

LIBERATION:  
MARINES IN THE  
RECAPTURE OF GUAM

MARINES IN  
WORLD WAR II  
COMMEMORATIVE SERIES

BY CYRIL J. O'BRIEN





# Liberation: Marines in the Recapture of Guam

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**W**ith the instantaneous opening of a two-hour, ever-increasing bombardment by six battleships, nine cruisers, a host of destroyers and rocket ships, laying their wrath on the wrinkled black hills, rice paddies, cliffs, and caves that faced the attacking fleet on the west side of the island, Liberation Day for Guam began at 0530, 21 July 1944.

Fourteen-inch guns belching fire and thunder set spectacular blossoms of flame sprouting on the fields and hillsides inland. It was all very plain to see in the glow of star shells which illuminated the shore, the ships, and the troops who lined the rails of the transports and LSTs (Landing Ships, Tank) which brought the U.S. Marines and soldiers there.

The barrages, which at daylight would be enlarged by the strafing and bombing of carrier fighters, bombers, and torpedo planes, were the grand climax of 13 days (since 8 July) of unceasing prelanding

softening-up. Indeed, carrier aircraft of Task Force 58 had been blasting Guam airfields since 11 June, while the first bombardment of the B-24s and B-25s of the Fifth, Seventh, and Thirteenth Air Forces fell as early as 6 May.

Up at 0230 to a by-now traditional Marine prelanding breakfast of steak and eggs, the assault troops, laden with fighting gear, sheathed bayonets protruding from their packs, hurried and waited, while the loudspeakers shouted "Now here this . . . Now hear this." Unit commanders on board the LSTs visited each of their men, checking gear, straightening packs, rendering an encouraging pat on a shoulder, and squaring away the queues going below to the well decks before boarding the LVTs (Landing Vehicles, Tracked).

Troops on the APAs (attack transports) went over the rail and down cargo nets to which they—weighed down with 40-pound packs as well as weapons—held on for dear life, and into LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel). These troops would transfer from the landing craft to LVTs at the reef's edge, if all went as planned.

Aircraft went roaring in over mast tops and naval guns produced a continuous booming background noise. Climaxing it all was the voice of Major General Roy S. Geiger, commanding general of III Amphibious Corps, rasping from a bulkhead speaker:

You have been honored. The eyes of the nation watch you as you go into battle to liberate this former American bastion from the enemy. The honor which has been bestowed on you is a signal one. May the glorious

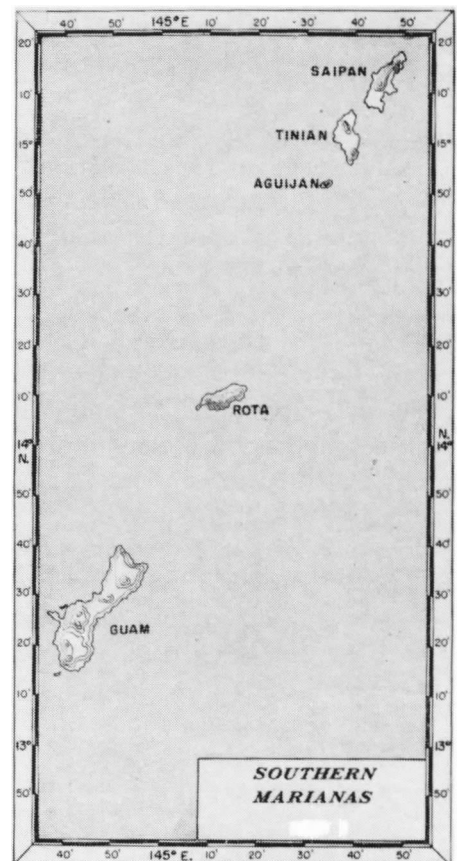
traditions of the Marine Corps' esprit de corps spur you to victory. You have been honored.

In the crowded, stifling well decks of the LSTs, the liberators climbed on board the LVTs and waited claustrophobic until the LST bow doors dropped and the tracked landing vehicles rattled out over these ramps into the swell of the sea. As the amphibian tractors circled (about 0615) near the line of departure, a flight of attack aircraft from the *Wasp* drowned out the whine of the amtrac engines and whirled up clouds of fire and dust, obscuring the landing beaches ahead. Eighty-five fighters, 65 bombers, and 53 torpedo planes executed a grass-cutting strafing and bombing sweep along all of the landing beaches from above the

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**On the Cover:** *Marines of Battery I, 14th Defense Battalion, man their twin-barrelled, Mark IV, Oerlikon-designed 20mm guns on top of Chonito Ridge, overlooking Adelup Point. In the initial stages of the Guam operation, these anti-aircraft guns fired in support of the 3d Marines. Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 93063*

**At left:** *A threatening 75mm Japanese gun pokes its barrel out of the Gaan Point pillbox where a companion piece and a 37mm gun wreaked havoc on the assault waves of the 22d Marines on W-Day, destroying approximately 24 troop-carrying amphibian tractors, before the enemy position was taken out. Department of Defense Photo (USN) 247618*



# General Roy S. Geiger

Major General Roy S. Geiger, as the other general officers in the Guam invasion force, was a World War I veteran. He also was an early Marine Corps aviator. He was the fifth Marine to become a naval aviator—in 1917—and the 49th in the naval service to obtain his wings. He went to France in July of that year and commanded a squadron of the First Marine Aviation Force. In the war and after, he saw service with Marine Corps air units. He also was well educated professionally, for he attended the Army Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth in 1924-1925 and was a student in the Senior and Advanced Courses at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, 1939-1941. In August 1941, he became commanding general of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and led it at Guadalcanal during the difficult days from September to Novem-

ber 1942. Back in Washington in 1943, he was Director of Aviation, until, on the untimely death of Major General Charles D. Barnett, Commanding General, I Marine Amphibious Corps, just prior to the Bougainville landings, General Geiger was rushed out to the Pacific to assume command and direct the landings at Empress Augusta Bay on 1 November 1943. He was the first Marine aviator to head as large a ground command as IMAC, which was redesignated III Amphibious Corps in April 1944. He led this organization in the liberation of Guam in July 1944, and in the landings on Peleliu on 15 September 1944. General Geiger led this corps into action for the fourth time as part of the Tenth Army in the invasion of Okinawa. Upon the death of Army Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner, Geiger took command of the Tenth Army, the first Marine to lead an army-sized force. In July



1945, at the end of the Okinawa operation, General Geiger assumed command of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, at Pearl Harbor. In November 1946 he returned to Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, in Washington, and died the following year. By an act of Congress, he was posthumously promoted to the rank of general.

northern beaches of Agana, south for 14 miles to Bangi Point.

"My aim is to get the troops ashore standing up," said Rear Admiral Richard L. Conolly, Southern Attack Force (Task Force 53) commander, who earned the nickname "Close-in Conolly" during the Marshalls operations for his insistence on having his naval gunfire support ships firing from stations very close to the beaches.

