Marine Aviation in the Marianas, Carolines and at Iwo Jima[1]

THE MARIANAS[2]

While Marines of the 4th MAW were engaged in neutralizing enemy strongholds in the Marshalls, American military operations in the Central Pacific were accelerating. By June of 1944, Operation FORAGER, the invasion of the Marianas, had gotten under way. For the operation, Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, commanding the Fifth Fleet, had assembled more than 800 ships, a far cry from the total of 82 ships that had been available for the Guadalcanal landings barely two years earlier. A similar increase in aircraft strength available for FORAGER was notable. Shore-based aircraft for the invasion of the Marianas totalled 879 planes; 352 belonging to the Marine Corps, 269 to the U.S. Army, and 258 to the Navy. Marine aircraft consisted of 172 fighters, 36 night fighters, 72 dive bombers, 36 torpedo bombers, and 36 transport aircraft.[3]

Despite the large number of Marine shore-based aircraft in the Gilberts and Marshalls, air operations in the Marianas were carried out largely by the Navy carrier planes. Previous attempts by exponents of Marine aviation to have

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from: 2d MAW Hist, Jul41-Sept46; 4th MBDAW WarDs, Dec42-Nov44 and 4th MAW WarDs, Nov44-Mar46; MAG-11 WarDs, Oct42-Oct44 and MAG-11 Hist, Aug41-Dec49; MAG-21 WarDs and Hist, Feb43-Dec44, hereafter *MAG-21 Hist;* MAG-25 WarDs, Aug42-Jun46; MAG-45 *OpRpt*, 8Jan45; MBDAG-45 WarDs and Hist, Feb-Oct44; VMO-2 WarDs and Hist, Nov43-Jul46 hereafter *VMO-2 Hist;* VMO-4 WarDs, Mar44-Oct45 and Hist, 20Dec43-31Dec44, hereafter *VMO-4 Hist; AWS-5 AR* and WarDs, Mar-Jul44; VMF-114 WarDs, Jul43-Apr47; VMF-121 WarDs, Oct42-Dec44 and Hist, May41-Jul44; VMTB-131 WarDs, Dec41-Sep42 and Jan44-Nov45; VMF-216 WarDs, Jun43-Mar46; VMF-217 WarDs, Jul43-May46; VMF-225 WarDs, Jan43-Mar47; VMF-225 Hist, Jan43-Dec49; VMTB-232 WarDs, Jul43-Feb45; VMTB-242 WarDs, Jul43-Nov45; VMTB-242 Hist, Jul43-Jul45; VMF-252 WarDs, Apr42-Jan44; VMF-321 WarDs, Sep-43-Jan46; VMF(N)-532 WarDs, Dec43-Jul46 and VMF(N)-532 Hist, Apr43-May47; VMF (N)-541 Hist, Feb44-Dec49; VMB-612 WarDs, Aug-Dec44 and VMB-612 Supp and Hist, Oct43-Aug45; VMR-952 WarDs and Hist, Jul44-Jul46, hereafter *VMR-952 Hist;* Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War;* King and Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King;* Sherrod, *Marine Corps Aviation in World War II;* Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea;* Morison, *Victory in the Pacific.*

[2] Additional sources for this section include: Major Carl W. Hoffman, *Saipan—The Beginning of the End* (Washington: HistDiv, HQMC, 1950), hereafter Hoffman, *Saipan;* Major Carl W. Hoffman, *The Seizure of Tinian* (Washington: HistDiv, HQMC, 1951), hereafter Hoffman, *Tinian;* Major Orlan R. Lodge, *The Recapture of Guam* (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1954), hereafter Lodge, *Guam;* USSBS, *Pacific Campaigns.*

[3] Aircraft figures above cited in USSBS, *Pacific Campaigns*, p. 235.

Marine flyers operate from carriers had not yet reached fruition. The invasion of Saipan on 15 June found Navy aviation in full control of the skies. During the epic air battle of the Philippine Sea, which was to become known as the "Marianas Turkey Shoot," the Navy destroyed 476 enemy aircraft, nearly all of them in the air. Between 22 and 24 June, 73 Army Air Forces Thunderbolt fighters (P–47s) were catapulted from the Navy carriers USS *Natoma Bay* and USS *Manila Bay* 60 miles off Saipan and landed on Aslito airfield. These planes gave valuable assistance to the Navy in furnishing close support for the troops on Saipan, where bitter fighting was in progress.[4]

At the end of the Saipan operation, numerous voices were raised in criticism of the close support the hard-pressed Marine divisions had received on the ground. The most frequent complaint was that excessive time was required before a much needed air strike was actually executed. Many of the requested missions had to be cancelled because the infantry had already advanced beyond the targets before the first airplane appeared over the battlefield. An evaluation of close air support on Saipan summed up the situation this way:

> . . . as compared with the assistance given to the fighting troops by naval ships, close air support was decidedly inferior. In the early part of the operation, close support missions were flown exclusively by navy planes, and only toward the end of the operation were army aircraft . . . employed for this purpose. At no time were specially trained Marine pilots available for this kind of work.[5]

Responsible officers of the 4th Marine Division attributed deficiencies in close air support on Saipan to inadequate training of pilots, overcrowding of radio circuits between troops on the ground and units controlling the air strikes, involvement of too many echelons in the control of air strikes, and poor coordination between aviation, naval guns, and artillery. Following the Saipan operation, General Holland Smith once again urged that air groups be designated and trained as direct support groups and be assigned to CVE–type carriers (escort aircraft carriers, hereafter referred to as CVEs), and that Marine aviation provide air groups for this specialized duty.

At the same time, General Vandegrift, Commandant of the Marine Corps, initiated action designed to get Marine aviation assigned to carriers. Following discussions with the Chief of Naval Operations and a conference at Pearl Harbor in August 1944, attended by General Vandegrift and ranking naval leaders, the placement of Marine aircraft on carriers was authorized. On 21 October, Marine Carrier Groups, Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, was established as a tactical command with headquarters at Santa Barbara, California. Colonel Albert D. Cooley was appointed commanding officer of the Marine Carrier Groups, which consisted of Marine Base Defense Aircraft Group 48 (MBDAG–48) at Santa Barbara and MAG-51 at Mojave. In early November, the two groups were re-

[4] For a detailed account of Marine ground operations on Saipan, see Shaw, Nalty, and Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive*, pp. 231–428.

[5] Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*, p. 333.

designated as Marine air support groups. Each group consisted of four carrier air groups, each with an 18-plane fighter squadron and a 12-aircraft torpedo bomber squadron. The Marine air support group was scheduled for assignment to a CVE division of six carriers. Each carrier air group was to be stationed on a CVE. The Marine air support group staff was to function in the flagship as part of the admiral's staff for directing operations of the carrier air groups in support of ground troops in a target area.

It was not envisioned that the Marine squadrons would furnish all close air support. Instead, Marine aviation was to provide close air support for Marine divisions when the situation permitted. Though carrier-based Marine aviation was not yet a reality during the Marianas campaign, the framework for such an organization was rapidly being laid.

Lest it be thought that Marine aviation was completely left out of operations on Saipan, it must be mentioned that some Marine aircraft did take off from carriers and perform a very useful mission in support of the ground action. These were airplanes of VMO–2, commanded by Major Robert W. Edmondson, and VMO–4, under Captain Nathan D. Blaha. Most of the small artillery spotter monoplanes flew off the carriers USS *Fanshaw Bay* and USS *White Plains* on 17 June, landed on Yellow Beach and the dirt strip at Charan-Kanoa, and subsequently, on 22 June, moved to Aslito airfield.

The flying personnel of VMO–2 soon noticed that combat situations varied considerably from textbook theory, as related in the squadron history:

> From the first hops on, it was realized that use of our planes could not be employed the way it was originally intended. Theoretically, we were to remain at all times behind our front lines, never going deep into or even over enemy territory and all artillery firing and adjustment was supposed to be done behind our own pieces. Very little time was needed for us to realize that this method was impractical and relatively ineffective. Due to the rugged mountainous terrain, observation was practically impossible from such a position. Consequently, we found it necessary not only to go behind enemy lines, but deep into enemy territory to scout and pick out targets, and to remain there while fire was conducted on these targets so proper adjustments could be made and the effect of the fire on the targets could be observed. Therefore, most all of our flying was done over and forward of our front lines for the remainder of the Saipan and Tinian operations.[6]

The monoplanes of VMO–2 continued their spotting missions until the end of the Saipan operation on 9 July 1944. None of the pilots or planes was lost, though enemy antiaircraft fire hit many of the aircraft; two of them had their gas tanks damaged but both returned safely to their base. On the night of 26 June, enemy bombers raided the squadron area and dropped numerous antipersonnel bombs, wounding some of the Marines on the ground.

Considerably less lucky in the course of the Saipan operation were the men of VMO-4, whose mission in support of the 4th Marine Division was identical to that executed by VMO–2 for the 2d Division. The first two planes of VMO–4 left the *White Plains* 150 miles offshore on 19 June and arrived safely at

[6] VMO–2 Hist, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

the Charan-Kanoa strip. The remaining aircraft, in crates, were brought ashore two days later; by 22 June, eight squadron planes were in operation. From this point on, and for the duration of its employment on Saipan, bad luck appeared to dog the squadron. Six days after reaching Saipan, VMO–4 had already lost a substantial number of its original aircraft. Two planes were damaged beyond repair by enemy fire; another had to be scrapped after it collided with a vehicle during takeoff. Loss of the fourth plane resulted in the death of the pilot as well.

The misfortunes of VMO–4 did not end there. On the night of 26 June, the squadron area was bombed. This raid, from which the men of VMO–2 had escaped relatively unscathed, had a far more serious effect on the sister squadron. Three enlisted men of VMO–4 were killed and three officers and men were wounded. Among the seriously injured was the squadron commander, who had to be evacuated and was succeeded by Lieutenant Thomas Rozga.[7]

Another Marine aviation unit on Saipan was Air Warning Squadron 5 (AWS–5). On 17 April 1944 the squadron, commanded by Captain Donald D. O'Neill, had been divided into three detachments for operations with V Amphibious Corps. One of these was assigned to the Northern Troops and Landing Force, the other two to the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions. The initial mission of these detachments was to provide an early air raid alert for the headquarters to which they were attached and to record all enemy air activity observed. On the morning of D plus 2, 17 June, the squadron went ashore on Saipan. As fighting on the island progressed, the detachments displaced forward with their radar equipment in line with the advance of the two Marine divisions. While conducting a reconnaissance for a new site to be occupied on 29 June, a lieutenant and five men were taken under enemy machine gun fire. The lieutenant was killed and a corporal subsequently was reported as missing.

On 12 July, after the battle for Saipan had come to an end, a dozen aircraft of VMF(N)–532 joined the Army Air Forces night fighters already stationed on the island. An advance echelon of 7 officers and 32 enlisted men had been flown to Saipan a week earlier. Beginning 10 July, in addition to patrolling over Saipan, the squadron maintained one night fighter on station over Guam between the hours of 1930 and 0530.

The invasion of Guam on 21 July found MAG–21, commanded by Colonel Peter P. Schrider, offshore awaiting the seizure of the Orote Peninsula. The air group had been detached from the 2d MAW on 4 June and subsequently was attached to the 4th MBDAW. After 30 days at sea, the aviation Marines were eager to go ashore and get an airfield operational on the peninsula. Due to the heavy and prolonged fighting in this particular part of Guam, the forward echelon of MAG–21 was still ship-bound a week after D-Day. Two days later, a work detail of 50 men finally went ashore to assist in the restoration of the old airstrip. The initial job was to clear the strip of shell fragments and Japa-

[7] VMO–4 Hist, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–12.

nese dead in various stages of decomposition. There remained to be done another extremely unpleasant job, which fell to the bomb disposal officer of MAG–21: clearing the area of mines, unexploded bombs, and the booby traps around the designated bivouac area.

From the time that the first Marines of MAG–21 started to restore the airstrip, and for many weeks thereafter, they were constantly harassed by enemy snipers and bypassed stragglers who lurked in the underbrush at night and infested the coral caves on both sides of the strip. Mechanics of the air group captured several Japanese; hundreds remained to be killed or captured on Orote Peninsula.

By 31 July, a 2,500-foot section had been added to the coral strip, which had already been cleared. The strip was ready for operations and several Marine officers planned to have the first American plane to land on Guam be one from VMO–1, commanded by Major Gordon W. Heritage, whose craft were poised on the escort carriers USS *Sangamon* and USS *Suwanee*.[8] This plan was frustrated when, during the afternoon of 31 July, a Navy torpedo bomber from the USS *Chenango* attempted a landing on the newly constructed strip shortly before the Marine observation planes were scheduled to arrive. The importance of the occasion was not lost on the numerous observers gathered to witness this memorable event, which was recorded for posterity in these words:

> Sniper fire cracked across Orote Airfield as the first American plane attempted to land on the captured strip, and the Marine reception committee lay pinned to the deck at the moment the Grumman torpedo bomber began its cautious approach toward the former Jap airbase. Halfway down the strip, mangled and charred Jap bodies lay in grotesque mounds before a fallen redoubt of concrete. The stench of 3,000 other dead Japs was over the scorched peninsula . . . a bullet-riddled wind sock flapped wearily in the hot breeze from across Apra Harbor. The noise of battle from the smoky mountain sides beyond the harbor rode on the same wind.
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> The word passed quickly. In a few minutes the strip was lined with curious spectators. But as Navy Lieutenant (jg) Edward F. Terrar, Coffeyville, Kansas zoomed the field, the sharp whine of bullets cut the air overhead, and the onlookers scrambled for cover without thought of dignity. Unmindful of the commotion on the ground, the Navy pilot dropped his flaps, cut his throttle and came on. His wheels touched lightly once, bounced harder a second time, and as the plane leaped on the third impact, he opened the gun and roared back into the air for a second try.
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> As he circled for another approach, the Marines on the ground weighed curiosity against prudence. But even the sniper was caught up in the drama of the situation. As suddenly as they had begun, the shots ceased. The TBF settled in again, but this time it greased the runway all the way, and pulled up to an easy stop as Marines swarmed around on every side. The time was exactly five o'clock; American aviation was on Guam.[9]

The stay of this American aircraft on Guam was very shortlived. Three minutes after landing, heavy sniper fire forced the torpedo bomber to take off. Minutes later, without major fanfare, a "grasshopper" of VMO–1, piloted by

[8] Col Frederick P. Henderson ltr to CMC, dtd 21Nov52, as cited in Shaw, Nalty, and Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive*, p. 525*n*.

[9] *MAG–21 Hist*, pp. 33–34.

the squadron commander, Major Gordon W. Heritage, landed on the airstrip as previously scheduled. As it developed, neither the torpedo bomber nor the VMO–1 spotter planes were the first American aircraft to touch down on Guam following its recapture. That honor fell to an Army liaison aircraft assigned to the 77th Infantry Division Artillery, which had taken off from an improvised airstrip elsewhere on the island at 1310 of the 30th.[10]

Work on the field continued at a furious pace through 4 August, by which date all but 150-200 yards at the west end of the strip had been completed. Except for unloading parties working on board ships, most of the MAG–21 headquarters and service squadron personnel moved into a new bivouac area at the east end of the field. Initially, the lot of these men was not an easy one. For one thing, the new "shelter-half camp" lacked mess and sanitary facilities. The air group history gives a vivid account of conditions prevailing at Orote airstrip at this time:

> In the camp, unavoidably in some respects, the men lived for more than a month in filth. The group did not bring with it ready-made heads or sanitation facilities. Men ate canned rations for some time before stoves could be set up and hot rations served. Worse than the mosquito that pestered Marine aviation men in the South Pacific, far worse was the big, fat ordinary variety of houseflies that swarmed over everything on Guam the first month. Of course, as the dead were gradually buried and ration cans properly disposed of, the fly began to disappear.
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> But the men were only on Guam a few days when dengue fever and dysentery began to take their toll. Dengue fever, with its symptoms very much like malaria, doesn't hang on and recur like malaria, but its original effects are much more painful. Every section of the MAG was hit seriously by dengue in those first few weeks. As soon as hot food was served, when dead Japs had all been buried, and when plenty of fresh water was available, dengue and dysentery slowly disappeared. After the first month and a half, cases dropped appreciably.[11]

On 4 August, Marine aviation returned to Guam in force. MAG–21 squadrons, flying in from the aircraft carrier USS *Santee*, safely touched down on the airstrip just before noon. The first squadron to land was VMF-(N)–534 flying Grumman Hellcats, led by the squadron commander, Major Ross S. Mickey, followed by VMF–216, –217, and –225. As the squadrons touched down, the planes were moved to the edge of the runway for parking since revetment areas had not yet been completed. At 0600 on 7 August, VMF–225 took off from Orote Field to make the first regular combat air patrol flown by Guam-based aircraft.

Barely a week after Orote Field had become operational, distinguished visitors arrived on board a large C–54 Skymaster transport. The dignitaries included Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, and Lieutenant General Alexander A. Vandegrift, Commandant of the Marine Corps. Awaiting them at the field were Lieutenant General Holland H. Smith, Major General Roy S. Geiger, Major General Henry L. Larsen, Brigadier

[10] 77th InfDiv Arty AAR, 21Jul-10Aug44, as cited in Shaw, Nalty, and Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive*, p. 525.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 37–38.

General Pedro A. Del Valle, and other ranking Marine and naval officers on the island.

Even though pilots and ground crews had landed on Guam with high hopes of engaging the enemy in combat, they soon learned to their disappointment that no enemy airmen were going to challenge American domination of the skies over the island. For a few months following the capture of Guam, there were several air alerts, but no enemy bombs were dropped. There were no operational accidents in more than 6,000 takeoffs and landings during the first month. Orote airfield had the distinction of becoming the first all-Marine airfield in the Pacific Theater.

Situated only 1,500 miles from Tokyo, the new base dispatched fighters and bombers to attack Japanese-held Pagan Island, 200 miles north of Guam, and Rota, only 55 miles to the northeast and halfway to Saipan. The establishment of Orote airfield represented a long and ambitious step forward in the two-year story of developing American air power in the Pacific. Just two years earlier, Marine pilots had flown into embattled Henderson Field on Guadalcanal to establish a precarious foothold in the southern Pacific. Almost a year later, in August 1943, Marine aviators were the first to land on Munda airstrip on New Georgia. That advance of only 181 tortuous miles had followed a year of bitter fighting in the South Pacific. By August 1944, American forces had advanced boldly into the Marianas—1,100 miles west of the Marshalls and halfway along the 3,000-mile road from the Solomons to the Japanese homeland.

In flying strafing and bombing missions against the enemy-held island of Rota, the pilots of MAG–21 initially concentrated their attacks on the enemy airfield. Continuous bombing, on the average of once a day for four consecutive months, kept the enemy field in a chronic state of disrepair. The run to Rota and return required barely an hour and at least one pilot cracked: "Sighted Rota, sank same, and got home in time for lunch."[12]

For a while it appeared that the bomb runs to Rota were a picnic, and Marine aviators came to look upon the island as something akin to a practice range—a place to discharge a dull, routine, and necessary, but not overly hazardous, task. Enemy antiaircraft fire initially was feeble. As weeks turned into months, the enemy antiaircraft gunners marooned on the island apparently derived some benefit from tracking the daily low level sweeps of the Marine pilots. In any case, as time went on, the raiding aircraft began to get hit. Some managed to limp back to their base, others were shot down outright. In contrast to their earlier nonchalance, the pilots learned to respect Rota. When vegetable gardens were subsequently spotted on the island, the Corsair squadrons were dispatched to destroy them and so to deprive the enemy holdouts of a much-needed food supply. The tactics used were simple but effective. Several fighters dropped belly tanks of aviation gasoline on the targets. Planes following closely behind the belly-tank-bombers would then

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

strafe the fuel-soaked fields with incendiary bullets.

