diplomatic entourage, entitled to repatriation. As the initial treatment of the Marines was relatively mild and they repeatedly received informal assurances from the Japanese that they would be exchanged, few attempted escape. When these rumors proved false, the opportunity had passed.¹⁹

By the time Ashurst's report of his decision to surrender reached Hart in Manila, the Philippines were in the thick of the war. The first news of the Japanese attack was picked up at 0257 by a radio operator at CinCAF Headquarters who, recognizing the technique of the sender, vouched for the reliability of the now famous message, "Air raid on Pearl Harbor. This is no drill."²⁰ The duty officer, Marine Lieutenant Colonel William T. Clement of Hart's staff, immediately notified the admiral who sent a war alert to all fleet units. Minutes later, by a combination of intercepted official and commercial broadcasts and the spreading of the word by the first agencies notified, the report had reached all major USAFFE headquarters.

¹⁹ Huizenga, *op. cit.*; MIS, G-2, WD, Escape Rept No. 666, Capt J. D. McBrayer, Jr., 12Jul45.

²⁰ *Clement Rept.*

A cacophony of sound broke the stillness at Olongapo when the alert reached the naval base at 0350; the bugler of the guard blew "Call to Arms;" the steam whistle at the power plant blasted a recall signal to PBY crewmen; and the ship's bell at the main gate clanged continuously.²¹ Companies immediately mustered in front of their wooden barracks and in the streets of tent areas and were put to work setting up machine guns for antiaircraft defense and digging individual protective holes. Colonel Howard initiated the first moves in what was to be a hectic period of redisposing, reorganizing, and reinforcing the regiment which lasted throughout the month of December.

When the 4th Marines arrived from Shanghai its strength stood at 44 officers and warrant officers and 728 enlisted men; organic naval medical personnel raised the total strength to 804. The regiment "had been permitted to dwindle by attrition"²² in China so that it consisted only of Headquarters Company, Service Company, and two battalions—the battalions short one of their rifle companies and the companies each short one of their three rifle platoons. By utilizing the members of the regimental band and absorbing the Marine Barracks Detachment, Olongapo, Howard was able to form some of the missing pla-

²¹ Capt F. W. Ferguson, Personal Experiences 8Dec41-6May42, n. d., hereinafter cited as *Ferguson*.

²² *Howard Rept*, 8. As the threat of war with Japan increased, Adm Hart initiated a policy of withholding replacements from Marine units in China. Almost all of the men held back were assigned to the 1st SepMarBn at Cavite. Hart felt that if by some mischance he was unable to get the 4th Mar out of China he "could at least stop sending any more Marines there until someone bawled us out most vociferously. They never did." *Hart Comments*.

toons. In keeping with previous orders from Admiral Rockwell, he sent the 1st Battalion by tug, lighter, and truck to Mariveles to relieve the Marine detachment there. The men of the Mariveles guard had been taken from the other major Marine unit in the Philippines, the 1st Separate Marine Battalion at Cavite.

The battalion was organized to function either as an antiaircraft or an infantry unit, but its primary mission was the antiaircraft defense of the naval installations in the Cavite-Sangle Point area. Its firing batteries, 3-inch guns and .50 caliber machine guns, had been on partial alert since 14 October and as the threat of war grew stronger the guns and their crews had reached a high degree of readiness. On 4 December, the battalion's one long range radar set and the necessary operating personnel were assigned to USAFFE's control and moved to a position on the west coast where the radar could scan the approaches to Manila from the south;²³ the set was one of two operating in the Philippines on 8 December. When the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel John P. Adams, passed the word of the Pearl Harbor attack there was little left to be done but to "cut fuzes, going into the last stage of readiness."²⁴ But the Marine guns were not to see action. The Japanese reserved their first day of attack for their primary target, MacArthur's Far East Air Force (FEAF). And when that day was over, the Japanese figured that their "suprem-

acy, at least in the air, was established conclusively."²⁵

Except for 16 B-17's at Del Monte on Mindanao, the bulk of FEAF's strength in first-line planes was stationed at fields in central Luzon. Dawn of the 8th found most of these planes airborne, waiting to engage or evade Japanese attackers. But the land-based naval fighters and bombers of the Japanese *Eleventh Air Fleet*, charged with making the main air assault, did not appear at dawn. The enemy plan had called for such a surprise attack, timed to coincide with the start of operations in Malaya and at Pearl Harbor, but thick clouds and heavy fog delayed the take-off from Formosa of the major attack formations. It was noon before the enemy planes could reach their targets, Luzon's airfields, and the Japanese pilots very reasonably assumed that with the loss of surprise they would be met in force.²⁶

But this was not to be, for "shortly after 1130 all American aircraft in the Philippines, with the exception of one or two planes, were on the ground."²⁷ The fighters were refueling after their fruitless morning patrols or awaiting a warning of imminent attack; the bombers were arming for an offensive mission against Formosa. By an incredible chain of circumstances, compounded by poor communications, a woefully inadequate air warning system, and a generous amount

²⁵ HistSec, Japanese Research Div, GHQ, FEC, Japanese Studies in WWII No. 11, Philippines AirOpsRec, 1Feb52, 7, hereinafter cited as *Philippines AirOpsRec*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ W. S. Craven and J. L. Cate (eds.), *Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942—The Army Air Forces in World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 209.

²³ LtCol H. L. Davis ltr to CMC, 31Oct56.

²⁴ 1stLt W. F. Hogaboom, Personal Experiences 140ct41-6May42, n. d., 1-2, hereinafter cited as *Hogaboom*. This narrative was published in the *MC Gazette*, April 1946, under the title, "Action Report—Bataan."

of pure bad luck, the Japanese were given a sitting target. After a day of violent action, when all concerned tried to make up for what hindsight calls mistakes, the strength of the FEAF had been reduced by half. The way was open for the Japanese to begin landing operations.²⁸

The enemy had in fact made his first landing by the time of the main air attacks. A small force came ashore at dawn on Batan Island midway between Luzon and Formosa and immediately began work to set up an air base on an already existing strip to accommodate the relatively short-ranged Army fighters. The next day elements of two fighter regiments of the Japanese *5th Air Group* were using the field and flying reconnaissance and strike missions over northern Luzon, site of the next planned landings.

THE FIRST DAYS ²⁹

On 9 December only a few enemy bombers attacked, but these planes filtering through the early morning darkness reached Nichols Field outside Manila unscathed where their bombs increased the damage and added to the toll of American planes. An all-out attack on the Manila Bay area had been planned for the

²⁸ See Craven and Cate, *op. cit.*, 201-213 and *Fall of the Philippines*, 79-90 for an examination of the contradictory statements and chronology of misadventures that marked what may well have been the blackest day in the history of the Army Air Corps.

²⁹ Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Hart Narrative*; *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*; *Moore Rept*; RAdm F. W. Rockwell, *Narrative of Naval Activities in the Luzon Area, 1Dec41-19Mar42, 1Aug42* (located at NHD), hereinafter cited as *Rockwell Narrative*; *Howard Rept*; *4th Mar Jnl*; *14th Army Rept*; *Fall of the Philippines*; *Rising Sun in the Pacific*.

second day of the war, but fog over Formosa prevented the take-off. Although the weather was again bad on the 10th, the enemy naval squadrons were on their way to their targets by midmorning.³⁰ Radar and ground observers spotted the incoming flights, but to no avail. When the outnumbered American interceptors rose to greet the raiders, the enemy fighters swarmed all over them, not giving as good as they got, but more than making up for their losses whenever they downed one of the few remaining planes of FEAF.

The Japanese bomber groups were heading for the best protected area in the Philippines; almost all of the antiaircraft units in USAFFE were concentrated near Manila. But the gunners below had an insoluble problem; they had plenty of ammunition, but very little of it was fused so that it could reach above 24,000 feet. After a few false starts the enemy learned that they could bomb from heights of 25,000 feet with relative impunity. There was a limited supply of mechanically-fused ammunition which could reach 30,000 feet, but there were not enough such rounds to materially increase anti-aircraft defenses.

The gunners of the 1st Separate Marine Battalion at Cavite scored a kill on 10 December when they downed an overeager dive bomber that strayed from the pack over Nichols Field, lured by the target of two PBY's taking off from Sangley Point. But that was the end of it. The three-inch batteries turned back the first flight of bombers, which came in too low, but all subsequent flights approaching the

³⁰ HistSec, G-2, GHQ, FEC, Japanese Studies in WWII No. 13, NavOps in the Invasion of the Philippines, 15May46 (located at OCMH), 7.

naval base stayed well out of range and the gunners were helpless spectators to the destruction that followed.³¹

Stick after stick of bombs rained down on the naval base as successive flights of bombers criss-crossed the area laying a perceptible pattern. Fires sprang up everywhere as small dumps of ammunition and gasoline were hit and the old town of Cavite was soon a raging mass of flames. All the ships that could possibly get away from the yard headed out into the bay, but the bombers caught and fatally damaged a submarine and a mine sweeper. Everyone feared that the ammunition depot, which still had large quantities of powder and ammunition in it, would be hit, but the bombers missed their most promising target. Still, the fires being blown toward the depot from Cavite might touch it off,³² and the rescue parties searching amid the flaming ruins for the hundreds of civilian casualties were in constant danger. Long after the raid was over, into the night and the early morning of the next day, the fires raged and Admiral Rockwell ordered all personnel to evacuate the base. Only a small group of men from Lieutenant Colonel Adams' battalion and a few Manila firemen remained. These volunteers localized the fire and were able to save the commissary stores; the ammunition depot soon was out of danger.³³

Admiral Hart had watched the air attack from the roof of his headquarters building in Manila and had seen the end of Cavite as a base of operations. Rockwell's damage report confirmed his obser-

vations. On the night of the 10th Hart ordered most of the remaining ships of the Asiatic Fleet still in Manila Bay to sail south to comparative safety. The next day he advised the captains of all merchant ships in the bay to get their vessels out while they still could; fortunately, only one merchantman out of 40 was caught by enemy bombers.³⁴ The strongest element of Hart's fleet, his 29 submarines, continued to operate from the bay for a short while, until Japanese control of the air made this base untenable. By the year's end only the submarine tender *Canopus* and a small collection of yard craft, motor torpedo boats, and auxiliaries remained in Manila's waters.

In the judgment of a naval historian of this period the Asiatic Fleet was "sadly inadequate" and therefore "unable to prevent the enemy from landing wherever he chose, or even to delay his efficient timetable of conquest."³⁵ Nor were FEAF or the ground troops of USAFFE able to do the job. In some instances there was a temporary delay when planes hit the landing forces, but nowhere were the Japanese stopped and forced to turn back. On 10 December two combat teams from the *2d Formosa Regiment* of the *48th Division* came ashore at Aparri in northern Luzon and at Vigan on the northwest coast. Their mission, which was to secure airfields for use by Army planes, was successful. In a day the Japanese, despite the loss of several ships to American bombers, were firmly established ashore and in practical control of the northern tip of Luzon. The one Philippine Army division in the area, the 11th, was responsible for the de-

³¹ *Hogaboom*, 3.

³² LtCol J. V. Lyon ltr to CMC, 31Oct56.

³³ LtCol J. W. Keene, Narrative and tactical dispositions of the 1st SepMarBn at Cavite, 8-26Dec41, n.d.

³⁴ *Hart Comments*.

³⁵ *Rising Sun in the Pacific*, 181.

fense of the island north of Lingayen Gulf and was of necessity spread so thin that it could offer no effective resistance.

The same situation held true in southern Luzon where the defending forces, two Philippine Army divisions, were completely unable to cover all possible landing beaches. On 12 December, when a Japanese convoy carrying the advance assault detachment of the *16th Division*, staged from the Palaus, reached Legaspi in southeastern Luzon, there was nothing to oppose their landing. The troops were ashore, had taken their airfield objective, and were moving north by nightfall. In all there were less than 10,000 enemy troops ashore at this time, but they had behind them the rest of the *Fourteenth Army* and command of the sea and air to insure its arrival on schedule.

The heavy air attacks of the 8th and 10th were only harbingers of further aerial assaults. Reinforced by Army fighters and bombers operating from newly-seized airfields, the naval planes of the Formosa-based *Eleventh Air Fleet* spread out over Luzon seeking new targets. The first turn of Olongapo and the 4th Marines came on 12 December, the day that marked the end of effective U. S. air support.

A flight of Japanese fighters followed the PBY's based at Olongapo into their anchorage after the flying boats had made a fruitless search for a supposed enemy carrier task force. The enemy pilots caught the seaplanes at their moorings and destroyed them all. As the Japanese strafed the naval station Marine machine gunners attempted to bring them down; Colonel Howard noticed that the tracers of Company H's .30's seemed to be "bouncing off these planes indicating sufficient

armor plate to prevent penetration."³⁶ The enemy attacked again on the 13th, this time bombing from altitudes beyond the range of the Marine automatic weapons. The few hits scored were all in the town of Olongapo; there was no damage to the naval station and only a few Marine casualties. The Filipinos who ignored the air raid warning suffered heavily; a bomb hit right in the midst of a large group of townspeople who were "standing under a tree watching the performance,"³⁷ killing 22 and wounding at least as many more. Although alarms were frequent thereafter, the Japanese did not attack again until the 19th and then their aim was bad and they liberally plastered the bay with bombs.

During this period, while the original Japanese landing forces were advancing toward Manila, top-level discussions were held between Hart and MacArthur and their staffs regarding employment of the 4th Marines.³⁸ On 20 December, MacArthur formally requested that the regiment be assigned to his command "as developments of the Navy plan can make it available."³⁹ Admiral Hart concurred and directed Howard to report to USAFFE for such employment as Mac-

³⁶ *Howard Rept*, 9.

³⁷ *Jackson*.

³⁸ Although the war plan for the Philippines had long called for the available Marines to be assigned to the defending ground forces under Army control, USAFFE made no effort in the first few days of the war to contact CinCAF regarding his Marine forces. After a reminder from Hart, "there came back a request to send one battalion into Manila City to guard USAFFE Headquarters. Feeling that it would be a wrong use of the best infantry available, [Hart issued] no order to that effect." *Hart Comments*.

³⁹ Copy of CG, USAFFE ltr to CinCAF, 20Dec41, in *4th Mar Jnl*, 237; *Clement Rept*, 6.

Arthur might deem necessary in the defense of Luzon.⁴⁰ In a covering memo to Rockwell, he pointed out that the assignment of the 4th Marines was the sole commitment that he had made and that he had verbally made it clear that it was his policy that excess naval personnel be organized and equipped and then "fed up into the combat areas on shore with the Fourth Regiment of Marines. A command exercised over them by the Army would normally be via C. O. Fourth Marines."⁴¹

The Navy Department had directed Hart on his departure from the Philippines to place all naval personnel, munitions, and equipment at the disposal of USAFFE. Rockwell, who was to relieve Hart as senior naval officer in the Philippines, nominally retained independent status. He adhered firmly, however, to the principle of unity of command and cooperated closely with MacArthur's headquarters.

On 22 December, the reinforced Japanese *48th Division* landed in Lingayen Gulf. It was the logical landing point for any force whose objective was Manila, for the gulf stood at the head of a broad valley leading directly to the capital. The landing was expected and it was resisted, but the combined efforts of American air, submarine, and ground forces could not prevent the Japanese from putting their

men ashore and effecting a juncture with Vigan-Aparri landing forces which had driven down from the north. Resistance, although sparked by the 26th Cavalry of the Philippine Scouts, was spotty and ineffectual, and the Japanese soon proved that the partially-trained men of the Philippine Army were not yet a match for their troops. Covered by the Scout 'cavalrymen, the Filipino reservists fell back in disorder to reorganize in positions below the Agno River.

The enemy was ready to drive on Manila from the north.

On the 24th, the last major assault element of the *Fourteenth Army*, the *16th Division* from the Ryukyus, landed at Lamonsay Bay only 60 miles cross-island from Manila. Here the story was much the same as Lingayen Gulf. The enemy overwhelmed scattered, ill-trained troops and made good his beachhead. The American South Luzon Force began to fight a delaying action along the roads leading to Manila. The decision, however, had already been made to declare the capital an "open city," and the troops were headed for the Bataan Peninsula.

Bataan, northern arm of Manila Bay, had long been considered the ultimate stronghold in a defense of Luzon. While it was held, and with it the fortified islands across the mouth of the bay, no enemy could use the harbor, and it was possible to gain succor from friendly naval forces which might break through a blockade. MacArthur had rejected the concept of a static, last-ditch defense when he took over USAFFE and had expected with the forces underway to him from the States and trained Philippine Army divisions to be able to repulse or contain enemy landing attempts. When the Japanese won

⁴⁰ According to the *Hart Narrative*, 45, one plan considered for the employment of the 4th Mar entailed the brigading of the regiment (reinforced by a naval battalion from Mariveles) and a constabulary regiment under a Marine brigade commander. The Marines were to furnish officers and NCO's to the Constabulary unit. Time did not permit the execution of this scheme.

⁴¹ CInCAF memo to ComSixteen, 22Dec41, in *4th Mar Jnl*, 239.

control of the sea and air, however, he lost all chance for successful execution of his orders to "attack and destroy"⁴² any landing force, and he was forced to adopt the only course of action that would save his army: a desperation withdrawal to Bataan. He made the fateful decision on 23 December and the following day preparations to effect it were begun.

Basically the withdrawal plan called for Major General Jonathan C. Wainwright's North Luzon Force to fight a series of delaying actions in the central island plain which would allow the South Luzon Force (Major General George M. Parker, Jr.) to reach the peninsula. Then Wainwright's units would pull back to Bataan, join forces with Parker, and stand off the enemy. In the time gained by the delaying actions, USAFFE would make every effort to augment the supplies already gathered in scattered dumps on Bataan with food, ammunition, weapons, and equipment from installations in the Manila area.

The role of the 4th Marines in this plan was laid out for Colonel Howard in a series of conferences which took place in Manila on 24 December. Admiral Hart, who was preparing to leave for Java the following day, informed the Marine commander that the 1st Separate Battalion would be added to his regiment as soon as it could clear Cavite and that he was to report immediately to MacArthur for duty. At USAFFE headquarters, amidst the bustle attendant on its move to Corregidor, Howard got a cordial welcome from his new chief and then received orders to move the 4th to Corregidor and take over its beach defenses. In a meeting with Admiral Rockwell, after he had

made a final call on Hart, Howard was told to destroy the Olongapo Naval Station when he pulled out.

Mariveles at the southern tip of Bataan had been designated the assembly area and transshipment point for the Marine units and their supplies. The 1st Battalion had already spent two weeks in bivouac near the base weathering a series of air attacks and furnishing guard details, unloading parties, and dump construction crews. Two men were killed and three wounded on 24 December during a bombing raid that struck shipping in the harbor. It was an inauspicious portent for the reception of the forward echelon of the regiment which left for Mariveles at 2200 that night.

Shortly after the truck convoy had cleared Olongapo, Colonel Howard had received warning from naval headquarters of an impending Japanese landing, and "sounds of motors could be distinctly heard from seaward"⁴³ in Subic Bay. All available men manned beach defense positions, but fortunately the report proved false and the motors turned out to be those of American torpedo boats. Early on Christmas morning a message from Rockwell's new headquarters on Corregidor ordered Howard to expedite evacuation and destruction lest the regiment be cut off by advancing Japanese troops. The Philippine Army's 31st Division had pulled back to Bataan from its coastal positions northwest of Olongapo on the 24th and the Marines' north flank was now open; a threat also existed to seaward, since the Army's coast defense troops were withdrawing from Fort Wint in Subic Bay. Motorcycle patrols ranging north of the base could find no sign of the enemy, however, and the movement of men and

⁴² *Wainwright's Story*, 28.

⁴³ *Howard Rept.*, 11.

supplies was completed without undue haste. At 1410 Howard's new CP opened outside Mariveles, and the fate of Olongapo was left in the hands of a demolition detail under Captain (later Major) Francis H. Williams.

Using charges improvised from 300-pound mines, "Williams set out with his demolition gang to do a good job of erasing the Naval Station from the face of the globe."⁴⁴ They sank the hull of the old armored cruiser *Rochester* in the bay and blew up or burned everything of value except the barracks which closely bordered the native town.⁴⁵ The last supplies were loaded early Christmas evening, and the rear echelon pulled out with darkness.

Christmas also saw the completion of destruction at Cavite where a Marine demolition party from the 1st Separate Battalion blew up or fired all remaining ammunition stocks and destroyed the submarine damaged in the 10 December air raid. The naval radio station near Sangley Point was already a shambles, for in a raid on 19 December enemy bombers leveled the buildings and set afire large quantities of gas and oil scattered in dumps throughout the surrounding area.⁴⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Adams received orders on 20 December to evacuate the Cavite area, and for the next few days men and supplies were trucked to Mariveles; the Christmas day demolition detail was the last element to leave.⁴⁷

After darkness fell on 26 December, the first Marines to move to Corregidor, 14 officers and 397 men of Adams' battalion,

made the seven and a half mile voyage from Mariveles' docks to North Dock on "The Rock."

*THE FORTIFIED ISLANDS*⁴⁸

The four islands that guarded the mouth of Manila Bay were fortified in the decade prior to World War I before air power changed the concept of coastal defense. Most of the powerful 14- and 12-inch guns were sited in open emplacements for the purpose of repelling an invasion from the sea. Disarmament treaty obligations and drastically reduced defense expenditures in the period between the wars allowed little concession to be made to the threat of air attack. Some antiaircraft guns were added to the fort's defenses, however, and a start was made toward providing underground bombproof shelters, especially on Corregidor (Fort Mills).

Corregidor was at its closest point just a little over two miles from the tip of Bataan Peninsula. The island was tadpole-shaped, three and a half miles long and one and a half miles wide at its head. This wide area, called Topside, loomed high above the rest of the island, its 500-foot cliffs dropping sharply to a narrow beachline. Most of the coast defense batteries and permanent quarters were located here, and the only access routes to the top from the western shore were two ravines, James and Cheney. East of Topside, along the neck of land that connected the tadpole's head and tail, was Middleside, a plateau which held several more battery positions and permanent buildings. A

⁴⁴ *Ferguson*, 3.

⁴⁵ The town's natives later burned their own houses and the barracks was consumed in the resulting fire.

⁴⁶ *Hogaboom*, 4.

⁴⁷ *Keene, op. cit.*, 10.

⁴⁸ Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Moore Rept*; *Howard Rept*; *4th Mar Jnl*; *Philippine AirOpsRec*; *Fall of the Philippines*.

third ravine, Ramsay, which led from the southern beaches to Middleside, was a critical defensive point. (See Map 8, Map Section)

A logically-named third distinctive portion of the island, Bottomside, consisted of the low ground occupied by the industrial and dock area and the native town of San Jose. The nerve center of Luzon's defenses was an extensively-tunnelled hill, Malinta Hill, which rose directly east of San Jose. The headquarters of MacArthur, Rockwell, and Major General George F. Moore, commanding the fortified islands, were all eventually located in the tunnels and laterals that spread out beneath the hill. From Malinta the long, low, narrow tail of the island bent away to the east; a light plane landing strip, Kindley Field, had been built along the spine of the tail.