Private First Class James G. Helt, a radioman with Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Battalion, 3d Marines, in the bow of an LVT moving towards shore, wondered, as did many others, if anything could be still be alive on Guam? Ashore, Lieutenant Colonel Hideyuki Takeda, on the staff of the defending 29th Division, said the island could only be defended if the Americans did not land. In a diary, one Japanese officer noted that the only respite from the bombardment was a "stiff drink."

The next best thing to a welcome mat for Marine assault waves had

been laid by the audacious Navy Underwater Demolition Teams 3, 4, and 6, who cleared the beach obstacles. Navy Chief Petty Officer James R. Chittum of Team 3 noted that these pathfinders were usually close enough to draw small arms fire. At Asan, they exploded 640 wire obstacle cages filled with cemented coral, and at Agat they blew a 200-foot hole for unloading in the coral reef. Team 3, under Navy Reserve Lieutenant Thomas C. Crist, also removed half of a small freighter from a channel blocking the way of the Marines.

Swimmers as well as scouts, the "demos" reconnoitered right up on the landing beaches themselves. They left a sign for the first assault wave at Asan: "Welcome Marines—USO This Way."

At 0730 a flare was shot in the air above the waiting flotilla and Admiral Conolly commanded: "Land the Landing Force." At 0808, the first wave of the 3d Marine Division broke the circle of waiting LVTs to

form a line and cross the 2,000 yards of water to the 2,500-yard-wide beach between Asan and Adelup points. At 0829, the first elements of the 3d Marine Division were on Guam. Three minutes later, 0832, lead assault troops of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade crossed the shelled-pocked strand at Agat, six miles south of the Asan-Adelup beachhead.

## *Coming Back to Guam*

Guam, along with the Philippines, became a territorial possession of the United States with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1899, ending the Spanish-American War. Earlier, on 21 June 1898, First Lieutenant John Twiggs "Handsome Jack" Myers had led a party of Marines ashore from the protected cruiser *Charleston* to accept the surrender of the Spanish authorities, who didn't know that a state of war then existed between Spain and the United States. Thus began a long Marine presence on Guam. The island, southernmost of

the Marianas chain, was discovered by Ferdinand Magellan in 1521, but not occupied until 1688 when a small mission was established there by a Spanish priest and soldiers. When control of the rest of the Mariana Islands, including Saipan and Tinian, all once German possessions, was given to Japan as a mandate power in 1919, Guam became an isolated and highly vulnerable American outpost in a Japanese sea.

This American territory, 35 miles long, nine miles at its widest and four at its narrowest, shaped like a peanut, with a year-long mean temperature of 79 degrees, fell quickly

and easily in the early morning of 10 December 1941. Much of the Japanese attack on Guam came from her sister island of Saipan, 150 miles to the north.

The governor of Guam, Captain George J. McMillan (the island governor was always a U.S. Navy officer), aware that he could expect no reinforcement or relief, decided to surrender the territory to Japanese naval forces. Foremost in his mind was the fate of the 20,000 Guamanians, all American nationals, who would inevitably suffer if a strong defense was mounted. He felt "the situation was simply hopeless." He sent

word to the 153 Marines of the barracks detachment at Sumay on Orote Peninsula and the 80-man Insular Guard to lay down their arms. Even so, in two days of bombing and fighting, the garrison lost 19 men killed and 42 wounded, including four Marines killed and 12 wounded.

### *Operation Forager*

In late 1943, both the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and, later, the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) agreed to the further direction of the Pacific War. General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the Southwest Pacific Area, was to head north through

*RAdm Richard L. Conolly, Southern Attack Force commander for the Guam landings, confers on Guadalcanal with the commanders of the Northern Attack Group during rehearsals prior to the departure for the Marianas target. From left to*

*right: BGen Alfred H. Noble, assistant division commander, 3d Marine Division; Cdr Patrick Buchanan, USN, commander, Northern Transport Group; Adm Conolly; MajGen Allen Turnage, commanding general, 3d Marine Division.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 50235



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# General Allan H. Turnage

Allan H. Turnage was commissioned in 1913, and went to France as commanding officer of the 5th Machine Gun Battalion, 5th Brigade of Marines. In the interwar period, Turnage had an assortment of assignments to sea duty and to duty overseas, and in 1935 he reported as director of The Basic School, then at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. At the outset of World War II, he commanded Camp Lejeune and its training center, which was responsible for the organization and

training of two regimental combat teams slated for duty with the 3d Marine Division. In October 1942 he became assistant division commander of the 3d Marine Division and its commander the next September. General Turnage led the division in the landing on Bougainville and the liberation of Guam. Following the end of the war, he became Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. Lieutenant General Turnage's final assignment was command of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, at Pearl Harbor. Upon his



retirement in 1948, because he was decorated in combat, he received a fourth star. He died in October 1971.

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New Guinea to regain the Philippines. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, and Pacific Ocean Areas (CinCPac/CinCPOA), proposed a move through the Central Pacific to secure a hold in the Marianas. The strategic bombing of Japan would originate from captured fields on Guam, Saipan, and Tinian. The new strategic weapon for these attacks would be the B-29 bomber, which had a range of 3,000 miles while car-

rying 10,000 pounds of bombs. The code name of the Marianas operation was "Forager." The Central Pacific drive began with the landing on Tarawa in November 1943, followed by the landings in Kwajalein Atoll on Roi-Namur, Eniwetok, and Kwajalein itself.

In January 1944, Admiral Nimitz made final plans for Guam, and selected his command structure for the Marianas campaign. Accordingly, Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, the

victor at Midway, was designated commander of the Fifth Fleet and of all the Central Pacific Task Forces; he would command all units involved in Forager.

Vice Admiral Richmond K. Turner, who had commanded naval forces for the landings at Guadalcanal and Tarawa, headed the Joint Expeditionary Force (Task Force 51). Turner would also command the Northern Attack Force for the invasion of Saipan and Tinian. Admiral Conolly,

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# General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr.

Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., was in his senior year at the Virginia Military Institute and had not yet graduated when he was commissioned in the Marine Corps. He sailed to France as a member of the 5th Regiment of Marines, part of the 4th Brigade of Marines. He saw considerable action in the war – he was wounded twice at Belleau Wood and after recovering from his wounds and rejoining his regiment for the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives, he was wounded for a third time in the latter. Shepherd served in the Army of Occupation in Germany, and on his return home, became aide to the Commandant and at the White House. During the interwar period, he had a mix of school, staff,

and command assignments. In March 1942, he assumed command of the 9th Marines and took it overseas as part of the 3d Marine Division. Upon promotion to flag rank in July 1943, he was assigned to the 1st Marine Division as assistant division commander and, as such, participated in the Cape Gloucester operation. He assumed command of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in May 1944, and led it in the landing on Guam. Following this operation, he received his second star and took command of the 6th Marine Division, which was formed from the brigade and participated in the landings on Okinawa. General Shepherd commanded Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, in the first two years of the Korean War, and then was chosen as the 20th



Commandant of the Marine Corps. General Shepherd died at the age of 94 in 1990.

who had commanded the invasion forces at Roi and Namur in the Marshalls, would head the Southern Attack Force (Task Force 53) assigned to Guam. Marine Major General (later Lieutenant General) Holland M. Smith, the Expeditionary Troops commander for the Marianas, would be responsible for the Northern Troops and Landing Force at Saipan and Tinian, essentially the Marine V Amphibious Corps (VAC). Major General Roy S. Geiger, an aviator who had conducted the Bougainville operation, was to command the Southern Troops and Landing Force, the III Amphibious Corps, at Guam.