Another enemy-held strongpoint frequently on the receiving end of Marine fighter bombers was Pagan. Ever since the American invasion of the Marianas, the enemy had tried to keep the Pagan airstrip operational, but these efforts were frustrated by continuous air raids. Taking off with a heavy gas load, carrying belly tanks and a pair of thousand pound bombs apiece, the Corsairs repeatedly attacked the enemy airfield on Pagan in the face of fairly heavy antiaircraft fire. Enemy aircraft caught on the ground were raked by strafing fighters, and in time the field became well pockmarked with bomb craters. In keeping the enemy airstrips on Rota and Pagan Islands in daily disrepair, the Corsairs of MAG–21, acting as fighter-bombers, played a vital part in protecting the new B–29 Superfortress bases on Saipan, Tinian, and Guam from enemy air action.[13]

On 7 September 1944, Colonel Schrider, commanding MAG–21, was succeeded by Colonel Edward B. Carney, who remained in command until late March 1945. By late November, MAG–21 consisted of VMF–216, –217, –225, –321, VMTB–131 and –242, VMO–1 and –2, VMF(N)–534, VMR–253, VMB–612, and AWS–2. The complement of the group at this time included 529 officers and 3,778 enlisted personnel. Aircraft of the group included 113 fighters (98 F4Us and 15 F6Fs), 15 night fighters (F6F–Ns), 39 torpedo bombers (TBFs and TBMs), 15 medium bombers (PBJs), 14 transports (R4Ds), 22 observation planes (OYs), and a solitary amphibious utility plane (J2F-6).[14] As 1944 drew to a close, most veteran pilots of the MAG–21 fighter squadrons either had or were in the process of returning to Pearl Harbor and the continental United States for training on aircraft carriers.

THE CAROLINES[15]

The occupation of the Marianas by U.S. forces during the summer of 1944, coupled with further advances in the southwest Pacific, opened the door to the seizure of the Philippine Islands. The logical step before retaking the Philippines was the seizure of the western Carolines, whose possession would not only provide the final steppingstone to the Philippines but also protect the right flank of the invasion force. By this time, the Japanese were facing a strategic situation that had greatly changed to their disadvantage, for American forces were strongly em-

[13] The first B–29 arrived on Saipan on 12 October 1944 while final paving and other construction was still incomplete. Facilities were not substantially operative until April 1945. On Guam, the newly constructed airfields did not become operational for B–29s until late February 1945. On Tinian, the first two runways were completed in January 1945, the third in late February, and the fourth in early May. The first runway of West Field became operational on 22 March 1945, the second on 20 April. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, pp. 515–520.

[14] Figures on personnel and materiel taken from *MAG-21 Hist*, p. 50.

[15] Additional sources for this section include: 2d MAW WarD, Jan-Apr43; *IIIAC Palaus Rpt;* Hough, *Assault on Peleliu;* Smith, *Approach to the Philippines*; Fane and Moore, *The Naked Warriors.*

placed on their inner line of defense. The fall of Saipan in the overall Japanese view of the war was a disaster comparable to the German defeat at Stalingrad during the winter of 1942-43. For many Germans the loss of the *Sixth Army* at Stalingrad meant the war could no longer be won; many Japanese reached the same conclusion following the loss of Saipan. While, for the time being, no political repercussions in Germany followed in the wake of the military debacle, the loss of Saipan proved a sufficient disaster to topple the cabinet of General Tojo. In announcing the fall of Saipan to the nation, the latter was forced to admit that "Japan was facing an unprecedented national crisis."[16]

As early as 10 May 1944, Admiral Nimitz had designated the commander of the Third Fleet, Admiral Halsey, to head the invasion of Peleliu and Angaur under the code name Operation STALEMATE. A second phase of the operation called for the capture of Yap and Ulithi. The seizure of Yap was subsequently shelved, and the island remained in enemy hands until the end of the war. The invasion date for Peleliu and Angaur was set for 15 September. While planning for STALEMATE was in progress, Army Air Forces bombers frequently attacked enemy installations in the Palaus. As in previous invasions, the target was out of range of land-based fighter aircraft, and direct air support for the Peleliu beachhead would have to be furnished by naval aviation. The Navy had already struck at enemy defenses on Peleliu in March 1944, when carrier-based planes had dropped 600 tons of bombs on the island in a two-day raid. Preinvasion air strikes were designed to eliminate any enemy aircraft left in the Palaus. Once the Marines of the III Amphibious Corps had seized the Peleliu airfield, the main objective of the operation, Marine aviation was to be based on the island.

The task of bringing Marine aviation to Peleliu was turned over to the 2d MAW, commanded by Brigadier General Harold D. Campbell. The air wing, consisting of MAGs-11 and -25, had spent considerable time in the Pacific Theater. Some of its squadrons had participated in the Battle of Midway and in operations on New Georgia. On 30 June 1944, the headquarters of the 2d MAW moved from Efate, in the New Hebrides, to Espiritu Santo, where it joined the remainder of the squadrons attached to the wing. One week later, Major General James T. Moore took over as wing commander. Upon his arrival at Espiritu Santo, General Moore found the wing fully engaged in preparing for Operation STALEMATE. Commanding officers and loading officers of VMF-114, -121, -122, and VMF(N)-541 were reporting to the 1st Marine Division at Guadalcanal with embarkation data for the impending operation.

It is perhaps not surprising that officers of the 2d MAW should show a greater than average interest in shipborne movement to a new objective. Many of them remembered or had heard of the saga of the liberty ship S.S. *Walter Colton,* which in January 1943 had transported part of the wing headquarters to the South Pacific. At the

[16] USSBS, *Pacific Campaigns*, p. 220.

time, what had begun as a routine three-week voyage when the ship pulled out of San Diego Harbor on 8 January, had turned into a seemingly interminable odyssey for the aviation Marines on board. No one to this date has determined what factor was responsible for the strange voyage of the *Colton*, but something went awry along the way. The wing historian subsequently was to describe the sequence of events in the following words:

> Instead of proceeding directly to Guadalcanal, the *Colton* received a change of orders directing her to Noumea; then, running ahead of schedule, she failed to pick up radioed orders from Pearl Harbor which directed her to Espiritu Santo instead. Dropping anchor in Noumea Harbor, the ship and passengers learned they were not expected there. Several days later they steamed on, arriving February 4 at Espiritu. Apparently the ship was not expected there either, for during the following 2½ months while crew and passengers fretted to be moving, and the Squadron's materiel lay useless in her hold, the ship remained tied up in that big port without orders for further movement.
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> Major Wilfrid H. Stiles and several other officers and enlisted personnel got off the *Colton* on February 6, and were flown to Guadalcanal. Others followed at later dates, but some of those who left the States on that ship never were detached from her until she reached Auckland, New Zealand, late in April.
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> The result was that the ship never reached Guadalcanal, nor did she reach Efate, where the material aboard also could have been used. Until she sailed for Auckland where the cargo finally was taken ashore, she remained at Espiritu Santo.[17]

No such long voyage was planned for the ground personnel of Marine squadrons attached to the 2d MAW, and ground elements of the air wing went ashore on Peleliu on 15 September only one hour behind the assault waves. During the early phase of the operation, enemy resistance was so fierce that aviation Marines were used as stretcher bearers, ammunition carriers and riflemen.[18] Six Marines of the 2d MAW were killed and 11 wounded while aiding the ground troops during the early part of the operation.

The unfinished Japanese airfield on Peleliu was captured on 16 September; roughly a week later it became operational. On 24 September, General Moore, with part of his staff, arrived by transport and set up his headquarters as Air Commander, Western Carolines (Task Group 59.6). In this capacity, he headed a combined Army-Navy-Marine staff in addition to personnel of the 2d Wing, to direct the operations of all aircraft based on Peleliu, Angaur, and Ulithi. Garrison Air Force, Western Carolines, whose largest component was the 2d MAW, had a threefold task. It had to provide air defense for all ground troops and convoys in the Western Carolines, furnish air support for the ground troops in the vicinity of Peleliu Island; and neutralize the remaining enemy bases in the Western Carolines.

The first Marine aircraft to operate on Peleliu Island were the spotter planes of VMO-3, commanded by Captain Wallace J. Slappey. The ground echelon of the observation squadron

[17] 2d MAW WarD, Jan-Apr43.

[18] For the complete history of ground operations on Peleliu, see Part III of this volume.

went ashore on Peleliu on 17 September and built a small airstrip about 500 feet long, just south of the main airfield. The first planes touched down on the following day, the remainder arriving on the 19th. On that day artillery spotting got under way and continued for the remainder of the month. The difficult and jagged terrain on the island required aerial observation 90 percent of the time. Most spotting was directed at seeking out previously unidentified natural fortifications, which had remained hidden from view beneath heavy vegetation. Despite the volume of fire directed against such fortifications, positive destruction of the enemy could not be determined because of the depth and strength of these positions. All enemy positions, buildings, and dumps of any kind that were exposed or built above ground level were either destroyed or left burning.

In addition to artillery spotting, the squadron assisted the infantry by executing numerous reconnaissance flights at extremely low altitudes over the front lines, seeking enemy gun positions that were holding up the advance. Other flights maintained a patrol over enemy-held islands to the north, looking for activities in general and barge movements in particular. Spotter aircraft also aided in directing amphibian tractor patrols to enemy troops trying to escape from the island. The pilots, not content with passively spotting targets, carried hand grenades and mortar shells along on many flights and dropped these on enemy troops and buildings. On occasion, planes returned from flights with holes from small arms fire and shell fragments. During the Peleliu operation, two OY–1 spotter aircraft were lost. The first loss occurred on take-off from the CVE on the day that the spotters were launched from the carrier off Peleliu. The second aircraft was shot down behind enemy lines. In both instances the flying crews were rescued.

On 24 September, the first eight F6F night fighters of VMF(N)-541, which had staged from Emirau through Owi Island, off New Guinea, arrived on Peleliu. Two days later, the Corsairs of VMF-114, commanded by Major Robert F. Stout, touched down. The Marine Corsairs wasted no time in assisting the ground troops in blasting the enemy out of his strongpoints. Details of these missions have been described elsewhere in this volume, but for the purposes of an overall description of Marine aviation activities on Peleliu there were two types of missions that deserve particular mention. One feat was the dropping of 1,000-pound bombs by Corsairs on enemy caves less than a mile from the Peleliu airstrip. The other was the employment of napalm, beginning on 12 October, against enemy caves and dugouts.

Japanese air power in the Western Carolines never posed any serious threat to Marine aviation. Enemy strips at Babelthuap and Yap were kept out of commission by repeated attacks of Marine fighters and torpedo bombers. By the end of October, Garrison Air Force, Western Carolines, had complete control of the air. The capture of Ulithi and adjacent islands provided Marine aviation with additional airfields. As a result, by the end of 1944, 11 squadrons were operating from fields on Peleliu,

Angaur, and Ulithi. As early as 17 November, Army bombers based on Angaur and attached to General Moore's task group were able to bomb enemy-held objectives on Luzon.

The only instance of direct air support for ground troops during the Peleliu operation occurred on 28 September, when the Corsairs of VMF-114 supported the landing of 3/5 on Ngesebus, an island adjacent to Peleliu. This isolated instance of direct air support was only a forerunner of what Marine aviation was to accomplish several months later in the Philippines. Nevertheless, even on this occasion, spectators to the operation, including Generals Smith, Geiger, Rupertus, and Moore, were highly impressed with the results obtained. The commander of the 1st Marine Division, General Rupertus, complimented the squadron commander, Major Robert F. Stout, on the performance of his pilots. Major Stout was destined not to survive the war; he was killed by enemy antiaircraft fire over Koror on Babelthuap Island on 4 March 1945, one of 16 pilots and 2 crewmen to lose their lives in bombing the remaining enemy-held islands in the Palaus and on Yap.

Following the capture of Ulithi on 21 September 1944, MBDAG-45, commanded by Colonel Frank M. June, was charged with the responsibility of providing air defense for the biggest anchorage in the western Pacific. The air group, subsequently redesignated as MAG-45, landed on Falalop Island on 8 October. The 51st Naval Construction Battalion, assisted by the group, completed a 3,500-foot airstrip within three weeks. On 22 October, the ground echelons of VMF-312 and VMTB-232 arrived at Ulithi from Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides and joined the air group at Falalop. Two days later, VMF-312 was administratively attached to Commanding General, Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific. Operational control remained with the commanding officer of MAG-45 until the ground echelon departed from Ulithi on 19 November.

On 29 October, the flight echelon of VMF(N)-542, led by Major William C. Kellum, reached Falalop and began flying local combat air patrol around the clock on the following day. The second day of November witnessed the arrival of the flight echelon of VMTB-232, led by Major Menard Doswell III, from Peleliu. On the 4th, a division of six Avengers of this squadron carried out a reconnaissance of Yap Island. By 14 November VMTB-232 had begun a regular antisubmarine patrol, with two-plane sections flying two-hour flights around the atoll from dawn to dusk. Two days later, the Avengers launched the first of many strikes against the Japanese airstrip on Yap.

Even though the enemy field on Yap had been heavily pounded from the sea and air long before the arrival of Marine aviation on Ulithi in early October 1944, it remained a constant threat to Allied bases and shipping in the Western Carolines. Well entrenched enemy ground troops on Yap made it necessary to neutralize the enemy strongpoint from the air, for there was always the danger that the strip might be hastily repaired and used as staging point for a surprise air assault on the Ulithi base and anchorage. There was a further

possibility that the enemy might use Yap as a refuelling station for submarines. Even though Marine pilots did not expect aerial opposition over Yap, they did encounter antiaircraft fire of sufficient intensity to cause them to maintain a minimum altitude of 6,000 feet.

Proof that the enemy was aware of the presence of American shipping at Ulithi anchorage was furnished on the morning of 20 November, when enemy submarines, the *I-36* and *I-47*, released five midget subs. One of these torpedoed the USS *Mississinewa,* a fleet oiler loaded with more than 400,000 gallons of aviation gas. The ship sank at her berth in the lagoon with a loss of 50 officers and men.[19] Immediate countermeasures taken by hunter-killer teams under the atoll commander, Commodore Oliver O. Kessing, resulted in the destruction of all five midgets, two of which fell victim to Marine Corps aircraft. Nevertheless, both the *I-36* and the *I-47* were able to make good their escape.

In general, tactical operations of MAG-45 from 30 October 1944 through the end of the year consisted of routine strikes and reconnaissance of Yap, Sorol, and Fais, and regular dawn to dusk antisubmarine patrols, all executed by Avengers of VMTB-232. VMF(N)-542 flew the regular combat air patrols, using the Falalop strip and its facilities, but depending on its own maintenance crews for service. On such missions, naval aviators were briefed by the Marine group operations and intelligence officers.

[19] Morison, *Leyte*, p. 51.

IWO JIMA[20]

As Marine aviation began to expand its operations to the Western Carolines, a development important to the future of Marine air was taking place far from the Pacific scene of action. After prolonged discussions and long delays, Marine Carrier Groups, Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific was finally established on 21 October 1944 as a tactical command.[21]

Training of Marine pilots for carrier qualification had already started during the summer of 1944. Even though about 15 percent of the aviators assigned to Marine Carrier Groups, FMFPac, had seen combat action, few had ever landed on a carrier. On 3 February 1945 the first carrier, the *Block Island,* was assigned to MASG-48. Three other carriers were furnished at one-month intervals. It was hoped that by late 1945, when the invasion of Japan itself was to get under way, eight carriers would be available to the Marines.[22]

The invasion of Iwo Jima, Operation DETACHMENT, came too early to en-

[20] Additional sources for this section include: MajGen Holland M. Smith, ConfRpt, TF 56, "Air Operations in Support of the Capture of Iwo Jima," n.d., hereafter Smith, *Iwo Jima Special Air OpsRpt;* S. E. Smith, *The United States Navy in World War II* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1966), hereafter Smith, *U. S. Navy in World War II;* Vice Admiral E. P. Forrestel, *Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, USN—A Study in Command* (Washington: GPO, 1966), hereafter Forrestel, *Admiral Spruance;* Okumiya, Horikoshi, and Caidin, *Zero!;* Leckie, *Strong Men Armed.*

[21] Sherrod, *Marine Corps Aviation in World War II*, p. 329.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 331.

able Marine aviation to furnish close air support from its escort carriers. Each one of the 11 escort carriers taking part in the operation was manned by Navy pilots. Nevertheless, Marine aviators were to be given at least a limited opportunity to strike a blow both directly and indirectly in support of the Iwo Jima operation, one against the island itself, the other in the diversionary attack against the Japanese mainland.

While the program to put Marines on carriers was being slowly implemented stateside, a crisis arose in the field that was to hasten this development in an entirely unforeseen fashion. The appearance of Japanese suicide planes during the Leyte campaign in the autumn of 1944 had created an instant need for additional fighters based on the big carriers of the Third Fleet. The employment of Marine fighters and pilots was decided upon as an immediate expedient; by the end of 1944 the first of the Marine fighter squadrons were to fly from the decks of five of the big carriers in major operations involving a fast carrier task force.[23]

On 28 December 1944, VMF–124, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William A. Millington, and VMF-213 under Major Donald P. Frame, went aboard the USS *Essex* at Ulithi. After a series of air strikes against Formosa and Luzon from 3-9 January 1945, Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet moved into the South China Sea, from where air strikes were launched against Indochina, Hong Kong, and Formosa. Effective 27 January, having returned to Ulithi, the Third Fleet was redesignated the Fifth Fleet and Admiral Spruance took over the tactical command from Admiral Halsey.

On 10 February, TF 58 sortied from Ulithi bound for Tokyo, 1,500 miles to the north. Three additional large carriers, each with two Marine fighter squadrons on board, joined the Fifth Fleet, so that in the end Admiral Spruance disposed over eight Marine fighter squadrons on four large carriers. The air attack on Tokyo was to precede the invasion of Iwo Jima by troops of the V Amphibious Corps by three days. Following their attacks against the Japanese capital, the Marine squadrons of TF 58 were to furnish air support at Iwo Jima on D-Day, which was set for 19 February.

Following the air strikes against Japan, which were carried out under unfavorable weather conditions, TF 58 was approximately 100 miles from Iwo Jima on D-Day, and prelanding strikes were launched against the landing beaches and adjacent areas. The initial sweep against the Iwo defenses was executed by a flight of 24 Marine Corsairs and an equal number of Navy Hellcats. Under the command of Colonel Millington of VMF-124, this flight attacked the flanks and high ground along the landing beaches with napalm, rockets, and machine gun fire. Five minutes before the first Marines hit the shore, the flight attacked the landing beach in low-level attacks. The contribution of Marine aviation in direct support of

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[23] For additional details on this subject matter, see Frank and Shaw, "Marines on Carriers," *op. cit.*

the Iwo landings was relatively small in numbers, for on D-Day a total of more than 600 aircraft, including those of the Navy and Army Air Forces, were engaged in reducing enemy defenses and supporting the assault. Carrier-based Marine aviation continued to fly in close support of the assault troops until 22 February, when Corsairs from the *Wasp* flew a ground support mission as part of a 23-plane flight. After that date, air support for the embattled Marines on the island was turned over to Navy escort carrier planes and Army P-51s, who did the best job under the circumstances.