The other three island forts, Hughes, Drum, and Frank, complemented the defenses of Fort Mills, and Marines served as part of the beach defense troops on all but the last named. Caballo Island (Fort Hughes), a quarter-mile square in area, stood less than two miles from Corregidor; its low-lying eastern shore rose abruptly to a 380-foot height which contained most of the battery positions. Four miles south of Caballo was the "concrete battleship," Fort Drum. Tiny El Fraile Island had been razed to water level and on its foundation a steel-reinforced concrete fortress had been erected with sides 25- to 36-feet thick, and a top deck 20-feet deep. Two case-hardened steel gun turrets, each sporting a pair of 14-inch guns, were mounted on the deck and the sides of the fort boasted four 6-inch gun casements. Its garrison could be completely contained within its walls, and "the fort

was considered impregnable to enemy attack."⁴⁹ The island which seemed most vulnerable to assault was Carabao (Fort Frank) which lay only 500 yards from the shore of Cavite Province. However, since some of its guns were capable of firing inland and most of its shoreline was ringed with precipitous cliffs, the job of taking Fort Frank promised to be quite a task.

General Moore later noted that "the fortresses were not designed to withstand a landing attack from adjacent shores supported by overwhelming artillery emplaced thereon;"⁵⁰ and that of his big guns only the turrets of Fort Drum, the 12-inch mortars, and two 12-inch long-range guns were capable of all-round fire. A tabulation of the major coast defense armament of the forts shows:

Type	Number of Guns			
	Mills	Hughes	Drum	Frank
14'' guns	—	2	4	2
12'' guns	8	—	—	—
12'' mortars	10	4	—	8
10'' guns	2	—	—	—
8'' guns	2	—	—	—
6'' guns	5	2	4	—
155mm guns	19	3	—	4
3'' guns	10	2	1	—

The forts had in addition a small number of 75mm beach defense guns. For anti-aircraft defense, including tied-in batteries on southern Bataan, there were 17 searchlights, 40 3-inch guns, and 48 .50 caliber machine guns.⁵¹

Marines from the 1st Separate Battalion were able to add a few .50 caliber

⁴⁹ *Moore Rept*, 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Annex C.

machine guns and a battery of four 3-inch guns taken from Cavite to the anti-aircraft defenses, but the primary function of the battalion was now that of infantry. It was reorganized and re-equipped at Mariveles to fill the role of the missing battalion of the 4th Marines; the formal change of title to 3d Battalion, 4th Marines came on 1 January.

With the exception of Batteries A and C and the radar detachment of Adams' battalion which remained on Bataan, the whole of the 4th Marines moved to Corregidor in successive echelons on the nights of 27 and 28 December. Enough rations for 2,000 men for six months, ten units of fire for all weapons, two years supply of summer khaki, and the medicines and equipment to outfit a 100-bed hospital accompanied the move. Fortunately, the Quartermaster, Major Ridgely, dispersed these supplies in small, scattered dumps as they arrived and they emerged relatively unscathed from the first Japanese air raid on Corregidor.

Many of the Marines in the bamboo jungles surrounding Mariveles, who had to shift camp constantly to avoid bombing and sleep "on the ground near a foxhole or some convenient ditch into which [they] could roll in the event of an air attack"⁵² looked forward to moving to The Rock. They had "watched the Jap bombers steer clear of its anti-aircraft barrages" and it had been pointed out to them "that Corregidor's anti-aircraft was so good that the Japs had not even dared to bomb it—yet!"⁵³ An additional lure of the island

to some men was the vision of a Gibraltar, and they talked knowingly of the (non-existent) intricate underground system of defenses.⁵⁴

At 0800 29 December, Colonel Howard reported to General Moore for orders as Fort Mills' beach defense commander and then started out to make a reconnaissance of the island. His men, temporarily quartered in Middleside Barracks, were startled to hear the air raid sirens sound shortly before noon. No one paid too much attention to them as Corregidor had never been bombed, but soon their trusting attitude changed. "All hell broke loose," and as one 1st Battalion officer described the scene, "there we were—the whole regiment flat on our bellies on the lower deck of Middleside Barracks."⁵⁵

The Japanese planes, 40 bombers of the 5th Air Group with 19 covering fighters, attacked at 1154. For the next hour a parade of Army aircraft flew the long axis of Corregidor dropping 200- and 500-pound bombs from 18,000 feet, and dive bombers attacked the anti-aircraft batteries, strafing as they plunged down. At 1300, the Army planes gave way to the Navy and bombers of the *Eleventh Air Fleet* continued to attack until 1415. None of FEAF's few remaining fighters, which were being saved for vital reconnaissance missions, took to the air, but Corregidor's gunners exacted a good price from the enemy—13 medium bombers fell to the 3-inchers and the .50 calibers shot down four of the dive bombers in a vivid demonstration of the folly of flying within reach of these guns. But the damage done by the enemy was considerable.

⁵² Statement of Lt(jg) R. G. Hetherneck in Cdr T. H. Hayes Rept on MedTactics, 4th Regt USMC, 7Dec41–6May42, 15Feb46, 79, hereinafter cited as *Hayes Rept*.

⁵³ LtCol R. F. Jenkins, Jr., Personal Experiences 28Dec41–6May42, n.d., 1, hereinafter cited as *Jenkins*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Almost all of the barracks and headquarters buildings and a good half of the wooden structures on the island were battered, set afire, or destroyed. A thick pall of black smoke and clouds of dust obscured the island from observers on Bataan, and the detail left to load out Marine supplies wondered at the fate of the regiment in the center of this maelstrom.⁵⁶ The casualty score was miraculously low, only one man killed and four wounded. With a single exception, bombs used by the Japanese did not penetrate all the way through to the bottom deck of the concrete barracks, but the building, shaken repeatedly by hits and near misses, was a shambles. In all, the island's defenders suffered about 100 casualties, and 29 December marked the end of "normal" above ground living for The Rock's garrison.

As soon as the air raid was over, Howard assigned beach defense sectors to his battalions, and the troops moved out to their new bivouac areas before dark. The 1st Battalion, 20 officers and 367 enlisted men under Lieutenant Colonel Curtis T. Beecher, drew a possible enemy landing point—the East Sector which included Malinta Hill and the island's tail. The beaches of Bottomside and most of Middleside (Middle Sector) up to a line including Morrison Hill and Ramsay Ravine were occupied by Lieutenant Colonel Adams' battalion with 20 officers and 490 men. The defense of the rest of the shoreline of Corregidor was the responsibility of the 2d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Herman R. Anderson) which mustered 18 officers and 324 enlisted men. A general reserve of 8 officers and 183 men, formed from the Headquarters and Service Com-

⁵⁶ *Ferguson*, 6.

panies, commanded by Major Stuart W. King,⁵⁷ bivouacked in Government Ravine, on the southern shore of the island below Geary and Crockett Batteries.

Not all of Adams' battalion was assigned to the Middle Sector; besides the units left on Bataan, the 3d Battalion furnished most of the other special detachments. One platoon (1 officer and 28 men) with four .50 caliber machine guns and a second (1 officer and 46 men) with four .30's left for Fort Hughes on the 30th to bolster the antiaircraft and beach defenses; the 2d Battalion added ten men and four more .30 caliber machine guns to the beach defenses on 3 January.⁵⁸ Fort Drum got a section of 15 men and two .50's to augment its crew. A third antiaircraft platoon with six .50's (1 officer and 35 men) was directly assigned to Fort Mills' air defenses and attached to a similarly-equipped battery of the 60th Coast Artillery which was emplaced near the Topside parade ground.

By 1 January the pattern had been set for the Marines' duties on Corregidor. The men were digging in, stringing barbed wire, emplacing their 37mm's, mortars, and machine guns, and tying-in for a coordinated and protracted defense. Ahead lay more than four months of waiting and preparation for a battle, months in which more than one survivor likened life on Corregidor to existence in the center of a bull's eye.

⁵⁷ *Howard Rept*, 14 lists Maj (then Capt) Max W. Schaeffer as commander of the regimental reserve at this point; however, the contemporary muster rolls at HQMC and survivors' comments indicate that Maj King held this position until 17Feb42 when Maj Schaeffer took over and King became ExO of the beach defense force at Fort Hughes.

⁵⁸ Lyon ltr, *op. cit.*

Bataan Prelude

*DRAWING THE BATTLE LINES*¹

The Japanese did not confine their operations in the Philippines to Luzon, but December landings on Mindanao and Jolo Islands were made primarily to secure bases for further attacks against Borneo. Here again the hastily mobilized Philippine Army reservists and Constabulary troopers were no match for the assault forces, and the enemy made good his lodgment. Offensive operations in the south, however, were limited by the fact that General Homma did not have sufficient troops to press a campaign on two fronts. The main strength of the *Fourteenth Army* remained on Luzon to win control of Manila Bay.

The original Japanese operation plan for Luzon had contemplated its occupation by the end of January and had provided for a mop-up force of one division and one brigade with a small air support unit. Shortly after Homma's troops entered Manila on 2 January, he received orders to expedite the withdrawal of the *48th Division* and the *5th Air Group* which were needed to reinforce stepped-up operations against Java and on the Asian mainland. In short return for these troop losses Homma got the *65th Brigade* from Formosa, originally assigned to mop-up and police duties. The brigade, which

landed on Lingayen Gulf beaches on 1 January, was selected by Homma as his Bataan assault force and reinforced with an infantry regiment from the *16th Division* and tank, artillery, and service troops from army reserves. (See Map 7, Map Section)

The necessary reorganization of the *65th Brigade* for combat and its movement into jump-off positions gave MacArthur time to establish an initial defense line. On 7 January he reorganized his forces into two corps and a rear area service command. Wainwright was given I Philippine Corps with responsibility for holding the western front, and Parker became II Philippine Corps commander with his troops manning defenses on the Manila Bay side of Bataan. More than 80,000 men were now bottled up on the peninsula and some 50,000 held positions on or near the initial defense line. These were impressive figures, and in paper strength the Bataan defenders outnumbered the *Fourteenth Army* which had about 50,000 troops under its command.

Military superiority depends, however, on many other factors besides relative troop strength. The conglomerate American-Filipino forces, completely cut off from effective relief, had limited supplies of rations, medicines, weapons, ammunition, and equipment. By contrast, the enemy's control of the sea and air gave the Japanese an unmatchable resupply and reinforcement potential. Even when

¹Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE-USFIP Rept; 14th Army Rept; Fall of the Philippines*.

the *Fourteenth Army's* fortunes were at their lowest ebb, the enemy troops could reasonably expect rescue and relief.

On 5 January MacArthur, in a move to conserve dwindling food stocks, had cut all troops on Bataan and the fortified islands to half rations.² This order was undoubtedly the most significant given in the campaign. It prolonged the fighting for weeks, until Bataan's defenses eventually collapsed. Men sapped by malnutrition and its attendant diseases, for which there were no medicines, could resist no more.

In launching their initial attack on Bataan the Japanese did not expect that the reinforced *65th Brigade* would have much trouble defeating the American-Filipino forces. The enemy was flushed with his successes and "completely ignorant concerning the terrain of Bataan Peninsula."³ Homma's intelligence officers had underestimated MacArthur's strength by half, had given their commander a distorted picture of Filipino morale, and had formulated an altogether incorrect estimate of the defensive situation on Bataan. The *Fourteenth Army* staff had:

. . . optimistically presumed that, considering its position relative to Corregidor Island, the enemy would offer serious resistance at the southern end of the Peninsula with Mariveles as a nucleus, withdrawing later to Corregidor Island. Taking this for granted, the threat of enemy resistance was taken lightly.⁴

Bataan Peninsula was an ideal position from the viewpoint of a force committed to a last-ditch stand. Thirty miles long at

its deepest point and 25 miles wide at its base, the peninsula tapered to an average width of 15 miles. Numerous streams, ravines, and gullies cut up the interior and thick jungle growth blanketed everything. A spine of mountains running northwest to southeast split Bataan roughly in half. The dominant features in the north were Mt. Natib (4,222 feet) and its companion Mt. Silanganan (3,620 feet), and in the south, Mt. Bataan (4,700 feet), which commanded the Mariveles area. Although numerous trails crisscrossed the peninsula, only two motor roads existed, one running along the coast and the other over the saddle between the mountain masses. The western coast line was uneven with many promontories formed by mountain ridges; the eastern coast was more regular and open but became hilly and rugged in the south. (See Map 7, Map Section)

The final defense line selected by USAFFE was midway down the peninsula, anchored on the towns of Bagac and Orion, and generally along the trace of the cross-peninsula motor road. It was the necessity of covering the preparation of this area for defense and the need to use the road as a supply route as long as possible that dictated the occupation of the initial defense line. Stretching across the peninsula just above the point where it narrowed, this position had a grave natural weakness. The corps boundary ran along the Natib-Silanganan mountain mass which pierced the defenses and prevented liaison or even contact between Wainwright's and Parker's men. The Japanese attempt to crack this defense line eventually involved landings far behind the front and brought the Marines at Mariveles into action.

² "Actually, the troops on Bataan received about one-third ration." *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*, 42.

³ *14th Army Rept*, 90.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.



SYMBOLIC OF JAPANESE SUCCESSES in the early stages of the war is this photograph taken on Mt. Limay on Bataan during the fighting in the Philippines. (SC 334265)

*THE NAVAL BATTALION*⁵

Although the farthest distance from the rear boundaries of the corps areas to the southern shore of Bataan was only ten miles, the defensive problem facing Brigadier General Allan C. McBride's Service Command was acute. With a relatively few men McBride had to guard over 40 miles of rough, jungle-covered coast line against enemy attack. A successful amphibious thrust which cut the vital coastal supply road could mean the prompt end of the battle for Bataan. To protect the east coast he had the newly-organized 2d (Constabulary) Division; on the west coast he had a motley composite force of service troops and planeless pursuit squadrons converted to infantry, backed up by a few elements of the 71st Division and a Constabulary regiment. Responsibility for the security of the naval reservation at Mariveles remained with the Navy.

In order to provide protection for Mariveles and support the Army in the defense of the west coast, Admiral Rockwell on 9 January directed Captain John H. S. Dessez, commander of the section base, to form a naval battalion for ground combat. The senior naval aviator remaining in the Philippines, Commander Francis J. Bridget, was appointed battalion commander and he immediately set about organizing his force. For troops he had about 480 bluejackets including 150 of his own men from Air, Asiatic Fleet, 130

crewmen from the submarine tender *Canopus*, 80 sailors from the Cavite Naval Ammunition Depot, and 120 general duty men from Cavite and Mariveles. He was also assigned approximately 120 Marines, members of Batteries A and C which had remained behind on Bataan under naval control when the rest of the 1st Separate Battalion (now 3/4) had moved to Corregidor.

The men of First Lieutenant William F. Hogaboom's Battery A had originally been slated to provide replacement and relief gun crews for Battery C (First Lieutenant Willard C. Holdredge) whose 3-inch guns were set up in a rice paddy between the town of Mariveles and the section base. But on 5 January Hogaboom had received instructions from a USAFFE staff officer, "approved by naval authorities on the 'Rock',"⁶ to move his unit to the site of MacArthur's advance CP on Bataan where the Marines were to furnish the interior guard. This assignment was short-lived, however, since Commander Bridget needed the men to serve as tactical instructors and cadres for the naval battalion, and on 14 January he directed Hogaboom to report back to Mariveles. To replace Battery A, USAFFE detached two officers and 47 men from the 4th Marines⁷ and sent them from Corregidor to Bataan where they guarded the advance headquarters until the end of the campaign.

The most serious problem Bridget faced in forming his battalion was the lack of ground combat training of his bluejackets. As the commander of the *Canopus*, naturally an interested spectator, noted:

⁵ Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Rockwell Narrative*; 16th NavDist War Diary, 8Dec41-19Feb42 (located at NHD); *Clement Rept*; Cdr F. J. Bridget Rept to ComSixteen, Action at Longoskawayan Point, 9Feb42 (located at NHD), hereinafter cited as *Bridget Rept*; Capt E. L. Sackett, USN, "History of the USS *Canopus*," 28Apr47 (located at NHD), hereinafter cited as *Canopus Hist*; *Hogaboom*.

⁶ *Hogaboom*, 5.

⁷ *4th Mar Jnl*, 268.

. . . perhaps two-thirds of the sailors knew which end of the rifle should be presented to the enemy, and had even practiced on a target range, but field training was practically a closed book to them. The experienced Marines were spread thinly throughout each company in hope that through precept and example, their qualities would be assimilated by the rest.⁸

Even after the formation of the naval battalion, the primary responsibility for anti-aircraft defense of Mariveles still rested with the Marine batteries and only a relatively few men, mostly NCO's, could be spared to help train the bluejacket companies. Holdredge's 3-inchers required at least skeleton crews and Hogaboom's unit, after its return from USAFFE control, was directed to mount and man nine .50 caliber machine-gun posts in the hills around the harbor. Therefore, in both batteries the majority of men available for ground combat were sailors; Battery A joined one officer and 65 bluejackets on 16-17 January and a Navy officer and 40 men joined Holdredge's battery on the 18th and 19th.⁹ Throughout the naval battalion, training was confined to fundamentals as Bridget strove to qualify his men as infantry. As was the case so often in the Philippines, the time for testing the combat readiness of the jury-rigged battalion came all too soon.

LONGOSKAWAYAN POINT¹⁰

In opening his attack on Bataan, General Homma committed the main strength of the 65th Brigade along the front of Parker's II Corps, figuring that the more open terrain along the east coast gave him a greater opportunity to exploit successes. By 11 January the Japanese had devel-

oped and fixed Parker's defenses and were probing for weak spots preparatory to an all-out assault. It was inevitable that they found the open and highly vulnerable left flank. By 22 January Parker's position along the slopes of Mt. Natib had been turned and all reserves with the exception of one regiment had been committed to contain the penetration. In order to prevent the defending forces from being cut off, USAFFE ordered a general withdrawal to the Bagac-Orion defense line, to be completed by the 26th.

The enemy advancing along the mountainous west coast did not contact General Wainwright's forward positions until 15 January. By that date, Homma, impressed by the lack of resistance in this sector, had already ordered the 20th Infantry of the 16th Division to reinforce and exploit the drive, strike through to the Bagac road junction, and gain the rear of Parker's corps. Although I Corps had been stripped of reserves to back up the sagging eastern defense line, Wainwright's front-line troops were able to stand off the initial Japanese assaults. When Homma's fresh troops attacked on the 21st, however, they effected a lodgment behind the front which eventually made withdrawal toward Bagac mandatory. The local Japanese commander, encouraged by his success, de-

¹⁰ Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is taken from *USAFFE-USFIP Rept; 14th Army Rept; 4th Mar Jnl; Clement Rept; Bridget Rept; Hogaboom; Btry A, US NavBn, Narrative of events, 2Feb42; 2dLt M. E. Peshek ltr to CO, 2/4, "Report of operation of Marine Detachment sent to Bataan on 25 January 1942," 2Feb42; GunSgt H. M. Ferrell ltr to CO, 1/4, "Temporary Duty of Mortar Platoon, vicinity of Mariveles, Bataan, Philippine Islands, from January 25, 1942, to January 30, 1942, inclusive," 31Jan42; Fall of the Philippines.*

⁸ *Canopus Hist*, 14.

⁹ Col W. F. Prickett ltr to CMC, October 1956.

cided on a shore-to-shore amphibious assault which would hit the Bataan coastal road about four miles below Bagac.

Embarking after dark on the night of 22-23 January, the enemy's 900-man landing force (*2d Battalion, 20th Infantry*) started out for its objective. It never arrived. En route two launches of the battalion's boat group were discovered and sunk by an American torpedo boat¹¹ and it is possible that these attacks were instrumental in scattering the remainder of the landing force. In any event, the enemy boats lost their bearings completely in the darkness. Instead of landing on the objective, two-thirds of the unit landed at Quinauan Point, eight miles south of Bagac. The remainder of the battalion, 7 officers and 294 men, came ashore at Longoskawayan Point, a finger-like promontory only 2,000 yards west of Mariveles. (See Map 7, Map Section)

The Longoskawayan landing force was not discovered immediately, and the enemy had time to advance along jungle-matted cliffs and reach Lapiay Point, the next promontory to the north. The Japanese patrols headed inland from Lapiay for Mt. Pucot, a 617-foot hill which commanded both the west coast road and the landing site. The first word of the presence of the enemy in his defense sector reached Commander Bridget at 0840 on 23 January when the small lookout detachment he had posted on Pucot was driven from its position by enemy machine-gun fire.

Bridget immediately phoned Hogaboom and Holdredge, directing both officers to send out patrols. Hogaboom, closest to

the scene of action, sent one bluejacket platoon under Lieutenant (junior grade) Leslie A. Pew directly to Pucot while he led a second platoon himself in a sweep through the ridges south of the hill. Pew's platoon deployed as it approached the hill-top, attacked through scattered rifle and machine-gun fire, and secured the high ground without difficulty. The Japanese offered only slight resistance and then faded out of contact.

South of the hill Hogaboom ran into a platoon from Battery C which had had a brush with the Japanese and taken a couple of casualties, but again the enemy had disappeared. The story of light firing and no firm resistance was much the same from the rest of the probing patrols which Bridget ordered out on the 23d; the Japanese evidently were still feeling out the situation and were not as yet disposed to make a stand or an attack. At dusk the patrols assembled on the mountain and set up a defense line along its crest and the ridges to the south facing Lapiay and Longoskawayan Points.

During the day Bridget had called on the Service Command for reinforcements but few men could be spared as most reserves already had been committed to contain the larger landing force at Quinauan Point. For infantry he got the 3d Pursuit Squadron and 60 men from the 301st Chemical Company whom he put into a holding line above Lapiay Point and on the north slope of Pucot; for fire support he received one 2.95-inch mountain pack howitzer and crew from the 71st Division. By nightfall the chemical company had tied in with the pursuit squadron on its right and with Battery A atop Pucot on its left; platoons from Battery C, the Air, Asiatic Fleet Company, and the Naval

¹¹ ComMTBron-3, Rept of Act of USS PT-34 on the night of 22-23Jan42, 27Feb42 (located at NHD), 1.

Ammunition Depot Company held the rest of Pucot's crest and the southern ridges which blocked off the landing area from Mariveles.¹² None of the naval battalion units was at full strength and none of the platoons strung out along the ridges was strictly a Navy or a Marine outfit. Sailors predominated but Marines were present all along the line, mostly as squad leaders and platoon sergeants. The composition of that part of the battalion which got into action became even more varied as the battle shaped up, and eventually about a third of the men on the front-line were drawn from the Marine batteries.

Bridget's men got their first real taste of the blind fighting of jungle warfare on the 24th. Hogaboom led a patrol down the bluff above Lapiay Point and ran head-on into an enemy machine gun firing from heavy cover. Grenades thrown at the gun exploded harmlessly in a tangle of lush vegetation which screened it from view; the men were being fired upon and they were replying, but sound rather than sight was the key to targets. When reinforcements arrived later in the day an attempt was made to establish a holding line across the point, but the Japanese opened up with a second machine gun and steady rifle fire. Then they began dropping mortar and howitzer shells among Hogaboom's group.