D-Day for the invasion of Saipan had been set for 15 June. It was an important date also for the 3d Marine Division, commanded by Major General Allen H. "Hal" Turnage; the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade under Brigadier General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr.; and the Army's 77th Infantry Division under Major General Andrew D. Bruce. They were to land on Guam on 18 June, but the 3d Division and the brigade first would wait as floating reserve until the course of operations on Saipan became clear. The 77th would stand by on Oahu, ready to be called forward when needed.

Admiral Spruance kept the floating reserve well south and east of Saipan, out of the path of an expected Japanese naval attack. A powerful Japanese fleet, eager to close with the American invasion force, descended upon the Marianas. The opposing carrier groups clashed nearby in the Battle of the Philippine Sea, one of the major air battles of the war. The Imperial Navy lost 330 out of the 430 planes it launched in the fray. The clash (19 June), called "the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot," was catastrophic for the Japanese and ended once and for all any naval or air threat to the Marianas invasion.

With the hard fighting on Saipan turning gradually but inevitably in favor of the American Marines and

## Major General Andrew D. Bruce

Andrew D. Bruce, a native of Missouri and a graduate of Texas A&M in 1916, was commissioned an Army second lieutenant in June 1917. His association with the Marine Corps goes back to World War I, when as a member of the 2d Infantry Division's 5th Machine Gun Battalion, he participated in actions in France in the Troyon Sector near Verdun, in the Aisne Defensive operation near Chateau Thierry, the Aisne-Marne offensive at Soissons, the fighting at St. Mihiel, and the Meuse-Argonne offensive at Blanc Mont. With the rest of the 2d Division, he hiked into Germany to become part of the occupation force.

In the interwar period, he had a mix of staff, command, and school assign-

ments. At the outbreak of World War II, then-Lieutenant Colonel Bruce headed the Army's Tank Destroyer School, which was first at Camp Meade, Maryland, then at Camp Hood near Killeen, Texas. He assumed command of the 77th Infantry Division in May 1943. The division first saw combat at Guam with the 3d Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, and then landed at Leyte for the Philippines operation. General Bruce's 77th once again fought with Marines in the landing on 1 April 1945 on Okinawa. When the XXIV Corps attacked to the south, General Bruce's soldiers and the 1st Marine Division were neighbors in the frontlines.

General Bruce retired with three stars as a lieutenant general and died in 1969.



soldiers battling the Japanese, the U.S. Navy was ready to direct its attention to Guam, which was now slated to receive the most thorough pre-landing bombardment yet seen in the Pacific War. After weeks at sea, the 3d Division and the 1st Brigade were given a respite and a chance to go ashore to lose their "sea legs" after so long a period on board ships. The Task Force 53 convoy moved back to Eniwetok Atoll, whose huge

20-mile-wide lagoon was rapidly becoming a major forward naval base.

The Marines welcomed the break and the chance to walk on dry land on the small islands of the atoll. There was even an issue of warm beer to all those on shore. The Marine veterans of the fighting on Bougainville, New Georgia, and Eniwetok had a chance to look over the soldiers of the 305th Regimental Combat Team, which now came for-



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 90434

*BGen Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., Commanding General, 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and his principal officers, from left, Col John T. Walker, brigade chief of staff; LtCol Alan Shapley, commander, 4th Marines; and Col Merlin T. Schneider, commander, 22d Marines, view a relief map of Guam for the brigade's operation.*

ward from Oahu to be attached briefly to the brigade for the landing on Guam, set for 21 July and designated W-Day. The rest of the Army contingent, the 77th Infantry Division, was well trained and well led, and was scheduled to arrive at the target on W plus 1, 22 July.

The 3d Marine Division, composed of the 3d, 9th, and 21st Marines (rifle regiments), the 12th Marines (artillery), and the 19th Marines (engineers and pioneers), plus supporting troops, numbered 20,238 men. It had received its baptism of fire on Bougainville in November and December 1943 and spent the intervening months on Guadalcanal training and absorbing casualty replacements. The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, which was organized on Guadalcanal, was also a veteran outfit. One of its infantry regiments, the 4th Marines, was formed from the disbanded raider battalions which had fought in the Solomons. The other once-separate regiment, the 22d Marines, was blooded in the seizure of Eniwetok in February 1944. Both regiments had 75mm pack howitzer battalions attached, which now joined brigade

troops. In all, the brigade mustered 9,886 men.

Corps troops of the III Corps was heavy with artillery and would use every gun. III Corps had three bat-

*En route to Guam on board the command ship USS Appalachian (AGC 1), Marine III Amphibious Corps commander, MajGen Roy S. Geiger; his chief of staff, Col Merwin H. Silverthorn; and the Corps Artillery commander, BGen Pedro A. del Valle, all longtime Marines and World War I veterans, review their copy of the Guam relief map to assist in their estimates and plans for the operation.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 87140



talions of 155mm howitzers and guns and the 9th and 14th Defense Battalions, whose 90mm guns could and would fire at both air and ground targets.

For the handling of casualties, III Corps had a medical battalion, with equipment and supplies to operate a 1,500-bed hospital. In addition, the 1st Brigade had two medical companies; the 3d Division its own medical battalion; and the 77th Division a fully staffed and equipped Army field hospital. Each of the divisions had a medium tank battalion and a full complement of engineers, augmented by two Marine separate engineer battalions and two naval construction battalions (Seabees). Two amphibian tractor battalions and an armored amphibian battalion would carry the assault waves to shore. All in all, the III Amphibious Corps was prepared to land more than 54,000 soldiers, sailors, and Marines.

Waiting for the attack and sure





Imperial Japanese Army LtGen Takeshi Takashina, commander of the 29th Infantry Division, which came to Guam from Manchuria in early 1944, where it was part of the Kwantung Army, was killed on 28 July while directing the evacuation of his Forte defenses.