Marine aviation contributed to operations on Iwo Jima in other ways. First to become engaged in the aerial assault against the island were the Mitchell medium bombers (PBJs) of VMB-612 commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Jack R. Cram. From early December 1944 until the end of January 1945, this squadron, based in the Marianas, flew night sorties against enemy shipping in the Volcano and Bonin Islands and seriously disrupted the flow of enemy supplies to these islands. Once the Marines had landed on Iwo, artillery spotter aircraft of VMO-4, commanded by Lieutenant Thomas Rozga, and VMO-5, headed by Lieutenant Roy G. Miller, lent valuable support to ground operations. For the Marines, whether on the ground or in the air, Iwo was to be an extremely difficult operation; the spotter aircraft were to share the dangers and tribulations of the campaign along with the remainder of the assault force.

The difficulties of the observation squadrons had begun in December 1944. The Commanding General, V Amphibious Corps, directed the pilots of VMO-4 in Hawaii to test a special piece of equipment, dubbed "Brodie gear," which had been designed by the U. S. Army to launch the small observation aircraft from an LST. The device, which resembled a giant slingshot, consisted of two projecting beams, a cable, arresting gear, and a loop. Hooks were fitted on the planes, and on 21 December 1944 tests were begun using LST *776* as a base. Initial tests were unsatisfactory and resulted in the loss of several spotter aircraft.

The experimentation did not end here, however. With added experience it became evident that launching the small spotter aircraft from an LST in this fashion was possible, though three planes fell overboard and sank before the feasibility of such launchings was established. For more than a week following the invasion of Iwo Jima, LST *776* with Brodie gear and observation planes on board remained offshore. By 26 February, when the first strip on Iwo had been secured, two spotter aircraft of VMO-4 on board the aircraft carrier *Wake Island* took off and reached the new field while it was still under mortar and artillery fire. A plane of VMO-5 reached the strip on the following day. By the last day of February, all of the planes that had made the voyage on aircraft carriers were ashore.

When the first of the observation planes on board LST *776* was finally launched with the help of the Brodie gear on 27 February, it fell into the water. Another attempt made on 1 March was at least partially successful. Of the four planes of VMO-4 launched that day, two received a dunking; the

remainder made it to Maple Field No. 1 on Iwo Jima.[24]

Pilots and planes of the two observation squadrons eked out a hazardous existence even after their arrival on the island. While stationary on the airstrip, the small aircraft were frequently hit by enemy fire. VMO-4 spotted for the 3d and 4th Marine Divisions; VMO-5 supported the 3d and 5th Marine Divisions. When VMO-4 completed its mission on Iwo after 19 days, the pilots had flown more than 200 missions. Of the squadron's seven planes, six had been so badly damaged that they had to be scrapped. VMO-5 pilots flew 379 missions in support of the divisions on the ground; their spotter aircraft incurred heavy damage similar to those of VMO-4. One pilot was shot down behind the enemy lines and lost.

The story of Marine aviation in the Central Pacific would be incomplete without mention of the Marines that were members of the Transport Air Group, an organization responsible for hauling passengers and equipment all over the Pacific area.

VMR-952 was organized on 15 June 1943 under MAG-15. At the time of the squadron's activation, it was commanded by Major Harry F. Baker, who in early July was replaced by Major Malcolm S. Mackay. One of the first problems facing the newly commissioned squadron was the replacement of its time-honored R4D Douglas Skytrain transports with the little heard of and lesser known R5C, the Curtiss "Commando," the largest twin-engined plane then in production. The squadron history described the early weeks of the unit's existence at an airfield in California as follows:

> An area was pointed out along the taxiway at Camp Kearney Field; tents were erected, a field telephone was installed, and the three "commandos" then belonging to the Marine Corps were rolled onto the check line.
>
> This was an occasion! Although a few of the squadron's new recruits could boast of a little experience with the "Commando" (they had flown and maintained the three first planes for the short time that they were attached to Marine Aircraft Group 15), the majority of the personnel from the pilots to the mechanics had never been in one. Their time in the R4D had been brief enough, but now this. Never had they been confronted with so large a portion of the unknown at one showing. Amazement soon gave way to curiosity and the quest for knowledge began anew.[25]

In February 1944, the squadron was transferred to Hawaii, where it became attached to Marine Air, Hawaiian Area, working directly under the supervision of that headquarters. The initial mission of the transport squadron was to keep open the lines of communication and supply between Hawaii and Midway, Johnson, and Palmyra Islands. Weekly and semi-weekly flights were made to each island with special additional flights when the need arose. VMR-952 transported personnel and equipment and escorted single engine aircraft to facilitate their movements. Pilots of the transport squadron carried out overwater flights which extended to New Caledonia in the Southwest Pacific

[24] RAdm E. M. Eller, Navy HistDiv, ltr to Head, HistBr, G–3 Div, HQMC, dtd 28Sep67, in *Marine Aviation Comment File.*

[25] VMR–952 Hist, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

and included stops at Espiritu Santo and Guadalcanal, as well as at Tarawa, Kwajalein, Majuro, and Eniwetok, in the Central Pacific.

In August 1944, the squadron moved to Emirau, in the Bismarck Archipelago, where it remained until Christmas Day, when it shifted to Guam. Following the capture of the Peleliu airfield in mid-September, transport aircraft of VMR-952 made frequent stops on Peleliu, bringing in urgently needed equipment and departing with wounded. On 4 October 1944, two of the big Curtiss transports, carrying 43 wounded, left Peleliu, inaugurating the first air evacuation of battle casualties from the island.[26] On the following day, three more flights took out an additional 63 casualties.[27] During the extended Peleliu campaign, the planes delivered large quantities of welcome fresh food to the island.

Three Marine transport squadrons and a similar Army Air Forces unit participated in the Iwo Jima operation. These four were VMR-253, -353, and 952, as well as the 9th Troop Carrier Squadron. The Army Air Forces squadron dropped supplies to Marine ground forces on Iwo on 28 February. On the following day, pilots of VMR-952 arrived with urgently needed mortar shells, spare parts for machine guns, blood plasma, and mail. On 3 March, the commanding officer of VMR-952, Lieutenant Colonel Mackay, flew from Guam to Saipan and then to Iwo Jima, where he piloted the first plane to land on the slightly more than 3,000 feet of runway. After the unloading of its 5,500 pounds of mortar ammunition, the aircraft returned to Guam. The next day, a crippled B-29 bomber, returning from a raid on Japan, was the first of many in like condition to make an emergency landing on the Iwo strip.

On each return flight from Iwo, the air transports evacuated casualties. Before the Iwo operation ended, VMR-952 had made 79 trips to the island and evacuated 625 wounded. The remaining air transport squadrons also contributed to the operation. VMR-353, for example, carried out 8 flights during the month of March 1945; and VMR-253 evacuated 100 casualties in 20 flights.

In a direct ratio to the growth of American air power in the Pacific theater was the decline of Japanese air strength. Aside from a growing shortage in raw materials and aviation fuels, there was a breakdown in planning and aircraft production all along the line. As seen from the "enemy side of the hill," the technical and administrative factors that hampered production were explained as follows:

> The urgent need of the combat air corps forced the Army and Navy to place in production several types of experimental aircraft which lacked the required test flights and design modifications. Airplanes were rushed from the experimental hangars to the production line, with the result that the planes were dispatched to the front lines before we could determine the missions which they could most effectively perform. Our engineers lacked the time necessary to prepare maintenance manuals and texts; thus the front-line mechanics, plagued with primitive working conditions, were forced to service airplanes about which they understood little. The confusion of the maintenance crews

[26] VMR-952 WarD, Oct44.
[27] *Ibid.*

inevitably caused equipment malfunction and breakage on a prohibitive scale.[28]

Along with the decline of older equipment and failure of new and better models to replace aircraft that were becoming more and more obsolete as the American war effort swung into full action, there was a corresponding drop of morale in the ranks of Japanese pilots. This did not in any way lessen the enemy pilot's determination to do his duty to the death. Nevertheless, even the enemy was well aware of the human factor involved, though few, if any, positive steps were taken by the Japanese military leadership to ease the lot of their aviators. Enemy flyers, sizing up their adversaries, could see with their own eyes the great value that Americans placed on retaining experienced pilots and air crews. Japanese flying personnel, whose quality and quantity were both in a severe state of decline, avidly observed:

> . . . after every mission the Americans sent out flying boats to the areas in which their planes had fought, searching for and rescuing air crews which had been shot down and stood a good chance of surviving aboard life rafts. Every lumbering flying boat, normally an easy catch for our fighter planes, went out on its search mission with nine to twelve escort fighters. Although their duties were extremely hazardous, the crews of these flying boats performed their missions gallantly, and there arose few occasions during the war when groups of men so consistently exposed themselves to multiple dangers. Our pilots could not fail to be impressed with these daring search missions and, despite the fact that enemy pilots manned the flying boats, our men regarded them as unusually courageous.[29]

In contrast with the all-out American attempts to salvage downed air crews was the attitude of the Japanese naval command, which held that the possible loss of a large flying boat could not be risked to effect the rescue of one air crew. A former Japanese naval aviator who participated in and survived action over Midway, Guadalcanal, New Guinea, and Santa Cruz, expressed the following thoughts on the subject of rescue and survival:

> I pondered this situation more than once. For this apathy toward rescuing downed pilots was not merely the attitude of the high command . . . our own combat men, the flying mates of the same men who were shot down and adrift at sea, would not, even under orders, take any unnecessary chances to save their lives. Lest this attitude be misconstrued as indicating that our men lacked compassion for their friends, it should be added that they would not expect otherwise should they be the ones to be shot down. Any man who was shot down and managed to survive by inflating his liferaft realized that his chance for continued survival lay entirely within his own hands. Our pilots accepted their abandonment stoically. At any rate, the entire Japanese Navy failed to evince any great interest in rescue operations of this nature.[30]

Along with the men fighting on the ground, and the flying personnel of the other services, Marine pilots in the Central Pacific made their contribution to the overall war effort. The day of close air support that Marines were to deliver in the Philippines had not yet dawned when operations in the Central Pacific

[28] Okumiya, Horikoshi, and Caidin, *Zero!*, p. 357.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 311.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 312.

got under way. But the Marine air arm left its milestones across the vast reaches of the Central Pacific. Often relegated to arduous but monotonous duty, Marine pilots defied death and disease in areas that did not rate headlines and that are all but forgotten today. They braved the dangers of combat or, if captured, humiliation, torture, and oftentimes death, at the hands of a remorseless enemy. Many survived against all odds the ravages of an equally cruel sea. Others fell victim to flying accidents. All of them, together with those who survived, had an equal share in bringing the war across the Central Pacific to the enemy's doorstep, paving the way for final victory.

PART VI

Iwo Jima

Background to DETACHMENT[1]

The autumn of 1944 saw the Allies poised for a major thrust both in Europe and in the Pacific. On the European Continent, the Allies had liberated almost all of France and stood ready to advance into Germany; in fact, the German western border and the heavily fortified Siegfried Line had already been breached; on the Eastern Front, the Russians had recaptured almost all Russian territory, had driven deep into the Balkans, and were engaged in cutting off sizable German forces in the Baltic countries after an advance into East Prussia. It was evident that Germany, now fighting by herself, having been abandoned by nearly all of her former allies, could stave off the collapse of the Third Reich for only a limited time.

In the Pacific Theater, the year of 1944 had gone badly for the Japanese also. Starting with the American offensive against the Gilberts in November 1943, the inexorable advance across the Pacific had taken American forces 3,000 miles westward by the end of the year. The conquest of Saipan, more than any other reverse, had brought home to Japanese leaders the realization that there no longer was any chance of a Japanese victory. Loss of the Marianas, accompanied by the Battle of the Philippine Sea which all but destroyed Japanese naval aviation, left the Japanese home islands open to American attack. Capture of Peleliu and Ulithi protected the American right flank for a thrust into the Philippines. By late October 1944, American forces had not only gained a foothold on Leyte, but had also inflicted disastrous punishment on the *Imperial Navy* during the Battle for Leyte Gulf.

The beginning of 1945 saw American forces in possession of most of Leyte and with a solid foothold on Luzon. The enemy naval forces, rendered largely impotent by the reverses they had suffered during the previous year, were no longer able to interfere successfully with American operations in the Philippines, whose liberation had become merely a matter of time.

The Allied advance by early 1945 had carried friendly forces deep into enemy territory in a line extending from an area east of the Kurile Islands southward and westward to a point separating the Mariana and Volcano Islands,

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from: LtCol Whitman S. Bartley, *Iwo Jima: Amphibious Epic* (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1954), hereafter Bartley, *Iwo Monograph;* Iwo Jima Comment File (HRB, HistDiv, HQMC), hereafter *Iwo Comments;* Smith, *Approach to the Philippines;* Capt. Clifford P. Morehouse, *The Iwo Jima Operation* (Washington: HistDiv, HQMC, 1946), hereafter Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign;* Morison, *Victory in the Pacific;* Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War.*

thence westward to the Philippines, where the line turned to the southeast and continued southwestward towards New Guinea and Australia (see Map I, Map Section). Even though many thousands of enemy troops remained on bypassed islands such as New Britain, Kavieng, Wake, Marcus, and Yap, these erstwhile Japanese strongholds had been so effectively isolated and neutralized by American air power and submarines that they remained merely a nuisance. With the capture of the Mariana Islands during the summer of 1944, the United States had obtained a strongpoint from which the further assaults towards the Japanese home islands could be launched. As an added steppingstone towards the ultimate invasion of Japan, an advance from the Marianas to the Ryukyus appeared logical. It was also considered necessary to secure a foothold in the Nanpo Shoto. The island finally selected for invasion within the Nanpo Shoto was barely more than a speck of dust and volcanic ashes in the Pacific. Little known to the outside world until 1945, its name was destined soon to be on the lips of thousands of men and women throughout the free world and Japan. That island was Iwo Jima.

HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE BONIN ISLANDS[2]

From the entrance to Tokyo Bay, a chain of islands, known as the Nanpo Shoto, extends southward for about 750 miles to within 300 miles of the Mariana Islands. The Nanpo Shoto consists of three major groups of islands: the Izut Shoto, the Bonin Islands, also known as the Ogasawara Gunto, and the Volcano Islands, known to the Japanese as the Kazan Retto. Among the latter group of islands lies Iwo Jima, located about 670 miles south of Tokyo, 700 miles north of Guam and nearly halfway between Tokyo and Saipan.

Iwo Jima, translated into English, means Sulphur Island, named for the sulphur deposits that extend to the very surface of the island. Iwo's shape has alternately been compared to that of a pork chop, a dripping ice-cream cone, or an elongated sea shell of the type commonly found on ocean beaches of the mid-Atlantic and southern United States. From northeast to southwest, the island measures less than five miles across; the width varies from approximately two and a half miles in the northern part to only one-half mile in the southern portion. Altogether, Iwo Jima occupies less than eight square miles.

There was little about Iwo Jima or the remainder of the Volcano-Bonin Islands to make them attractive to foreigners in search of areas that could be colonized. In the mid-Sixteenth Century a Spanish navigator sighted the Volcano Islands but thereafter Europeans paid little attention to them. As the century drew to a close, a Japanese explorer dis-

[2] Additional sources for this section include: Amphibious Forces South Pacific G–2 Study, *Information on Iwo Jima (Kazan Retto)*, n.d.; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1944 Edition, "Ogasawara Jima" and "Volcanic Islands"; Foster R. Dulles, *America in the Pacific* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932); Philip T. Terry, *Terry's Japanese Empire* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914); Willard Price: *Japan's Islands of Mystery* (New York: John Day Company, 1944).

covered the Bonin Islands and found them to be uninhabited. They remained this way until the early part of the Nineteenth Century, when an assortment of British and American whaling captains sailed into the waters surrounding the islands. A group of colonists, consisting of Englishmen, Portuguese, Italians, Hawaiians, and an American named Nathaniel Savory, who hailed from New England, set out from Hawaii and settled on Chichi Jima under British sponsorship.

In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry stopped at Chichi Jima and, impressed by the possible use of the island as a coaling station for U. S. Navy vessels, urged the government to purchase a strip of land on the island on which warehouses could be erected. Congress at the time showed little interest in such a venture, and in the end the project was abandoned.

While none of the European powers showed any interest in the largely barren and forbidding island of Iwo Jima, the Japanese had different ideas. Shortly after Perry's visit to Japan in 1853, the Japanese sent officials and colonists to the Volcano-Bonins. Eight years later, Japan laid formal claim to these islands. By 1891, following increased colonization, all of the islands in the Nanpo Shoto had come under the direct jurisdiction of the Tokyo Prefecture and thus became an integral part of the Japanese homeland. A ban on foreign settlement all but stamped out outside influence in the islands with only one exception: on Chichi Jima, the descendants of Nathaniel Savory and his group still celebrated Washington's Birthday and the Fourth of July; on these occasions they proudly displayed Old Glory, an act hardly in keeping with Japanese policy.[3]

By 1943, Japanese colonization of Iwo Jima had resulted in the settlement of almost 1,100 Japanese civilians on the island. Most of these Japanese were either employed at a sugar mill located in the northeastern portion of the island or a sulphur mine and refinery located in the same general area. The inhabitants of Iwo Jima lived in five villages or settlements scattered over the northern half of the island. The northernmost of these was Kita, located in the north central part of Iwo. The village of Nishi was situated in the northwestern part of the island, while Motoyama, the largest built-up area on Iwo, was located in close proximity to the sulphur mine and refinery. The remaining two villages, Higashi and Minami, were located in the northeastern part of the island. (See Map 24).