¹² An officer of 3/4 who knew many of the survivors of this action, later wrote an article describing the battle. He maintained that the Army detachments mentioned never joined, although they may have been assigned, and that the purely naval companies were not used as such. Instead the sailors who could be spared joined one of the Marine units. While this story is quite credible, in this instance the contemporary *Bridget Rept* has been used as a guide. See LtCol W. F. Prickett, "Naval Battalion at Mariveles," *MC Gazette*, June 1950, 40-43.

The Marine officer ordered a withdrawal to the previous night's positions.

The source of the mortar and howitzer fire was Longoskawayan Point where a patrol led by Lieutenant Holdredge had encountered the main body of Japanese. His two-man point had surprised an enemy group setting up a field piece in a clearing and opened up with a rifle and a BAR, dropping about a dozen men around the gun. The Japanese reaction was swift, agreeing with the BAR-man's evaluation that the surprise fire "ought to make them madder'n hell."¹³ The patrol fell back, fighting a rear guard action until it cleared the area of the point's tip, and then it retired to the ridges. After the day's action Hogaboom and Holdredge compared notes and estimated that they faced at least 200 well-equipped enemy troops in strong positions; they informed Bridget of their conclusion that it would take a fully-organized battalion with supporting weapons to dislodge them.

On the morning of 25 January, USAFFE augmented Bridget's force by sending him a machine-gun platoon and an 81mm mortar platoon from the 4th Marines on The Rock. The two mortars immediately set up on a saddle northwest of Pucot and, with Hogaboom spotting for them, worked over the whole of Lapiay and Longoskawayan Points; direct hits were scored on the positions where the Japanese had been encountered the day before. A midafternoon patrol discovered that the enemy had evacuated Lapiay, but it was soon evident where they had gone. Holdredge led a combined force of several platoons against Longoskawayan Point and ran into a hornet's nest. He himself was among those wounded before the pla-

¹³ Quoted in *Hogaboom*, 10.

toons could extricate themselves. Again the naval battalion occupied blocking positions on the ridges east of the points for night defense.

During the action of the 25th, USAFFE had changed the command structure in the rear service area and given the corps commanders responsibility for beach defense throughout Bataan. In addition, MacArthur had granted permission for the 12-inch mortars on Corregidor to support Bridget's battalion. Shortly after midnight, the giant mortars, spotted in by an observer on Mt. Pucot, laid several rounds on Longoskawayan Point. The daylight hours were spent in light patrol action while the battalion was readied for a full-scale attack on the 27th. General Wainwright sent a battery of Philippine Scout 75mm guns to support the drive.

At 0700 on 27 January the mountain howitzer, the Marine mortars, the Scout 75's, and Corregidor's 12-inch mortars fired a preparation on Longoskawayan, and a skirmish line of about 200 men, some 60-75 of them Marines, started to advance. The enemy reoccupied his positions as soon as the supporting fire lifted, and the jungle came alive with bullets and shell fragments. The right and center of the line made little progress in the face of heavy machine-gun fire. On the left where the going was a little easier a gap soon opened through which Japanese infiltrating groups were able to reach the reserve's positions.

During the resulting hectic fighting, the enemy opened up with mortar fire to herald a counterattack; fortunately, the 4th Marines' 81's were able to silence this fire, but it was soon obvious that the naval battalion was in no shape to advance farther or even to hold its lines on Longo-

skawayan. Bridget again authorized a withdrawal to the night defense lines on the eastern ridges.

The solution to the problem of eliminating the Japanese beachhead arrived late that afternoon. Colonel Clement, who had come over from Corregidor to advise Bridget on the conduct of the Longoskawayan action, had requested reinforcements from I Corps. Wainwright sent in the regular troops needed and the 2d Battalion of the 57th Philippine Scout Regiment relieved the naval battalion, which went into reserve. The 4th Marines' mortars and machine guns were assigned to the Scouts to support their operations. The oddly-assorted platoons of Bridget's battalion were not committed to action again, but they had done their job in containing the Japanese though outnumbered and outgunned.

The Scouts spent 28 January in developing the Longoskawayan position. On the 29th they attacked in full strength with all the support they could muster. The mine sweeper *Quail*, risking an encounter with Japanese destroyers, came out from Mariveles and cruised offshore while Commander Bridget spotted for the 12-inch mortars and the 75mm guns. The ship closed from 2,200 to 1,300 yards firing point-blank at Japanese soldiers trying to hide out in the caves and undergrowth along the shores of the point.¹⁴ Ashore the Scouts, supported by machine-gun and mortar fire from the landing flanking the point, did the job expected of them and smashed through the enemy lines. By nightfall organized resistance had ended and the cost of taking Lapiay and Long-

¹⁴ CO USS *Quail* Rept of Act at Longoskawayan Pt morning of 29Jan42, 30Jan42 (located at NHD), 1.

oskawayan had been counted. Bridget's unit had lost 11 killed and 26 wounded in action; the Scout casualties were 11 dead and 27 wounded; and the Japanese had lost their entire landing force.

During the next few days patrols, aided by ship's launches armored and manned by crewmen from the *Canopus*, mopped up the area, killing stragglers and taking a few prisoners, but the threat to Mariveles was ended. Similar action by adequately supported Scout units wiped out the Quinauan Point landing force by 7 February. The major Japanese attempt to reinforce the beleaguered troops on Quinauan was beaten back by the combined fire of artillery, naval guns, and the strafing of the four P-40's remaining on Bataan. Elements of an enemy battalion which did get ashore on a point of land just above Quinauan on 27 January and 2 February were also finished off by the Scouts.

By 13 February the last survivors of the amphibious attempts had been killed or captured. The make-shift beach defense forces which had initially contained the landings had barely managed to hold their own against the Japanese. They had had to overreach themselves to keep the enemy off balance and prevent a breakthrough while the troops of I and II Corps were falling back to the Bagac-Orion position. Once that line was occupied and Wainwright could commit some of his best troops in sufficient numbers and with adequate support, the Japanese were finished. Discouraged by their amphibious fiasco, the enemy never again attempted to hit the coastal flanks of the American-Filipino positions.

At the same time the survivors of the landing attempts were being hunted down,

the Japanese offensive sputtered to a halt in front of the Bagac-Orion line. The initial enemy advance on Bataan had not been made without cost, and the casualty rate now soared so high that the attacking troops were rendered ineffective. On 13 February Homma found it necessary to break contact, pull back to a line of blocking positions, and to regroup his battered forces. The lull in the *Fourteenth Army's* attack was only temporary, however, as Homma was promised replacements and reinforcements. When the second phase of the battle for Bataan opened, the scales were heavily tipped in favor of the Japanese.

The detachment of *Canopus* crewmen, the sailors from the Cavite Naval Ammunition Depot, and the majority of the general duty men, nine officers and 327 enlisted men in all, were transferred to the 4th Marines on Corregidor on 17-18 February. Commander Bridget and his naval aviation contingent moved to Fort Hughes on the 30th where Bridget became beach defense commander with Major Stuart W. King of the 4th Marines as his executive officer. Battery C of 3/4 remained at Mariveles to man its antiaircraft guns, but Battery A rejoined the regiment, with most of its men going to Headquarters Company to augment the regimental reserve.

The assignment of the sailors of the naval battalion to Colonel Howard's command accentuated the growing joint-service character of the Marine regiment. Small contingents of crewmen from damaged or sunken boats of the Inshore Patrol also had been joined and over 700 Philippine Army air cadets and their officers were now included in the 4th's ranks. These men, most of whom had never had

any infantry training, were distributed throughout the companies on beach defense and in reserve where the experienced Marines could best train them by example and close individual instruction. No company in the regiment retained an all-Marine complexion.

The arrival of reinforcements on Corregidor and Caballo came at a time when the Japanese had stepped up their campaign against the fortified islands. On 6 February, the first enemy shells, fired by 105mm guns emplaced along the shore of Cavite Province, exploded amidst the American positions on all the islands. The reaction was swift and the forts replied with the guns that could bear. The counterbattery exchange continued throughout February and early March, occasionally waning as the Japanese were forced to shift to new firing positions by gunners on Forts Frank and Drum. The limited number of planes available to Homma made enemy bombers infrequent visitors during this period, and the Japanese concentrated on reducing the island defenses with artillery fire. In the first week of March, the American commander on Fort Frank received a demand for its surrender with a boast that the Cavite coast was lined with artillery and that:

... Carabao will be reduced by our mighty artillery fire, likewise Drum; after reduction of Carabao and Drum our invincible artillery will pound Corregidor into submission, batter it, weaken it, preparatory to a final assault by crack Japanese landing troops.¹⁶

The surrender note was unproductive for the enemy, but it was prophetic regarding the fate of Corregidor.

Until the Japanese were ready to renew their assault on Bataan in late March, the

severity of the enemy shellings from Cavite was not great enough to be effective in halting the construction and improvement of beach defenses on Corregidor. Trenches and gun positions lined the shores of Bottomside and the ravines leading to Topside and Middleside from the beaches. Barbed wire entanglements and mine fields improvised from aerial bombs were laid across all possible approaches. The ordnance stores of the island were searched to provide increased firepower for the 4th Marines,¹⁷ and guns were sited to insure that any landing force would be caught in a murderous crossfire if it attempted to reach shore.

The thoroughness of the regiment's preparations was indicative of its high state of morale. The men manning the beach defenses, and to a lesser extent their comrades in the jungles of Bataan, never completely abandoned hope of rescue and relief until the very last days of their ordeal.¹⁸ Even when General MacArthur was ordered to leave the Philippines to take over a new Allied command in the Southwest Pacific, many men thought that he would return, leading a strong relief force. The senior commanders in the Philippines and the Allied leaders knew the truth, however, and realized that barring a miracle, Luzon was doomed to fall. Only a few key men could be taken out of the trap by submarine, torpedo boat, or

¹⁷ One source of beach defense guns was the sub-caliber 37mm's which were used for practice firing by Corregidor's big guns. These were dismounted from the gun tubes and turned over to the Marines. LtGen S. L. Howard interview by HistBr, G-3, HQMC, 26Oct56, hereinafter cited as *Howard Interview*.

¹⁸ Maj T. E. Pulos ltr to CMC, 30Oct56.

¹⁶ Quoted in *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*, 40-41.

plane; the rest had to be left to accept their fate.

On 11 March, the day before MacArthur and his party started the first leg of their journey to Australia, he created a new headquarters, Luzon Force, to control the operations on Bataan and appointed General Wainwright to its command. On 20 March, the War Department notified Wainwright of his promotion to lieutenant general and of the fact that he was to be commander of all forces remaining in the Philippines. To take the place of USAFFE, an area headquarters, United States Forces in the Philippines (USFIP), was created.

To take his place on Bataan, Wainwright appointed the USAFFE Artillery Officer, Major General Edward P. King, Jr. King drew an unenviable task when he took over Luzon Force, for the volume of Japanese preparatory fire on Bataan and on the island forts indicated the start of a major effort. To meet this attack, King had troops who had already spent two weeks on a diet of $\frac{3}{8}$ of a ration on top of two months of half rations; they were ready to fight but "with not enough food in their bellies to sustain a dog."¹⁹ The USAFFE Surgeon General, on 18 February, had accounted Bataan's defenders as being only 55% combat efficient as a result of "debilities due to malaria, dysentery, and general malnutrition."²⁰ These same men were now a month further along on the road to exhaustion and collapse and were destined to meet a fresh and vigorous enemy assault.

¹⁹ *Wainwright's Story*, 76. The ration was cut to $\frac{3}{8}$ on 2 March according to *USAFFE-USFIP Rept* entry for that date.

²⁰ Quoted in *Diary of Maj A. C. Tisdelle, Aide to MajGen King*, entry of 18Feb42.

THE FALL OF BATAAN²¹

The *Fourteenth Army* set 3 April as D-day for its renewed offensive on Bataan, and General Homma foresaw "no reason why this attack should not succeed."²² He could well be confident since he had received the infantry replacements needed to rebuild the *16th Division* and the *65th Brigade*, and he had been sent the *4th Division* from Shanghai. In addition, *Imperial Headquarters* had allotted him a strongly reinforced infantry regiment from the *21st Division*, originally slated for duty in Indo-China. His artillery strength had been more than doubled and now included far-ranging 240mm howitzers. Two heavy bomber regiments had been flown up from Malaya to increase materially his mastery of the air.

Once the enemy attack was launched, the pressure on Bataan's defenders was relentless. In less than a week the issue had been decided. The physically weakened Americans and Filipinos tried desperately to stem the Japanese advance, but to no avail. By 7 April the last reserves had been committed. A growing stream of dazed, disorganized men, seeking to escape the incessant bombardment at the front and the onrushing enemy, crowded the roads and trails leading to Mariveles. Only isolated groups of soldiers still fought to hold the Japanese back from the tip of the peninsula. Under these circumstances, General King decided to seek surrender terms. His aide recorded the situation in his diary:

8th [April]. Wednesday. The army can not attack. It is impossible. Area is congested with stragglers . . . General King has ordered all

²¹ Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE-USFIP Rept: 14th Army Rept; Fall of the Philippines*.

²² *14th Army Rept*, Appendix 4, 17.

tanks thrown [blown?] and arms destroyed, and is going forward to contact the Japanese and try to avert a massacre.²³

Near midnight on the 8th a severe earthquake tremor was felt on Corregidor and Bataan, and soon thereafter the Mariveles harbor was shaking violently from man-made explosions, as King's orders to destroy all munitions dumps were carried out. To an observer on The Rock it seemed that:

. . . the southern end of Bataan was a huge conflagration which resembled more than anything else a volcano in violent eruption . . . white hot pieces of metal from exploded shells and bombs shot skyward by the thousands in every conceivable direction. Various colored flares exploded in great numbers and charged off on crazy courses much the same as a sky rocket which has run wild on the ground.²⁴

All night long the water between Bataan and Corregidor was lashed with falling debris and fragments from the explosions. Through this deadly shower a procession

of small craft dodged its way to the north dock of Bottomside. Everything that could float was pressed into use by frantic refugees. Some of the arrivals, however, such as the nurses from Bataan's hospitals, were under orders to report to Corregidor. Specific units that could strengthen The Rock's garrison, antiaircraft batteries and the 45th Philippine Scout Regiment, had also been called for. Only the AAA gunners from the Mariveles area, including the 4th Marines' Battery C, managed to escape. The Scout regiment was prevented from reaching the harbor in time by the jammed condition of the roads.

By noon on 9 April, General King had found out that no terms would be given him; the Japanese demanded unconditional surrender. With thousands of his men lying wounded and sick in open air general hospitals and all hope of successful resistance gone, King accepted the inevitable and surrendered, asking only that his men be given fair treatment. The battle for Bataan had ended, and more than 75,000 gallant men began the first of more than a thousand days of brutal captivity.

²³ Tisdelle, *op. cit.*

²⁴ LCdr T. C. Parker, "The Epic of Corregidor-Bataan, December 24, 1941-May 4, 1942," *USNI Proceedings*, January 1943, 18, hereinafter cited as *Parker*.

The Siege and Capture of Corregidor

THE JAPANESE PLANS¹

On 9 April the victorious *Fourteenth Army* paused on the shore of Bataan with its next target—Corregidor—dead center in its sights. Many enemy staff officers, both in Tokyo and on Luzon, wanted to launch an immediate amphibious attack, taking advantage of the army's success on Bataan. The dearth of landing craft in Manila Bay, however, effectively served to postpone the operation. Most of the Japanese landing barges and boats were located in Lingayen Gulf or Subic Bay and had to be moved past Corregidor's guns to the designated staging areas on the eastern coast of Bataan. (See Map 8, Map Section)

On the night of 14 April the first small group of boats slipped by The Rock, hugging Bataan's shore while the enemy shelled and bombed the island's north coast to prevent their discovery.² Because they were forced to follow this method of moving a few boats at a time and these only at night and behind a curtain of protective fire, the Japanese took more than three weeks to assemble the necessary assault craft.

The need for extreme caution in making the risky passage into Manila Bay was not the only factor which acted against rapid execution of the Japanese assault

plan. In mid-April a severe outbreak of malaria in the ranks of the *4th Division*, Homma's chosen landing force, severely hampered attack preparations, but amphibious training and rehearsals continued despite the temporary decrease in the division's effective strength. Emergency supplies of quinine tablets were flown to Luzon in time to check the spread of the disease and restore fighting trim.

The *Fourteenth Army* was obsessed, with the need for deception and secrecy and stringent security measures were taken to conceal the preparations for the attack on Corregidor. A consistent effort was made to create the impression that Cavite Province was the Japanese amphibious base and that Forts Frank and Drum were the targets. Landing craft maneuvered off Cavite's shores while the army's air and artillery pounded the defenses of the southern islands. Two battalions of the *16th Division* feigned preparations for an attack on Frank and Drum, but there was little doubt at USFIP Headquarters that Corregidor was the primary Japanese objective.

Every day in April, starting with the day Bataan fell, an increasingly heavier concentration of enemy artillery pieces found firing positions in the peninsula's jungled hills. At least thirty-seven batteries, whose weapons ranged from 75mm mountain guns to 240mm howitzers, covered Corregidor with a continuous pattern of fire that reached every position and knocked out the major portion of the

¹ Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *14th Army Rept; Philippine AirOpsRec; Fall of the Philippines*.

² *4th Mar Jnl*, 374.

island's defenses.³ Nine Japanese bombing squadrons, capitalizing on the gradual weakening of anti-aircraft fire, were overhead to add their bombardment to the attack preparation.

The enemy *4th Division* was reinforced for the assault with two independent engineer regiments to man the transport and support landing craft as well as a tank regiment and three mortar battalions to provide additional firepower. The actual landing operation was to be made in two stages with Colonel Gem-pachi Sato's *61st Infantry Regiment* (two infantry battalions, a tank company, a mountain artillery battery, and mortar units) designated the initial assault force. Sato was to land his unit in successive waves, battalions abreast along the beaches between Infantry and Cavalry Points on the night of 5 May. After establishing a beachhead, he was to send most of his men against Malinta Hill while the remainder of the regiment drove across the tail of the island to isolate and contain the defenders east of Infantry Point. The plan called for the *61st Regiment* to be in possession of Malinta Hill by dawn, ready to support a second landing.

Twenty-four hours after Sato's force landed, the division's main assault effort would strike beaches between Morrison and Battery Points, near James Ravine, and at the neck of the island. This second landing force, four heavily reinforced infantry battalions, would have the assist-

ance of Sato's unit which was scheduled to make a concurrent attack against Ramsay Battery hill. Throughout the whole operation the artillery on Bataan, operating under army control, was to deliver preparatory and supporting fires, and in daylight hours the army's air squadrons were to fly close support missions.

The *4th Division* had three infantry battalions in reserve for its attack but did not expect that they would be needed. The Japanese were confident that their preparatory bombardment had knocked most of the fight out of Corregidor. Every terrain feature on the island was plotted and registered on artillery target maps and any signal for support from the assault forces would call down a smother of accurate fire on the defenders. The enemy felt certain that dusk of 7 May would see their assault troops in control of Corregidor.

LIFE ON A BULL'S EYE⁴

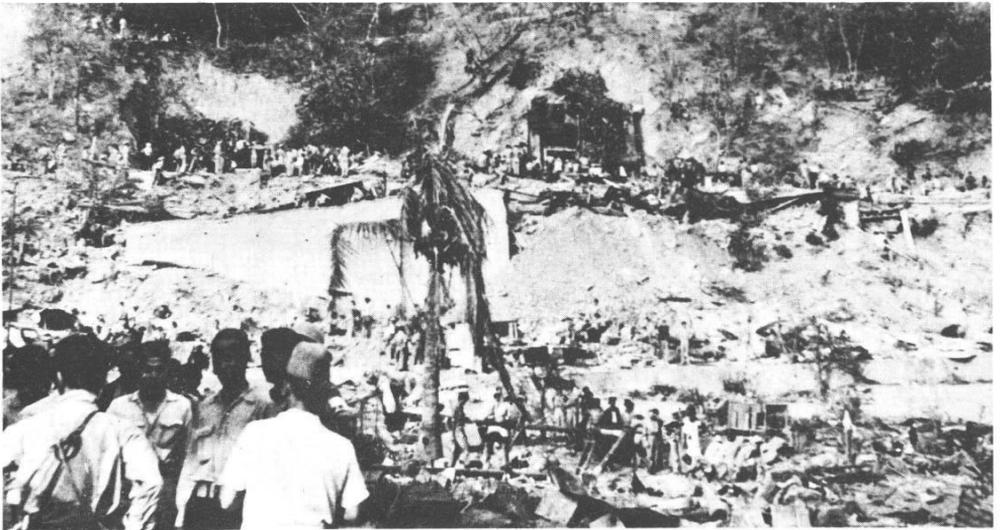
During the 27 days between the fall of Bataan and the assault on Corregidor, life on The Rock became a living hell. The men in the open gun pits and exposed beach defenses were subjected to an increasing rain of shells and bombs. It became virtually impossible to move about the

³ Many survivors and a number of accounts of this siege credit the Japanese with having as many as 400 artillery pieces firing on the fortified islands by 5 May. The figure of 37 batteries (approximately 150 pieces) represents only the enemy artillery units listed in *14th Army Rept*, 187 as part of the Corregidor attack organization.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*; *Moore Rept*; *4th Mar Jnl*; *Hayes Rept*; Capt C. B. Brook, USN, Personal Experiences 8Apr-6 May 56, n.d., hereinafter cited as *Brook*; Maj H. E. Dalness, USA, "The Operations of the 4th Battalion (Provisional) 4th Marine Regiment in the Final Counterattack in the Defense of Corregidor 5-6 May 1942," AdvInfoOff Course 1949-50, The InfSch, Ft. Benning, Ga., hereinafter cited as *Dalness*; *Ferguson*; *Jenkins*; 1stLt O. E. Saalman, USA, Personal Experiences 12Apr-6May42, n.d., hereinafter cited as *Saalman*.



AERIAL VIEW OF CORREGIDOR ISLAND showing in the foreground the area of the battle between the Japanese landing force and the 4th Marines. (SC 200883-S)



EFFECT OF JAPANESE BOMBARDMENT OF CORREGIDOR is shown in this photograph taken the day after the surrender near the main entrance to Malinta Hill. (SC 282343)

island by daylight; enemy artillery spotters aloft in observation balloons on Bataan and in planes overhead had a clear view of their targets. The dense vegetation which had once covered most of Corregidor was stripped away by blast and fragmentation to reveal the dispositions of Howard's command. The tunnels through Malinta Hill, their laterals crowded with headquarters installations and hospital beds, offered refuge for only a fraction of the 11,000-man garrison and the rest of the defenders had to stick it out with little hope of protection from the deadly down-pour.