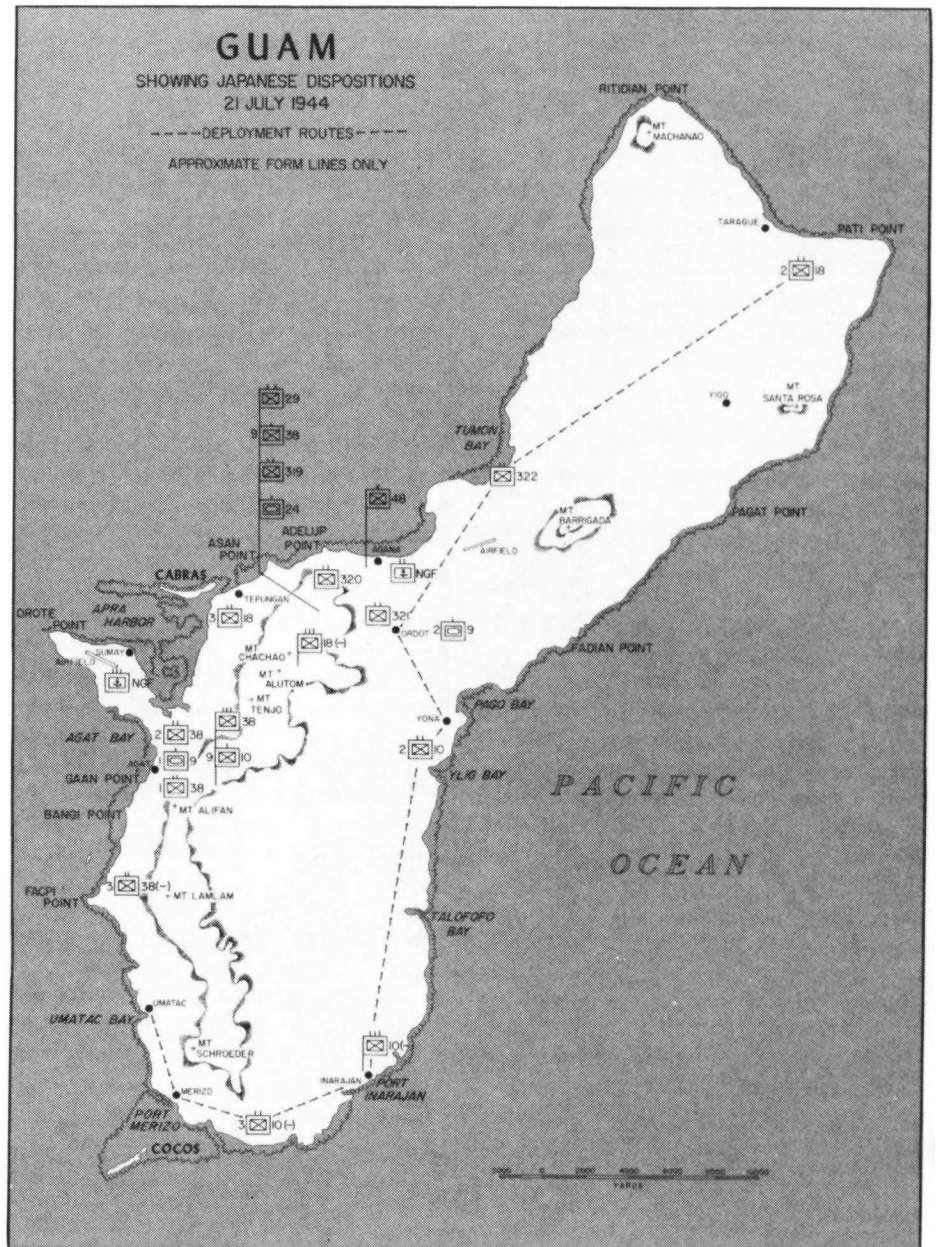
that it would come, but not where, was the Japanese 29th Infantry Division under Lieutenant General Takeshi Takashina. The 29th had served in Japan's Kwantung Army, operating and training in Manchuria until it was sent to the Marianas in February 1944. One of its regiments, the 18th, fell victim to an American submarine, the *Trout*, and lost 2,200 of its 3,500 men when its transport was sunk. Reorganized on Saipan, the 18th Infantry Regiment took two infantry battalions to Guam, together with two companies of tanks.

Another of the 29th's regiments garrisoned Tinian and the remaining unit, the 38th Infantry, together with division headquarters troops, arrived on Guam in March. The other major Army defending units were the 48th Independent Mixed Brigade and the 10th Independent Mixed Regiment, both formed on Guam in March from a six-battalion infantry, artillery, and engineer force sent from the Kwantung Army. With miscellaneous supporting troops, the total Army defending force numbered about 11,500 men. Added to these

were 5,000 naval troops of the 54th Keibitai (guard force) and about 2,000 naval airmen reorganized as infantry to defend Orote Peninsula and its airfield. General Takashina was in overall tactical command of the 18,500 Army and Navy defenders. His immediate superior, Lieutenant General Hideyoshi Obata, commanding the *Thirty-first Army*, was also on Guam, though not intentionally. Returning to his Saipan headquarters from an inspection trip to the Palau Islands, Obata was trapped on Guam by the American landing on Saipan. He left the conduct of Guam's defense to Takashina.

The fact that the Americans were to assault Guam was no secret to its defenders. The invasion of Saipan and a month-long bombardment by ships and planes left only the question of when and where. With only 15 miles of potential landing beaches along the approachable west coast, the Japanese could not be very wrong no matter where they defended.

Tokyo Rose said they expected us. On board ship, the Americans heard her and her pleasant beguiling voice on the radio. While she made threats of dire things to happen to invasion troops, she was never taken seriously by any of her American "fans."





LtGen Hideyoshi Obata, Thirty-first Army commander, who took command of the defense of Guam after Gen Takashina's death, was himself killed by soldiers of the 306th Infantry, when they overran the Mataguac command post.

Major General Kiyoshi Shigematsu, shoring up the morale of his 48th Independent Mixed Brigade, told his men: "The enemy, overconfident because of his successful landing on Saipan, is planning a reckless and insufficiently prepared landing on Guam. We have an excellent opportunity to annihilate him on the beaches."

Premier Hideki Tojo, supreme commander of the war effort for

Japan, also had spirited words for his embattled commanders: "Because the fate of the Japanese empire depends on the result of your operation, inspire the spirit of officers and men and to the very end continue to destroy the enemy gallantly and persistently; thus alleviate the anxiety of the Emperor."

Back to visit Guam a half century later, a former Japanese lieutenant said the tremendous American invasion fleet offshore had "paved the sea" and recalled what he thought on 21 July: "This is the day I will die."

"Conditions," said Admiral Conolly, "are most favorable for a successful landing."