Only the northern part of Iwo Jima had soil permitting some gardening. Vegetables, sugar cane, and dry grains were raised for local consumption. Rice and all other manufactured consumer items had to be obtained from Japan proper. The inhabitants of Iwo were able to supplement their diet through fishing. In this connection it must be pointed out that one of the most serious impediments to large-scale settlement of the island was the total absence of any source of fresh water, such as a lake or a river. Since the island also lacked wells, water had to be obtained

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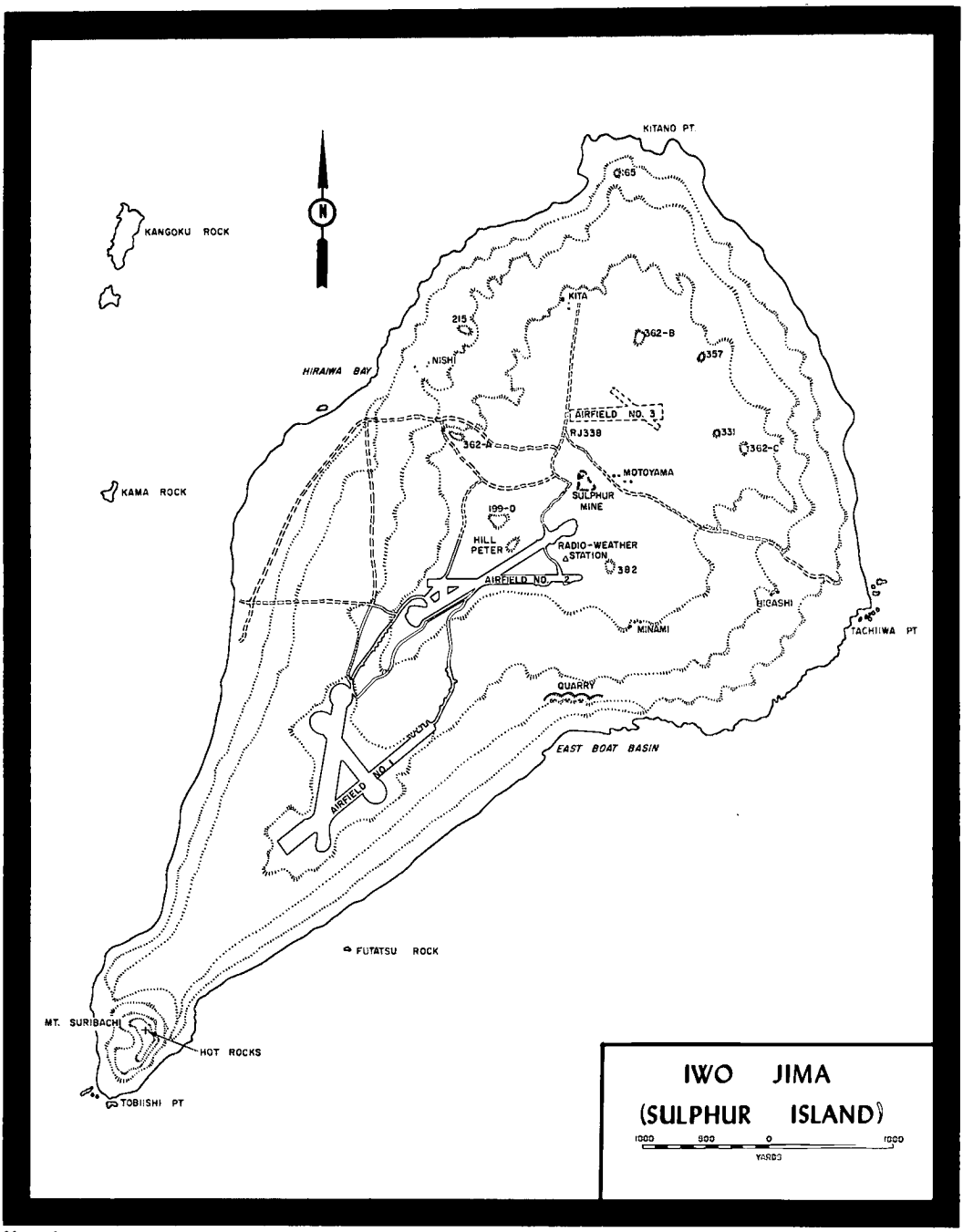
[3] Maj John N. Rentz interview with HistBr, G–3 Div, HQMC, dtd 29Nov51, in *Iwo Comments.*



Map 24 E.L. Wilson

exclusively from rain carefully collected in concrete cisterns. At times, Iwo Jima was supplied with potable water by tankers. Some effort was also made to augment precious water supplies through the distillation of sea water.

While the northern part of the island was hardly designed to become a tourist attraction, the southern half of Iwo Jima was ugly beyond description. Near the narrow southern tip of Iwo, dominating the entire island, stands Mount Suribachi, an extinct volcano, which rises to an elevation of about 550 feet. To the north of Suribachi, inland from the beaches, the ground terraces successively upward to form a broad tableland occupying most of the central section of the island. The area between the northern base of Suribachi and the dome-shaped northern plateau is covered by a deep layer of black, volcanic ash so soft and so much subject to drifting that even walking becomes a problem. Wheeled vehicles cannot negotiate such ground; tracked vehicles can move across it only with difficulty.

The northern plateau consists of several elevations; the highest of these is Hill 382, located just east of Motoyama Airfield No. 2, halfway between Motoyama and Minami; two other hills reach a height of 362 feet. Much of this terrain consists of rough and rocky ground, interspersed with deep gorges and high ridges. Sulphur vapor permeates the entire area with a characteristic smell of rotten eggs. The ground itself is hot in this part of the island; the veils of vapor only serve to accentuate the impression of a ghostly landscape.

The beaches of Iwo Jima from Kitano Point, the northernmost tip of the island, to Tachiiwa Point, two miles to the southeast, are steep and narrow with many rocky shoals offshore. They border terrain that rises sharply towards the northern plateau. Rough and broken ground is typical of all beaches on northern Iwo Jima, in numerous instances with cliffs that drop off sharply towards the water's edge. Beaches along the southwestern and southeastern shores of the island vary in depth from 150 to 500 feet and generally are free from rocks offshore. The terrain would be level, rising gradually towards the interior, if it were not for the existence of sand terraces created by the action of waves. These terraces, which differ in height and width, are undergoing a constant change depending on the surf and winds. Surf conditions at Iwo are unfavorable, even under normal conditions. The island does not possess any anchorage or other inlets to protect ships from the fury of the sea. Steep beaches bring breakers close to the shore, where they can mete out severe punishment to small craft that are inward bound or beached. Winds hitting the shore from the sea serve to increase the fury of the waves.

The climate of Iwo Jima is subtropical with a cool season extending from December through April and a warm season from May through November. Temperatures are moderate, with an average ranging between 63 and 70 degrees during the cool period and 73 through 80 degrees during spring, summer, and autumn. Annual rainfall averages 60 inches, with February the driest month and May the wettest.

The desolation of the island is further accentuated by the sparse vegetation.

A few coarse grasses and gnarled trees are engaged in a perennial struggle for survival. An officer in the *Imperial Japanese Army*, formerly stationed on Iwo, has described it as an "island of sulphur, no water, no sparrow, and no swallow."[4] The only living thing on Iwo, aside from the Japanese, was a bird resembling the American rail, a wading bird related to the cranes, but of medium size.

The above description of Iwo Jima, hardly complimentary in essence, may easily give rise to the question how an island of such poor proportions could assume the strategic importance that both the Japanese and Americans placed on it by the summer of 1944. At least one American, speaking to a Navy Chaplain, expressed the sentiment that "after God got through making the world, he must've took all the dirty ash and rubble left over and made Iwo Jima."[5] Yet the island was destined to witness one of the epic amphibious assaults of World War II, followed by a month-long running battle that cost the assault force heavily in men and equipment and at the same time resulted in the complete destruction of the enemy garrison. The factors that made this otherwise worthless pile of rock and black sand such a prize to friend and enemy alike, require a detailed explanation. Only then can the struggle between 23,000 Japanese and an assault force initially of 60,000 men, combatting each other at closest quarters on this inhospitable island, be readily understood.

JAPANESE DEFENSIVE PREPARATIONS IN THE BONIN-VOLCANO ISLANDS[6]

Japanese military interest in the Volcano-Bonin Islands first arose in 1914, coincident to the outbreak of World War I. Even though the Japanese home islands were never threatened during that war, which Japan entered on the side of the Allies, a few defenses were prepared on Chichi Jima, an island in the Bonin-Volcano Group about 175 miles north-northeast of Iwo Jima. On 10 August 1920, the *Chichi Jima Branch, Army Fortification Department*, was formally established, followed by the construction of fortifications beginning in June 1921. As a result of the Naval Arms Limitation Agreement, concluded on 6 February 1922, work on the fortifications was halted.[7] Since all of the action had occurred elsewhere, the Japanese garrison on Chichi Jima led a peaceful existence and never fired a shot in anger.

During the postwar period and

[4] Major Yoshitaka Horie, IJA, "Explanation of Japanese Defense Plan and Battle of Iwo Jima," dtd, 25Jan46.

[5] Capt Raymond Henri, USMC, *Iwo Jima —Springboard to Final Victory* (New York: U. S. Camera Publishing Corporation, 1945), hereafter Henri, *Springboard to Final Victory*.

[6] Additional sources for this section include: Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*; Richard F. Newcomb, *Iwo Jima* (New York, Chicago, and San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), hereafter Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, quoted with permission; Richard F. Newcomb notes for *Iwo Jima*, hereafter *Newcomb notes;* Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea;* Sakai, Caidin, and Saito, *Samurai!;* Hayashi and Coox, *Kogun;* Capt Raymond Henri, *et al, The U. S. Marines on Iwo Jima* (Washington: The Infantry Journal, 1945), hereafter Henri *et al, Marines on Iwo Jima*.

[7] War History Office, Defense Agency of Japan ltr to Head, HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, dtd 21Aug69 in *Iwo Comments*, hereafter *Japanese Defense Agency Comment*.

throughout the twenties and thirties, the status of Chichi Jima did not undergo any appreciable change. Though a small garrison remained on the island, no additional installations were constructed. On Iwo Jima, the presence of any military installation was even less conspicuous, though by 1937 a wooden sign had been erected by the *Imperial Navy*, bearing a legend in both Japanese and English, clearly cautioning the careless trespasser from recording or photographing such installations as he might encounter on the island.

At the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor an Army force of about 3,700–3,800 men garrisoned Chichi Jima. In addition, about 1,200 naval personnel manned the Chichi Jima Naval Base, a small seaplane base, the radio and weather station, and various gunboat, subchaser, and minesweeping units.[8] On Iwo Jima, the *Imperial Navy* had constructed an airfield about 2,000 yards northeast of Mount Suribachi. Initially stationed on this field were 1,500 naval aviation personnel and 20 aircraft.[9]

In the wake of the American seizure of the Marshalls and devastating air attacks against Truk in the Carolines during February 1944, the Japanese military leadership was forced to conduct an agonizing reappraisal of the military situation. All indications pointed to an American drive towards the Marianas and Carolines. To counter such a move, it became necessary to establish an inner line of defense extending generally northward from the Carolines to the Marianas, and from thence to the Volcano-Bonin Islands. In March 1944, the *Thirty-First Army*, commanded by General Hideyoshi Obata, was activated for the purpose of garrisoning this inner line. The commander of the Chichi Jima garrison was placed nominally in command of Army and Navy units in the Volcano-Bonin Islands.

Following the American seizure of most of the Marshalls, both Army and Navy reinforcements were sent to Iwo Jima. Five hundred men from the naval base at Yokosuka and an additional 500 from Chichi Jima reached Iwo during March and April 1944. At the same time, with the arrival of reinforcements from Chichi Jima and the home islands, the Army garrison on Iwo Jima had reached a strength of over 5,000 men, equipped with 13 artillery pieces, 200 light and heavy machine guns, and 4,552 rifles.[10] In addition, the defense boasted 14 120mm coast artillery guns, 12 heavy antiaircraft guns, and 30 25mm dual-mount antiaircraft guns.[11]

The loss of the Marianas during the summer of 1944 greatly increased the importance of the Volcano-Bonins for the Japanese, who were fully cognizant

[8] *Japanese Defense Agency Comment.*

[9] To the Japanese, this first of two airstrips on Iwo Jima to be completed prior to the American invasion was known alternately as Chidori Airfield or Motoyama Airfield No. 1. A second airfield, located about 2,000 yards northeast of the first one, in the very center of the island, was known to the Japanese as Motoyama No. 2. A third airfield north of the village of Motoyama was still under construction at the time of the American landings.

[10] CinCPac-CinCPOA Item No. 9652, "A Report from the Chief of Staff of the Thirty-First Army to the Chief of Staff, Central Pacific Fleet," dtd 31May44.

[11] *Ibid.*

that the loss of these islands would facilitate American air raids against the home islands. Such raids, beyond any doubt, would raise havoc with the entire Japanese war production program, and deal a severe blow to civilian morale. Final Japanese plans for the defense of the Volcano-Bonins were overshadowed by the fact that the *Imperial Navy* had already lost most of its naval strength and no longer constituted a major factor in frustrating possible American landings. Moreover, aircraft losses throughout 1944 had been so heavy that, even if war production was not materially slowed by American air attacks, combined Japanese air strength was not expected to increase to 3,000 aircraft until March or April of 1945. Even then, these planes could not be used from bases in the home islands against Iwo Jima because their range did not exceed 550 miles; besides, all available aircraft had to be hoarded for possible use on Formosa and adjacent islands where land bases were available in close proximity.[12]

In a postwar study, Japanese staff officers described the strategy applied in the defense of Iwo Jima in the following terms:

> In the light of the above situation, seeing that it was impossible to conduct our air, sea, and ground operations on Iwo Island toward ultimate victory, it was decided that in order to gain time necessary for the preparation of the Homeland defense, our forces should rely solely upon the established defensive equipment in that area, checking the enemy by delaying tactics. Even the suicidal attacks by small groups of our Army and Navy airplanes, the surprise attacks by our submarines, and the actions of parachute units, although effective, could be regarded only as a strategical ruse on our part. It was a most depressing thought that we had no available means left for the exploitation of the strategical opportunities which might from time to time occur in the course of these operations.[13]

Even before the fall of Saipan in June 1944, Japanese planners knew that Iwo Jima would have to be reinforced materially if it were to the held for any length of time, and preparations were made to send sizable numbers of men and quantities of materiel to that island. In late May, Lieutenant General Tadamichi Kuribayashi was summoned to the office of the Prime Minister, General Hideki Tojo, who informed the general that he had been chosen to defend Iwo Jima to the last. Kuribayashi was further apprised of the importance of this assignment when Tojo pointed out that the eyes of the entire nation were focused on the defense of Iwo. Fully aware of the implications of the task entrusted to him, the general accepted. By 8 June, Kuribayashi was on his way to his toughest and final assignment, determined to convert Iwo Jima into an invincible fortress that would withstand any type of attack from any quarter.

The Japanese could hardly have selected an individual better qualified to lead the defense of Iwo Jima. As a member of a *Samurai* family, the 54-year-old Kuribayashi already had a distinguished military career behind him at the time he received the Iwo as-

[12] USA, FEC, HistDiv, "Operations in the Central Pacific"—Japanese Studies in World War II (Japanese Monograph No. 48, OCMH), p. 62.

[13] *Ibid.*

signment. In the 30 years in which he had served the Empire, the general had seen much of the world. During the late twenties, as a captain, Kuribayashi had spent two years in the United States performing attache duties. In the course of his travels in America, he gained a keen appreciation of American economic power, as expressed in a letter to his wife:

> The United States is the last country in the world that Japan should fight. Its industrial potentiality is huge and fabulous, and the people are energetic and versatile. One must never underestimate the American's fighting ability.[14]

Following his travels in the New World, Kuribayashi served in the Japanese cavalry. In August 1936, as a lieutenant colonel, he commanded a cavalry regiment. For the next two years, by then a colonel, he served in the Ministry of War. In 1940, he was promoted to brigadier general and given command of a cavalry brigade. Following the Pearl Harbor attack, he participated in the occupation of Hong Kong as chief of staff of the *Twenty-Third Army*. In 1943, General Kuribayashi, by then a major general, was recalled to Tokyo, where he commanded the *Imperial Guards* until his appointment as commander of the Iwo Jima Garrison.[15]

General Kuribayashi arrived on Iwo Jima between 8 and 10 June. As a result, he was on the island when TG 58.1 and TG 58.4, consisting of seven aircraft carriers under the command of Rear Admiral Joseph J. Clark, unleashed their first strike against the Bonins, which resulted in the destruction of 10 Japanese fighters in the air and a possible 70 planes on the ground in two days of operations. In addition, 21 seaplanes were destroyed on Chichi Jima. On 24 June 1944, the American carriers under Admiral Clark again struck at Iwo. This time, 80 Japanese fighters rose to challenge the intruders. When the smoke of battle over Iwo cleared nearly half of the Japanese fighters had been destroyed. One of the Japanese fighter pilots who survived the fierce dogfights over Iwo Jima that day commented:

> The loss of forty planes and pilots in a single action staggered me. Equally disturbing was the sight of our inexperienced pilots falling in flames, one after the other, as the Hellcats blasted our outmoded Zeros from the Sky. How much like Lae the battle had been! Except that now the obsolescent planes were Zeros, and the inexperienced pilots were Japanese. The war had run full circle.[16]

The loss of the 40 sorely needed fighters on 24 June was not the only disaster that befell Rear Admiral Teiichi Matsunaga, commanding the Japanese naval forces on Iwo. Not one of 20 torpedo bombers he sent out against the American carriers returned to the island. A third wave of 41 aircraft dispatched against the task force not only failed to inflict any damage on the carriers, but in the process nearly half of the Japanese planes were shot out of the sky.

On the evening of 2 July, Japanese radio monitors on Iwo Jima noted a sudden increase in their adversary's

[14] Tadamichi Kuribayashi ltr to Yoshii Kuribayashi, as cited in Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, pp. 8–9.

[15] For a detailed breakdown of General Kuribayashi's military assignments, see *Japanese Defense Agency Comment*; Hayashi and Coox, *Kōgun*.

[16] Sakai, Caidin, and Saito, *Samurai!*, p. 213.

radio traffic. Though the Japanese were unable to decipher the code, the strength of the signals indicated to experienced monitors that an American force was in fairly close proximity to Iwo Jima. Early the following morning, American carrier-based aircraft once again raided the island. While the 40 Japanese fighters remaining on Iwo took to the air to intercept the attacking American planes and soon became engaged in heavy dogfights, a squadron of bombers pounced on the island and bombed the airstrip in five waves. Not a single fighter opposed them, since all of the Zeros had been diverted by the American fighters. At the end of the day it became apparent that once again the Japanese had lost half of their remaining fighters, which left only 20 of the original 80. The air battle over Iwo continued on 4 July. At the end of the day, only nine Zeros, most of them badly damaged, returned to Iwo. This left Japanese aviation on the island with nine damaged fighters and eight torpedo bombers which had somehow escaped the holocaust in their revetments.

On the following day, this remnant of Japanese naval aviation on Iwo was dispatched on a final mission: to seek out the American naval task force and destroy as many carriers as possible. The fighter pilots were admonished to stay with the eight torpedo bombers and avoid combat with intercepting American fighters at all costs. It was made clear to both fighter and bomber pilots that they were engaged in a one-way mission from which they were not expected to return. When the attack force approached Admiral Clark's carriers it proved no match for the intercepting fighters. The slow, sluggish Japanese bombers, heavily loaded with their torpedoes, were shot down one after the other by the attacking Hellcats. One of the few Japanese pilots to survive this action reported that in less than a minute seven of the bombers had been destroyed by American fighters. Late on 5 July, four dispirited Japanese fighter pilots and one bomber pilot returned to Iwo.