Most of the escapees from Bataan were ordered to join the 4th Marines, thus adding 72 officers and 1,173 enlisted men to its strength between 9 and 12 April.⁵ The majority of the Army combat veterans, however, "were in such poor physical condition that they were incapable of even light work,"⁶ and had to be hospitalized. The mixed collection of infantry, artillery, aviation, and service personnel from both American and Philippine units assigned to the beach defense battalions was in little better shape than the men who had been committed to the hospital under Malinta Hill. The commander of 1/4's reserve, First Lieutenant Robert F. Jenkins, Jr., who received a typical contingent of Bataan men to augment his small force commented that he:

. . . had never seen men in such poor physical condition. Their clothing was ragged and

⁵ The former sergeant major of 2/4 believes that the regiment joined substantially more men than this figure which appears in the regimental journal. He recalls that the 2d Bn "picked up for rations, and on the crudest rolls, at least 600 men" and believes that the other battalions did the same. *Jackson*.

⁶ *Wainwright's Story*, 87.

stained from perspiration and dirt. Their gaunt, unshaven faces were strained and emaciated. Some of them were already suffering from beri-beri as a result of a starvation diet of rice for weeks. We did what we could for them and then put them to work on the beach defenses.⁷

The sailors from Mariveles, mostly crewmen from the now-scuttled *Canopus*, were kept together and formed into a new 275-man reserve battalion for the regiment, the 4th Battalion, 4th Marines.⁸ Not only was the designation of 4/4 unusual, but so was its makeup and its personnel. Only six Marines served in the battalion: its commander, Major Francis H. Williams, and five NCOs. The staff, company commanders, and platoon leaders were drawn from the nine Army and 18 Navy officers assigned to assist Williams.⁹ The four rifle companies were designated Q, R, S, and T, the highest lettered companies the men had ever heard of. Another boast of the bluejackets turned Marines was that they were "the highest paid battalion in the world, as most of the men

⁷ *Jenkins*, 13.

⁸ Most survivors of 4/4 refer to the battalion as having had approximately 500 men in its ranks. Strength breakdowns of the 4th Mar exist up through 1 May 42, however, and nowhere do they support the larger figure. The S-3 of 4/4 is certain that the total strength of the battalion on 6 May was no more than 350 men. Maj O. E. Saalman ltr to CMC, 22 Oct 56, hereinafter cited as *Saalman 1956*.

⁹ Survivors of 4/4 are unable to agree on the identity of the man who served as ExO of the battalion; at least five Army or Navy officers have been mentioned. In addition, the possibility that a Marine who was closely connected with 4/4 was *de facto* ExO was brought out by one of the NCOs who recalls that "Major Williams always considered Gunner Joe Reardon [QMCIk Joseph J. Reardon] as his Executive Officer and Adjutant." MSgt K. W. Mize ltr to CMC, 1 Nov 56.

were petty officers of the upper pay grades.”¹⁰

The new organization went into bivouac in Government Ravine as part of the regimental reserve. The reserve had heretofore consisted of men from the Headquarters and Service Companies, reinforced by Philippine Air cadets and Marines from Bataan. Major Max W. Schaeffer, who had replaced Major King as reserve commander, had organized this force of approximately 250 men into two tactical companies, O and P. Company O was commanded by Captain Robert Chambers, Jr. and Company P by Lieutenant Hogaboom; the platoons were led by Marine warrant officers and senior NCOs.

A good part of Schaeffer's men had primary duties connected with regimental supply and administration, but each afternoon the companies assembled in the bivouac area where the troops were instructed in basic infantry tactics and the employment of their weapons. Despite the constant interruptions of air raids and shellings, the Marines and Filipinos had a chance “to get acquainted with each other, familiarize themselves with each others' voices, and to learn [the] teamwork”¹¹ so essential to effective combat operations. Frequently, Major Schaeffer conducted his company and platoon commanders on reconnaissance of beach defenses so that the reserve leaders would be familiar with routes of approach and terrain in each sector in which they might fight.

While Schaeffer's unit had had some time to train before the Japanese stepped up their bombardment of the island in

late March, Williams' battalion was organized at the inception of the period of heaviest enemy fire and spent part of every day huddled in foxholes dug along the trail between Geary Point and Government Ravine.¹² Any let-up in the bombardment would be the signal for small groups of men to gather around the Army officers and Marine NCOs for instruction in the use of their weapons and the tactics of small units. Rifles were zeroed in on floating debris in the bay and for most of the men this marksmanship training was their first since Navy boot camp. When darkness limited Japanese shelling to harassment and interdiction fires, the sailors formed eager audiences for the Army Bataan veterans who gave them a resumé of enemy battle tactics. Every man was dead serious, knowing that his chances for survival depended to a large extent upon how much he learned. “The chips were down; there was no horseplay.”¹³

To a very great extent the record of the 4th Battalion in the fighting on Corregidor was a tribute to the inspirational leadership of its commander. During the trying period under enemy shellfire and bombing when the battalion's character was molded, Major Williams seemed to be omnipresent; wherever the bombardment was heaviest, he showed up to see how his men were weathering the storm. When on separate occasions Battery Crockett and then Battery Geary were hit and set afire, he led rescue parties from 4/4 into the resulting holocausts of flame, choking smoke, and exploding ammunition to rescue the wounded. He seemed to have

¹⁰ *Brook*, 1.

¹¹ *Ferguson*, 10.

¹² Dr. C. E. Chunn ltr to CMC, 12Nov56, herein after cited as *Chunn*.

¹³ *Dalness*, 7.

an utter disregard for his own safety in the face of any need for his presence. Survivors of his battalion agree with startling unanimity that he was a giant among men at a time when courage was commonplace.

Raw courage was a necessity on the fortified islands after Bataan's fall, since there was no defiladed position that could not be reached by Japanese 240mm howitzers firing from Cavite and Bataan. The bombers overhead, increasingly bold as gun after gun of the anti-aircraft defenses was knocked out, came down lower to pinpoint targets. Counterbattery and anti-aircraft fire silenced some enemy guns and accounted for a number of planes, but nothing seemed to halt the buildup of preparatory fires.

On 28 April Howard issued a warning to his battalions that the next day would be a rough one. It was the Emperor's birthday and the Japanese could be expected to "celebrate by unusual aerial and artillery bombardment."¹⁴ The colonel's prophecy proved to be a true one, and on the 29th one observer noted that even "the kitchen sink came over."¹⁵ The birthday celebration marked the beginning of a period when the enemy bombarded the islands without let-up, day and night. The men manning the beach defenses of Corregidor's East Sector found it:

. . . practically impossible to get any rest or to repair any damage to our positions and barbed wire. Our field telephone system was knocked out; our water supply was ruined (drinking water had to be hauled from the other end of the island in large powder cans) . . . Corregidor was enveloped in a cloud of smoke, dust, and the continuous roar of bursting shells and bombs.

¹⁴ *4th Mar Jnl*, 392.

¹⁵ *Parker*, 20.

There were many more casualties than we had suffered in the previous five months.¹⁶

About three days prior to the Japanese landing, Lieutenant Colonel Beecher reported to Colonel Howard that defensive installations in the 1st Battalion's sector were:

. . . practically destroyed. Very little defensive wire remained, tank traps constructed with great difficulty had been rendered useless, and all my weapons were in temporary emplacements as the original emplacements had been destroyed. I told Colonel Howard at this time that I was very dubious as to my ability to withstand a landing attack in force. Colonel Howard reported the facts to General Wainwright, who, according to Colonel Howard, said that he would never surrender. I pointed out to Colonel Howard that I had said nothing about surrender but that I was merely reporting the facts as it was my duty to do.¹⁷

The increase in the fury of the Japanese bombardment with the coming of May, coupled with the frequent sightings of landing craft along the eastern shore of Bataan, clearly pointed to the imminence of an enemy landing attempt. The last successful effort to evacuate personnel from the island forts was made on the night of 3 May. The submarine *Spearfish* surfaced after dark outside the mine fields off Corregidor and took on a party of officers and nurses who had been ordered out, as well as a load of important USFIP records and a roster of every person still alive on the islands.¹⁸ The 4th Marines

¹⁶ *Jenkins*, 15-16.

¹⁷ BriGen C. T. Beecher ltr to Mr. G. J. Berry, 17Mar50 (deposited by Capt G. J. Berry, USMCR, in the USMC Archives, 30Oct56).

¹⁸ Submarines were the beleaguered garrison's only contact with Allied bases outside the Philippines during most of the siege. Although the subs brought in rations, anti-aircraft ammunition, and medical supplies on scattered occasions, the

sent out their regimental journal, its last entry, dated 2 May, the list of the five men who had been killed and the nine who had been wounded during the day's bombardment.

To one of the lucky few who got orders to leave on the *Spearfish* the receding island looked "beaten and burnt to a crisp."¹⁹ In one day, 2 May, USFIP estimated that 12 240mm shells a minute had fallen on Corregidor during a five-hour period. On the same day the Japanese flew 55 sorties over the islands dropping 12 1,000-pound, 45 500-pound, and 159 200-pound bombs.²⁰ The damage was extensive. Battery Geary's eight 12-inch mortars were completely destroyed as was one of Battery Crockett's two 12-inch guns. The enemy fire also knocked out of action two more 12-inch mortars, a 3-inch gun, three searchlights, five 3-inch and three .50 caliber anti-aircraft guns, and a height finder. Data transmission cables to the guns were cut in many places and all communication lines were damaged. The beach defenses lost four machine guns, a 37mm, and a pillbox; barbed wire, mine fields, and anti-boat obstacles were torn apart.

The logical landing points for an assault against Corregidor, the entire East Sector and the ravines that gave access to Topside and Middleside, received a special working over so steady and deadly that the effectiveness of the beach defenses was sharply

amount that they could carry was only enough for stop-gap relief. For the interesting story of the diversified submarine actions in support of USAFFE-USFIP see, T. Roscoe, *United States Submarine Operations in World War II* (Annapolis: U. S. Naval Institute, 1949), 23-39.

¹⁹ Parker, 22.

²⁰ *Philippine AirOpsRec*, Plate 8.

reduced. Casualties mounted as the men's foxholes, trenches, and shelters crumbled under the fire. Unit leaders checking the state of the defenses were especially vulnerable to the fragments of steel which swept the ground bare. By the Japanese-appointed X-Day (5 May) the 1st Battalion had lost the commander of Company A, Major Harry C. Lang, and Captain Paul A. Brown, commanding Company B, had been hospitalized as a result of severe concussion suffered during an enemy bombing attack.²¹ Three Army officers attached to the Reserve Company, an officer of Company B, and another of Company D had all been severely wounded.

Despite the damage to defenses it had so laboriously constructed, the 4th Marines was ready, indeed almost eager, to meet a Japanese assault after days and weeks of absorbing punishment without a chance to strike back. On the eve of a battle which no one doubted was coming, the regiment was perhaps the most unusual Marine unit ever to take the field. From an understrength two-battalion regiment of less than 800 Marine regulars it had grown until it mustered almost 4,000 officers and men drawn from all the services and 142 different organizations.²² Its ranks contained 72 Marine officers and 1,368 enlisted

²¹ Beecher ltr to Berry, *op. cit.*

²² The last complete contemporary breakdown of strength of the 4th Mar by component units is contained in *4th Mar Jnl*, 390. It was corrected through 1 May. A slightly earlier list dated 28Apr42, detached from the journal book but unmistakably once part of it, has an interesting appendix which gives the units from which attached personnel originated. It shows that 26 Navy, 104 American and Philippine Army, 9 Philippine Scout, and 3 Philippine Constabulary organizations furnished men to the 4th Mar.

Marines, 37 Navy officers²³ and 848 blue-jackets, and 111 American and Philippine Air Corps, Army, Scout, and Constabulary officers with 1,455 of their men.

The units that actually met the Japanese at the beaches—1/4, 4/4, and the regimental reserve—had such a varied makeup that it deserves to be recorded:²⁴

Service component	HqCo		SerCo		1st Bn		4th Bn	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
USMC & USMCR	14	80	6	63	16	344	1	5
USN (MC & DC)	3	7		1	3	13	2	6
USN	1	16		1	1	78	16	262
USNR		21				30		
USA	1		1		26	286	9	2
Philippine Insular Navy		4						
Philippine Army Air Corps	6	83			7	217		
Philippine Scouts						33		
Philippine Army						22		
Philippine Constabulary					1	1		
Totals	25	211	7	65	53	1,024	28	275

THE JAPANESE LANDING²⁵

The area chosen by the Japanese for their initial assault, the 4th Marines' East Sector, was a shambles by nightfall on 5

²³ The five Marine officers, two Navy doctors, and 96 Marine enlisted men previously captured in China and on Bataan have been omitted from these figures.

²⁴ The 1May42 listing of regimental strength does not indicate the tactical breakdown of Hq and SerCos into Cos O and P. The figures shown, therefore, include a number of regimental staff officers, probably two-thirds of the total, and a few enlisted men who did not serve in Maj Schaeffer's command. One officer and five enlisted men have been deducted from SerCo's USMC Strength and added to that of 4/4.

²⁵ Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*; *Moore Rept*; *14th Army Rept*; *Howard Rept*; MG H. M. Ferrell, *Personal Experiences 5-6 May42*, n. d., hereinafter cited as *Ferrell*; *Jenkins*; H. W. Baldwin, "The Fourth Marines at Corregidor," *MC Gazette*, in 4 parts November

May. Two days earlier the regimental intelligence journal had noted that:

There has been a distinct shifting of enemy artillery fire from inland targets to our beach defenses on the north side of Corregidor the past 24 hours.²⁶

This concentration of fire continued and intensified, smashing the last vestiges of a coordinated and cohesive defensive zone and shaping 1/4's beach positions into an irregular series of strong points where a few machine guns and 37mm's were still in firing order. A pair of Philippine Scout-manned 75mm guns, located just

1946-February 1947, hereinafter cited as *Baldwin Narrative*; *Fall of the Philippines*; K. Uno, *Corregidor: Isle of Delusion* (China: Press Bureau, Imperial Japanese Army Headquarters, September 1942) (located at OCMH), hereinafter cited as *Isle of Delusion*.

²⁶ 4th Mar R-2 Jnl, 8Dec41-3May42, last entry.

east of North Point, which had never revealed their position, also escaped the destructive fires. Wire lines to command posts were ripped apart and could not be repaired; "command could be exercised and intelligence obtained only by use of foot messengers, which medium was uncertain under the heavy and continuous artillery and air bombardment."²⁷

Along the northern side of the hogback ridge that traced its course from Malinta Hill to the bend in Corregidor's tail, Company A and the reserves of 1/4 waited doggedly for the Japanese to come. There was no sharp division between unit defense sectors, and the men of the various units intermingled as the bombardment demolished prepared positions. Along the battered base and sides of Malinta Hill, a special target for enemy fire, were the men of Lieutenant Jenkins' Reserve Company. Next to them, holding the shoreline up to Infantry Point, was a rifle platoon organized from 1/4's Headquarters Company; Captain Lewis H. Pickup, the company commander, held concurrent command of Company A, having taken over on the death of Major Lang. The 1st Platoon under First Lieutenant William F. Harris defended the beaches from Infantry to Cavalry Points, the landing site selected in Japanese pre-assault plans. Master Gunnery Sergeant John Mercurio's 2d Platoon's positions rimmed the gentle curve of land from Cavalry to North Point. Extending from North Point to the tip of the island's tail were the foxholes and machine-gun emplacements of First Sergeant Noble W. Well's 3d Platoon.

Positions along the top of the steep southern face of the East Sector's dominant ridge were occupied by the platoons

of Company B under First Lieutenant Alan S. Manning, who had taken over when Captain Brown was wounded.²⁸ The machine guns and 37mm's of Captain Noel O. Castle's Company D were emplaced in commanding positions along the beaches on both sides of the island; the company's mortars were in firing positions near Malinta Hill.

At about 2100 on 5 May, sensitive sound locators on Corregidor picked up the noise of many barges warming up their motors near Limay on Bataan's east coast. Warning of an impending landing was flashed to responsible higher headquarters, but the lack of wire communication kept the word from reaching the men in the foxholes along the beaches of the East Sector. They did not need any additional advice of enemy intentions anyway, since the whole regiment had been on an all-out alert every night for a month, momentarily expecting Japanese landing barges to loom out of the darkness. The men of 1/4 had withstood some pretty stiff shellings, too, as they waited, but nothing to compare with the barrage that began falling on the beach defenses manned by Harris' 1st Platoon at about 2245.

The Japanese had begun to deliver the short preparatory bombardment designed to cover the approach of Colonel Sato's assault waves which was called for in their operation plan. If Sato's boat groups adhered to their schedule they would rendezvous and head in for the beaches just as the artillery fire lifted and shifted to the west, walling off the landing area from American reinforcement efforts. The regiment would be ashore before the moon rose near midnight to give Corregidor's gunners a clear target. In two respects the

²⁷ USAFFE-USFIP Rept, 77.

²⁸ LtCol R. F. Jenkins ltr to CMC, 30Oct56.

plan miscarried, and for a while it was touch and go for the assault troops.

The artillery shoot went off on schedule, but Sato's first waves, transporting most of his *1st Battalion*, were carried by an unexpectedly strong incoming tide hundreds of yards to the east of the designated landing beaches. Guides in the oncoming craft were unable to recognize landmarks in the darkness, and from water level the tail of the island looked markedly uniform as smoke and dust raised by the shelling obscured the shoreline. The *61st Regiment's 2d Battalion*, slated to follow close on the heels of the *1st*, was delayed and disrupted by faulty boat handling and tide currents until it came in well out of position and under the full light of the moon.

When the Japanese preparatory fires lifted shortly after 2300, the troops along the East Sector beaches spotted the scattered landing craft of the *1st Battalion*, *61st* heading in for the beaches at North Point. The few remaining searchlights illuminated the barges, and the island's tail erupted with fire. Enemy artillery knocked out the searchlights almost as soon as they showed themselves; but it made little difference, since streams of tracer bullets from beach defense machine guns furnished enough light for the Scout 75's near North Point and 1/4's 37's to find targets. A Japanese observer on Bataan described the resulting scene as "sheer massacre,"²⁹ but the enemy *1st Battalion* came in close enough behind its preparation to get a good portion of its men ashore. Although the Japanese infantrymen overwhelmed Mercurio's 2d Platoon, the fighting was fierce and the enemy casualties in the water and on the beach were heavy. Colonel

Sato, who landed with the first waves, sorely needed his *2d Battalion's* strength.

This straggling battalion which began heading shoreward about midnight suffered much more damage than the first waves. The remaining coast defense guns and mortars on Corregidor, backed up by the fire of Forts Hughes and Drum, churned the channel between Bataan and Corregidor into a surging froth, whipped by shell fragments and explosions. The moon's steady light revealed many direct hits on barges and showed heavily burdened enemy soldiers struggling in the water and sinking under the weight of their packs and equipment. Still, some men reached shore and Colonel Sato was able to organize a drive toward his objective, Malinta Hill.

Individual enemy soldiers and machine-gun crews infiltrated across Kindley Field and through the rubble of torn barbed wire, blasted trees, and crater-pocked ground to Denver Battery, a sandbagged antiaircraft gun position which stood on relatively high ground south of Cavalry Point. The American gunners, whose weapons were out of action as a result of the bombardment, were unable to beat back the encroaching Japanese who established themselves in a commanding position with fields of fire over the whole approach route to the landing beaches. Captain Pickup's first word that the Japanese had seized Denver Battery came when he sent one of Company D's weapons platoon leaders, Marine Gunner Harold M. Ferrell, to establish contact with the battery's defenders. Ferrell and one of his men found the battery alive with enemy soldiers digging in and setting up automatic weapons. Ferrell immediately went back to his defense area west of Infantry Point and

²⁹ Quoted in *Iste of Delusion*, 17.

brought up some men to establish a line "along the hogsback to prevent the enemy from coming down on the backs of the men on the beaches."³⁰

Pickup came up shortly after Gunner Ferrell got his men into position and considered pulling Lieutenant Harris' platoon out of its beach defenses to launch an attack against the enemy. After a conference with Harris the company commander decided to leave the 1st Platoon in position. Japanese landing craft were still coming in, and the platoon's withdrawal would leave several hundred yards of beach open. The fact that enemy troops were ashore had been communicated to Lieutenant Colonel Beecher's CP just inside Malinta Tunnel's east entrance, and small groups of men, a squad or so at a time, were coming up to build on the line in front of Denver Battery. The enemy now fired his machine guns steadily, and intermittent but heavy shellfire struck all along the roads from Malinta to Denver. Casualties were severe throughout the area.

By 0130 surviving elements of 1/4 on the eastern tip of the island were cut off completely from the rest of the battalion. Beecher was forced to leave men in position on both shores west of Denver Battery to prevent the enemy landing behind his lines. All the men who could be spared from the beaches were being sent up to the defensive position astride the ridgeline just west of Denver, but the strength that could be assembled there amounted to little more than two platoons including a few Philippine Scouts from the silenced anti-boat guns in 1/4's sector. No exact figures reveal how many Japanese were ashore at

³⁰ *Ferrell*, 1.

this time or how many casualties the *61st Infantry's* assault companies had suffered, but it was plain that the enemy at Denver Battery outnumbered the small force trying to contain them, and Japanese snipers and infiltrating groups soon began to crop up in the rear of Pickup's position.

The situation clearly called for the commitment of additional men in the East Sector. Colonel Howard had made provision for this soon after getting word of the landing attempt. He alerted Schaeffer's command of two companies first, but held off committing Williams' battalion until the situation clarified itself. There was no guarantee that the Japanese would accommodate the 4th Marines by landing all their troops in the East Sector; in fact, there was a general belief among the men manning the defenses which commanded the ravines leading to Topside that the East Sector landing was not the main effort and that the enemy would be coming in against West and Middle Sector beaches.³¹ Complicating the entire problem of command in the confused situation during the early morning hours of 6 May was the fact that only runners could get word of battle progress to Beecher's and Howard's CP. And any runner, or for that matter any man, who tried to make the 1,000-yard journey from the Denver line to the mouth of Malinta Tunnel stood a good chance of never completing his mission. The area east of Malinta Hill was a killing ground as Schaeffer's men soon found out when they made their bid to reach Denver Battery.

³¹ *Hayes Rept*, Statement of LCdr E. M. Wade, 65. The general existence of this belief was questioned by one survivor. *Jackson*.

*THE COMMITMENT OF
THE RESERVE*³²

In Government Ravine the 4th Marines' reserve companies saw and heard the machine guns along the East Sector beaches hammering at the Japanese landing craft. Major Schaeffer's command was already standing by to move out, and near 2400 Companies O and P filed down the trail and started for Malinta. There was little confusion, for the men had rehearsed their movements often. Crossing Bottomside by means of a tank trap which protected them from enemy shellfire, they moved into Malinta Tunnel where company and platoon commanders supervised the distribution of machine-gun ammunition and grenades cached there for just such an emergency. Volunteers from the Navy and Marine headquarters installations joined the companies to serve as ammunition carriers "although they were neither officially or morally obligated to do so."³³

Major Schaeffer reported to Colonel Howard and received his instructions; he was to take his men out into the East Sector and counterattack the Japanese position. At 0200 the companies began to move out of the oppressive heat and foul air of the crowded main tunnel onto the deeply cratered roads which led to Denver.³⁴ Lieutenant Hogaboom's Company

³² Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*; *14th Army Rept*; *Howard Rept*; *Ferguson*; *Ferrell*; *Hogaboom*; *Jenkins*; *Baldwin Narrative*; *Isle of Delusion*; *Fall of the Philippines*.