### Ashore in the North

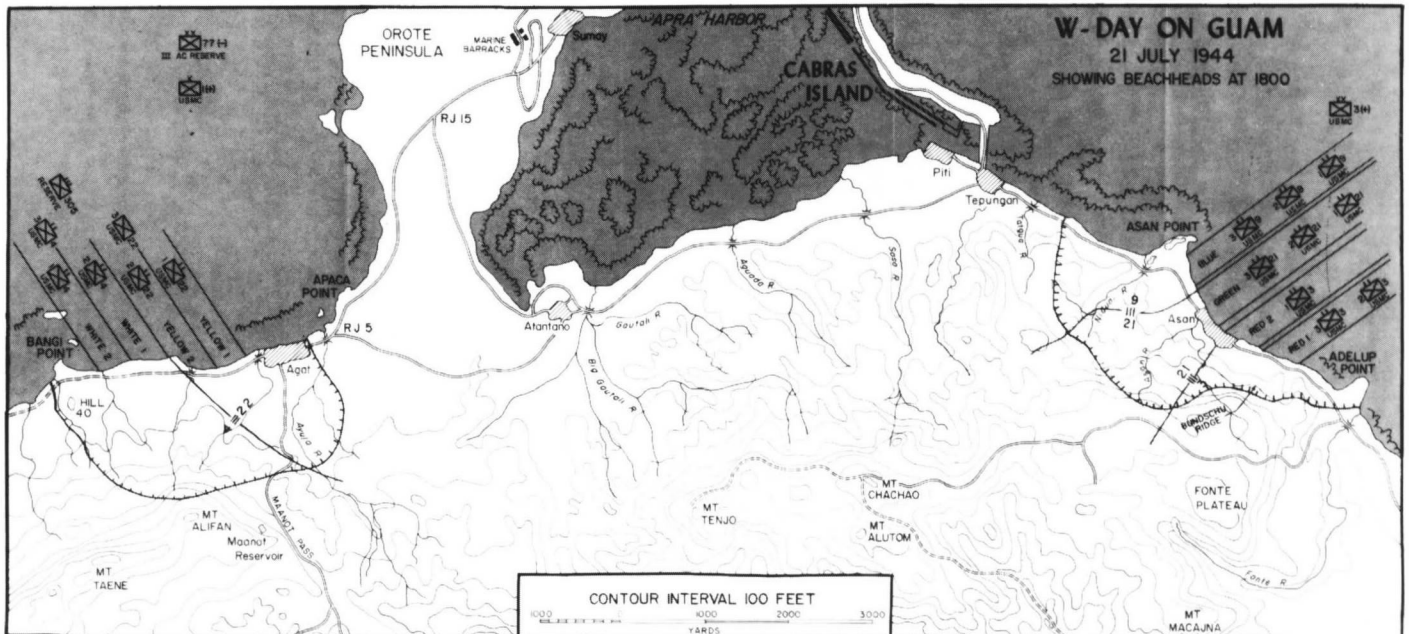
Troops of the 3d Marine Division landed virtually in the lap of the Japanese island commander, General Takashina, whose U-shaped cave command post, carved out of a sandstone cliff, overlooked the Asan-Adelup beachhead. The looming heights dominated the beaches, particularly on the left and center, where the 3d and 21st Marines were headed for the shore.

W-Day, 21 July 1944, opened as a beautiful day, but it soon turned hazy as the violent clouds of smoke, dust, and fire spiraled skyward. At

0808 an air observer shouted into his microphone: "First wave on the beach." At 0833, the same airborne announcer confirmed the battle was on, with: "Troops ashore on all beaches."

The 3d Marines under Colonel W. Carvel Hall struck on the far left of the 2,500-yard beachhead, the left flank of the division near Adelup Point. Ahead was Chonito Cliff, a ridge later named Bundschu Ridge, and high, difficult ground in back of which was the final beachhead line (FBHL), or first goal of the landing. The center, straight up the middle, belonged to the 21st Marines, under Colonel Arthur H. "Tex" Butler. The regiment would drive inland, secure a line of cliffs, and defend them until the division caught up and was ready to expand the beachhead outward. Under Colonel Edward A. Craig, the 9th Marines landed on the right flank near Asan Point, ready to strike inland over paddies to and across lower and more hospitable hills, but all part of the same formidable enemy-held ridgeline.

The 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, under Lieutenant Colonel Walter Asmuth, Jr., caught intense fire from the front and right flank near Asan Point, and he had to call on tanks for assistance, but one company got to



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# 3d Marine Division Insignia

The insignia of the 3d Marine Division was adopted on 25 August 1943, when the division was in training on Guadalcanal for the upcoming invasion of Bougainville. Approved in 3d Marine Division Memorandum 274-43, the insignia consisted of a caltrop on a triangular, gold-bordered scarlet shield. The caltrop was a medieval defensive weapon used against both cavalry and infantry. During the warfare of the Middle Ages, large numbers of caltrops were scattered by defenders on the ground in front of an approaching enemy. The four-pronged, forged-iron caltrop was designed so that no matter which way it landed when thrown on the ground, one point would be up with the other three points supporting



it. When used on the insignia, the caltrop represented not only the 3d Marine Division, but also the motto painted on the drums carried by the Continental Marines in the American Revolution: "Don't Tread on Me."

the ridge ahead quite rapidly and threw the defenders at Asan Point off balance, making the regiment's advance easier. (It would also be up to the 9th Marines to take Cabras, a little island offshore and hard against Apra Harbor. This would be accomplished with a separate amphibious landing.) With its 2d and 3d Battalions in the lead, the 9th Marines drove through its initial objectives quickly and had to slacken its advance in order not to thin out the divisions lines.

Colonel Butler's 21st Marines, in a

stroke of luck which would later be called unbelievable, found two unguarded defiles on either side of the regiment's zone of action. His troops climbed straight to the clifftops. No attempt was made to keep contact going up, but, on top, the 2d and 3d Battalions formed a bridge covering both defiles. The 1st Battalion swept the area below the cliffs.

The 12th Marines (Colonel John B. Wilson) was quickly on the beach, with its burdensome guns and equipment, and the 3d Battalion of Lieutenant Colonel Alpha L. Bowser, Jr.,

was registered and firing by 1215. By 1640 every battery was in position and in support of the advance. Captain Austin P. Gattis of the 12th Marines attributed the success of his regiment in setting up quickly to "training, because we had done it over, and over, and over. It was efficiency learned and practiced and it always gave the 12th a leg up."

On the far left, the 3d Marines was getting the worst of the enemy's increasing resistance. The regiment received intense mortar and artillery fire coming in and on the beaches, and faced the toughest terrain — steep cliffs whose approaches were laced with interlocking bands of Japanese machine gun fire. The cliffs were defended by foes who knew and used their weapons well. The Japanese, that close, would roll grenades right down the escarpment onto the Marines. Snipers could find protection and cover in the countless folds and ridges of the irregular terrain, and the ridgetops were arrayed like the breastworks of some nightmarish castle. It appeared that ten on top could hold off hundreds below.

One of the defenders, Lieutenant Kenichi Itoh, recalled that despite the terrible bombardment, he felt secure, that his countrymen could hold out for a long time, even win. After the war, recalling his feelings that eventful day in July 1944, the lieutenant considered it all a bad dream, "even

*Laden amphibious tractors carry troops of the 22d Marines in the assault wave to Yellow Beaches 1 and 2 south of Agat in the Southern Sector. Here, they would face murderous fire*

*from Japanese guns at Gaan Point and from positions overlooking the beaches on Mount Alifan and Maanot Ridge. Gaan Point was not fully neutralized until 1330, W-Day.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 88093





Department of Defense Photo (USMC)88160

*Upon reaching the beach, Marines quickly unload over the gunwales of the amtrac which brought them in and rushed off the beaches. As the frontlines advanced, succeeding waves of amphibian tractors will carry the troops further inland.*

absurd" to think that his forces could ever withstand the onslaught.