In addition to the annihilation of virtually all Iwo-based aircraft, another ordeal was in store for the Japanese garrison. On the day following the unsuccessful bombing mission, a U. S. naval force boldly appeared within sight of the island and subjected the Japanese to a naval bombardment from point-blank range. What it felt like to be on the receiving end of such a bombardment has been recorded by one of the Japanese:

> For two days we cowered like rats, trying to dig ourselves deeper into the acrid volcanic dust and ash of Iwo Jima. Never have I felt so helpless, so puny, as I did during those two days. There was nothing we could do, there was no way in which we could strike back. The men screamed and cursed and shouted, they shook their fists and swore revenge, and too many of them fell to the ground, their threats choking on the blood which bubbled through great gashes in their throats. Virtually every last structure on Iwo Jima was torn to splintered wreckage. Not a building stood. Not a tent escaped. Not even the most dismal shack remained standing. Everything was blown to bits. The four fighter planes which had returned from our last sortie were smashed by shells into flaming pieces of junk.[17]

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 235.

For several days the survivors of the bombardment remained in a state of shock from their ordeal and frantic calls for reinforcements went out in view of what appeared to be an imminent invasion of the island. When several Japanese transport ships appeared on the horizon, the garrison rejoiced, only to fall into deeper gloom and frustration when American submarines torpedoed these ships before their very eyes. Lookouts posted atop Mount Suribachi scanned the ocean for signs of the approaching invasion fleet, and false alarms were frequent.

Much to the surprise of the Japanese garrison on Iwo, an American invasion of the island did not materialize during the summer of 1944. There was little doubt that in time the Americans would be compelled to attack the island. General Kuribayashi, who had personally witnessed Admiral Clark's second air strike against Iwo, as well as the naval bombardment in early July, was more determined than ever to exact the heaviest possible price for Iwo when the invaders came. Without naval and air support, it was a foregone conclusion that Iwo could not hold out indefinitely against an invader possessing both naval and air supremacy.

As a first step in readying Iwo for a prolonged defense, the island commander ordered the evacuation of all civilians from the island. This was accomplished by late July. Next came an overall plan for defense of the island. Lieutenant General Hideyoshi Obata, Commanding General of the *Thirty-First Army*, early in 1944 had been responsible for the defense of Iwo prior to his return to the Marianas. At the time, faithful to the doctrine that an invasion had to be met practically at the water's edge, Obata had ordered the emplacement of artillery and the construction of pillboxes near the beaches. General Kuribayashi had different ideas. Instead of a futile effort to hold the beaches, he planned to defend the latter with a sprinkling of automatic weapons and infantry. Artillery, mortars, and rockets would be emplaced on the foot and slopes of Mount Suribachi, as well as in the high ground to the north of Chidori airfield.

A prolonged defense of the island required the preparation of an extensive system of caves and tunnels, for the naval bombardment had clearly shown that surface installations could not withstand extensive shelling. To this end, mining engineers were dispatched from Japan to draw blueprints for projected underground fortifications that would consist of elaborate tunnels at varying levels to assure good ventilation and minimize the effect of bombs or shells exploding near the entrances or exits.

At the same time, reinforcements were gradually beginning to reach the island. As commander of the *109th Infantry Division*, General Kuribayashi decided first of all to shift the *2d Independent Mixed Brigade*, consisting of about 5,000 men under Major General Kotau Osuga, from Chichi to Iwo. With the fall of Saipan, 2,700 men of the *145th Infantry Regiment*, commanded by Colonel Masuo Ikeda, were diverted to Iwo. These reinforcements, who reached the island during July and August 1944, brought the strength of the garrison up to approximately 12,700

men. Next came 1,233 members of the *204th Naval Construction Battalion,* who quickly set to work constructing concrete pillboxes and other fortifications.

On 10 August, Rear Admiral Toshinosuka Ichimaru reached Iwo, shortly followed by 2,216 naval personnel, including naval aviators and ground crews.[18] The admiral, a renowned Japanese aviator, had been crippled in an airplane crash in the mid-twenties and, ever since the outbreak of the war, had chafed under repeated rear echelon assignments. More than pleased with finally having been granted a combat assignment, Ichimaru penned a poem which began:

> Grateful to his Majesty for giving me
> A chance to fight on the foremost front.
> I depart with buoyant heart,
> Filled with joy and exultation.[19]

Next to arrive on Iwo were artillery units and five antitank battalions. Even though numerous supply ships on route to Iwo Jima were sunk by American submarines and aircraft, substantial quantities of materiel did reach Iwo during the summer and autumn of 1944. By the end of the year, General Kuribayashi had available to him 361 artillery pieces of 75mm or larger caliber, a dozen 320mm mortars, 65 medium (150mm) and light (81mm) mortars, 33 naval guns 80mm or larger, and 94 antiaircraft guns 75mm or larger. In addition to this formidable array of large caliber guns, the Iwo defenses could boast of more than 200 20mm and 25mm antiaircraft guns and 69 37mm and 47mm antitank guns. The fire power of the artillery was further supplemented with a variety of rockets varying from an eight-inch type that weighed 200 pounds and could travel between 2,000–3,000 yards, to a giant 550–pound projectible that had a range of more than 7,500 yards.[20] Altogether, 70 rocket guns and their crews reached Iwo Jima. As a result of American attacks against Japanese shipping, a number of artillery pieces were lost. Others reached Iwo, but their crews, travelling on other ships, drowned en route. In several instances, guns and crews arrived intact, only to discover that vital optical sights, shipped on other vessels, had been lost. Large shipments of barbed wire, essential for the defense of Iwo, never reached the island; the ships carrying this vital commodity were sunk en route.

In order to further strengthen the Iwo defenses, the *26th Tank Regiment,* which had been stationed at Pusan, Korea after extended service in Manchuria, received orders for Iwo. The officer commanding this regiment was Lieutenant Colonel Baron Takeichi Nishi. Like Kuribayashi, he was a cavalryman, had travelled extensively abroad, and in the 1932 Olympics at Los Angeles had won a gold medal in the equestrian competitions. The regiment, consisting of 600 men and 28 tanks, sailed from Japan in mid-July on board

[18] For a breakdown of Japanese naval units on Iwo Jima, see *Japanese Defense Agency Comment.*

[19] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima,* p. 14.

[20] Information on the Japanese artillery buildup on Iwo Jima was compiled from data contained in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 152–45, dtd 1Jul45, pp. 38, 76, 80, 84; CinCPac-CPOA Bul No. 6–45, Supplmt 4, dtd 4Jun45; VAC IntelRpt, Iwo Jima, p. 18.

the *Nisshu Maru.* As the ship, sailing in a convoy, approached Chichi Jima on 18 July 1944, it was torpedoed by an American submarine, the USS *Cobia.* Even though only two members of the *26th Tank Regiment* failed to survive the sinking, all of the regiment's 28 tanks went to the bottom of the sea. It would be December before these tanks could be replaced, but 22 finally reached Iwo Jima. Initially, Colonel Nishi had planned to employ his armor as a type of "roving fire brigade," to be committed at focal points of combat. The rugged terrain precluded such employment and in the end, under the colonel's watchful eyes, the tanks were deployed in static positions. They were either buried or their turrets were dismounted and so skillfully emplaced in the rocky ground that they were practically invisible from the air or from the ground.

For the remainder of 1944, the construction of fortifications on Iwo also went into high gear. The Japanese were quick to discover that the black volcanic ash that existed in abundance all over the island could be converted into concrete of superior quality when mixed with cement. Pillboxes near the beaches north of Mount Suribachi were constructed of reinforced concrete, many of them with walls four feet thick. At the same time, an elaborate system of caves, concrete blockhouses, and pillboxes was established. One of the results of American air attacks and naval bombardment in the early summer of 1944 had been to drive the Japanese so deep underground that eventually their defenses became virtually immune to air or naval bombardment.

While the Japanese on Peleliu Island in the Western Carolines, also awaiting American invasion, had turned the improvement of natural caves into an art, the defenders of Iwo literally developed it into a science. Because of the importance of the underground positions, 25 percent of the garrison was detailed to tunneling. Positions constructed underground ranged in size from small caves for a few men to several underground chambers capable of holding 300 or 400 men. In order to prevent personnel from becoming trapped in any one excavation, the subterranean installations were provided with multiple entrances and exits, as well as stairways and interconnecting passageways. Special attention had to be paid to providing adequate ventilation, since sulphur fumes were present in many of the underground installations. Fortunately for the Japanese, most of the volcanic stone on Iwo was so soft that it could be cut with hand tools.

General Kuribayashi established his command post in the northern part of the island, about 500 yards northeast of Kita village and south of Kitano Point. This installation, 75 feet underground, consisted of caves of varying sizes, connected by 500 feet of tunnels. Here the island commander had his own warroom in one of three small concrete-enclosed chambers; the two similar rooms were used by the staff. A communications blockhouse protruded above the ground level. This structure was 150 feet long, 70 feet wide; the roof had a thickness of 10 feet with walls five feet wide. The blockhouse was manned by 70 radio operators who worked in shifts.

Farther south on Hill 382, the second

highest elevation on the island, the Japanese constructed a radio and weather station. Nearby, on an elevation just southeast of the station, an enormously large blockhouse was constructed which served as the headquarters of Colonel Chosaku Kaido, who commanded all artillery on Iwo Jima. Other hills in the northern portion of the island were tunnelled out. All of these major excavations featured multiple entrances and exits and were virtually invulnerable to damage from artillery or aerial bombardment. Typical of the thoroughness employed in the construction of subterranean defenses was the main communications center south of Kita village, which was so spacious that it contained a chamber 150 feet long and 70 feet wide. This giant structure was similar in construction and thickness of walls and ceilings to General Kuribayashi's command post. A 500-foot-long tunnel 75 feet below the ground led into this vast subterranean chamber.[21]

Perhaps the most ambitious construction project to get under way was the creation of an underground passageway designed to link all major defense installations on the island. As projected, this passageway was to have attained a total length of almost 17 miles. Had it been completed, it would have linked the formidable underground installations in the northern portion of Iwo Jima with the southern part of the island, where the northern slope of Mount Suribachi alone harbored several thousand yards of tunnels.[22] By the time the Marines landed on Iwo Jima, more than 11 miles of tunnels had been completed.[23]

A supreme effort was required of the Japanese personnel engaged in the underground construction work. Aside from the heavy physical labor, the men were exposed to heat varying from 90 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit, as well as sulphur fumes that forced them to wear gas masks. In numerous instances a work detail had to be relieved after only five minutes. When renewed American air attacks struck the island on 8 December 1944 and thereafter became a daily occurrence until the actual invasion of the island, a large number of men had to be diverted to repairing the damaged airfields.

While Iwo Jima was being converted into a major fortress with all possible speed, General Kuribayashi formulated his final plans for the defense of the island. This plan, which constituted a radical departure from the defensive tactics used by the Japanese earlier in the war, provided for the following major points:

a. In order to prevent disclosing their positions to the Americans, Japanese artillery was to remain silent during the expected prelanding bombardment. No fire would be directed against the American naval vessels.

b. Upon landing on Iwo Jima, the Americans were not to encounter any opposition on the beaches.

c. Once the Americans had advanced about 500 yards inland, they were to be taken under the concentrated fire of automatic weapons stationed in the vicinity of Motoyama airfield to the north,

[21] POW Interrogation Rpt, Iwo Jima, 3d MarDiv G-2 Language Sec, dtd 2Mar45.

[22] *VAC C-2 Rpt*, Encl H.

[23] *Japanese Defense Agency Comment.*

as well as automatic weapons and artillery emplaced both on the high ground to the north of the landing beaches and Mount Suribachi to the south.

d. After inflicting maximum possible casualties and damage on the landing force, the artillery was to displace northward from the high ground near the Chidori airfield.

In this connection, Kuribayashi stressed once again that he planned to conduct an elastic defense designed to wear down the invasion force. Such prolonged resistance naturally required the defending force to stockpile rations and ammunition. To this end the island commander accumulated a food reserve to last for two and a half months, ever mindful of the fact that the trickle of supplies that was reaching Iwo Jima during the latter part of 1944 would cease altogether once the island was surrounded by a hostile naval force.

Opposition to General Kuribayashi's unorthodox defense plan, which reflected changes in earlier Japanese military doctrine, was not long in developing. It must be noted that the defensive form of combat in itself was distasteful to the Japanese, who early in the war had been loath to admit to themselves that the *Imperial Army* would ever be forced to engage in this form of combat. In fact, "so pronounced was their dislike for the defensive that tactical problems illustrating this type of combat were extremely rare."[24] According to standard Japanese doctrine, the object of the defensive was to inflict on the superior hostile forces such losses by firepower—disposed appropriately on the terrain and behind man-made works—that the initial disparity of forces became equalized to the point of eventually permitting the defense force to go over to the offensive.

As far as the objective in defending Iwo Jima was concerned, General Kuribayashi's plan adhered closely to the prevalent doctrine. It was the manner of execution that aroused the displeasure of some of his subordinates, for during the period following the American capture of Guadalcanal and up until the end of the fighting on Saipan, it had become almost standard procedure for the Japanese to defend the beaches in an attempt to drive the invader back into the sea. Once the position of the defending force on an island had become untenable, a brave *banzai* charge, in which the defenders sought victory in death, usually terminated all organized resistance. Kuribayashi's intent of conserving his manpower and not staking all on a defense of the beaches or futile *banzai* charges was the epitome of the revised Japanese doctrine, already employed at Biak in the Southwest Pacific, to some extent in the Palaus, and very extensively on Luzon in the Philippines.

The most vociferous opposition to General Kuribayashi's plan of defense, strangely enough, came from his own chief of staff, Colonel Shizuichi Hori, a former instructor at the Japanese Military Academy. The latter was strongly supported by General Osuga, commander of the *2d Independent Mixed Brigade*. In an unusual display of solidarity between Army and Navy, Captain Samaji Inouye, commanding the *Naval Guard Force*, sided wih the two

[24] MilIntelDiv, WD, Handbook on Japanese Military Forces, TM-E 30-480 (Washington, 1944), p. 99.

Army dissidents. According to one source who was stationed on Iwo during the summer of 1944:

> Arguments raged in July, August, and September. Arguments were not confined to Iwo command alone, but taken to Tokyo's Army and Navy staffs. In August Tokyo asked Nazi German General Staff's opinion. Germany replied that waterfront repulse was unfeasible under overwhelming American shelling and bombings according to German experience. It was not that German reply was the decisive factor. But anyway, supporters of the waterfront idea gradually dwindled. Kuribayashi made some compromise and the hot arguments ended in September.[25]

Finally, in December 1944, General Kuribayashi decided to restore unity to his command. He dismissed Colonel Hori as chief of staff of the *109th Division* and replaced him with Colonel Tadashi Takaishi. General Osuga, commander of the *2d Independent Brigade*, was succeeded by Major General Sadasue Senda, an experienced artilleryman who had seen combat in Manchuria and China. Altogether, a total of 18 officers were replaced.

During the final months of preparing Iwo Jima for the defense, General Kuribayashi saw to it that the strenuous work of building fortifications did not interefere with the training of units. As an initial step towards obtaining more time for training, he ordered work on the northernmost airfield on the island halted. In an operations order issued in early December, the island commander set 11 February 1945 as the target date for completion of defensive preparations and specified that personnel were to spend 70 percent of their time in training and 30 percent in construction work.

Despite intermittent harassment by American submarines and aircraft, additional personnel continued to arrive on Iwo until February 1945. By that time General Kuribayashi had under his command a force totalling between 21,000 and 23,000 men, including both Army and Navy units.[26]

General Kuribayashi made several changes in his basic defense plan in the months preceding the American invasion of Iwo Jima. The final stratagem, which became effective in January 1945, called for the creation of strong, mutually supporting positions which were to be defended to the death. Neither large scale counterattacks, withdrawals, nor *banzai* charges were contemplated. The southern portion of Iwo in the proximity of Mount Suribachi was organized into a semi-independent defense sector. Fortifications included casemated coast artillery and automatic weapons in mutually supporting pillboxes. The narrow isthmus to the north of Suribachi was to be defended by a small infantry force. On the other hand,

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[25] Interview of Capt Tsunezo Wachi, IJN, Former CO, Iwo Navy Garrison, from Feb-Oct44, by Fred Saito, 25Jan64, in Saito ltr to Richard F. Newcomb, 25Jan64, p. 5, in *Newcomb Notes*.

[26] Available sources disagree as to the exact strength of the Iwo Jima garrison. Bartley, in *Iwo Monograph*, App VI, pp. 230–231, places Japanese strength on 19Feb45 at 20,530–21,060. Morehouse, in *Iwo Jima Campaign*, App C, p. 159C, estimates enemy strength at 21,000–22,000. A Japanese postwar report that mentions a figure of 17,500 Army and 5,500 Navy personnel is cited in Hayashi and Coox, *Kogun*, p. 137. Japanese postwar sources place the total of Japanese troops on Iwo Jima at 20,933, consisting of 13,586 Army and 7,347 Navy. *Japanese Defense Agency Comment.*

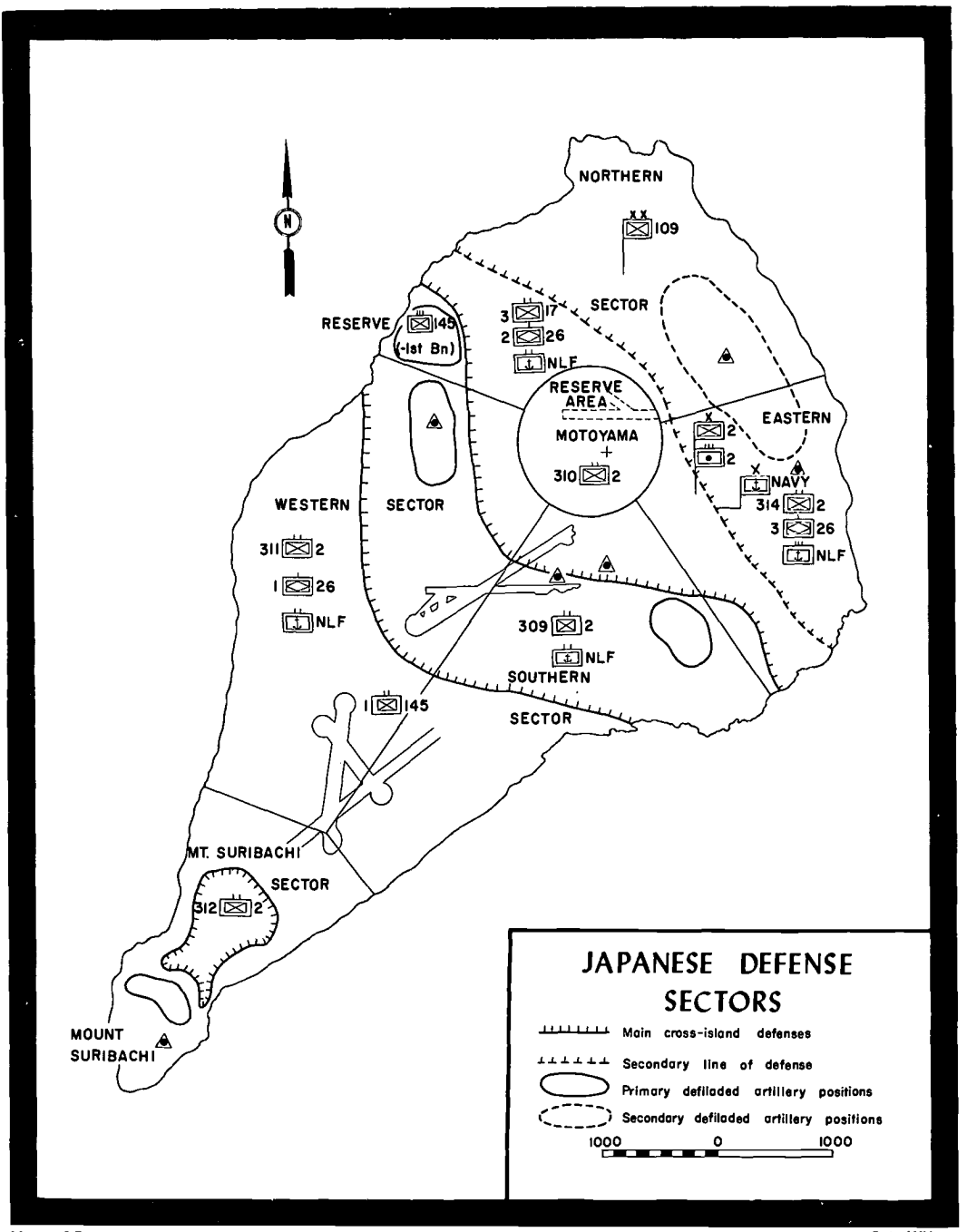
this entire area was exposed to the fire of artillery, rocket launchers, and mortars emplaced on Suribachi to the south and the high ground to the north.