³³ *Ferguson*, 14.

³⁴ By the time the Japanese landed, the only road into the East Sector was that which led through Malinta Tunnel. The road cut out of the side of the hill on the north had been completely demolished, and Col Howard, looking for an alternate route of approach, had discovered

P was in the lead, following the left fork of the road behind its guide, Captain Golland L. Clark, Jr., the 1st Battalion Adjutant. As the last platoon of the company cleared the tunnel it was diverted to a vicious fire fight raging on the right of the Marine line by an officer who had come back seeking reinforcements. Several enemy machine guns had been set up near the base of a stone water tower forward of Denver Battery and to the right front of the Marine positions. The platoon, in common with most of the rest of the units that tried to reduce this strong point, was chopped to pieces by interlocking bands of machine-gun fire.

On Clark's order, Hogaboom deployed his remaining two platoons in line of skirmishers once they were well clear of the tunnel. The advancing line made contact with Lieutenant Harris and the remnants of Company A's 1st Platoon holding the left of the Denver defensive position and tied in with them. Hogaboom found that his right flank was open; Captain Chambers' Company O which was to have followed him out of the tunnel and come up on his right was not to be found.

Chambers' men had left the tunnel all right, but almost immediately after the company column cleared the entrance bright flares were seen going up over the Japanese position. Chambers and his 1st Platoon leader, Quartermaster Clerk Frank W. Ferguson, concluding that the flares were a signal to the artillery on Bataan, passed the word along the line to look for the nearest shelter. The guess on

shortly before the landing that enemy artillery had blown a deep, ravine-like depression in the southern circling road that rendered it impassable to organized troop movement. *Howard Interview*.

the flares was right, and Ferguson's platoon was fortunate in taking its shelling in an area where the Japanese had provided deep bomb craters. The platoon came through with only eight casualties. As soon as the bombardment lifted, Ferguson moved toward Denver until he was forced to deploy by heavy machine-gun and mortar fire. He looked for the 3d Platoon to come up on his right according to plan, but only its commander, Quartermaster Sergeant John E. Haskin, and five men appeared, the rest had been lost in the shelling. Captain Chambers sent up the reserve platoon, which was in even worse shape, having been caught in the open near the tunnel entrance. Quartermaster Clerk Herman L. Snellings had only four survivors alive and unwounded.

Company O now contained but one platoon and had not yet made its attack.

Major Schaeffer established control over the scattered groups of men from the 1st Battalion and the reserve and launched three separate counterattacks on the dug-in Japanese. Sometimes the men would get up the slopes leading to the battery gun pits, but they were always driven back, fewer in number each time. On the right flank, Sergeant Major John H. Sweeney and Sergeant Haskin took advantage of the water tower's battered elevation to hurl grenades down on the machine guns that were holding up the advance; Haskin was killed trying to get more grenades up to Sweeney, and Sweeney was picked off after he had knocked out at least one of the guns. Ferguson, who knew and had served with both these long-time regulars, wrote their simple epitaph:

They were very close friends in life and it was most fitting that they should go out together.³⁵

³⁵ *Ferguson*, 18.

Many close friends died that morning in the darkness and choking dust as the Japanese and the Americans and Filipinos faced each other from positions less than forty yards apart. Some men cut off behind the enemy lines still kept firing at occasional landing craft that were coming in to reinforce Sato. Hogaboom could see the tracers of a single .50 caliber and felt that "the bullets smacking into the armor of the barges sounded like rivet hammers rattling away."³⁶ Every movement of the Japanese boats which stood in number offshore was counted as an attempt at landing, although many of them were improvised gunboats whose mission was protecting and supporting the landing craft. But detachments of Sato's force kept coming in all night, and one enemy lieutenant, probably a member of one of the *61st's* supporting units, gave a vivid description of the helpless feeling of the men in the barges as they were caught in Corregidor's fire:

American high powered machine guns poured a stream of bullets on us from all directions. Rifle fire added to the hail of death. Our men who were huddled in the center of the boat were all either killed or wounded. Those who clung to the sides were hit by shells that pierced the steel plating. The boat had already sprung several leaks when we finally came within landing distance of Corregidor. Desperately I gave the signal and led the charge against the shore defenses. I don't remember how many men responded. I know I heard only a small chorus. In that mad dash for shore many were drowned as they dropped into the water mortally wounded. Many were killed outright If it had not been for the fact that it was the dark hour before the dawn, pitch black, I doubt if any of us would be alive today to tell the story.³⁷

However heavy the Japanese casualties were, they did not measurably weaken the

³⁶ *Hogaboom*, 16.

³⁷ Quoted in *Iste of Delusion*, 34.

firepower of the Denver position. Each attack by Schaeffer's men thinned the Marine line still more. Lost were officers and NCOs whose leadership was vital to the operations of mixed units such as those which held the Japanese at bay. Captain Castle of Company D was killed trying to silence a machine gun, and many small unit leaders who still held their place in line were badly wounded. The situation was so desperate that Colonel Howard could no longer hold his last reserves out of the action. He ordered the 4th Battalion to move into the East Sector and join the embattled defense line.

*THE 4TH BATTALION IN ACTION*³⁸

Major Williams' 4th Battalion had been alerted early in the night's action, and he had ordered the issue of extra ammunition and grenades. At about 0100 he got the word to move the battalion into Malinta Tunnel and stand by. The sailors proceeded cautiously down the south shore road, waited for an enemy barrage which was hitting in the dock area to lift, and then dashed across to the tunnel entrance. In the sweltering corridor the men pressed back against the walls as hundreds of casualties, walking wounded and litter cases, streamed in from the East Sector fighting. The hospital laterals were filled to overflowing, and the doctors, nurses, and corpsmen tended to the stricken men wherever they could find room to lay a

³⁸ Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*; *14th Army Rept*; *Howard Rept*; *Brook*; *Dalness*; *SSgt C. E. Downing, Personal Experiences 5-6-May42, n. d.*; *Ferguson*; *Ferrell*; *Hogaboom*; *Jenkins*; *Baldwin Narrative*; *Isle of Delusion*; *Fall of the Philippines*.

man down. At 0430, Colonel Howard ordered Williams to take his battalion out of the tunnel and attack the Japanese at Denver Battery.

The companies moved out in column. About 500 yards out from Malinta they were caught in a heavy shelling that sharply reduced their strength and temporarily scattered the men. The survivors reassembled and moved toward the fighting in line of skirmishers. Companies Q and R, commanded by two Army officers, Captains Paul C. Moore and Harold E. Dalness, respectively, moved in on the left to reinforce the scattered groups of riflemen from Companies A and P who were trying to contain the Japanese in the broken ground north of Denver Battery. The battery position itself was assigned to Company T (Lieutenant Bethel B. Otter, USN), and two platoons of Company S,³⁹ originally designated the battalion reserve, were brought up on the extreme right where Lieutenant Edward N. Little, USN, was to try to silence the enemy machine guns near the water tower. The blue-jackets filled in the gaps along the line—wide gaps, for there was little that could be called a firm defensive line left—and joined the fire fight.

The lack of adequate communications prevented Colonel Howard from exercising active tactical direction of the battle in the East Sector. The unit commanders on the ground, first Captain Pickup, then Major Schaeffer, and finally Major Williams made the minute-to-minute decisions that close combat demanded. By the time Williams' battalion had reorganized and moved up into the Marine forward positions, Schaeffer's command was

³⁹ *Saalman 1956*.

practically nonexistent. Williams, by mutual consent (Schaeffer was senior), took over command of the fighting since he was in a far better position to get the best effort out of his bluejackets when they attacked.⁴⁰

At dawn Major Williams moved along the front, telling his officers to be ready to jump off at 0615. The company and platoon command posts were right up on the firing line and there were no reserves left; every officer and man still able to stand took part in the attack. On the left the Japanese were driven back 200–300 yards before Williams sent a runner to check the advance of Moore and Dalness; the right of the line had been unable to make more than a few yards before the withering fire of the Denver and water tower defenses drove the men to the deck. The left companies shifted toward Denver to close the gap that had opened while the men on the right tried to knock out the Japanese machine guns and mortars. Lieutenant Otter was killed while leading an attack, and his executive, Captain Calvin E. Chunn, took over; Chunn was wounded soon after as Company T charged a Japanese unit which was setting up a field piece near the water tower.⁴¹ Lieutenant Little was hit in the chest and Williams sent a Philippine Scout officer, First Lieutenant Otis E. Saalman, to take over Company S.

The Marine mortars of 1/4, 3-inch Stokes without sights, were not accurate enough to support Williams' attack. He had to order them to cease fire when stray rounds fell among his own men, who had closed to within grenade range of the Japanese. Robbed of the last supporting

weapons that might have opened a breach in the Denver position, the attack stalled completely. Major Schaeffer sent Warrant Officer Ferguson, who had succeeded to command of Company O when Captain Chambers was wounded, to Colonel Howard's CP to report the situation and request reinforcements. Ferguson, like Schaeffer and many of the survivors of 1/4 and the reserve, was a walking wounded case himself. By the time Ferguson got back through the enemy shelling to Malinta at 0900, Williams had received what few reinforcements Howard could muster. Captain Herman H. Hauck and 60 men of the 59th Coast Artillery, assigned by General Moore to the 4th Marines, had come up and Williams sent them to the left flank to block Japanese snipers and machine-gun crews infiltrating along the beaches into the rear areas.

At about 0930 men on the north flank of the Marine line saw a couple of Japanese tanks coming off barges near Cavalry Point, a move that spelled the end on Corregidor. The tanks were in position to advance within a half hour, and, just as the men in front of Denver Battery spotted them, enemy flares went up again and artillery salvos crashed down just forward of the Japanese position. Some men began to fall back, and though Williams and the surviving leaders tried to halt the withdrawal, the shellfire prevented them from regaining control. At 1030 Williams sent a message to the units on the left flank to fall back to the ruins of a concrete trench which stood just forward of the entrance to Malinta Tunnel. The next thirty minutes witnessed a scene of utter confusion as the Japanese opened up on the retreating men with rifles, mortars, machine guns, and mountain howitzers. Flares signalled

⁴⁰ Mize ltr, *op. cit.*

⁴¹ Chunn.

the artillery on Bataan to increase its fire, and a rolling barrage swung back and forth between Malinta and Denver, demolishing any semblance of order in the ranks of the men straining to reach the dubious shelter of the trench. "Dirt, rocks, trees, bodies, and debris literally filled the air,"⁴² and pitifully few men made it back to Malinta.

Williams, who was wounded, and roughly 150 officers and men, many of them also casualties, gathered in the trench ruins to make a stand. The Japanese were less than three hundred yards from their position and enemy tanks could be seen moving up to outflank their line on the right. The Marine major, who had been a tower of strength throughout the hopeless fight, went into the tunnel at 1130 to ask Howard for antitank guns and more men. But the battle was over: General Wainwright had made the decision to surrender.

*SURRENDER*⁴³

Colonel Howard had personally reported the landing of the Japanese tanks to General Wainwright at 1000. The USFIP commander, who had kept current on the situation in the East Sector throughout the night's fighting, made the fateful decision to surrender. He later related that "it was the terror that is vested in a tank that was the deciding factor," for he "thought of the havoc that even one of these could wreak if it nosed into the tunnel, where lay our helpless wounded . . ." ⁴⁴ He did not believe, nor did any other offi-

⁴² *Dalness*, 18.

⁴³ Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*; *14th Army Rept*; *Howard Rept*; *Baldwin Narrative*; *Fall of the Philippines*; *Wainwright's Story*.

⁴⁴ *Wainwright's Story*, 119.

cer he consulted, that the defenses outside Malinta could last more than the remaining hours of the day, and he set the hour of surrender for noon in order "to avoid the horrors which would have accrued had I let the fight go on until dark."⁴⁵

The order to surrender was passed to the troops on Topside and Middleside along with instructions to destroy all weapons larger than .45 caliber. The sickened men of the 4th Marines' 2d and 3d Battalions, who had been forced to stand by helplessly as they heard and watched the battle to the east, carried the order even further, smashing their rifles against the rocks. Veterans of fighting in World War I and a dozen "banana wars" stood unashamedly crying as they were told they would have to surrender. Inside Malinta, Colonel Howard ordered the regimental and national colors of the 4th Marines burned to prevent their falling into enemy hands. Two 1st Battalion officers, Captain Clark and Lieutenant Manning, a field music, and an interpreter were selected to carry Wainwright's flag of truce to the Japanese. As the white flag was carried out of the tunnel, Major Williams ordered survivors of the East Sector fighting to move inside the hill and take shelter from the Japanese bombardment which still was falling.

Captain Clark's party passed the last American outpost; the music sounded off and Manning waved a pole which bore a piece of sheeting. The enemy infantrymen, who had been given special instructions regarding the reception of flags of truce, did not fire, and Clark was taken to the senior Japanese officer on the island who contacted Bataan and arranged for a parley on the peninsula with General Homma. When Wainwright, accompa-

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 186.

denied by a few senior officers and aides, walked out of the tunnel and up the long slope toward Kindley Field, he saw dead and dying men on every hand, a grim record of the ferocity of the fighting in the past 12 hours.

No complete figures exist for the casualties suffered by either side on 5-6 May; estimates of the Japanese losses range from 900 to 4,000.⁴⁶ The strait between Bataan and Corregidor was heavily dotted with enemy bodies, and American prisoners on Corregidor estimated that they helped collect and cremate the remains of hundreds of Japanese soldiers.⁴⁷ The detailed losses of the 4th Marines will probably never be known because of the joint-service nature of the regiment at the time of battle and the scarcity of contemporary records. The casualties of Marines alone are known, however, and they may be considered indicative of the fate of soldiers and sailors who served with them. In the whole Philippine campaign the regiment

⁴⁶ Most American survivors of the battle mention that they heard from the Japanese later in prison camp that the enemy had suffered almost 4,000 casualties in trying to take Corregidor. However, Japanese officers commenting on Dr. Morton's draft manuscript of *The Fall of the Philippines* wrote that the total casualties of the Japanese in the Corregidor operation between 14Apr-7May42 were 903. MilHistSec, SS, GHQ, FEC, Comments of Former Japanese Officers Regarding "The Fall of the Philippines," 19Apr42 (located at OCMH), Chap XXXI, 3.

⁴⁷ *Saalman 1956*. Saalman recalls having remarked to Maj Williams shortly after daybreak on 6 May, "I believe we could walk from Corregidor to Bataan over dead bodies." In light of the number of bodies that were collected and cremated, Saalman is convinced that the 903 figure supplied by the Japanese in commenting on the draft of *The Fall of the Philippines* reflects only enemy dead rather than total casualties.

⁴⁸ See Appendix D for Marine casualties.

had 315 officers and men killed, 15 missing in action presumed dead, and 357 men wounded;⁴⁸ the great majority of these casualties occurred during the battle for Corregidor.

The bloody battle for the island fortress did not end with Wainwright's decision to surrender. The Japanese went right ahead with their assault plan and preparatory bombardments, paying no heed to the white flags displayed on all the islands in the bay. Eighty-eight tons of bombs were dropped on 6 May, a good part of them after the surrender.⁴⁹ Wainwright, who had released his southern Philippine commanders to MacArthur's control before he attempted to meet the enemy commander, tried to surrender only the fortified islands to the Japanese. He was rebuffed coldly by Homma's emissary and told that the Japanese knew that he was commander of all the forces in the Philippines and that they would not accept his surrender unless it meant the capitulation of every man in his command, everywhere in the islands. The American general, convinced that the Japanese would treat the men on the fortified islands as hostages, perhaps even massacre them if the fighting continued in the south, finally acceded to the enemy demand and broadcast a surrender message at midnight on 6 May to all his commanding officers. There was considerable dissension regarding this order, especially on islands where the Japanese had not made much effort to subdue the Philippine Army troops, but eventually most of the organized units of USFIP came out of the hills to lay down their arms. Wainwright felt, as did most of his advisors at the time, that the Japanese were quite capable of slaughtering the men surrendered on the fortified

⁴⁹ *Philippine AirOpsRec*, Plate 8.

islands if he did not insure a complete surrender of all his forces.

The struggle for control of Manila Bay finally ended on 7 May when the Japanese occupied the last of the island forts, but for most of the captured men "the fight for life had just begun."⁵⁰ Thousands succumbed in the next three years to brutal mistreatment, malnutrition, and disease in Japanese prison camps in the Philippines, in the enemy home islands, and in Manchuria. Two hundred and thirty-nine officers and men of the 4th Marine Regiment died in enemy hands.

CONCLUSION

The battle for Corregidor was bitter and confused; relatively few men survive who fought in the East Sector through the night and morning of 5-6 May 1942. Hundreds of well-trained infantrymen in positions within a mile or so of Malinta Hill were only spectators and auditors of the fighting. The poorest-trained elements of the 4th Marines constituted the vital mobile reserve. On the surface and in hasty consideration it would seem that the tactics of the beach defense left much to be desired.

Corregidor, however, was not a fortress with only one entrance. The beaches fronting the ravines defended by 2/4 and 3/4 led directly to the island's major defensive installations. The threat of amphibious assault existed all around the island's perimeter, but especially along the northern and western shores. The Japanese laid down preparatory fires all along the north side of the island, devoting as much attention to James Ravine and Bottomside west of Malinta as they did the

eastern beaches. Until the night of 5 May there was no compelling reason to believe that the East Sector would draw the first assault. And even after the enemy landed at North Point the very present threat to western Corregidor existed and could not be ignored. To meet it, a number of Army units were alerted to back up the positions of 2/4 and 3/4.⁵¹

The problem which Colonel Howard faced of when, where, and in what strength to commit the reserves available to him was a classic one for commanders at all troop levels. If he committed all his reserve at one time and in the area of greatest existing threat, he distinctly increased the vulnerability of other sectors to enemy attack. If he committed only part of his reserve and retained the capability of reinforcing against further attacks, he stood the chance of not using enough men to have a decisive effect in any sector. The decision to commit the reserve piecemeal reflected the regiment's estimate of the enemy's capabilities and intentions in light of their actions.⁵² The Japanese, although opposed by a relatively small force, did not or could not vigorously pursue their advance after reaching the Denver position. The continued presence of numerous small craft off Corregidor's north shore indicated a possible, even probable, early attempt at a second landing. Under these circumstances the East Sector assault might well be a secondary effort which had stalled, with the enemy's main attack still to come. Actually this was the Japanese plan, with the difference that the second landing was to follow the first after a day's interval

⁵⁰ *Jenkins*, 19.

⁵¹ Col F. P. Pyzick ltr to CMC, 30Oct56.

⁵² *Howard Interview*.

rather than as soon as the Marines expected.

In large part the 4th Marines' reserve strength was already committed on 5 May. The Japanese preparatory fires, especially those which were laid on areas in plain sight of Bataan, made movement by any body of troops extremely difficult—witness the fate of Company O. The bombardment had the effect of tying the regiment to its defenses. The trained infantrymen in its ranks were kept where they could do the most to bolster the crucial beach positions.⁵³ If any sizable number of these men had been withdrawn from the beaches to form a reserve, it is questionable whether the remaining men could have withstood any enemy assault. Once the Japanese began to bombard Corregidor in earnest there was no such thing as a strong beach defense position; the very fury of the bombardment, destroying as it did most of the prepared defenses and demolishing the major supporting weapons, placed a high

⁵³ *Ibid.*

premium on having the best infantrymen at the point where their value would be greatest—the beaches.

The fall of Corregidor was inevitable; the garrison simply did not have enough food to hold out until relief could arrive. Although the enemy, primarily for prestige and propaganda reasons, choose to assault the island, they could easily have starved its defenders into submission. When the Japanese did make their attack they paid a high price for their haste, but extracted as great a one from the defenders. In the immediate tactical sense, however, the enemy artillery was the victor in the siege and fall of Corregidor; no defending force could have withstood its devastatingly accurate bombardment.

Although it was a defeat, the battle of Corregidor is marked down in the annals of the 4th Marines as a fight to be proud of. Those who fought and died in its ranks, whatever their service of origin, were, if only for a brief moment, Corregidor Marines.

PART V

Decision at Midway

Setting the Stage: Early Naval Operations¹

Early in January 1942 the U. S. Pacific Fleet was looking for a way to strike back at the Japanese; and advocates of the fast carrier force, believing their case ironically had been proven by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor, were ready to test their theories.² But first there were some fences to mend. The all-important communications chain to Australia and New Zealand was rather tenuous, and the bulk of the Navy had to be used for escort duty until reinforcements could be put ashore to bolster some of the stations along the route.

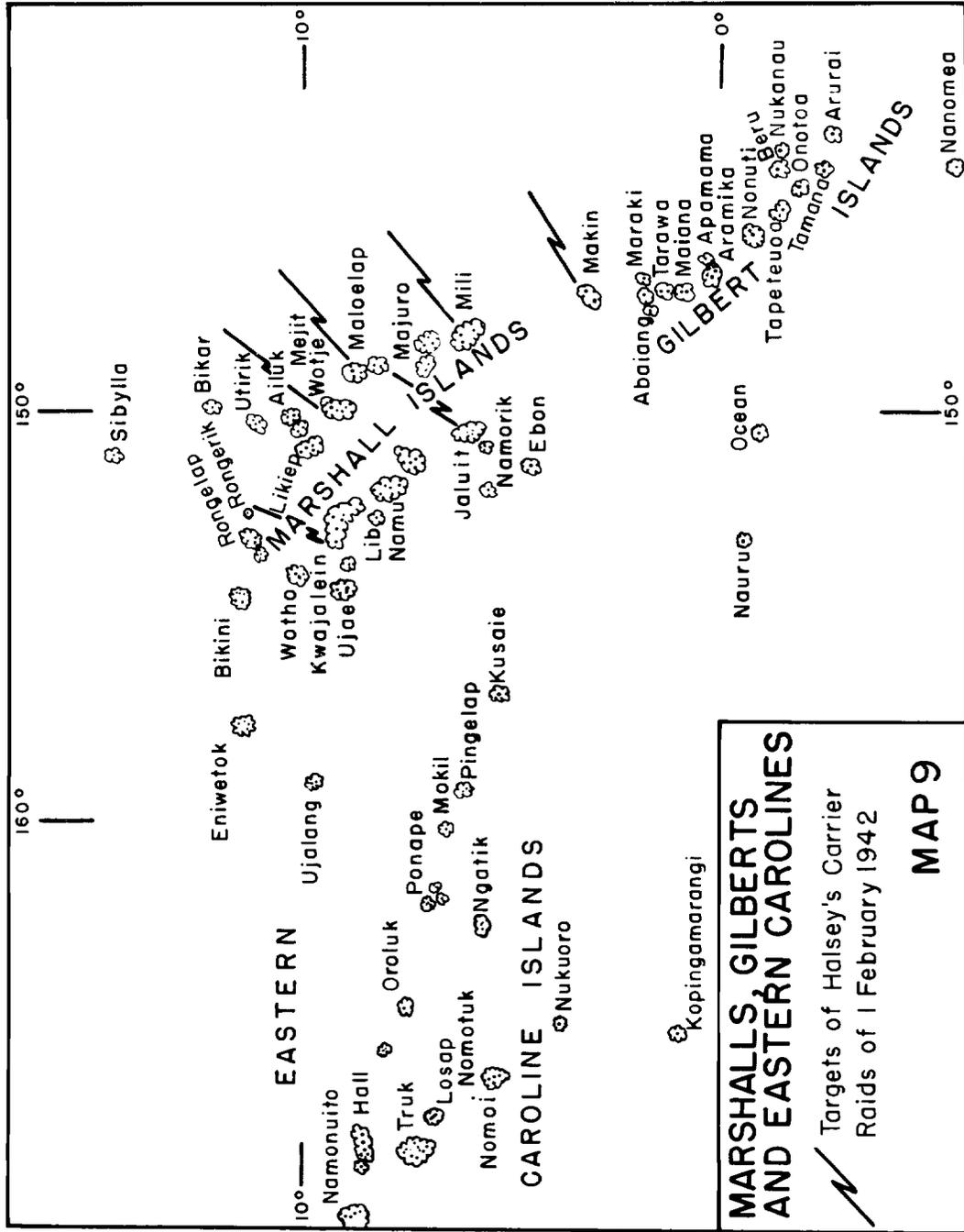
One of the most important links in this communication chain was Samoa. The worst was feared for this area when the

Pago Pago naval station was shelled by a Japanese submarine on 11 January while the 2d Marine Brigade (composed for the most part of the 8th Marines and the 2d Defense Battalion) still was en route to the islands from San Diego. But on 23 January after the Marines' four transports and one fleet cargo vessel were delivered safely to Samoa, Vice Admiral William F. Halsey's *Enterprise* force, together with a new fast carrier force commanded by Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher and formed around the *Yorktown*, were released for the raiding actions that the fleet was anxious to launch.