On W-Day, Lieutenant Colonel Ralph E. Houser's 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, was on the extreme left of the line, facing Adelup Point, which, with Asan Point, marked the right and left flanks of the invasion beaches. Houser's troops could seize the territory in his zone only with the support of tanks from Company C, 3d Tank Battalion, and half-track-mounted 75mm guns. Holding up the regimental advance was a little nose projecting from Chonito Ridge facing the invasion beach in the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines' zone. Early on W-Day (about 1045), Captain Geary R. Bundschu's Company A was able to secure a foothold within 100 yards of the crest of this promontory, but could not hold its positions in the face of intense enfilading machine gun fire. Captain Bundschu called for stretchers and corpsmen, then re-

quested permission to disengage. Major Henry Aplington II, commanding the 1st Battalion, was "unwilling to give up ground in the tight area and told Captain Bundschu to hold what he had."

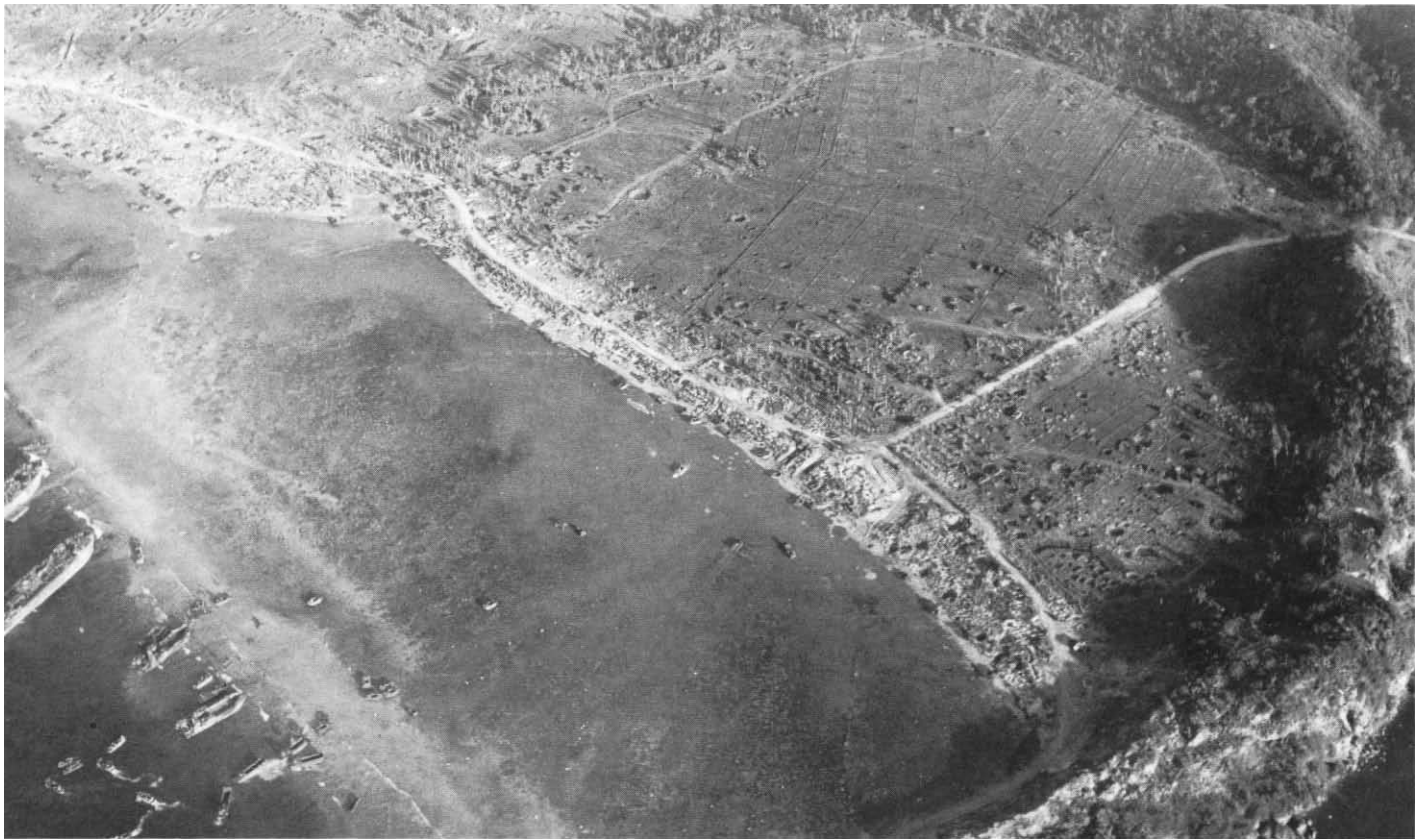
Colonel Hall ordered the attack to continue in mid-afternoon behind a massive 81mm mortar barrage. None of the companies of Major Aplington's battalion or Lieutenant Colonel Hector de Zayas' 2d Battalion could gain any ground beyond what they already precariously held. Their opponent, the 320th Independent Infantry Battalion held fast.

A couple of hours later, Colonel Hall ordered another attack, with Companies A and E in the fore. Major Aplington recalled:

When the 1700 attack went off, it was no change. E made little progress and the gallant men of A Company attacked again and again, reached the

top but could not hold. Geary Bundschu was killed and the company slid back to the former positions.

In the morning light of 22 July (W plus 1), that small but formidable Japanese position still held firmly against the 3d Marines' advance. During the bitter fighting of the previous day, Private First Class Luther Skaggs, Jr., of the 3d Battalion, led a mortar section through heavy enemy fire to support the attack, then defended his position against enemy counterattacks during the night although badly wounded. For conspicuous gallantry and bravery beyond the call of duty, he was awarded the Medal of Honor. On the 22d, Private First Class Leonard F. Mason, a Browning automatic rifleman of the 2d Battalion, earned a posthumous Medal of Honor for single-handedly attacking and wiping out an enemy machine gun po-



Seen from the air, 9th and 21st Marines assault Green and Blue Beaches in the Northern Sector on 21 July, W-Day. In the right, Asan Point casts a foreboding shadow over that portion of the landing area. Note LSTs beaching at the left.

sition which threatened his unit. Although wounded severely, he rejoined his fellow Marines to continue the attack, but succumbed to his fatal wounds.