A main line of defense, consisting of mutually supporting positions in depth, extended from the northwestern part of the island to the southeast, along a general line from the cliffs to the northwest, across Motoyama Airfield No. 2 to Minami village. From there it continued eastward to the shoreline just south of Tachiiwa Point. (See Map 25). The entire line of defense was dotted with pillboxes, bunkers, and blockhouses. Colonel Nishi's immobilized tanks, carefully dug in and camouflaged, further reinforced this fortified area, whose strength was supplemented by the broken terrain. A second line of defense extended from a few hundred yards south of Kitano Point at the very northern tip of Iwo across the still uncompleted Airfield No. 3, to Motoyama village, and then to the area between Tachiiwa Point and the East Boat Basin. This second line contained fewer man-made fortifications, but the Japanese took maximum advantage of natural caves and other terrain features.

As an additional means of protecting the two completed airfields on Iwo from direct assault, the Japanese constructed a number of antitank ditches near the fields and mined all natural routes of approach. When, on 2 January, more than a dozen B-24 bombers raided Airfield No. 1 and inflicted heavy damage, Kuribayashi diverted more than 600 men, 11 trucks, and 2 bulldozers for immediate repairs. As a result, the airfield again became operational after only 12 hours. Eventually, 2,000 men were assigned the job of filling the bomb craters with as many as 50 men detailed to each bomb crater. The end of 1944 saw American B-24 bombers over Iwo Jima almost every night while U. S. Navy carriers and cruisers frequently sortied into the Bonins. On 8 December, American aircraft dropped more than 800 tons of bombs on Iwo Jima, which shook the Japanese up but did very little real damage to the island defenses. Even though frequent air raids interfered with the Japanese defensive preparations and robbed the garrison of much badly needed sleep, progress of the work was not materially slowed.

Despite the air raids, which became a daily occurrence in December, and increasing isolation from the homeland, morale remained high among members of the Iwo garrison. Japanese national holidays, such as the birthday of Emperor Meiji on 11 February, were celebrated with rice cake and an extra ration of *sake*. At the same time, the Iwo Jima defenders, gathered in small groups near their battle stations, listened to a Tokyo broadcast in which a song, especially dedicated to the defense of Iwo, was released to the public. Many of the men wore white headbands, similar to the ones worn by *kamikaze* pilots, to demonstrate their determination to die in defense of the island. Inside the pillboxes, for all to see and burn into their minds, were copies of the "Courageous Battle Vow," which pledged all to dedicate themselves to the defense of Iwo, and to fight to the last with any and all weapons at hand. The pledge appropriately ended with the following words:

> Each man will make it his duty to kill



Map 25 E.L. Wilson

> ten of the enemy before dying. Until we are destroyed to the last man, we shall harass the enemy by guerrilla tactics.[27]

As early as 5 January 1945, Admiral Ichimaru conducted a briefing of naval personnel at his command post in which he informed them of the destruction of the Japanese Fleet at Leyte, loss of the Philippines, and the expectation that Iwo would shortly be invaded. Exactly one month later, Japanese radio operators on Iwo reported to the island commander that code signals of American aircraft had undergone an ominous change. On the 13th, a Japanese naval patrol plane spotted 170 American ships moving northwestward from Saipan. All Japanese troops in the Bonin Islands were alerted and occupied their battle positions. On Iwo Jima, preparations for the pending battle had been completed, and the defenders were ready.

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[27] 4th MarDiv Translations, Iwo Jima, 24-Feb45.

Offensive Plans and Preparations[1]

Preliminary planning for the seizure of an objective in the Volcano-Bonin Islands began as early as September 1943, when the Joint War Plans Committee, a planning agency of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, advocated such a move.[2] However, because of impending military operations in the Gilberts, Marshalls, and Marianas no further preparation for any operations against the Bonins were made until the summer of 1944. The successful completion of the Saipan operation in July brought the continuation of operations in the Central Pacific into sharper focus. In a conference held in Washington by top echelon U. S. military leaders from 13-22 July 1944, the senior members of the Joint War Plans Committee presented to the Joint Chiefs the possible courses of action in continuing the war against Japan. Plans for the bombing of the Japanese home islands figured prominently in these discussions. In this connection, the use of the Marianas as a base for long-range bombers was again discussed, as well as the need for seizing the Bonins to facilitate such air operations.[3]

In the course of a visit to Hawaii in mid-July 1944, Admiral Ernest J. King discussed with Admiral Chester W. Nimitz some of the decisions which the Joint Chiefs had reached. He apprised Nimitz of the fact that the Army Air Forces had been ordered to set up four B-29 groups in the Marianas for long-range bombing. In time, 12 groups of B-29s were to be based in the Marianas. In this connection, King brought up the desirability of establishing bases in the Bonins to furnish fighter escorts for the B-29s. With oper-

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from: USPacFlt OpO 1–45, dtd 10Jan45; Fifth Flt OPlan No. 13–44, dtd 31Dec44; ComPhibPac OPlan A25–44, dtd 8Dec44; CinCPOA OPlan 11–44, dtd 25Nov44; VAC OPlan 3–44, dtd 23Dec44; TF 51 OPlan A25–44, dtd 27Dec44; TF 52 OPlan A101–45, dtd 1Jan45; VAC AR, Iwo Jima, Anx A, OPlan (Alt) 4–44, dtd 31Dec44, and OPlans and Orders, 20Feb-22Mar45; 4th MarDiv OPlan 49–44, Iwo Jima, dtd 26Dec44; 4th MarDiv OPlan 50–44, Iwo Jima, dtd 4Jan45; 5th MarDiv OPlan 2–44, Iwo Jima, dtd 31-Dec44; 3d MarDiv OPlan 1–45, Iwo Jima, dtd 22Jan45; *Iwo Comments;* Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*; Robert A. Aurthur and Kenneth Cohlmia, *The Third Marine Division* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948), hereafter Aurthur and Cohlmia, *The Third Marine Division*; Proehl, *The Fourth Marine Division*; Howard M. Conner, *The Spearhead—The World War II History of the Fifth Marine Division* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1950), hereafter Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division.*

[2] JWPC 91/D, dtd 13Sep43, "Seizure of the Bonins," in Bartley, *Iwo Monograph*, p. 19.

[3] Early planners for operations against Iwo Jima and Chichi Jima referred to these islands as being part of the Bonin Islands even though they are actually located in the Volcano Group.

ations in the Carolines and the Philippines scheduled within the next few months, both naval commanders felt that no forces should be diverted to the Bonins at this time. Nevertheless, King instructed Nimitz to prepare plans for an assault against the Bonins, although he considered such an operation unwise unless it was shortly followed by an invasion of Japan.

Planning for an amphibious assault against the Bonins was inextricably interwoven with the development of the B-29 long-range bomber of the U. S. Army Air Forces, and for this reason an explanation of the development and characteristics of this aircraft appear warranted. The B–29 had its origin in 1939, when General H. H. Arnold, then Chief of the Army Air Corps, ordered the experimental development of a four-engine bomber with a range of 2,000 miles. As eventually developed, the B–29 or "Superfortress" had a wing span of slightly more than 141 feet, a length of 99 feet, and four Wright engines with turbo-superchargers developing 2,200 horsepower each at sea level. The giant bomber was armed with a dozen .50 caliber machine guns and a 20mm cannon mounted in the tail. The B–29 had a service ceiling of 38,000 feet and near that altitude had a maximum speed of 361 miles per hour. Without a load, the aircraft was estimated to have a range of 4,400 miles; it could move 3,500 miles when carrying a bomb load of four tons.[4]

During the latter half of 1944, about 100 B–29s operated from airfields in China under the Army Air Forces XX Bomber Command. This command, for all practical purposes, constituted an experimental organization, designed to serve as a prototype for similar units to be activated later. Its mission was three-fold: to test the B-29 under combat conditions; to formulate and refine a tactical doctrine; and to perfect the administrative structure to support the B–29 strikes. By mid-October 1944, China-based B-29s had flown a total of 10 missions against a variety of industrial targets ranging from Bangkok in southeast Asia to Manchuria and the home islands.

Meanwhile, the progress of the American offensive in the Central Pacific had resulted in the capture of the Marianas. Preparations got under way for a sustained bomber offensive against the home islands by Marianas-based B-29s. It was anticipated that the first airfield in the Marianas capable of accommodating the big B-29s would be operational by October 1944. In connection with the initiation of very long-range bombing of the Japanese home islands from B-29 bases in the Marianas, the Volcano-Bonin Islands, situated halfway between the Marianas and Tokyo, assumed major strategic importance. As part of this island group, Iwo Jima appeared the logical choice for invasion because it was the only island suitable for the construction of airfields of sufficient size to handle the new Superfortresses. In this connection, it was not intended to use Iwo as a base or staging area for the B-29s, but as a forward air station from which fighters could fly escort missions for the big bombers. At the same time, crippled

[4] Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, pp. 8-9.

B-29s limping back from raids over Japan would be able to make emergency landings on the island instead of ditching into the Pacific. Even while the battle for Saipan was in full swing, 500 of the giant bombers were ready for combat.

As increasing attention focused on bases in the Marianas, the strategic importance of the B-29 bases in China waned. As early as September 1944, General Arnold had seriously considered transferring the XX Bomber Command to a more profitable site. Japanese gains in China ultimately forced the abandonment of the B-29 bases and transfer of the B-29 combat groups and their supporting units to the Marianas.

In July 1944, the Army Air Forces advised the Joint Staff Planners that Iwo was a potential base for fighter planes, since Tokyo would be within the range of P-51 Mustangs based on Iwo.[5] On 12 August, the Joint War Plans Committee recommended the seizure of the Volcano-Bonins, listing as major reasons their availability for bases from which fighter cover could be provided to support the air effort against Japan; denial of these strategic outposts to the enemy; furnishing air defense bases for American positions in the Marianas; and providing fields for staging heavy bombers against Japan.[6]

In a study of naval personnel requirements prepared by the Joint Planning Staff in late August 1944, a list of projected operations included an assault against the Volcano-Bonin Islands with a target date of mid-April 1945. It was estimated that three divisions would be required for these operations.[7] While planning an invasion of Formosa, Admiral Nimitz also was attracted to the Volcano-Bonin Islands. In September 1944, he informed Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, that the 2d and 3d Marine Divisions should be retained in the Marianas as an area reserve for Formosa. In addition, they were to make up the bulk of the landing force once an attack was mounted against Iwo Jima.

By this time, key service commanders were beset by serious doubts with respect to a major operation against Formosa. Lieutenant General Millard F. Harmon, Commanding General, Army Air Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas, advocated that Formosa be bypassed in favor of the Volcano-Bonins and Ryukyus. His superior, Lieutenant General Robert C. Richardson, Jr., Commanding General, Army Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas, likewise failed to see any advantage in seizing Formosa and expressed himself in favor of advancing through the Nanpo Shoto. Admiral Nimitz felt that the capture of Formosa could serve a useful purpose only if it was a preliminary step towards subsequent landings on a coast of China, where recent Japanese military gains made such a move of questionable value.

Despite an increasing rejection of Formosa as an invasion target by the military leaders concerned, Admiral

[5] AAF Memo to JPS, dtd 21Jul44, "Fighter Escort for VLR Bombers," in Bartley, *Iwo Monograph*, p. 20.

[6] JWPC 91/3, dtd 12Aug44, "Plan for the Seizure of the Bonins," as cited in *Ibid.*

[7] JLC 67/4m "Memorandum of Request, Naval Personnel Requirements," dtd 23Aug44, as cited in *Ibid.*

King, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Fleet, consistently adhered to the projected operation against that island, at least until early October 1944. However, on 11 and 12 July, when Admirals King and Nimitz visited Saipan, King asked Admiral Raymond A. Spruance what objective he would recommend for his next operation. Spruance replied that he would like to take Okinawa.[8]

Admiral Spruance has described his participation in the early planning and the final change of objectives in the following words:

> After the completion of the Marianas Operation I turned my command over to Admiral Halsey on 28 August 1944 and returned to Pearl Harbor early in September. On reporting to Admiral Nimitz, he advised me that my next operation would be the capture of Formosa and Amoy. I said that I thought Iwo Jima, followed by Okinawa, would be preferable, but was told that the orders from Cominch called for Formosa.[9]

Following this conversation, Admiral Spruance went on leave. He was about to return to Pearl Harbor during the latter part of September, when he was ordered to attend a conference between Admiral King and Admiral Nimitz which was to be held towards the end of the month at San Francisco. Admiral Spruance recalled the focal points of this meeting as follows:

> At this Conference Admiral Nimitz presented a paper—prepared, I believe, by Captain Forrest Sherman, U.S.N., head of Fleet War Plans Division—recommending the substitution of Iwo Jima and Okinawa for Formosa and Amoy. The reason for this change was that Lt.Gen. S. B. Buckner, U.S.A., Commander 10th Army, who was to command the Landing Force for Formosa, said that he had insufficient Service Troops for an objective so large as Formosa; but that he could take Okinawa. Admiral King, after considerable discussion, was convinced of the necessity for the change and so recommended to the JCS who approved it.[10]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff lost little time in issuing a new directive on 3 October ordering Admiral Nimitz to provide fleet cover and support for General MacArthur's forces in the occupation of Luzon, scheduled for 20 December 1944; to occupy one or more positions in the Nanpo Shoto, with a target date of 20 January 1945; and to occupy one or more positions in the Nansei Shoto by 1 March 1945.[11]

Subsequently, delays encountered in operations in the Philippines affected planning for the Iwo Jima and Okinawa Operations, which were designated DETACHMENT and ICEBERG, respectively. Target dates had to be readjusted to 19 February for the Iwo operation, and to 1 April for the invasion of Okinawa.

On 7 October Admiral Nimitz and his staff issued a staff study for preliminary planning, which clearly listed the objectives of Operation DETACHMENT. The overriding purpose of the operation was to maintain unremitting military pressure against Japan and to extend American control over the Western Pacific. In American hands, Iwo Jima could be turned into a base from which

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[8] Admiral Raymond A. Spruance ltr to CMC, dtd 5Jan52, in *Iwo Comments.*

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] JCS 713/19, 30Oct44, "Future Operations in the Pacific," in Bartley, *Iwo Monograph,* p. 22.

we could attack the Japanese home islands, protect our bases in the Marianas, cover our naval forces, conduct search operations of the approaches to the Japanese home islands, and provide fighter escort for very long-range operations. Three tasks specifically envisioned in the study were the reduction of enemy naval and air strength and industrial facilities in the home islands; the destruction of Japanese naval and air strength in the Bonin Islands, and the capture, occupation, and subsequent defense of Iwo Jima, which was to be developed into an air base.

On 9 October, General Holland Smith received the staff study, accompanied by a directive from Admiral Nimitz ordering the seizure of Iwo Jima. This directive designated specific commanders for the operation. Admiral Spruance, Commander, Fifth Fleet, was placed in charge as Operation Commander, Task Force 50. Under Spruance, Vice Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, Commander, Amphibious Forces, Pacific, was to command the Joint Expeditionary Force, Task Force 51. Second in command of the Joint Expeditionary Force was Rear Admiral Harry W. Hill. General Holland Smith was designated Commanding General, Expeditionary Troops, Task Force 56.

It was not accidental that these men were selected to command an operation of such vital importance that it has since become known as "the classical amphibious assault of recorded history."[12] All of them had shown their mettle in previous engagements. One chronicler of the Iwo Jima operation put it in the following words:

> The team assigned to Iwo Jima was superb—the very men who had perfected the amphibious techniques from Guadalcanal to Guam. Nearly every problem, it was believed, had been met and mastered along the way, from the jungles of Guadalcanal up through the Solomons, and across the Central Pacific from the bloody reefs of Tarawa to the mountains of the Marianas.[13]

For General Smith, who was 62 years old, the Iwo Jima operation was to be his last. In mid-October 1944, Smith issued a letter of instruction designating Major General Harry Schmidt, Commanding General, V Amphibious Corps, as Commander of the Landing Force, Task Group 56.1. General Schmidt, 58 at the time, was a veteran of nearly 26 years of military service, who had commanded the 4th Marine Division during the invasion of Roi-Namur in the Marshalls and during the Saipan operation in the Marianas. His experienced staff, headed by Colonel William W. Rogers,[14] was responsible for the preparation and execution of all Landing Force plans for the operation. When completed, plans for the execution of the landing had to be submitted by the commander of the landing force to General Smith for the latter's approval. On 20 October 1944, VAC received a directive from FMFPac, assigning troops to the corps for training, planning, and operations. Initially, the

[12] Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*, p. 432.

[13] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 27.

[14] Promoted to brigadier general for duty as corps chief of staff about 1 Mar 1945. MajGen William W. Rogers ltr to HistBr, G–3 Div, HQMC, dtd 26Jun69 in *Iwo Comments*, hereafter *Rogers ltr*.

corps was to be ready in all respects for combat by 15 December.[15]

The major units assigned to the Landing Force were the 3d, 4th, and 5th Marine Divisions. The 3d Marine Division had already distinguished itself on Bougainville in the Solomons and on Guam in the Marianas. While planning for Operation DETACHMENT was in progress during the late autumn of 1944, the division was still reorganizing on Guam after the heavy fighting for that island and was actively engaged in rounding up or dispatching Japanese that continued to infest the island. At the age of 47, the division commander, Major General Graves B. Erskine, was one of the youngest generals in the Marine Corps with a well-established reputation for toughness. Joining the Marine Corps Reserve in 1917 as a second lieutenant, Erskine had distinguished himself in France during World War I. Following the war, he had seen service in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and China.