While the 2d Marine Brigade unloaded at Samoa on 23 January, the Japanese landed far to the west at Rabaul where the small Australian garrison was quickly overrun. Although the importance of Rabaul to the Japanese was not realized at once, it was soon clear that from the Bismarcks the enemy could launch an attack through the Coral Sea toward Australia and New Zealand. This threat tended to increase rather than diminish the danger to Samoa. It was reasoned that a Japanese attack there would precede a strike at Australia or New Zealand to block U. S. assistance to the Anzac areas. Japanese occupation of Makin Island in the Gilberts seemed to point toward Samoa, and naval commanders held that the best insurance against subsequent

¹ Unless otherwise noted the material in Part V is derived from *Rising Sun in the Pacific*; S. E. Morison, *Coral Sea, Midway and Submarine Actions, May 1942–August 1942: History of United States Naval Operations in World War II* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1949), hereinafter cited as *Coral Sea and Midway*; *U. S. & Sea Power*; M. Fuchida and M. Okumiya, *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan* (Annapolis: U. S. Naval Institute, 1955), hereinafter cited as *Battle That Doomed Japan*; *Marines at Midway*; "The Japanese Story of the Battle of Midway," *ONI Review*, May 1947, hereinafter cited as *ONI Review*.

² "There was still much difference of opinion [about the effectiveness of the carrier striking force] until 7 Dec 1941 when the Japanese attack took the controversy out of the laboratory class . . . Japan knifed us with our own invention." Capt Miles R. Browning, USN, "The Fast Carrier Force," *MC Gazette*, June 1946, 19.



moves would be a raid against the Marshalls, from which much of this Japanese action was mounted. Halsey's *Enterprise* force therefore set out to strike Wotje and Maleolap, seaplane bases in the Marshalls, while Fletcher prepared to attack Mili and Jaluit (also in the Marshalls) plus Makin with his *Yorktown* group. (See Map 9)

A submarine reconnaissance found the Marshalls lightly defended and spotted the largest concentration of Japanese planes and ships at Kwajalein Atoll in the center of the island group. Halsey decided to add this choice target to his list, and for the missions he divided Task Force 8 into three groups. The *Enterprise* with three destroyers would strike Wotje, Maloelap, and Kwajalein; Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance with the cruisers *Northampton* and *Salt Lake City* plus one destroyer would bombard Wotje; and Captain Thomas M. Shock in USS *Chester*, and with two destroyers, would shell Maloelap. The three southern atolls in the Marshalls group and Makin in the northern Gilberts would be attended to by Fletcher in the *Yorktown* with his independent command (TF 17) made up of the cruisers *Louisville* and *St. Louis* and four destroyers.

The twin attacks struck on 1 February. Halsey began launching at 0443 under a full moon when his carrier was just 36 miles from Wotje. Kwajalein, the main objective was 155 miles away. Nine torpedo bombers and 37 dive bombers led off the attack, the SBD's striking Roi air base on the northern end of the atoll and the torpedo bombers hitting Kwajalein Island across the lagoon.

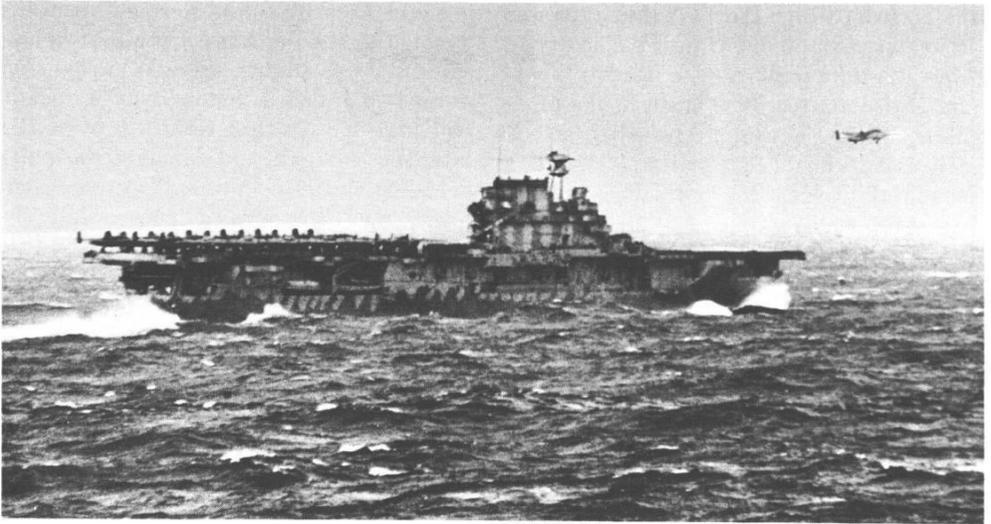
At Kwajalein the hunting was better; but in spite of the fact that there was no

fighter opposition, and that the reports brought back by pilots were enthusiastic, damage to the Japanese installations and shipping was slight. Five Wildcats shot down two Japanese planes over Maloelap, and nine SBD's that returned from Roi later sortied again and damaged some airfield installations. The surface bombardment, too, was disappointing, and the bombardment flagship, *Chester*, took a light bomb through her main deck and lost eight men killed and eleven wounded.

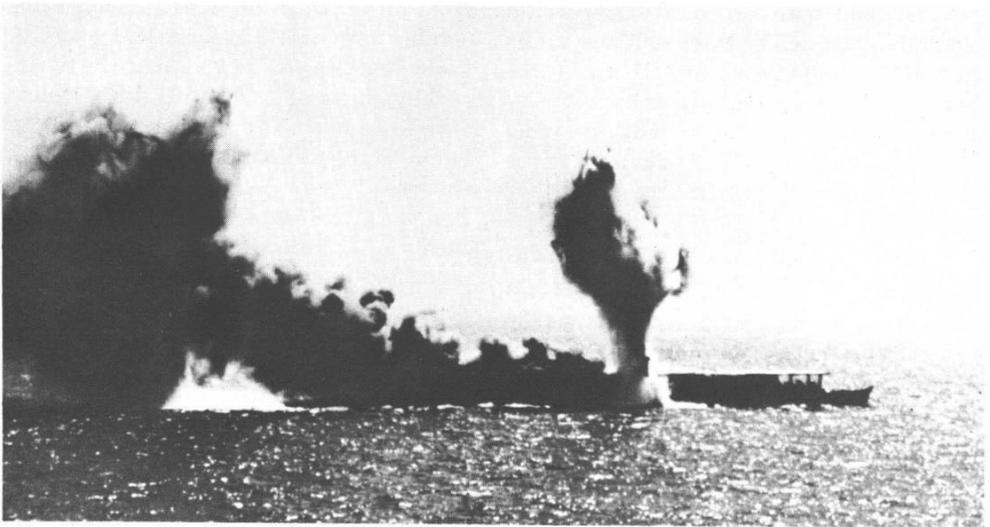
To the south, Fletcher had bad luck over Jaluit when his fliers found their targets concealed by thunder showers. Two Japanese ships off Jabor Town were hit, but not sunk, and the damage ashore was slight. A mine layer was hit at Makin, and damage at Mili was also slight.

Similar actions were continued in other areas of the Pacific to harass the Japanese and to provide at least one outlet for efforts to fight back at the enemy when the news from all other fronts was gloomy. Most notable were strikes in early March against Wake and Marcus Island, and the daring raid by planes of Admiral Wilson Brown's task force over New Guinea's 15,000-foot Owen Stanley Mountains to hit the Japanese newly moved into Lae and Salamaua. But in all cases actual damage to the enemy still failed to measure up to expectations, much less to the reports turned in by overenthusiastic aviators.

Most audacious and unorthodox of the attacks, of course, was that which launched Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle and his Army raiders from the *Hornet's* deck to the 18 April Tokyo raid. Planned as "something really spectacular"—a proper retaliation for Pearl Harbor—the raid was designed more for its dramatic impact upon morale than for any other purpose. In that it was highly successful.



AN ARMY B-25, one of Doolittle's Raiders, takes off from the deck of the carrier Hornet to participate in the first U. S. air raid on Japan. (USN 41197)



JAPANESE CARRIER SHOHO, dead in the water and smoking from repeated bomb and torpedo hits, was sunk by carrier planes in the Coral Sea Battle. (USN 17026)

After security-shrouded planning and training, Doolittle's 16 B-25's left San Francisco on 2 April 1942 on board the *Hornet* which was escorted by cruisers *Vincennes* and *Nashville*, four destroyers, and an oiler. After a 13 April rendezvous with the *Enterprise* of Halsey's TF 16, the raiding party continued along the northern route toward the Japanese home islands.³ Enemy picket boats sighted the convoy when it was more than 100 miles short of the intended launching range, and, with Doolittle's concurrence, Halsey launched the fliers at 0725 on 18 April while the *Hornet* bucked in a heavy sea 668 miles from the Imperial Palace in central Tokyo.⁴

Much of the raid's anticipated shock effect on Tokyo was lost by the coincidence of Doolittle's arrival over the city at about noon just as a Japanese air raid drill was completed. The Japanese, confused by the attack which followed their own maneuvers, offered only light opposition to the B-25's which skimmed the city at treetop level to drop their bombs on military targets. One plane which struck Kobe received no opposition, although two others over Nagoya and Osaka drew heavy fire from antiaircraft batteries; but none was lost over Japan.

Halsey managed to retire from the launching area with little difficulty, and

³ Plans called for the bombers to land on friendly Chinese fields some 1,093 miles from Tokyo, and completion of this trip for the planes loaded initially with four 500-pound bombs and 1,140 gallons of gasoline required that they be launched within 500 miles of Tokyo.

⁴ Although the picket boats were prompt with a warning, Japanese interception attempts were tardy. It was assumed that Navy planes, with a shorter range than B-25's, were on the carrier, and that the force could not strike Japan until the ships steamed for another day.

both carriers returned to Pearl Harbor on 25 April. Although the raid did more to boost American morale than it did to damage Japanese military installations, more practical results came later. It allowed a Japanese military group which favored a further expansion of their territorial gains to begin execution of these ambitious plans, and this expansion effort led directly to the Battle of Midway which ". . . alone was well worth the effort put into this operation by . . . [those] . . . who had volunteered to help even the score."⁵

The first of Japan's planned expansion moves in the spring of 1942 aimed for control of the Coral Sea through seizure of the Southern Solomon Islands and Port Moresby on New Guinea as bases from which to knock out growing Allied air power in northeastern Australia. Seizure of New Caledonia, planned as part of the third step in the second major series of offensives, would complete encirclement of the Coral Sea. This would leave the U. S. communications route to the Anzac area dangling useless at the Samoan Islands; and later Japanese advances would push the U. S. Pacific Fleet back to Pearl Harbor and perhaps even to the west coast.

Characteristically, the Japanese plan called for an almost impossible degree of timing and coordination. It depended for success largely on surprise and on the U. S. forces behaving just as the Japanese hoped that they would. But this second element was largely corollary to the first, and, when surprise failed, the Japanese were shocked to discover that the U. S. fleet did not follow the script.

⁵ *Rising Sun in the Pacific*, 398.

The Japanese anticipated resistance from a U. S. carrier task force known to be lurking somewhere to the south or south-east, but they expected to corner this force in the eastern Coral Sea with a pincers movement of carrier task forces of their own. Vice Admiral Takeo Takagi would skirt to the east of the Solomons with his *Striking Force* of heavy carriers *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku* and move in on the U. S. ships from that direction, while Rear Admiral Aritomo Goto's *Covering Force* built around the light carrier *Shoho* would close in from the northwest. Destruction of the northeast Australian airfields would follow this fatal pinch of the U. S. fleet, and then the *Port Moresby Invasion Group* could ply the southeastern coast of New Guinea with impunity.

But Japanese overconfidence enabled U. S. intelligence to diagnose this operation in advance, and Fletcher's Task Force 17 had steamed into the Coral Sea where he all but completed refueling before the first Japanese elements sortied from Rabaul. On 4 May Fletcher's *Lexington*, *Yorktown*, screening ships, and support vessels were joined by the combined Australian-American surface force under Rear Admiral J. C. Crace of the Royal Navy.

On the previous day the Japanese had started their operation (which they called "Mo") like any other routine land grab. A suitable invasion force, adequately supported, moved into the Southern Solomons, seized Tulagi without opposition⁶ and promptly began setting up a seaplane base. There Fletcher's planes startled them next

⁶Tulagi, with which U. S. forces were to get better acquainted, was the capital of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. Officials and such garrison as existed had been amply forewarned and evacuated several days earlier. See Part VI of this volume.

day with several powerful air strikes on the new garrison and on the Japanese ships still in the area. The U. S. carrier planes struck virtually unopposed,⁷ but they caused little damage in proportion to the energy and ammunition they expended. This startling deviation from the "Mo" script caused the Japanese to initiate the remaining steps of the operation without further delay.

The Battle of the Coral Sea proved the first major naval engagement in history where opposing surface forces neither saw nor fired at each other.⁸ Although both were eager to join battle, combat intelligence was so poor and aerial reconnaissance so hampered by shifting weather fronts that three days passed before the main forces found each other. But other things they did find led to a series of events on the 7th that might be described as a comedy of errors, although there was nothing particularly comical about them to those involved.

Early that morning an over-enthusiastic Japanese search pilot brought Takagi's entire striking air power down on the U. S. fleet tanker *Neosho* and her lone convoying destroyer, the USS *Sims*, by reporting them as a carrier and heavy cruiser respectively. This overwhelming attack sank the *Sims* and so damaged the *Neosho*

⁷ Experience to date had indicated to the Japanese that one of their landings constituted a *fait accompli* which no enemy would dare dispute, and the naval force supporting the landing had departed in order to get on with the war. Takagi's powerful Carrier Striking Force at this time lay north of Bougainville to keep beyond the range of Allied air search.

⁸ "So many mistakes were made on both sides in this new mode of fighting that it might be called the Battle of Naval Errors." *Coral Sea and Midway*, 63.

that she had to be destroyed four days later.

Not to be outdone, the Americans reacted similarly a short time later to a scout plane's report of two Japanese carriers and four cruisers north of the Louisiades. Actually these craft were a subordinate enemy task group consisting of two old light cruisers and three converted gunboats. But more by good luck than good management, the attacking planes investigating the report sighted the Japanese *Covering Force*, then protecting the left flank of the *Port Moresby Invasion Group*, and concentrated on the *Shoho* to the virtual exclusion of her consorts. Against 93 aircraft of all types, the lone light carrier had no more chance than Task Force *Neosho-Sims* had against the Japanese, and her demise prompted the morale-boosting phrase, "Scratch one flattop!"⁹

As a result of these alarms and excursions, both commanding admirals had missed each other once again. By mid-afternoon, however, Takagi had a pretty good idea of the U. S. carriers' location and, shortly before nightfall, dispatched a bomber-torpedo strike against Fletcher. Thanks to a heavy weather front, these planes failed to find their target, and American combat air patrol intercepted them on their attempted return. In the confusion of dogfights, several Japanese pilots lost direction in the gathering darkness and made the error of attempting to land on the *Yorktown*.¹⁰

⁹ "Scratch one flattop! Dixon to Carrier, Scratch one flattop!" Voice radio report LCDR R. E. Dixon to USS *Lexington*, quoted in *Coral Sea and Midway*, 42. Action against the *Shoho* was U. S. Navy Air's first attack on an enemy carrier.

¹⁰ Six planes in two groups of three each. Although they were recognized and fired on, all but

Early the following morning, U. S. search planes finally located the Japanese carriers at about the time the Japanese re-discovered the U. S. flattops. At last the stage was set for the big show.

Loss of the *Shoho* had cut the Japanese down to size. The opponents who slugged it out on 8 May 1942 were evenly matched, physically and morally, to a degree rarely found in warfare, afloat or ashore.¹¹ However, at the time the battle developed, the Japanese enjoyed the great tactical advantage of having their position shrouded by the same heavy weather front that had covered the U. S. carriers the previous afternoon, while Fletcher's force lay in clear tropical sunlight where it could be seen for many miles from aloft.

The attacking aircraft of both parties struck their enemy at nearly the same time (approximately 1100), passing each other en route.¹² The two Japanese carriers and their respective escorts lay about ten miles apart. As the *Yorktown's* planes orbited over the target preparatory to the attack, the *Zuikaku* and her screening force disappeared into a rain squall and were seen

one escaped. In this action the Japanese lost 9 planes in combat and 11 attempting night landings without benefit of homing devices, against U. S. loss of 2 fighters.

¹¹ A lucid summary of the several factors involved occurs in *Coral Sea and Midway*, 48. Fletcher's potential marked advantage in surface screening strength had been dissipated when, early on 7 May, he had dispatched Crace's force of cruisers and destroyers on a dash westward to intercept the enemy transport convoy expected to round the southeastern tip of New Guinea the next morning en route to attack Port Moresby. For analysis of this perhaps ill-judged move and its results, see *Ibid.*, 37-39.

¹² "The story current shortly after the battle, that the Japanese and American planes sighted but paid no attention to each other when passing on opposite courses, is not true." *Ibid.*, 52n.

no more during the brief action that followed, thereby escaping damage. So all U. S. planes that reached the scene concentrated on the *Shokaku*, but with disappointing results.

The *Yorktown's* torpedo bombers went in first, low and covered by fighters. But faulty technique and the wretched quality of U. S. torpedoes at this stage of the war combined to make this attack wholly ineffective: hits (if any) proved to be duds, the pilots launched at excessive ranges, and the torpedoes traveled so slowly that vessels unable to dodge had only to outrun them. The dive bombers, following closely, scored only two direct hits. But one of these so damaged the *Shokaku's* flight deck that she could no longer launch planes, although she still was capable of recovering them. Many of the *Lexington* planes, taking off ten minutes after those from *Yorktown*, got lost in the overcast and never found their targets. Those that did attack made the same mistakes the *Yorktown* fliers committed. The torpedoes proved wholly ineffective, and the damaging bomb hit on the *Shokaku* was something less than lethal despite the pilot's enthusiastic report that she was "settling fast."¹³

The Japanese did considerably better, thanks to vastly superior torpedoes and launching techniques. Two of these powerful "fish" ripped great holes in the *Lexington's* port side, and she sustained two direct bomb hits plus numerous near misses that sprang plates. The more maneuverable *Yorktown* dodged all of the torpedoes aimed at her and escaped all but one of the bombs. But this was an 800-pounder, and it exploded with such a spectacular display of flame and smoke

that the Japanese pilots may be excused their claim that they had sunk her.

These events made up the Battle of the Coral Sea. It was all over by 1140.

Preoccupation of both forces with the flattops left opposing escort vessels unscathed, although the Japanese claimed to have left burning "one battleship or cruiser."¹⁴ The Americans had sustained far the heavier damage and casualties, but had inflicted the greater tactical blow in knocking the *Shokaku* out of further offensive action while both U. S. carriers still were operational. Even the crippled *Lexington* had put out fires, shored up torpedo damage, and was capable of sustaining 25-knot speed and conducting nearly normal flight operations an hour after the battle ended.

The Japanese had lost the greater number of planes: 43 from all causes against 33 for the Americans. Their command, accepting at face value the ecstatic reports of their pilots that they had sunk both U. S. carriers, started the beat-up *Shokaku* for home, and in the afternoon commenced withdrawal from the area on orders from Rabaul. Admiral Takagi concurred with higher authority that it would be unwise to risk the vulnerable transport convoy in the narrowing waters of the western Coral Sea in face of the Allies' Australian airfields under cover of the whittled-down air complement of the single operational carrier. So the *Port Moresby Invasion Group* was ordered back to Rabaul.

But the final, tragic act of the drama remained. The gallant old *Lexington*, her wounds patched up and apparently fit to return to Pearl Harbor for permanent repairs, was suddenly racked by a terrible

¹³ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

explosion. This resulted only indirectly from enemy action: released gasoline fumes were ignited by sparks from a generator someone had carelessly left running. This set off what amounted to a chain reaction. The best efforts of her crew availed nothing, and at 1707 her skipper gave the order to abandon ship. This movement was carried out in the best order, without the loss of a man. At about 2000, nearly nine hours after the Japanese had withdrawn from the battle, torpedoes of her

own escort put her under the waves forever.

Loss of the *Lexington* gave tactical victory to the Japanese. But by thwarting the invasion of Port Moresby, principal objective of the entire operation, the United States won strategic victory. At the time the enemy regarded this merely a postponement of their invasion plans; but events would prove that no Japanese seaborne invasion ever would near Port Moresby again.