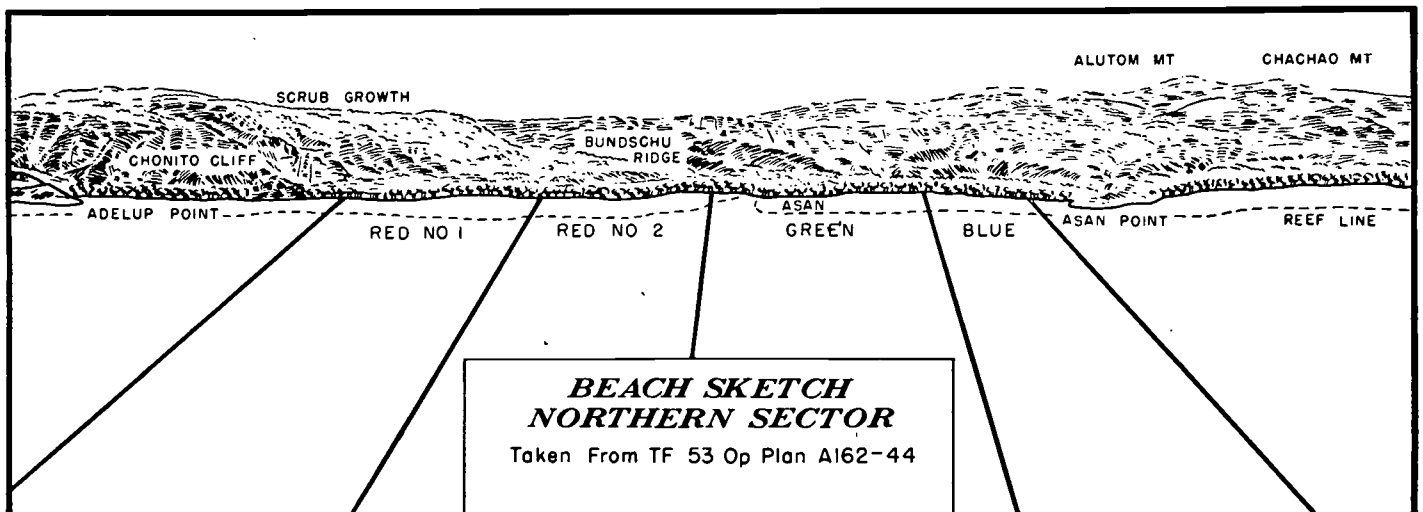
During the day's bitter fighting, Colonel Hall tried to envelop the Japanese, using Companies A and C of Aplington's battalion and Company E of de Zayas'. On regimental orders, Aplington kicked it off at 1150. It also got nowhere at first. Company A got to the top but was thrown off.

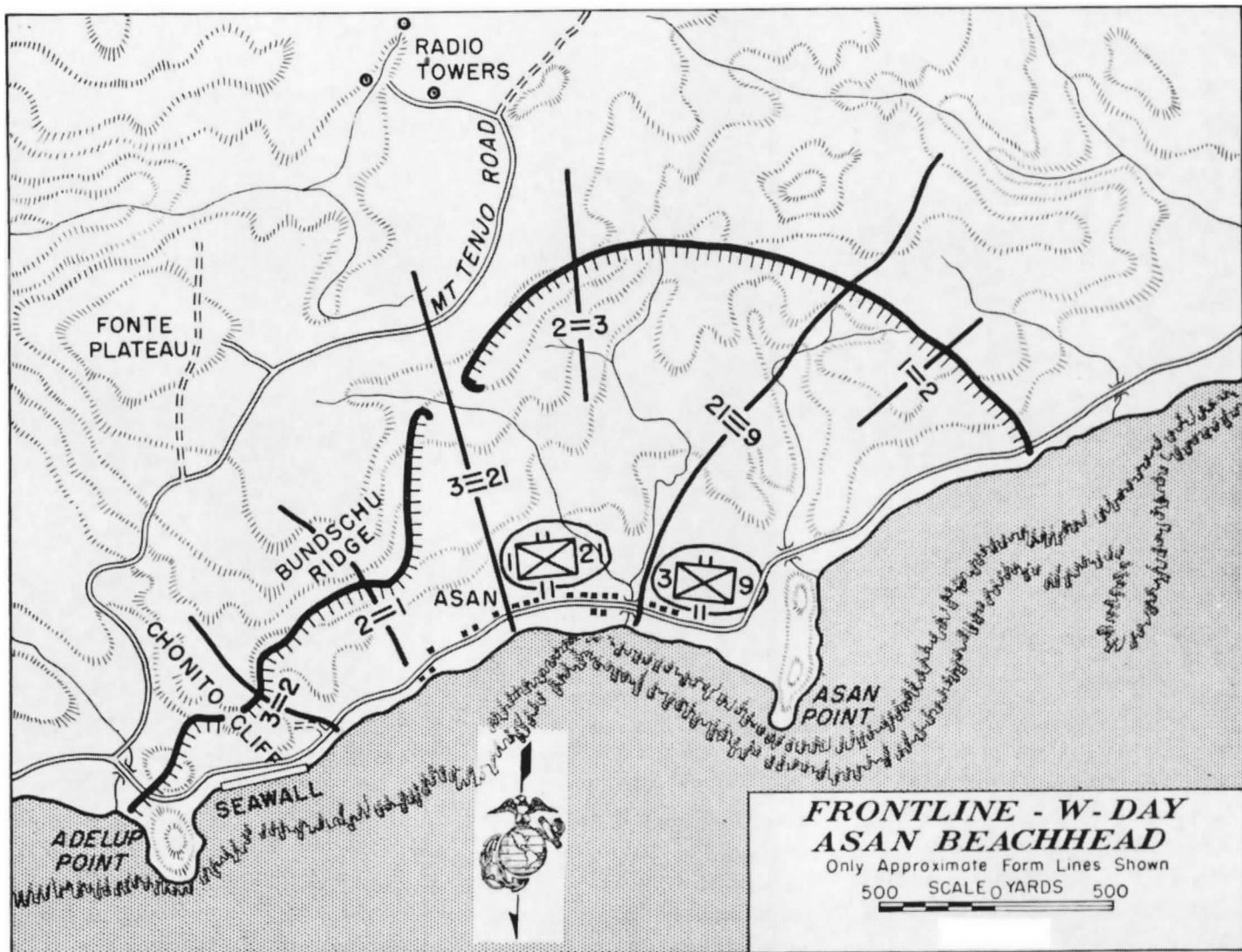
Company E was able to move ahead very slowly. Probe after probe, it found Japanese resistance perceptibly weakening. By 1900, the men of E reached the top, above Company A's position. The Japanese had pulled back. In the morning, a further advance confirmed the enemy withdrawal.

### *The Southern Beaches*

In the south at Agat, despite favorable terrain for the attack, the

1st Brigade found enemy resistance at the beachhead to be more intense than that which the 3d Division found on the northern beaches. Small arms and machine gun fire, and the incessant fires of two 75mm guns and a 37mm gun from a concrete blockhouse with a four-foot thick roof built into the nose of Gaan Point, greeted the invading Marines as the LVTs churned ashore. The structure had been well camouflaged and not spotted by photo interpreters





before the landing nor, unfortunately, selected as a target for bombing. As a result, its guns knocked out two dozen amtracs carrying elements of the 22d Marines. For the assault forces' first hours ashore on W-Day on the southern beaches, the Gaan position posed a major problem.