At the time of the Pearl Harbor attack, he served as Chief of Staff of the Amphibious Corps, Atlantic Fleet. In 1942, he was assigned as Chief of Staff of the Amphibious Corps, Pacific Fleet, under Holland Smith, who was then a major general. After taking part in the amphibious training of Army troops for the Kiska and Attu operations in the Aleutians, Erskine became Deputy Corps Commander and Chief of Staff of the V Amphibious Corps when it was organized in 1943. He had an active part in planning the seizure of Tarawa and accompanied the assault forces which took Kwajalein, Saipan, and Tinian. When the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, was organized after the capture of Saipan, General Erskine became Chief of Staff of that organization. Promoted to the rank of major general in October 1944, he assumed command of the 3d Marine Division at that time.[16]

The 4th Marine Division, commanded by Major Clifton B. Cates, also had seen considerable action. During the invasion of Roi-Namur in the Marshalls, it had been the first Marine division to go directly into combat from the United States.[17] In less than a year's time, the division had taken part in three landings. In addition to the Roi-Namur operation, the 4th had also made assault landings on Tinian and Saipan. The forthcoming invasion of Iwo Jima would be the division's fourth landing in less than 13 months.

General Cates had assumed command of the division on 12 July 1944, when General Schmidt became the Commanding General of the V Amphibious Corps. Cates already had a long and distinguished Marine Corps career behind him, having served in France during World War I as a company grade officer. During his 20 months of service with the 6th Marines he had been wounded in action twice and had earned the Navy Cross, in addition to other decorations. At Guadalcanal early in World War II, he had commanded the 1st Marines, one of the two assault regiments that landed on the island.

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[15] *VAC AR*, App 3 to Anx B, GenStaff Sec Rpts, dtd 31Mar45, p. 3.

[16] For further details concerning the operations of the 3d Marine Division and its commanders, see Aurthur and Cohlmia, *The Third Marine Division.*

[17] Proehl, *The Fourth Marine Division*, p. 15.

In contrast to the 3d and 4th Marine Divisions, the 5th Division had not seen combat as a unit prior to the Iwo Jima operation. Organized at Camp Pendleton, California, on 11 November 1943, the division was commanded by Major General Keller E. Rockey. Like his counterparts in the 3d and 4th Marine Divisions, General Rockey had seen combat action at Chateau Thierry in 1918. Even though the 5th Marine Division had no previous combat experience, nearly half of the men comprising the unit had served with other combat units. In speaking of the division after the end of World War II, General Rockey made the following comment:

> From its earliest days to the hour of its disbandment, I found the 5th to possess and maintain a high standard of military performance and an esprit exceptionally fine. And when the 5th Division entered combat, it acted from the first hour like a unit of veterans. It fought that first fight with the utmost vigor, courage, and intelligence.[18]

At the time that final plans and preparations for Operation DETACHMENT were being made, the 3d Marine Division was still stationed on Guam, following the recent recapture of that island. As commander of VAC, General Schmidt had also located his command post on that island. The 4th Marine Division, upon completion of operations on Saipan and Tinian in the Marianas, had returned to its permanent camp site on Maui in Hawaii. In August 1944, the 5th Marine Division had moved from California to Hawaii, where it underwent final training. The close proximity in which the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions found themselves in Hawaii during the latter part of 1944 was to have a favorable effect on joint planning between the divisions. When General Schmidt moved VAC headquarters to Pearl Harbor on 13 October, the major planning staffs concerned with Operation DETACHMENT, except for the 3d Marine Division, now were functioning close to each other, a circumstance that resulted in better coordination of efforts.

Of the three divisions scheduled to participate in DETACHMENT, the 3d Marine Division was the only one still actively engaged in military operations during the planning phase for Iwo Jima. Even though Guam had been officially declared secure by 10 August 1944, Marines continued to round up or annihilate stragglers until mid-December. The situation on Guam was not without effect on the planning for Iwo Jima and resulted in one of the changes in the basic operations plan. As General Holland Smith was to reminisce at a later time, with reference to the status of the 3d Marine Division:

> It had been proposed to hold the division in reserve, alerted at Guam. On further study, I considered it much sounder for this division to arrive with the other troops in the target area on D-Day, available as a floating reserve. This decision proved sound because we ran into a larger garrison and far stronger defenses than we had anticipated.[19]

General Schmidt issued the first blueprint for Operation DETACHMENT on 19 October 1944, to be used as a guide by subordinate commanders. On the following day, General Smith directed him to have the VAC ready for

[18] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, Preface.

[19] Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, p. 242.

Operation DETACHMENT by 15 December.[20]

During the two remaining months of 1944, VAC evolved tactical and logistical plans in joint conferences with all commanders concerned. As increasing intelligence became available, alternate plans were drafted and changes were incorporated into the original plan.[21] All commanders issued tentative drafts of their respective operation plans, and continual adjustments were made to achieve maximum support with the forces available and to organize the most effective assault force possible. Planning remained flexible right up to D-Day, which itself was postponed twice because the naval forces required for the invasion of Iwo Jima were still engaged in the Philippines. As a result, on 18 November D-Day was postponed to 3 February 1945; on 6 December, an additional postponement to 19 February became necessary.[22]

When Admiral Spruance assumed command of all forces assigned to the Central Pacific Task Force on 26 January, CinCPOA Plan 11-44 was in full effect. Designated for the beach assault were the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions, less the 26th Marines, which was to be held in Landing Force reserve. For training purposes prior to the operation, the 26th Marines would remain with the 5th Division. The 3d Marine Division was to stage on Guam and would remain as reserve on board ship in the objective area until D plus 3.

The VAC scheme of maneuver for the landings was relatively simple. The 4th and 5th Marine Divisions were to land abreast on the eastern beaches, the 4th on the right and the 5th on the left. When released to VAC, the 3d Marine Division, as Expeditionary Troops Reserve, was to land over the same beaches to take part in the attack or play a defensive role, whichever was called for. The plan called for a rapid exploitation of the beachhead with an advance in a northeasterly direction to capture the entire island. A regiment of the 5th Marine Division was designated to capture Mount Suribachi in the south.[23]

Since there was a possibility of unfavorable surf conditions along the eastern beaches, VAC issued an alternate plan on 8 January 1945, which provided for a landing on the western beaches. However, since predominant northerly or northwesterly winds caused hazardous swells almost continuously along the southwest side of the island, it appeared unlikely that this alternate plan would be put into execution.[24]

The eastern beaches over which the landings were to be made extended for about 3,500 yards northeastward from Mount Suribachi to the East Boat Basin. (See Map 26). For purposes of organization and control of the invasion force, these beaches were divided into seven

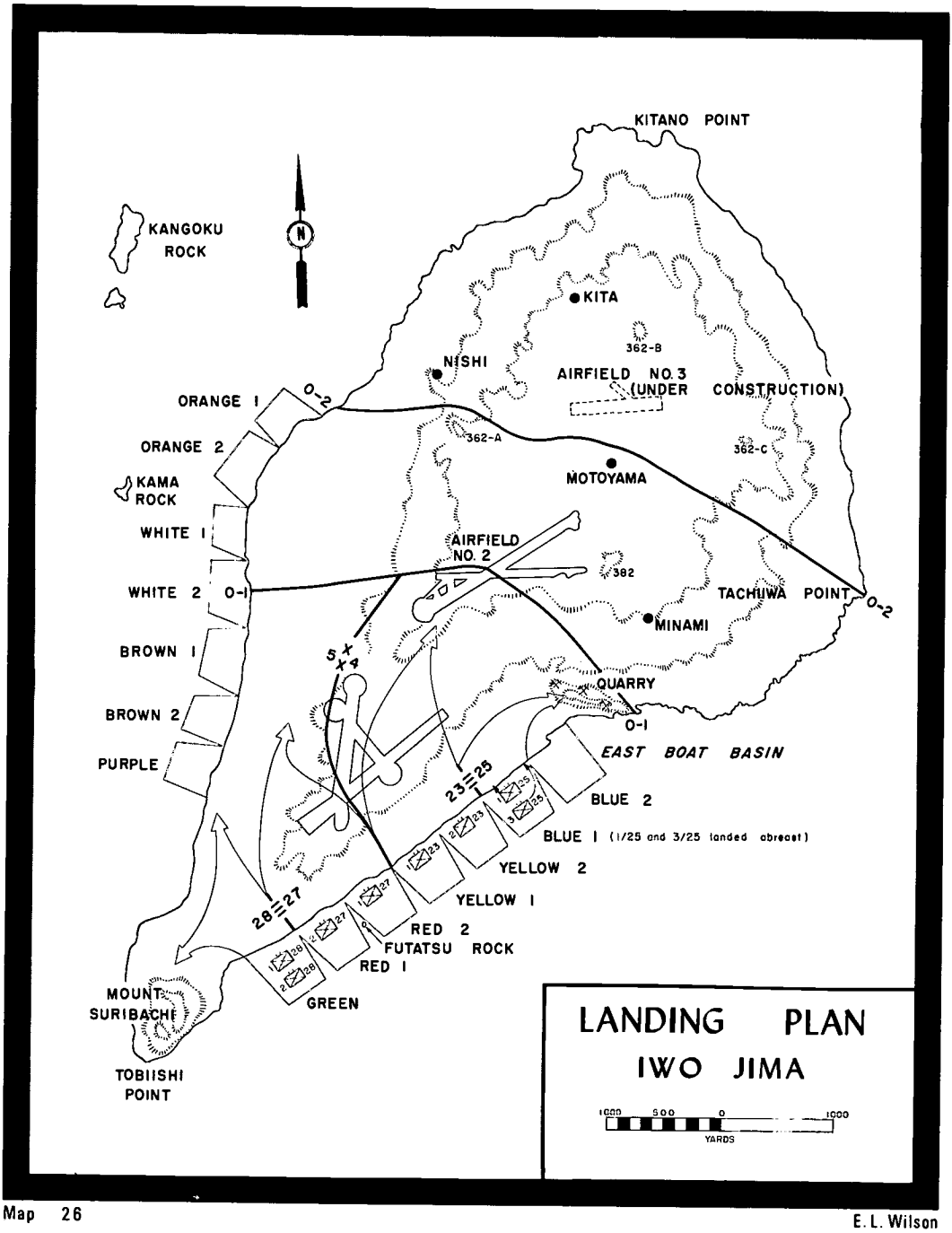
[20] For Task Organization of VAC Landing Force, see App G.

[21] Final drafts for Operation DETACHMENT were published on the following dates: CinCPOA OPlan 11–44, 25Nov44; VAC OPlan no. 3–44, 23Dec44; Joint Exped Force OPlan no. A25–44, 27Dec44; and ComFifthFlt OPlan no. 13–44, 31Dec44.

[22] *TF 56 AR*, Encl B, G–3 Rpt, Planning and Ops, Iwo, dtd 27Mar45.

[23] VAC OPlan no. 3–44, dtd 23Dec44, in *TF 56 AR*, Encl A, p. 5.

[24] VAC OPlan no. 4–44, dtd 8Jan45, in *TF 56 AR*, Encl A, p. 6.



Map 26 E. L. Wilson

500-yard segments, which, from left to right, were designated as Green, Red 1 and 2, Yellow 1 and 2, and Blue 1 and 2. The 5th Marine Division, landing over Green, Red 1, and Red 2 beaches, was to advance straight across the island, which at this point formed a narrow isthmus, until it reached the west coast. At the same time, it was to hold along the right, while part of the division wheeled to the south to capture Mount Suribachi. The 4th Marine Division had the specific mission of moving into the center of the isthmus, while its right flank swerved to the north to seize Motoyama Plateau, the high ground above the East Boat Basin. Unless this vital ground to the north of the invasion beaches and Mount Suribachi to the south—terrain features which overlooked the beaches and permitted the enemy to fire at the exposed Marines at will—were quickly seized, the landing force could be expected to take very heavy casualties.

Once the southern portion of Iwo Jima had been secured, the two divisions could join in a combined drive to the north. At this time, the 3d Marine Division, initially in Expeditionary Troop Reserve on board ships near the beachhead, could be disembarked and landed to assist in maintaining the momentum of the VAC attack.

The detailed scheme of maneuver for the landings provided for the 28th Marines of the 5th Marine Division, commanded by Colonel Harry B. Liversedge, to land on the extreme left of the corps on Green 1. On the right of the 28th Marines, the 27th, under Colonel Thomas A. Wornham, was to attack towards the west coast of the island, then wheel northeastward and seize the 0-1 Line. Action by the 27th and 28th Marines was designed to drive the enemy from the commanding heights along the southern portion of Iwo, simultaneously securing the flanks and rear of VAC. As far as the 4th Marine Division was concerned, the 23d Marines, commanded by Colonel Walter W. Wensinger, was to go ashore on Yellow 1 and 2 beaches, seize Motoyama Airfield No. 1, then turn to the northeast and seize that part of Motoyama Airfield No. 2 and the 0-1 Line within its zone of action. After landing on Blue Beach 1, the 25th Marines, under Colonel John R. Lanigan, was to assist in the capture of Airfield No. 1, the capture of Blue Beach 2, and the 0-1 Line within its zone of action.[25] The 24th Marines, under Colonel Walter I. Jordan, was to be held in 4th Marine Division reserve during the initial landings. The 26th Marines, led by Colonel Chester B. Graham, was to be released from corps reserve on D-Day and prepared to support the 5th Marine Division.

Division artillery was to go ashore

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[25] The initial VAC LanFor plan had called for the use of Blue Beach 2 as a landing beach. Because of the proximity of Blue 2 to the commanding high ground on the right, and in order to provide a safety factor while maintaining adequate neutralization fires on this high ground during the landing, the 4th Marine Division had requested that the landing of the 25th Marines be limited to Blue 1. This permission was granted, and the 25th Marines was ordered to land on Blue Beach 1 and seize Blue 2 as quickly as possible to enable succeeding units and supplies to use this beach. *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, Iwo Jima, dtd 18May45, Sec. I, p. 2.

on order from the respective division commanders. The 4th Marine Division was to be supported by the 14th Marines, commanded by Colonel Louis G. DeHaven; Colonel James D. Waller's 13th Marines was to furnish similar support for the 5th Marine Division.

The operation was to be so timed that at H-Hour 68 LVT(A)4s, comprising the first wave, were to hit the beach. These vehicles were to advance inland until they reached the first terrace beyond the high-water mark. The armored amphibians would use their 75mm howitzers and machine guns to the utmost in an attempt to keep the enemy down, thus giving some measure of protection to succeeding waves of Marines who were most vulnerable to enemy fire at the time they debarked from their LVTs. Though early versions of the VAC operations plan had called for tanks of the 4th and 5th Tank Battalions to be landed at H plus 30, subsequent studies of the beaches made it necessary to adopt a more flexible schedule. The possibility of congestion at the water's edge also contributed to this change in plans. In the end, the time for bringing the tanks ashore was left to the discretion of the regimental commanders. Company A of the 5th Tank Battalion attached to the 27th Marines was scheduled to land on the Red Beaches at the prearranged time of H plus 30 minutes.[26]

In the event that the landings took place on the western beaches of Iwo, the alternate plan made provision for a company of the 24th Marines, reinforced by a platoon of armored amphibians from the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion, to seize Kangoku Rock, a 600-yard-long island lying about 2,200 feet northwest of Iwo Jima. The island could be used as an artillery site and for this reason a contingency plan was prepared to land the 105mm howitzers of 4/14 there.

INTELLIGENCE PLANNING[27]

The scheme of maneuver for the Iwo Jima operation, as well as the preliminary planning, was largely based on available intelligence. Enemy documents seized on Saipan during the summer of 1944 gave a fair indication of enemy strength in the Volcano-Bonin Islands. Captured Japanese maps, supplemented by aerial photographs obtained by U.S. Navy carrier pilots during the air strikes of June and July 1944, were utilized in the preparation of situation maps and beach studies. During the planning phase for the operation, pilots of Navy Photographic Squadrons 4 and 5 and the Army Air

[26] *5th MarDiv AR*, Sec. VII, p. 10.

[27] Additional material in this section is derived from: Amphibious Forces Pacific, Information on Iwo Jima, n.d., hereafter *PhibForPac G-2 Rpt*; Hq, US Army Forces, POA, IntelRpt, n.d.; Nanpo Shoto Info Bulletin No. 122-44, Supplmt 1, dtd 10Oct44; CinCPac-CinCPOA Bulletin No. 9-45, dtd 10Jan45; TF 56 AR, Encl C, Rpt of Intelligence, Iwo Jima, dtd 1Apr45, hereafter *TF 56 G-2 Rpt;* TF 51 AR, Iwo Jima, 27Dec44-26Mar45, hereafter *TF 51 AR;* VAC C-2 Special Study of Enemy Sit, Iwo Jima, dtd 6Jan45, hereafter *VAC G-2 Study;* VAC Rpt on Beaches, Iwo Jima, dtd 30Oct44; VAC Estimate of Enemy Sit and Strength, dtd 7Mar45; VAC G-2 Jnl, 11Jan-24Mar45; 4th MarDiv D-2 Tactical Study, Iwo Jima, dtd 20Jan65, hereafter *4th MarDiv G-2 Study;* 5th MarDiv D-2 Study, Iwo Jima, dtd 16Nov44, hereafter *5thMarDiv G-2 Study.*

Forces 28th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron flew 371 sorties. Liberators of the Seventh Air Force obtained additional photographic coverage of the island in the course of their bombing missions.

Significantly, during the preparatory phase, representatives of the 3d, 4th, and 5th Marine Divisions, the Commander, Amphibious Forces, Pacific, and VAC combined their efforts in preparing a Joint Situation Map which was completed on 6 December 1944. Representative officers from Navy and Marine units were ordered to report to Photographic Interpretation Squadron 2, based on Guam, in late January 1945. There, the most recent photographs were available. On the basis of the most current information then available, a final enemy installations map was prepared that was to play a major part in the pre-D-Day naval and aerial strikes, as well as during the actual assault phase.[28]

Between 29 November and 2 December 1944, the submarine USS *Spearfish* conducted a reconnaissance off Iwo Jima. Approaching as close to the island as he could without being detected, the submarine commander gave a running account of the view that presented itself to his eyes as he watched through his periscope. This commentary was transcribed. So close did the submarine approach the shore of Iwo that at one point the skipper spotted a cave going into the base of Mount Suribachi "with a dejected looking individual sitting right in the entrance sunning himself."[29] Additional observations included construction work at various parts of the island, an armored car in motion, and various earthworks and blockhouses on different parts of the island. The submarine reconnaissance failed to discover any guns or emplacements on the slopes of Mount Suribachi itself, nor could individual pillboxes be identified, though a number of caves were visible.[30]

Beach studies indicated that movement over the loose sand would be difficult for wheeled vehicles; tracked vehicles were not expected to bog down. Partially buried gasoline drums, observed at the edge of the water both on the eastern and western beaches, gave rise to considerable speculation. It was thought that these drums might be wired for electrical ignition, so that burning gasoline would run out over the water to check landing craft, or that they would ignite at the moment the amphibious tractors or tanks reached land to raise a wall of fire before them. It was also possible that the drums had been converted into mines, equipped with pull-type detonators, with attached trip wires, which would ignite when either personnel or tanks came into contact with the wire.[31]

In any case, Marines were warned to expect the widespread employment of antitank mines and obstacles, combined with "close quarter attack units" using hand-placed charges. No change in

[28] Extracts from CG, VAC Landing Force Rpt, Iwo Jima, 013/124, Ser. 02848, dtd 20May45, p. 3.