Japanese Plans: Toward Midway and the North Pacific

Apparently ignoring this setback in the Coral Sea, Japan next turned toward the Central and North Pacific to launch the second complicated operation on her schedule. Admiral Yamamoto's two-pronged thrust at Midway and the Aleutians would automatically wipe clean the Coral Sea reverses and extend the outer perimeter of defense a safer distance from the home islands. And in the bargain, Yamamoto hoped, these attacks would lure forth the remainder of the U. S. fleet so that he could finish off the job he started on 7 December.¹

The admiral accepted his aviators' reports that they had destroyed both U. S. carriers in the Coral Sea, and he therefore reasoned that the U. S. could bring no more than two flattops against him anywhere in the Pacific. Actually the Pearl Harbor yard had put the *Yorktown* back into operation in less than 48 hours so that the U. S. had three carriers, including the *Enterprise* and the *Hornet*. But against these Yamamoto had seven, and four sea-plane carriers as well. His force also contained 11 battleships, including three of the latest type.² The U. S. had no battle-

ships—or at least none in position for this upcoming battle.³ And Yamamoto also had a substantial edge over the U. S. in cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. But the Japanese admiral squandered this lopsided advantage by dispersing his armada in widely scattered groups and opened himself for defeat in detail by the inferior U. S. Pacific Fleet.⁴

This Japanese fleet, divided for the complicated plan into five major forces, with some of these split into smaller groups, steamed eastward independently to carry out the various phases of the second step in this strategy for 1942. Planes from two light carriers in the *Second Mobile Force* would strike Dutch Harbor, Alaska on 3 June to confuse the U. S. com-

³ Although some of the battleships knocked out at Pearl Harbor had been put back in service, and three others had been brought around from the Atlantic, these ships were operating from the west coast as a final defense for the U. S.

⁴ In view of subsequent developments, Morison describes Yamamoto's disposition as "cockeyed." *Coral Sea and Midway*, 77–79. See also *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 73–78. These Japanese authors, although sometimes carefully kind to Yamamoto (who was killed later in a Solomon Islands air action), are most often highly critical of the Japanese Navy and of war plans in general. Although the work is valuable and serious (*n. b.* the final two paragraphs of the book, at pages 247–248), the authors sometimes sound like men on the morning after, ruefully surveying the night before.

¹ *Battle That Doomed Japan*, Chaps 4 and 5, *passim*. The Aleutians phase was intended only as a diversion and to protect the northern flank of the Midway thrust, the plan being to withdraw the landing troops in September. *Ibid.*, 79.

² Adm Yamamoto flew his flag in the *Yamato*, the largest, fastest, and most heavily armed (18" guns) ship in the world.

mand and to cover diversionary Japanese landings in the western Aleutians by the *Occupation Forces* for Adak-Attu and Kiska. Next the *Carrier Striking Force*, commanded by Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, would soften Midway with the planes from the big fleet carriers *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Hiryu*, and *Soryu*,⁵ and would then move on to strike the first blow at the U. S. Pacific Fleet if it challenged in a sortie from Pearl Harbor.

Admiral Yamamoto's *Main Body*, including three battleships and a light cruiser of his force plus the *Aleutian Screening Force* of four battleships and two light cruisers, then would go in for the kill against the U. S. Fleet. This engagement would be followed, after darkness on 5 June, by Vice Admiral Nobutake Kondo moving in to shell the U. S. base for two days. Then Kondo's convoyed *Transport Group* would approach to land the *Midway Occupation Force* of 5,000 ground troops. While crossing the Pacific, Yamamoto remained some hundreds of miles to the rear with his *Main Body*, awaiting word from the *Advance Expeditionary Force* of large fleet submarines already manning stations on the approaches to Pearl Harbor to warn about sorties of the American ships.

This ambitious plan might have worked, even though it was over-intricate. But again the Japanese had allowed their opti-

⁵ Absent members of the original Pearl Harbor striking force were the *Shokaku* and the *Zuikaku*, the former undergoing Coral Sea damage repairs, and the latter reforming its air groups battered in that same action. Presence of these big carriers at Midway might well have been decisive.

mism and overconfidence to cast the U. S. Pacific Fleet in the role of a timid character actor cued for a vulnerable "walk-on" part. They begged the question of tactics before their plan moved to the operational stage. The U. S. Fleet, according to Japanese plans, would be steaming for the *Second Mobile Force* in the Aleutians, or would be vacillating in Hawaiian waters, until the strong *Carrier Striking Force* hit Midway and revealed the target of the main effort.⁶ In either event nothing but the small Marine garrison force would stand in the way of the occupation of Midway, and the Japanese would have an air base of their own there before the U. S. Fleet could reach them.

But, as at the Coral Sea encounter, the U. S. Fleet already had sortied to await the Japanese. For more than a month Nimitz had been aware that something like this was in the wind, and he bet nearly everything he had that the strike would hit Midway. The weakened Pacific Fleet stood some 300 miles northeast of Midway, there to refuel, before the Japanese picket submarines took position. As a result, these boats sighted no U. S. ships and radioed no reports, and Admiral Nagumo discovered the presence of the U. S. carriers in a most unpleasant manner.

⁶ Fuchida and Okumiya state that Japanese plans "calculated that the enemy naval forces would be lured out by the strike on Midway Island and not before." *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 128. But in this calculation their overconfidence must have been tempered somewhat, else why the diversion into the Aleutians? Morison discusses this faulty Japanese strategy, probably more realistically. *Coral Sea and Midway*, 74-79.

Midway Girds for Battle¹

Even before these Japanese plans were made, and long before Admiral Yamamoto sortied eastward, all U. S. military planners recognized the vulnerable position of the Midway Atoll.² Especially was this position clear in the light of early Japanese successes elsewhere in the Pacific, and none was more keenly aware of the grim situation than the atoll's small garrison force. The 12 PBY's of VP-21 were soon withdrawn, and little help was expected from the crippled fleet. But on 17 December, while the 6th Marine Defense Battalion worked to improve existing defense installations, 17 SB2U-3's (Vindicators) of Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 231 (VMSB-231) flew in unexpectedly from Hawaii. Led by Major Clarence J. Chappell, Jr., and assisted in over-water navigation by a PBY, the obsolescent craft made the 1,137-mile hop in nine hours and twenty minutes.³ Other reinforcements,

¹ Editor's Note: Material contained in Chapters 3 and 4 is derived mainly from Chapters III and IV of the historical monograph *Marines at Midway* by Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr., published by Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, in 1948. This has been extensively rewritten and checked against sources subsequently brought to light.

² See Part II for a description of the geography and history of Midway.

³ This was then the longest massed flight of single engine landplanes on record, and it had been carried out with no surface rescue craft available. CO MAG-21 serial 1173 to MGC, 19Dec41. The flight took off from Hickam since Ewa's runways were too short for the heavily-laden planes to use with complete safety.

including about 100 officers and men of Batteries A and C of the 4th Defense Battalion, left Pearl Harbor on 19 December with the old Navy 7-inch⁴ and the 3-inch guns which had been shipped to Pearl Harbor for Midway prior to the outset of war. (See Map 10, Map Section)

This force, on board the USS *Wright*, arrived on Christmas Eve, and Lieutenant Colonel Harold D. Shannon, who commanded Marine defense forces on the atoll, turned over to Battery A (Captain Custis Burton, Jr.) the mission of installing and manning the 7-inch and 3-inch batteries to be emplaced on Eastern Island. Battery C (First Lieutenant Lewis A. Jones) was assigned the job of setting up its 3-inch battery on Sand Island.⁵

Next day Midway received another Christmas present: 14 Brewster F2A-3's, the air echelon of Marine Fighter Squadron 221 (VMF-221), flew in from the USS *Saratoga* which was retiring from the abortive attempt to relieve Wake Island. This squadron immediately began a daily schedule of air search and patrolling. On 26 December the USS *Tangier* brought in

⁴ These 7-inch weapons had been removed from pre-World War I battleships and stored in reserve at naval yards. K. J. Bauer, "Ships of the Navy, 1775-1945," (MS available from the author).

⁵ Interview with LtCol C. Burton, Jr., 26Sep47, hereinafter cited as *Burton*. The two Eastern Island batteries were located side by side on the south shore of the island, near the western tip, and the Sand Island battery was set up along the north shore of Sand Island.

Battery B of the 4th Defense Battalion (First Lieutenant Frank G. Umstead); additional machine gunners and 12 anti-aircraft machine guns from the Special Weapons Group of that same battalion; an aviation contingent of three officers and 110 enlisted Marines constituting the ground echelon of VMF-221; aviation supplies; additional radar; and much-needed base-defense artillery material. Umstead's 5-inch battery, along with the island's other 7-inch battery, were set up south of the radio station on Sand Island. By New Year's Day of 1942 Midway was garrisoned by a strongly-reinforced defense battalion, and one fighter and one scout-bomber squadron.

A major air base took shape on Eastern Island under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel William J. Wallace who on 9 January became commanding officer of the Marine Aviation Detachment. Individual aircraft bunkers and underground personnel shelters were built, emergency fueling expedients devised, radars calibrated, and inexperienced operators trained to use them properly. Colonel Wallace was assisted by Major Walter L. J. Bayler, the Marine aviation officer who had been sent back from Wake with that atoll's last reports.⁶

The first test of this defense came on 25 January during twilight general quarters when a Japanese submarine surfaced abruptly and opened fire on Sand Island, apparently trying to knock out the radio station. Battery D opened up with its 3-inch guns and forced the enemy craft to crash-dive three minutes after it had surfaced. Sand Island and the adjacent lagoon had received from 10 to 15 indis-

criminate hits, and Captain Buckner's Battery D had expended 24 rounds.

The next action against the atoll came two weeks later, on 8 February, when another submarine appeared less than 1,000 yards south of Sand Island and opened fire on the radio towers. Captain Loren S. Fraser's Battery A opened fire on this boat, and it submerged after Marines had returned two rounds. The enemy had hit a concrete ammunition magazine, but fortunately the small arms ammunition was not detonated. Two days later another submarine—or the same one—surfaced almost directly below two Marine fighter planes flying the sunset antisubmarine patrol. The submarine got off two rounds before First Lieutenant John F. Carey and Second Lieutenant Philip R. White, the fliers, could launch a diving attack. Both rounds from the submarine splashed in the lagoon, and then the boat was driven under water by the air attack just as the batteries of the 6th Defense Battalion were going into action. This was the last time for a number of months that Midway was troubled by enemy submarines.

As the winter wore on, Midway's air arm began to profit from the general expansion of Marine Corps aviation, and the two squadrons and their small provisional headquarters on 1 March became Marine Aircraft Group 22 (MAG-22). On 20 April Lieutenant Colonel Wallace was succeeded in command by Major Ira L. Kimes, and at the same time Major Lofton R. Henderson took command of VMSB-241, (the new designation of former VMSB-231). This was a busy time for MAG-22, which was then converting Eastern Island from a small advanced air base to a major installation capable of handling as many squadrons and aircraft types as could

⁶ LtCol W. J. Wallace ltr to Col C. A. Larkin, 18Jan42.

physically be accommodated and protected there.

On 10 March, during the work and reorganization, the Marine fliers got their first test against enemy aircraft. Radar picked up a Japanese four-engined "Mavis" (Kawanishi 97) approximately 45 miles west of Midway, and 12 fighters under Captain Robert M. Haynes vectored out to intercept. They made contact with the enemy flying boat at 10,000 feet and shot it down.

Although the enemy plane did as well as it could to fight off this attack, this contact was more important as intelligence for Nimitz' staff in Pearl Harbor than as a test for the Marine fliers. Two aircraft of this type had tumbled four bombs into the hills behind Honolulu on the night of 3-4 March, and Nimitz already believed that this portended an offensive toward Hawaii. Now this new sighting near Midway gave added weight to his estimate, and this information went into the CinCPac intelligence "hopper" which shortly thereafter reached the considered opinion that the Japanese attack would strike Midway. By this time the Japanese code had been broken, also.⁷ Thus were the fragments pieced together into Nimitz's May 1942 decision which caused him to wager nearly every ship he had in an early sortie from Pearl Harbor to the position 300 miles northeast of Midway from which the Japanese could be intercepted.

It was a bold, even though well-calculated, wager. The many ships on South Pacific convoy duty had to be left on their important jobs; Halsey's *Enterprise* and *Hornet* had rushed from the Doolittle launching area part way to the

⁷ *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 131; *U. S. & Sea Power*, 686.

Carol Sea and back again to Pearl Harbor where they were placed under a new commander, Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance; Fletcher's *Yorktown* had just limped in from the Coral Sea needing an estimated 90 days of repair work; and all the Fleet's battleships were on the west coast where they could not be used (partly because Nimitz felt he did not have enough air strength to protect them, anyway). But Nimitz was convinced that his intelligence estimate was correct, and that the stand had to be made.

For the engagement Nimitz gave Fletcher, in over-all tactical charge,⁸ direct command of Task Force 17 which included the *Yorktown* (rushed into shape in two days rather than 90), two cruisers, and six destroyers. Spruance commanded Task Force 16 which included the *Enterprise* and *Hornet*, six cruisers, and nine destroyers. Four oilers and 19 submarines also were assigned to the area, and, in addition, a North Pacific Force was formed of five cruisers and ten destroyers to screen the Aleutians. The Japanese had him outnumbered on all counts, and Nimitz knew that the enemy would be gunning for the three U. S. carriers. But his carriers likewise were his only hope, and the admiral ordered his subordinates to apply the rule of calculated risk when they went in with their air groups to stop the Japanese.

While Nimitz readied this reception committee, the Japanese completed their Midway plans and polished the rough operational edges with carrier training and

⁸ Fletcher was senior to Spruance, and thus became Officer in Tactical Command. But as it turned out, Spruance exercised practically an independent command during the critical days of 4-6 June, and this probably was fortunate because Fletcher had no aviation staff while Spruance had inherited Halsey's.

rehearsals. By the last week of May, all Japanese fleet elements were underway, and on decks Imperial sailors sunbathed and sang songs—vocal eruptions of what has been described as the “Victory Disease.”⁹

Meanwhile on Midway, the focal point for these vast efforts, Marines got their first inkling of all this attention when Nimitz flew in on 2 May to see their senior officer, Lieutenant Colonel Shannon, and the atoll commander, Commander Cyril T. Simard. The admiral inspected the installations, and then directed Shannon to submit a detailed list of all supplies and equipment he would need to defend the atoll against a strong attack. Nimitz promised that all available items requested would be forwarded immediately, and within less than a week men and material were being embarked in Hawaii to bolster the island strength.

Three more 3-inch antiaircraft batteries totaling 12 guns, a 37mm antiaircraft battery of eight guns, and a 20mm antiaircraft battery of 18 guns were temporarily detached from the 3d Defense Battalion at Pearl Harbor; and two rifle companies of the 2d Marine Raider Battalion, together with a platoon of five light tanks, also were sent along to Midway. For MAG-22, still flying Brewster fighters and Vought Vindicator dive bombers, there would be 16 SBD-2 dive bombers and seven relatively new Grumman F4F-3 fighters.

Shortly after his return from Midway to Pearl Harbor, Nimitz arranged “spot” promotions to captain and colonel respectively for Simard and Shannon, and described to them in a joint personal letter

⁹ *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 245. “. . . the spread of the virus was so great,” the authors say, “that its effect may be found on every level of the planning and execution of the Midway operation.”

the steps being taken to reinforce their atoll against the anticipated attack. Japanese D-Day, the admiral predicted, would be about 28 May. On the day they received this letter, Simard and Shannon conferred on their final plans for defense, and that evening Colonel Shannon assembled his key subordinates and warned them of the impending enemy attack. Additional defensive measures and priorities of final efforts were outlined, and all recreational activities suspended. May 25 was set as the deadline for completion of the measures ordered.

On the 25th, however, came two welcomed changes for the picture. First, Nimitz passed the word that the Japanese attack was not expected until early June, and, second, the first reinforcements arrived. On this date the USS *St. Louis* came in with the 37mm antiaircraft battery of the 3d Defense Battalion plus the two companies of raiders. Four of the 37's were emplaced on each island while Raider Company C (Captain Donald H. Hastie) went to Sand Island, and Company D (First Lieutenant John Apergis) to Eastern Island.

Next day the aircraft tender *Kittyhawk* arrived with the 3d Defense Battalion's 3-inch antiaircraft group commanded by Major Chandler W. Johnson, the light tank platoon for the mobile reserve, and the SBD-2's and the F4F-3's. In the following week additional Army and Navy planes arrived, and by 31 May there were 107 aircraft on the island.¹⁰

¹⁰ By this date the daily aviation gasoline consumption of planes based on Eastern Island was 65,000 gallons, and the following numbers of planes were based there: U. S. Army—four B-26's and 17 B-17's; U. S. Navy—16 PBX-5A's and six TBF's; U. S. Marine Corps—19 SBD-2's, 17 SB2U-3's, 21 F2A-3's, and seven F4F-3's.

For the ground forces and key civilian workers who had remained behind to help defend the island, the week was equally busy. Reinforcing weapons were installed, tanks tested in the sand, all defensive concentrations registered in, and the emplacing of an extensive system of obstacles, mines and demolitions completed. Sand Island now was surrounded with two double-apron barbed wire barriers, and all installations on both islands were ringed by protective wire. Antiboat mines of sealed sewer pipe, and obstacles of reinforcing steel lay offshore; the beaches were sown with homemade mines of ammunition boxes filled with dynamite and 20-penny nails; cigar box antitank mines cov-

ered likely beach exits; and bottles of molotov cocktail stood ready at every position. A decoy mockup airplane (a JFU—Japanese fouler-upper) was spotted prominently on the seaplane apron, and all underground fuel storage areas on Sand Island were prepared for emergency destruction by demolition.¹¹

¹¹ The demolition system worked, too. On 22 May a sailor threw the wrong switch and blew up a good portion of the aviation gasoline. The supply was so critical after this that the pilots who arrived on the *Kittyhawk* did not get a prebattle chance to check out in their SBD-2's. Pipe lines also were wrecked in the blast, and MAG-22 thereafter had to refuel all planes by hand from 55-gallon drums.

Midway Versus the Japanese

4-5 June 1942

A Midway PBY spotted the approaching Japanese first, at about 0900 on June 3,¹ and tracked them long enough to report eleven ships making 19 knots eastward. These vessels were probably the transport and seaplane groups of the *Occupation Force*, and they were attacked at 1624 by nine B-17's which Captain Simard sent out following the PBY's contact report. The pilots reported having hit "two battleships or heavy cruisers" and two transports in the group then 570 miles away from Midway, but the fliers were mistaken in both ship identification and in calling their shots, for they actually hit nothing. A Catalina scored on one of these oilers later that night in a moonlight torpedo run.

This was enough to convince Fletcher that the battle would soon be on, and he changed course from his station 300 miles east-northeast of Midway to gain a new position about 200 miles north. From there he could launch his planes the following morning against the Japanese carrier force which was expected to come in from the northwest. U. S. intelligence still was good. Nagumo continued to steam in from the northwest while his transports were under attack, and near daybreak on 4 June, when the *Yorktown* launched an early-morning search and while 11 PBY's

¹ Midway (Zone plus 12) time and West Longitude date.

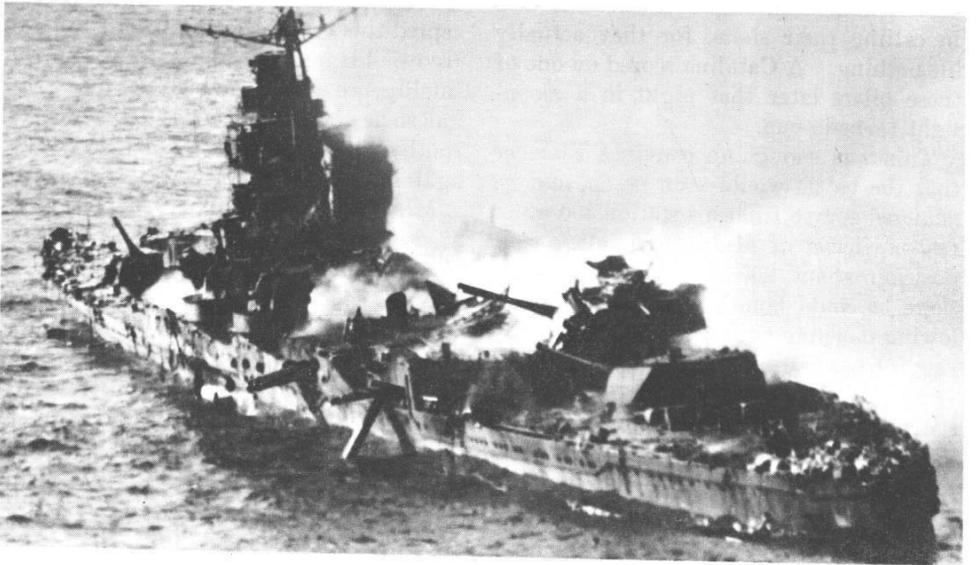
were going up to patrol from Midway, he had reached a position approximately 250 miles northwest of the atoll. There at 0430 the Japanese admiral launched 36 "Kate" torpedo planes and 36 "Val" dive bombers, plus 36 escorting Zeros, for the first strike against the atoll.

At 0545 one of the Midway PBY's sighted these planes about 150 miles out from the island, and a short time later another PBY reported visual contact with two enemy carriers and the balance of the Japanese *Carrier Striking Force* some 200 miles from Midway. *Enterprise* intercepted this report, but Fletcher wanted to recover his search planes and sift further intelligence before launching his strike, and so he ordered Spruance to take the van southwesterly and lead off the attack against the enemy carriers.

Meanwhile the Midway Marines were ready for the first shock of attack. Ground force defenders at general quarters manned every weapon and warning device, and MAG-22, which already had fighters up to cover the sortie of the PBY's stood by for orders. At 0555, shortly after the second PBY report had fixed the position of the Japanese *Striking Force*, the 6th Defense Battalion radar logged a report of "many planes," and the Naval Air Station raised similar blips almost simultaneously. Air raid sirens began to wail, Condition One was set, and the MAG-22 pilots manned their planes. Both squadrons were in the



CAMOUFLAGED LOOKOUT TOWER AT SAND ISLAND stands amidst the damage caused by Japanese dive bombers which attacked Midway Atoll on 4 June 1942. (USN 17057)



JAPANESE CRUISER MIKUMA, sunk at the Battle of Midway, lies battered and smoking from the attacks of pilots of MAG-22 and the American carriers. (USN 11528)

air in less than 10 minutes, VMF-221 heading to intercept the enemy planes and VMSB-241 off to rendezvous station 20 miles east where the dive bomber pilots would receive further instructions.

The VMF fliers under Major Floyd B. Parks sighted the Zero-escorted Val dive bombers at 0616 about 30 miles out from Midway, and Captain John F. Carey, leading one of Parks' divisions in an F4F-3, launched the attack from 17,000 feet. The Marine fliers were hopelessly outnumbered, and they found that the Zero fighters could "fly rings around them." They had time for only one pass at the bombers, and then had to turn their attention to the swarm of Zeros, from one to five of which got on the tail of each Marine fighter. Only three of the original 12 Marine pilots survived this brawl, and although the damage they inflicted on the enemy has never been assessed, it is believed that they splashed a number of the bombers and some of the Zeros. Other Zeros were led into the Midway anti-aircraft fire.

Meanwhile another group of 13 Midway fighters under Captain Kirk Armistead came in for an attack against the enemy air formation. Again the damage inflicted upon the enemy was undetermined, but fewer Marine pilots were lost. For better or for worse, however, the fighter defense of Midway had been expended, and the problem now passed to the anti-aircraft guns on the atoll.