The assault at Agat was treated to the same thunderous naval gunfire support which had disrupted and shook the ground in advance of the landings on the northern beaches at Asan. When the 1st Brigade assault wave was 1,000 yards from the beach, hundreds of 4.5-inch rockets from LCI(G)s (Landing Craft, Infantry, Gunboat) slammed into the strand. It would be the last of the powerful support the troops of the brigade in assault would get before they touched down on Guam.

While the LVTs, the DUKWs (am-

phibious trucks), and the LCVPs were considerably off shore, there was virtually no enemy fire from the beach. An artillery observation plane reported no observed enemy fire. The defenders at Agat, however, 1st and 2d Battalions, 38th Infantry, would respond in their own time. The loss of so many amtracs as the assault waves neared the beaches meant that, later in the day, there would not be enough LVTs for the transfer of all supplies and men from boats to amtracs at the Agat reef. This shortage of tractors would plague the brigade until well after W-Day.

The damage caused to assault and cargo craft on the reef, and the precision of Japanese guns became real concerns to General Shepherd. Some of the Marines and most of the soldiers who came in after the first assault waves would wade ashore with full

packs, water to the waist or higher, facing the perils of both underwater shellholes and Japanese fire. Fortunately, by the time the bulk of the 77th Division waded in, these twin threats were not as great because the Marines ashore were spread out and keeping the Japanese occupied.

The Japanese Agat command had prepared its defenses well with thick-walled bunkers and smaller pillboxes. The 75mm guns on Gaan Point were in the middle of the landing beaches. Crossfire from Gaan coordinated with the machine guns on nearby tiny Yona island to rake the beaches allocated to the 4th Marines under Lieutenant Colonel Alan Shapley. The 4th Marines was to establish its beachhead, and protect the right or southernmost flank. After bitter fighting, the 4th Marines forged ahead on the low ground to



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 94137

*In quick order, the 105mm howitzers of LtCol Alpha L. Bowser's 3d Battalion, 12th Marines, were landed and set up in camouflaged positions to support the attack.*

its front and cleared Bangi Point where bunker walls could withstand a round from a battleship. Lieutenant Colonel Shapley set up a block on what was to be known as Harmon Road leading down from the mountains to Agat. A lesson well learned in previous operations was that the Japanese would be back in strength and at night.

When the Marines landed, they found an excellent but undermanned Japanese trench system on the beaches, and while the pre-landing bombardment had driven enemy defenders back into their holes, they nonetheless were able to pour heavy machine gun and mortar fire down on the invaders. Pre-landing planning called for the Marine amtracs to drive 1,000 yards inland before discharging their embarked Marines, but this tactic failed because of a heavily mined beachhead, with its antitank ditches and other obstacles. However, the brigade attack ashore was so heavy, with overwhelming force the Marines were able to break through, and by 1034, the assault forces were 1,000 yards inland, and the 4th Marines' reserve battalion had landed. After receiving extremely heavy fire from all emplaced Japanese forces, the Marines worked on cleaning out bypassed bunkers together with the now-landed tanks.

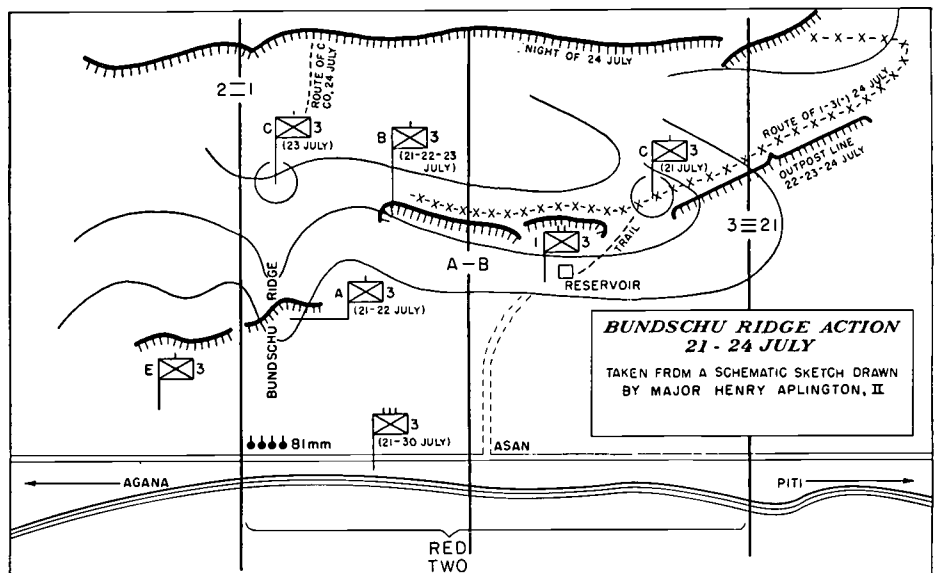
By 1330, the Gaan Point blockhouse had been eliminated by taking the position from the rear and blasting the surprised enemy gunners before they could offer effective resistance. At this time also, the brigade command group was on the beach and General Shepherd had opened his command post.

The 22d Marines, led by Colonel Merlin F. Schneider, was battered by a hail of small arms and mortar fire on hitting its assigned beach, and suffered heavy losses of men and equipment in the first minutes. Private First Class William L. Dunlap could vouch for the high casualties. The dead, Dunlap recalled, included

the battalion's beloved chaplain, who had been entrusted with just about everybody's gambling money "to hold for safekeeping," the Marines never for a minute considering that he was just as mortal as they. The 1st Battalion, 22d Marines (Lieutenant Colonel Walfried H. Fromhold), had left its section of the landing zone and moved to the shattered town of Agat, after which the battalion would drive north and eventually seal off heavily defended Orote Peninsula, shortly to be the scene of a major battle.

The 22d Marines' 2d Battalion, (Lieutenant Colonel Donn C. Hart), in the center of the beachhead, quickly and easily moved 1,000 yards directly ahead inland from the beach. The battalion could have gone on to one of the W-Day goals, the local heights of Mount Alifan, if American bombs had not fallen short, halting the attack.

The 1st Battalion moved into the ruins of Agat and at 1020 was able to say, "We have Agat," although there was still small arms resistance in the rubble. By 1130 the battalion was also out to Harmon Road, which led to the northern shoulder of Mount Alifan. Even as Fromhold's men made their advances, Japanese shells hit the battalion aid station, wounding and killing members of the medical team and destroying supplies.





*Often, in attacking up the ridges, there was very little cover and hardly any concealment as the Marines and soldiers ad-*

*Company A, 3d Marines, is in a perilous position on W-Day plus 1, 22 July, as it is held up on Bundschu Ridge on its way*

*vanced in the face of heavy artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire. Evacuation was extremely difficult under these conditions.*

*to Chonito Ridge at the top. The troops were halted by Japanese fire, which prevented immediate reinforcement.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 87396