The first Japanese formation attacked at about 0630 from 14,000 feet. Anti-aircraft fire knocked down two of these horizontal bombers before they could unload, but 22 came on through to drop their bombs. And just as these initial explosions rocked the two islands, 18 planes of the enemy's second wave came over for

their strike. Since each of these Japanese formations had left the carriers with 36 planes, it is possible that the Marine fliers scored some kills.²

The *Kaga* aircraft group in the first wave, assigned to attack the patrol plane facilities on Sand Island, dropped nine 242-kilogram bombs on and about the sea-plane hangars, setting them aflame and starting a large fire in the fuel oil tanks 500 yards to the north. The *Akagi* planes plastered the north shore of Eastern Island to destroy the Marine mess hall, galley, and post exchange. These the returning enemy fliers described as hangars.³ Other targets of the Japanese dive bombers included the already-flaming fuel storage at the north end of Sand Island, the Sand Island dispensary, and the Eastern Island powerhouse which suffered direct hits from two 805-kilogram bombs. These hits virtually destroyed the entire plant. And at the very end of the strike, the 6th Defense Battalion's Eastern Island command post received a direct hit which killed the Marine sector commander, Major William W. Benson, and wounded several other men. After these bombers completed their runs, the Zeros came in for strafing attacks. This one and only air strike on Midway was over shortly after 0700.

² Maj W. S. McCormick, an experienced anti-aircraft officer, counted the 22; and Capt M. A. Tyler, a VMSB-241 pilot with a grounded plane, counted the 18. CO, VMF-221 Rept to CO, MAG-22, 6Jun42, 1. However, *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 155, reports that "not a single hit" was sustained by the Japanese bombers until they struck in two waves of 36 planes each. This seems highly improbable in view of eyewitness accounts and damage sustained.

³ *ONI Review*, 45-48. Information on ground defense from CO, 6th DefBn Rept to CO, NAS, Midway on action of 4-5Jun42, 13Jun42, 1-8.

Marine defense batteries fired throughout these attacks, and one source credited this antiaircraft fire with 10 kills.⁴ Reports from Marine flyers would appear to require an increase of this estimate, however, since returning Midway pilots described enemy planes falling out of formation and others floundering into the water.⁵ But Japanese authorities claim that only six of their planes—three level bombers, two dive bombers, and a fighter—failed to make it back to the carriers.⁶ This controversy probably will never be resolved, for regardless of how many of these Japanese planes made it back to their carrier decks, Fletcher and Spruance—with a certain unintentional assistance from Nagumo—initiated action which resulted in the destruction of all these planes, anyway.

Nagumo's mistake was a natural one for a commander who believed himself to be unopposed on a "field" of battle of his own choice. Lieutenant Joichi Tomonaga, the flight officer who had commanded the first attack wave against Midway, radioed during his return flight that "There is need for a second attack wave." Meanwhile, with Nagumo still ignorant of the U. S. fleet's presence in the vicinity, six American TBF's and four B-26's from Midway came in to attack his ships. This convinced the Japanese admiral that Tomonaga was right, and he sent below to hangar spaces the 93 planes he had kept spotted for strikes against possible surface opposition. These planes were to be re-armed with bombs for the second strike. Then Nagumo called in the returning planes to

arm them for the new attack of the atoll. While his men were involved in this work on the flight deck and in hangar spaces, Nagumo got the belated word from a *Tone* search plane that U. S. ships, including at least one carrier, were in the area. This caused another change of mind, and the admiral ordered the planes' ordnance changed again, from bombs back to torpedoes with which to attack the surface ships. But this decision was just tardy enough to allow Spruance to catch him with his planes down, and with torpedoes and bombs strewn in great confusion about the hangar deck.⁷

Meanwhile, as Nagumo vacillated, Admiral Nimitz's orders for Captain Simard to "go all out for the carriers," while Marine antiaircraft batteries worried about Midway, were under execution. VMSB-241, like the fighter squadron, had divided into two striking units, the first composed of 16 SBD-2's led by Major Lofton Henderson, and the second of 11 SB2U-3's commanded by Major Benjamin W. Norris. Henderson's group climbed to 9,000 feet to locate the enemy carriers, which were then undergoing the attack from the TBF's and the B-26's. Fliers of this group sighted the Japanese ships at 0744, but as the SBD's spiralled down they were set upon by swarms of Nakajima 97's and Zeros flying air cover, which were soon reinforced by more fighters from the carriers below. Henderson and several others were shot down (only eight of these planes got back to Midway) and the strike scored no hits although some were claimed.⁸

⁴ *ONI Review*, 72.

⁵ CinCPac Rept to CominCh on the Battle of Midway, 8.

⁶ *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 156.

⁷ *ONI Review*, 17-19, 44-45.

⁸ Statement of Capt E. G. Glidden, 7Jun42, 1. Japanese sources disclose, however, that no hits were scored in this attack. The Guadalcanal

Next came an attack by 15 B-17's led by Lieutenant Colonel Walter C. Sweeney, USA, but again claims of hits were optimistic. And as these Flying Fortresses pulled away, Major Norris came in with his 11 Vindicators which had taken off with Henderson. Beset by the Zeros, Norris turned to the nearest target at hand, and the Marines crowded their ancient planes into a standard glide run almost on top of the Japanese battleship *Haruna*—previously claimed as an Army B-17's victim off Luzon. Some of the fliers also went after the *Kirishima*, which was nearby, but neither attack managed any hits. Three Marines were shot down, and the group was credited with splashing two enemy fighters, plus two probables.⁹

By 1100 all surviving Marine aircraft had made their way back to the atoll where all hands grimly assessed the battle's damage and prepared for subsequent action. Of the VMF-221 fighters which had

airfield, captured two months later, was named in Maj Henderson's honor. Rear gunners of this strike group are credited with four enemy kills plus two additional probables.

⁹ *ONI Review*, 19; *USSBS Interrogations*, Nav No 2, Capt Susumu Kawaguchi, IJN, I, 6. See also *Coral Sea and Midway*, 111, for Adm Morison's dismissal of damage claims by land-based fliers.

gone in against the attacking Japanese planes, only 10 returned, and of this number only two were in shape to leave the ground again. Thirteen F2A-3's and two F4F's were missing, along with the eight craft lost from the Henderson group and the three shot away from the Norris force. Slick black smoke from oil fires billowed up from the islands, and ruptured fuel lines left more than two-thirds of the aviation fuel temporarily unavailable. Gasoline had to be sent to the field from Sand Island, and hand-pumped from drums. The Marine ground defense force had sustained 24 casualties, and four ordnancemen of VMF-221 had been lost to a direct bomb hit.

At 1700 a burning enemy carrier was reported 200 miles northwest of Midway, and Major Norris prepared VMSB-241's six operational SBD-2's and five SB2U-3's for a night attack. The planes took off at 1900, but could not find the carrier. Major Norris failed to return from this mission, although the other pilots managed to home by the light of oil fires and the antiaircraft searchlights which were turned up as beacons.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the Battle of Midway had been decided at sea in a fight of carrier aircraft.

¹⁰ VMSB-241 Rept of Combat, 7Jun42, 3.

Battle of the Carrier Planes

4 June 1942

While the land-based fliers had their morning go at the Japanese *Striking Force*, and while Nagumo juggled his planes and decisions, Spruance steamed southeast to lead off the attack against the enemy. The American admiral intended to hold his planes until he drew within about 100 miles of the Japanese. But when he heard of the strike on Midway, Spruance launched two hours before this intended range would have been reached. By this calculated risk he hoped to catch the Japanese planes back on their carriers rearming for a second attack of the atoll. And about twenty minutes later Nagumo made the decision which set up himself and his planes as exactly the target Spruance hoped his pilots would find.¹

Enterprise and *Hornet* began launching at about 0700, sending off every operational plane they carried, except a few to cover

¹In his introduction to *Battle That Doomed Japan*, Spruance writes: "In reading the account of what happened on 4 June, I am more than ever impressed with the part that good or bad fortune sometimes plays in tactical engagements. The authors give us credit, where no credit is due, for being able to choose the exact time for our attack on the Japanese carriers when they were at the greatest disadvantage—flight decks full of aircraft fueled, armed and ready to go. All that I can claim credit for, myself, is a very keen sense of the urgent need for surprise and a strong desire to hit the enemy carriers with our full strength as early as we could reach them."

the task force. The strike was led by 29 Devastator (TBD-1) torpedo bombers, and these were followed by 67 Dauntless dive bombers and 20 Wildcat fighters. Eighteen other Wildcats, plus a like number withheld to relieve them later, patrolled overhead. *Yorktown* held back its planes for about two hours; Fletcher considered that the aircraft from his carrier might be needed against other enemy carriers not yet located, but by 0838 there had been no enemy sightings, and he decided to launch half his dive bombers and all his torpedo planes, along with escorting fighters. By shortly after 0900 the *Yorktown* had 17 SBD's, 12 TBD's, and six F4F-3's in the air, and other planes ready for takeoff.

As Spruance had hoped, Nagumo continued for more than an hour to steam toward Midway, and the first U. S. planes found the Japanese *Carrier Striking Force* with its flattops in the center of a larger formation consisting of two battleships, three cruisers, and 11 destroyers. By 0917, Nagumo had recovered his Midway attack planes, and at that time he made a 90-degree change of course to east-northeast. This course change caused 35 of the *Hornet's* SBD's and escorting fighters to miss the battle, but *Hornet's* torpedo planes found the enemy and went in low without fighter cover.

The 15 obsolete Devastators met heavy anti-aircraft fire from the Japanese *Strik-*

ing Force, and pulled down upon themselves the bulk of the Zeroes patrolling overhead. Against this combined fire, few of the planes got close enough to Japanese ships to launch torpedoes, and again, as in the Coral Sea battle, any hits scored by the slow unreliable torpedoes of that period proved duds. This antiaircraft and fighter opposition started while the planes had yet eight miles to go to reach the Japanese ships, and only one Devastator pilot lived to pull up from this attack.²

The 14 TBD's from the *Enterprise* fared only a little better. Four of these planes, likewise striking without fighter escort, survived their torpedo runs against the Japanese ships, although they scored no hits. But these two Devastator attacks, costly as they were, served to pull down the Zero canopy to such a low altitude that the following SBD's from *Enterprise* and *Yorktown* had an easier time of it.

These Dauntless dive bombers came in at about 1020 while Nagumo's ships still were dodging the Devastators. The *Akagi* took two hits which set her afire, and Admiral Nagumo transferred his flag to the light cruiser *Nagara*.³ The *Kaga* sustained four hits, and at 1925 she blew up and sank. The *Soryu* was hit three times by the planes and also struck by three torpedoes from the submarine *Nautilus* which arrived on the scene between 1359 and 1495.⁴ Finally the

Soryu's gasoline stowage exploded and broke the ship in half.

By 1030, Nagumo had lost the services of three carriers, and in all three cases, as Spruance had hoped, the American attack had caught the ships in process of refueling and rearming the planes of their Midway strike. But even with these ships and their planes gone, Nagumo still was determined to fight back with his surviving carrier, the *Hiryu*, which had escaped damage by getting far out of position in some of the earlier evasive actions to escape the torpedo planes. "Although defeat now stared the Japanese starkly in the face, they felt that the battle had to be continued as long as we retained even a small part of our striking power."⁵

When the *Akagi* was shot from under Nagumo, the Japanese *Striking Force* commander temporarily passed his command to Rear Admiral Hiroaki Abe on board the heavy cruiser *Tone*, and command of air operations simultaneously passed to Rear Admiral Tamon Yamaguchi in the *Hiryu*. At about 1050 two float planes from the cruiser *Chikuma* sighted the *Yorktown* task group and guided to it a strike of 18 dive bombers and six fighters up from the *Hiryu*. The U. S. air patrol and antiaircraft fire knocked down or turned back most of these enemy planes which arrived

not the *Soryu* but the *Kaga*, and that the one torpedo which actually hit proved a dud.

⁵ *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 191. In *Coral Sea and Midway*, at page 132, Adm Morison points out that the Japanese at this time assumed from scout plane reports that the U. S. force had no more than two carriers, and possibly only one. The Japanese authors in *Battle That Doomed Japan* point out on page 174, however, that while the torpedo planes were yet approaching for their first strike against Nagumo, "Reports of enemy planes increased until it was quite evident that they were not from a single carrier."

² Ensign George H. Gay was this sole survivor. His plane splashed shortly after he had pulled up from his run which had skimmed a carrier deck at about 10 feet. Gay's gunner had been killed, but Gay was rescued from his life raft next day by a Catalina.

³ Although the *Akagi* remained afloat, she was abandoned at 1915 and later scuttled by a torpedo from one of her screening destroyers.

⁴ *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 185, 189-191, presents strong evidence to indicate that this was

at about noon, but those that got through scored three hits which started fires. Within 20 minutes the big carrier was dead in the water.

Her crew got her underway again in about an hour, but a second strike from the *Hiryu* appeared early in the afternoon. Although the Japanese lost half of the 10 Kate torpedo bombers and six Zero fighters of this attack, four of the Kates came in to attack the *Yorktown* at masthead level. Launching at a range of about 500 yards, two of the torpedo planes scored hits which left the carrier not only dead in the water but listing so badly that she was abandoned a few minutes later.⁶

Meanwhile, one of *Yorktown's* search planes (one of 10 scout bombers sent out before the first attack on the ship) spotted the *Hiryu*, two battleships, three cruisers, and four destroyers at 1445, and reported the position of these enemy ships. At 1530 Spruance had 24 SBD's⁷ up from the *Enterprise*, and they found the *Hiryu* and her screening ships at 1700. Using the same tactics which had paid off in their morning attacks, the dive bombers scored four hits which finished operations for Nagumo's

⁶ The speed with which her crew had put *Yorktown* in shape after the first attack led the Japanese to believe that this second strike was against a different carrier. They had by now spotted all three U. S. carriers, but at this point they thought they had destroyed two of them. This second strike still did not finish the battered carrier, however. She remained afloat and regained some degree of equilibrium without human aid. Salvage parties went on board the following day, and the ship was taken under tow. But one of Nagumo's float planes spotted her early on 5 June, and a submarine was sent out to finish her off. The sub found the carrier on the 6th, put two torpedoes in her, and she finally went down early on 7 June.

⁷ Ten of these were refugees from *Yorktown*, and the others veterans of the earlier strikes.

fourth and last flattop.⁸ The bombing cost three SBD's and their crews.

During all this action Admiral Yamamoto, still miles to the rear, considered himself fortunate to have drawn out the U. S. Pacific Fleet. Shortly after noon, when he heard of the *Hiryu's* first strike against the *Yorktown*, the Japanese commander ordered the *Aleutian Screening Group* and Admiral Kondo's *Second Fleet* to join his *Main Body* by noon the next day to finish off the U. S. ships and complete the occupation of Midway. And a full hour and twenty minutes after he heard of the fate of Nagumo's final carrier, Admiral Yamamoto sent out a message in which he reported the U. S. fleet "practically destroyed and . . . retiring eastward," and he called on Nagumo, the *Invasion Force* (less *Cruiser Division 7*) and the *Submarine Force* to "immediately contact and attack the enemy." A stimulating message, but "In the light of the whole situation . . . so strangely optimistic as to suggest that Commander in Chief was deliberately trying to prevent the morale of our forces from collapsing."⁹

Nagumo's morale obviously needed to be stimulated by stronger stuff; at 2130 he reported: "Total enemy strength is 5 carriers, 6 heavy cruisers, and 15 destroyers. They are steaming westward. We are retiring to the northwest escorting *Hiryu*. Speed, 18 knots."¹⁰ Yamamoto's answer

⁸ The *Hiryu* floated in flames until, as in the case of the *Akagi*, one of the ships of her screening force put her to death with torpedoes at 0510 next morning. *ONI Review*, 13.

⁹ *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 213.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* To which message the authors quote a response by one of Yamamoto's staff officers, who, they say, "voiced the dejection of the entire Combined Fleet staff. . . ." Made by Rear Admiral Matome Ugaki, Yamamoto's chief of staff,

relieved Nagumo of command in favor of Rear Admiral Kondo; but later messages told the commander in chief that there was little chance of finding the U. S. Fleet until after dawn next day. At 0255 on 5 June the admiral changed his mind, abandoned the Midway venture, and ordered a general withdrawal.

Admiral Spruance, now more on his own than ever, following Fletcher's move from the damaged *Yorktown* to the *Astoria*,¹¹ of course did not know of Yamamoto's decision; but he did know that vastly more powerful enemy surface forces could well be nearby, quite possibly with additional carriers that had come in with the *Main Body* or with another enemy force. His problem, as he saw it, was to avoid combat in which he could be hopelessly outclassed, especially at night, and yet at the same time keep within air support distance of Midway in case the Japanese should persist in their assault plans. This he succeeded in doing, but in the process lost contact with the enemy fleet. He did not regain contact until 6 June.

In the early morning hours of 5 June, however, a retiring Japanese column of four cruisers and two destroyers was sighted by U. S. submarine *Tambor*; and when the Japanese sighted the *Tambor*, evasive action resulted in a collision of their cruisers, *Mogami* and *Mikuma*. While the other Japanese cruisers retired at full speed, these two lagged behind

the statement must likewise be considered a classic of understatement: "The Nagumo Force has no stomach for a night engagement!"

¹¹ Shortly after 1300 on 4 June, Spruance radioed his disposition and course to Fletcher on board the *Astoria*, and asked if Fletcher had instructions for him. Fletcher replied: "None. Will conform to your movements." *Coral Sea and Midway*, 141n.

with the destroyers to screen them, the *Mogami* with a damaged bow and the *Mikuma* trailing oil. The submarine continued to stalk these four ships, did not manage to gain a firing position, but at break of day reported their position.

Captain Simard sent 12 B-17's out from Midway to attack these ships, but the Flying Fortresses had trouble locating their targets, and Simard then ordered a Marine bombing squadron off on this mission. Captain M. A. Tyler with six SBD-2's and Captain Richard E. Fleming with six SB2U-3's took off at about 0700 to attack the ships which were then reported to be 170 miles west of the atoll. They located the ships at about 0800, and Tyler led his division out of the sun toward the stern of the *Mogami* while Fleming and the other Vindicator pilots went down at the *Mikuma*.

Both divisions met heavy antiaircraft fire, but Tyler and his fliers bracketed their target with six near misses which caused some topside damage to the *Mogami*.¹² Fleming's plane was hit, but the pilot stayed on course at the head of his attack formation and crashed his plane into the *Mikuma's* after gun turret.¹³ This additional damage further slowed the

¹² *USSBS Interrogations*, Nav No 83, RAdm Akira Soji, I, 363. Adm (then Capt) Soji had command of the *Mogami* during this action.

¹³ Fleming's dive "... crashed into the after turret, spreading fire over the air intake of the starboard engine room. This caused an explosion of gas fumes below, killing all hands working in the engine room. This was a damaging blow to the cruiser, hitherto unscathed except for the slight hull damage received in the collision with *Mogami*. Both cruisers were now hurt, and they continued their westward withdrawal with darkening prospects of escaping the enemy's fury." *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 226.

cruisers, and Admiral Spruance's carrier planes found the cripples the following day, the 6th. The attack of these planes sank the *Mikuma* and inflicted enough additional damage on the *Mogami* to keep her out of the war for the next two years.

The Battle of Midway—which many historians and military experts consider the decisive naval engagement of the Pacific War—was over, and all actions following those of 4 June were anti-climactic. The U. S. had lost 98 carrier planes of all types, and would lose the *Yorktown*, then under tow. The Japanese carriers sustained total losses of about 322 planes of all types.¹⁴ And with the four carriers had gone the cream of their experienced naval pilots. This, along with later losses in air battles over Guadalcanal, was a blow from which the Japanese never fully recovered.¹⁵

Although the carrier planes had decided the large issue, the contribution of Marines to the defense of Midway had been considerable, from the inception of base development to the end of the action. Not only had the 3d and 6th Defense Battalions contributed their share of labor, vigilance, and flak, but the aviation personnel of MAG-22, at a cost rarely surpassed in the history of U. S. naval aviation, had faced a superior enemy and exacted serious damage. At a cost of 49 Marines killed and 53 wounded, Midway had destroyed some 43 enemy aircraft (25 dive bombers and 18 Zeros) in air action, plus another 10 shot down by antiaircraft guns.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 250. This figure may be suspect. It exceeds considerably the regular complement of the four carriers.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the "crack-man policy" of the Japanese Navy Air Force, see *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 242-243.

¹⁶ These are reported figures based on the soundest possible estimates. The Japanese account in

In another air-air action, similar to that at Coral Sea, Fletcher and Spruance had sent the proud *Imperial Fleet* scurrying home to Japan without firing a shot from its superior naval rifles. Yamamoto could gain little consolation from the fact that the northern operation had secured two Aleutian bases: what good the bowl if the rice is gone? For ". . . unlike most of the Nipponese war lords, [Yamamoto] appreciated American strength and resources."¹⁷ He knew that destruction of the U. S. Fleet early in 1942 was a necessary prerequisite to the year's plans for control of the Coral Sea and the American sea lanes to Australia and New Zealand, and, in the final analysis, the necessary prerequisite to the success of Japan's entire war effort.¹⁸

But now that the Japanese clearly were defeated at Midway, they no longer could overlook the setback they had received at Coral Sea in phase one of their 1942 plans, and phase three—occupation of the Fijis, Samoa and New Caledonia—soon was scrapped. "The catastrophe of Midway definitely marked the turning of the tide in the Pacific War . . ." ¹⁹ and from arrogant offense the Japanese soon turned to chagrined defense and ultimate defeat. U. S. plans for a first offensive already were well advanced, and the rest of 1942 was destined to be a most gloomy period for the Japanese.

In *Battle That Doomed Japan*, Fuchida and Okumiya devote their final chapter to a scholarly and complete analysis of this

Battle That Doomed Japan does not bear them out. The authors list only six planes lost in the Midway strike and 12 in combat air patrol.

¹⁷ *Coral Sea and Midway*, 75.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* See also *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 60.

¹⁹ *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 231.

defeat, and they end on an introspective note:

In the final analysis, the root cause of Japan's defeat, not alone in the Battle of Midway but in the entire war, lies deep in the Japanese national character. There is an irrationality and impulsiveness about our people which results in actions that are haphazard and often contradictory. A tradition of provincialism makes us narrow-minded and dogmatic, reluctant to discard prejudices and slow to adopt even necessary improvements if they require a new concept. Indecisive and vacillating, we succumb readily to deceit, which in turn makes us disdainful of others. Opportunistic but lacking a spirit of daring and independence, we are wont to place reliance on others and to truckle to superiors.

Our want of rationality often leads us to confuse desire with reality, and thus to do things without careful planning. Only when our hasty action has ended in failure do we begin to think rationally about it, usually for the purpose of finding excuses for the failure. In short, as a nation, we lack maturity of mind and the necessary conditioning to enable us to know when and what to sacrifice for the sake of our main goal.

Such are the weaknesses of the Japanese national character. These weaknesses were reflected in the defeat we suffered in the Battle of Midway, which rendered fruitless all the valiant deeds and precious sacrifices of the men who fought there. In these weaknesses lies the cause of Japan's misfortunes.²⁰

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 247-248.