[29] USS *Spearfish* ReconRpt, Iwo Jima, 1Dec44, p. 4.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[31] 1st Supplement to Nanpo Shoto Info Bulletin No. 122–44, dtd 10Oct44; CinCPac-CinCPOA Bulletin No. 9–45, 10Jan45, p. 10.

Japanese artillery tactics was anticipated. Even though the presence of a large number of artillery pieces on the island was a foregone conclusion, there was no reason to believe that the Japanese would employ massed fires in larger than battery concentrations.

From a thorough study of aerial photographs and a captured map showing the scheme of the enemy's defense, it was known that the Japanese had established an elaborate defense in depth. Gun positions were sited to place withering fire on the selected beaches; defensive works such as pillboxes, blockhouses, antitank trenches, and mines were located where they could repel the American advance once the invasion force had landed. Numerous antiboat gun positions as well as coast defense guns were discovered. Unless these guns were neutralized, it was more than likely that the enemy would use them to fire on the leading waves and transport areas of the invasion force.

Planners for the invasion of Iwo Jima further deduced from documents captured on Saipan that the enemy would adhere to his older tactics of attempting the destruction of the invasion force before an adequate beachhead had been established. The most likely time for this counterattack was considered the early morning of the day following the initial landing.[32]

Further study of aerial photographs and captured documents indicated that Iwo had probably been divided into four defense sectors with one infantry battalion manning each sector. Since the Japanese were believed to have nine infantry battalions on the island, this would leave five battalions to be held in reserve. Photographs taken in January 1945, as the invasion date was drawing closer, indicated that the number of field fortifications, pillboxes, and covered artillery positions was increasing despite intensive aerial bombardment. A most significant development noted in these photographs was the construction of a line of defense across the island from a point near Hiraiwa Bay on the northwest coast to high ground north of the East Boat Basin.

During the period from 3 December 1944 to 10 February 1945, it was noted that the number of enemy coast defense guns on the island increased from 3 to 6; the number of dual purpose guns rose from 16 to 42. Automatic antiaircraft guns showed an increase from 151 to 203, and covered artillery positions rose from 39 to 67. There was a decrease in openly emplaced artillery, antitank and antiboat guns, and machine guns, but in the words of the Expeditionary Troops G-2, Colonel Edmond J. Buckley, the apparent reduction in observed machine guns could be offset by the heavy increase in field fortifications, including blockhouses and pillboxes. The blockhouses could contain fixed artillery, and, in numerous instances, their construction was such as to permit mobile artillery pieces to be wheeled into them. It also appeared likely that each pillbox was equipped with one or more machine guns, whose presence could not be ascertained by aerial observation.

Prelanding reconnaissance had shown that the Japanese had established nu-

[32] *VAC C–2 Study*, p. 17.

merous antiboat gun positions, as well as coast defense guns. It was imperative that these guns be neutralized. Such neutralization, of course, depended upon the ability of the invasion force to detect targets and destroy them by naval gunfire and aerial attack prior to H-hour.[33]

Even though planners of the Iwo Jima invasion were generally correct with reference to the enemy's intentions and capabilities, their intelligence estimate erred in two important respects. First among these was an underestimation of enemy strength on the island. Intelligence officers had estimated that the Iwo garrison numbered between 13,000 and 14,000 troops.[34] Names and background of Japanese commanders in the Bonins were known, though the intelligence estimate mistakenly assumed that General Kuribayashi exercised overall command of the Volcano-Bonin Defense Sector from his *109th Division Headquarters* on Chichi Jima, and that a Major General Osuka was in charge of the defense of Iwo Jima. Information on the Japanese naval guard and air base units on Iwo was lacking.

The second serious shortcoming of preinvasion intelligence was the mistaken assumption that the enemy defensive tactics to be expected on Iwo Jima would conform to tactics employed in earlier operations. In describing Japanese capabilities, the intelligence estimate voiced the following expectations:

> The enemy may be prepared to attempt small local counterattacks prior to the establishment of our beachhead in order to annihilate our forces at the beach. His doctrine specifies that the enemy must not gain a foothold on shore and that in order to combat this all troops must be prepared to attack with the mission of splitting our forces and destroying them by local counterattacks.[35]

At the latest, the enemy could be expected to throw all available reserves against the beachhead prior to dawn on D plus 1.

In addition to their task of accumulating and analyzing all information available to them about the enemy's strength, capabilities, and dispositions during the planning period, American planners were faced with the formidable problem of maintaining complete secrecy with reference to the movement of such a large force as was to take place in the Iwo Jima assault. This was not an easy undertaking in view of the tremendous size of the force assigned to capture and develop the island. Admiral Turner's command alone consisted of 495 ships, including, among others, 4 command ships, 8 battleships, 12 aircraft carriers, 19 cruisers, 44 destroyers, 43 transports, 63 LSTs, and 31 LSMs. The addition of Task Force 58, together with supply and auxiliary ships, brought the invasion fleet to more than 800 vessels. The Marine assault troops numbered 70,647 officers and men.[36] This force was further augmented by Marine and Army garrison units, as well as three Army amphibian truck companies in the assault phase, and Navy personnel assigned to shore duty, bringing the total of the expeditionary force to 111,308 men.[37] If one further adds the crews of Turner's

[33] *VAC C–2 Study*, p. 17.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[36] *TF 51 AR*, pt. I, p. 4.

ships and of Task Force 58, more than 250,000 men on the American side were involved in the Iwo operation.[38]

Intelligence officers had a few bad moments on 22 December 1944, when a Pearl Harbor newspaper printed two pictures of Iwo Jima under aerial attack. The pictures bore a startling resemblance to pictures and maps of "Island X," which VAC had issued for training purposes. In order to prevent the Japanese from learning of the assembly and destination of the invasion force, General Schmidt recommended a counterintelligence diversion. Word was spread in the bars and hotels of Honolulu that the command would shortly depart for an attack on Formosa. Whether the diversion had any effect in deceiving the enemy could not be determined.[39]

A serious breach of security occurred on 14 February 1945, while the invasion convoy was en route to the objective. In the course of a radio transmission, someone in the vicinity of Saipan was overheard making the following statement:

> We are going to Iwo Jima. It's a Jap island not far from here. The B-29s bomb it from here every day. It's about 600 miles from Japan. We'll make it hot for them Japs when we get there. We're leaving for there in the next day or so.[40]

Such a breach of security was more than enough to make experienced intelligence officers quake in their boots. The intelligence officer of Amphibious Group 2 reported the incident to VAC. There is no indication that this information ever reached the Japanese, though under different circumstances this compromise of vital information could have had disastrous consequences.

LOGISTICS AND ADMINISTRATION[41]

Another major responsibility accruing to the staff of the VAC was logistical planning, which had already begun even before VAC staff officers reached Pearl Harbor on 13 October. Special staffs of FMFPac conducted preliminary conferences and executed logistical planning for the assault on Iwo Jima. As in other areas, logistics required the harmonious teamwork of different levels of command, and between the armed services.

The Quartermaster, U. S. Army Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas, was responsible for supplying rations (Class I) to all personnel taking part in the operation, as well as clothing, special equipment, and supplies (Class II), and ammunition (Class V), for participating Army troops. Fuel and lubricants (Class III) were to be supplied

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[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima,* pp. 27–28.

[39] *VAC G-2 SAR,* Iwo Jima, 30Apr45, p. 8, in *VAC AR,* Anx B, GenStaffSecRpts.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] Additional material in this section is derived from TF 56, AdminO 1–44, 8Nov44; VAC C–1 PersRpts, Iwo Jima, 20Feb-24Mar45, hereafter *VAC G–1 Rpt;* VAC C–4 Jnl, 29Jan-21Feb45; 3d MarDiv D–1 Jnl, 14Feb-12Apr45; 3d MarDiv Breakdown of Ammunition and Fuel, Iwo Jima, 1Feb45; 3d MarDiv C–4 Jnl, 23Feb-8Apr45; 3d MarDiv G–4 Log, 8Dec44-9Aug45; 3d MarDiv G–4 Periodic Rpts, 3Jan-20Mar45; 4th MarDiv AdmO 44–44, 24Dec44; US PacFlt Logistics Plan for Land-Based Forces, 14Oct44.

by the Navy's Service Force, Pacific. The Supply Service, FMFPac, was to furnish ammunition (Class V) and special supplies, and equipment (Class IV) for the Marines. The latter supplies were to be distributed initially by the 6th Base Depot in Hawaii and the 5th Field Depot on Guam.

Administrative planning, including service and support to the VAC Landing Force, was the responsibility of the G–4 Section, V Amphibious Corps. Prescribed levels for Class I supply were two days' rations for the assault troops plus a 30-day backup supply. Water was to be carried in cans, drums, or other organizational equipment at the ratio of two gallons per man per day for five days.[42] Class II and IV supplies were to be stockpiled for 30 days. Ammunition for ground forces (Class V) was to be provided in quantities of seven units of fire (U/F) for artillery, mortars, and antiaircraft guns, and five units of fire for all other types of weapons.[43]

Special preloads on LSTs were made to provide a balanced initial supply of rations, fuel, and ammunition for the assault troops. These supplies were loaded in LST tank decks and were designed to provide initial priority combat supplies close in to beaches on D-Day and D plus 1. A total of 38 LSTs were to be preloaded at Pearl Harbor, Hilo, and Guam prior to the embarkation of the assault units. In addition, 42 2½-ton Amphibian Trucks (DUKWs) were to be preloaded at Pearl Harbor with assorted small arms and mortar ammunition, rations, fuel, medical supplies, and flamethrower fuel. These vehicles were scheduled to provide an early replenishment supply on the beaches on D-Day.

Resupply plans and preparations were performed by the Marine Supply Service. Initial resupply ships were to be loaded at Oahu with 30 days Class I, II, and IV supplies and 15 days Class III supplies (except for aviation gasoline) for two reinforced Marine divisions and for all garrison troops estimated to be located on Iwo Jima at D plus 35. Class V was to be loaded in this shipment on board one ammunition ship at the rate of 9 U/F for one Marine division, 7 U/F for one 155mm howitzer battalion, 8 U/F for one Army heavy antiaircraft battalion, 4 U/F for one Army light antiaircraft battalion, and 90 tons of engineer and Chemical Warfare Service demolitions.

The Commander, Forward Area, Central Pacific was instructed to hold available in the Marianas for shipment on call in an emergency, a stock of 30 days supplies of Classes I, II, III, and IV and two units of fire for one reinforced Marine division and one reinforced Army division. Supplies were to be provided by the Commanding General, Pacific Ocean Areas, the Commanding General, FMFPac, and ComServPac. ComAirPac was to maintain a 45-day stock of aviation supplies, except for Class V, in floating storage in the forward area for Navy and Marine aircraft employed in that area. Aviation supplies at Guam and on Roi-Namur were to be held available for emergency shipment. ComGenPOA was to maintain

[42] VAC G–4 SAR, Iwo Jima, dtd 30Apr45, p. 2, hereafter *VAC G–4 SAR*.

[43] A unit of fire is a predetermined quantity of ammunition a weapon can be expected to fire in an average day of combat.

a 45-day stock of aviation supplies in floating storage in the forward area for Army aircraft. ComServPac was to provide the necessary storage if space and facilities assigned to ComGenPOA proved inadequate. ComServPac was to shift Service Squadron 10 to Ulithi to furnish support to fleet units and emergency supply for land-based forces. Elements of the above squadron were to be located in the Marshalls and Marianas for support of small task forces.

Pre-packaged supplies were stockpiled by the VAC Air Delivery Section on Saipan for emergency deliveries by air. If needed, the Commander, Expeditionary Troops, could draw from similar stockpiles in Hawaii and elsewhere in the Marianas. For the Iwo Jima operation, VAC organized the 8th Field Depot, commanded by Colonel Leland S. Swindler. The depot was designed to serve as the nucleus of the shore party organization; the depot commander had a dual designation as Shore Party Commander of the Landing Force, in which capacity he was responsible for coordinating the activities of the division shore parties.

Since Iwo Jima was not surrounded by reefs, all types of landing craft could proceed directly from the transport area to the beachhead without becoming involved in time-consuming transfer operations that had been characteristic of many previous landings in the Central Pacific. This circumstance led VAC to authorize subordinate units to mount up to 50 percent of their supplies on pallets.[44]

Planners of the Iwo operation were aware of the fact that the soft volcanic ash along the beaches, as well as the steep terraces en route inland, would impede the movement of wheeled vehicles. To insure a steady flow of supplies from the beaches inland, runner sleds were improvised that could be loaded with needed items and pulled inland by tracked vehicles. Another improvisation designed to overcome the soft sand or volcanic ash was the use of Marston matting at the beaches. Even though this material was originally used for the construction of airfield runways, it likewise could be employed to great advantage in bridging strips of sand along the beaches that would otherwise be impassable.

In addition to the large variety of supplies and equipment normally used for an amphibious operation, VAC employed two items for the first time. One was the two-wheeled Clever-Brooks 3½-ton amphibion trailer, the other the M-29C light cargo carrier, subsequently known as the "Weasel." This boat-like, tracked vehicle resembled a miniature LVT without ramps. The amphibian trailers reached the three assault divisions during November and December 1944.[45] The Weasels arrived in November and were subjected to extensive tests which revealed that the cargo carriers were capable of excellent performance under conditions anticipated at Iwo.

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[44] Pallets was the designation for wooden platforms on which supplies were strapped or fastened. Palletization facilitated loading and unloading when cranes and other lifting devices were available to handle such convenient but heavy loads.

[45] The 3d Marine Division was issued the trailers in November; the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions received theirs in December.

Three Army and two Marine DUKW companies were assigned to VAC for the operation, as were the 31st and 133d Naval Construction Battalions.[46] In addition, a Marine engineer battalion, a topographic company, an Army bomb disposal company, and the 62d Naval Construction Battalion were attached to VAC and placed under operational control of the Corps engineer. These units would be responsible for clearing minefields, bomb disposal, road construction and maintenance, water supply, and the restoration of airfields on Iwo Jima. Following the beach assault, and as soon as conditions permitted, the 62d Naval Construction Battalion was to begin to ready Motoyama Airfield No. 1 for observation and fighter aircraft. Target date for completion of this assignment was D plus 7. The 31st Naval Construction Battalion was to restore Airfield No. 2 for use by the B-29 bombers. Making the latter field operational for this purpose involved not only restoration of facilities that were already in existence, but called for extension of existing runways to 7,000 feet to accommodate the giant aircraft. Airfield No. 2 was to become operational at D plus 10.[47]

In view of the size and scope of the impending operation, the handling and evacuation of casualties required special planning. Initially, it was assumed that seizure of the objective would require 14 days. It was estimated that five percent of the assault force would become casualties on each of the first and second days; three percent on the third and fourth days; and one and one-half percent on each of the remaining 10 days. It was further estimated that 20 percent of all casualties would be dead or missing.[48]

For the evacuation of casualties from Iwo Jima, two hospital ships, the *Samaritan* and the *Solace* were assigned, as well as the auxiliary hospital ship *Pinckney*, and LSTs *929*, *930*, *931*, and *1033*. These LSTs, especially equipped to handle casualties close to the beach, were to be stationed 2,000 yards offshore and serve as evacuation control centers. There, the casualties would be logged, given additional emergency treatment, and transferred to other ships for further care. One of the LSTs was equipped with a blood bank.

As in so many other instances of operations in the Pacific Theater, the adaptation of existing equipment to a new use was due to the efforts of one individual who not only conceived the idea but also had to sell it at the right time and place. In this instance the conversion of LSTs for the evacuation of casualties was the brainchild of Lieutenant Commander George J. Miller, Medical Corps, USNR, who prepared blueprints of the LSTs showing the plan of operating tables, beds, and other equipment. In December 1944 he presented his idea to several high ranking naval medical officers who initially vetoed it. In the end, the persistent lieutenant commander was able to sell the idea to an even higher ranking personage who immediately recognized the

[46] The 133d Naval Construction Battalion was attached to the 4th Marine Division, the 31st to the 5th Marine Division.

[47] VAC OPlan 3–44, dtd 23Dec44, Anx M, Eng Plan.

[48] VAC Surgeon, SAR, Iwo Jima, dtd 24Mar45, hereafter *VAC MedRpt.*

merit of the plan and gave his unqualified approval of it.[49]

In addition to the hospital ships and the specially converted LSTs, long range dispositions had to be made from Iwo Jima for the reception of casualties. In addition to the hospitals that were to be set up on the island itself, once the situation following the landings had stabilized to some extent, 5,000 beds were available in hospitals on Saipan and Guam. Air transportation of casualties was scheduled to begin as soon as airstrips were ready to accommodate transport planes.[50]

These preparations only give a bare outline of the time and effort required to bring logistics and administration into line with the operational planning. At least one account has briefly summed up the diverse items involved and the thought that had to be given to their transport and storage:

> It was necessary to think of everything —pencils, blood, toilet paper, 'this item,' said the orders, 'will be stowed under tarpaulin at the rear of all landing vehicles to protect it from spray,' matches, gasoline, socks, bullets, wooden crosses (prepainted), water, welding rods, garbage cans, splints, food, spark plugs, blankets, flares, dog food, maps, holy water, smoke pots, paint, shoelaces, fingerprint ink, batteries, rock-crushers, bulbs, cigars, asphalt machines, carbon paper. The Fifth Division alone carried 100 million cigarettes and enough food to feed Columbus, Ohio, for thirty days.
>
> Ships began loading as early as November, every parcel stenciled, weighed, sized, and stowed in a particular spot. Marked photos showed where the cemetery would be located, orders specified the exact depth of burial and space between bodies (3 feet from centerline to centerline of body, fifty bodies to a row, 3 feet between rows.) The graves registration team would land on D-Day, equipped with its own bulldozers to bury the bodies exactly 6 feet deep. Then men would mound each grave with a special wooden form.[51]

Nor was the multiplicity of supplies all that the planners had to consider; there was one more commodity whose importance transcended all others. This was the flow of men towards the scene of action to replace those who would become casualties. During the last months of 1944, long before the first Marines were scheduled to hit the beaches of Iwo Jima, the complex machinery of administration was already set in motion when six replacement drafts embarked from the United States to join VAC. Each draft was composed of about 1,250 officers and men. Each of the three Marine divisions slated to participate in the operation received 2,500 replacements, some of whom were incorporated into the divisions before they left their staging areas. The bulk of the replacement units was kept intact; their personnel were assigned to shore parties, to be employed on the beaches until they were needed to replace combat losses.[52]

Launching an amphibious operation on the scale of the contemplated assault

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[49] "This use of LSTs saved many, many lives of wounded men who received treatment on the LSTs. If they had not received this treatment and had had to be taken from the beach all the way to the hospital ships, many would have died before they reached the ships." BGen John S. Letcher ltr to Head, HistBr, G–3 Div, HQMC, dtd 12Jun69, in *Iwo Comments*, hereafter *Letcher ltr*.

[50] *VAC G–1 Rpt*, p. 13.

[51] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 37.

[52] *VAC G–1 Rpt*, pp. 13–15.

against Iwo Jima required far more than merely assembling men and materiel and shipping them to the objective. The real planning effort had only begun at the point when the objective had been decided upon and the means to seize it were being made available. The efforts of various arms and services had to be combined until the gigantic machine of war functioned as an instrument of precision. Each man, each weapon, each unit, every ship, tank, and airplane had a very definite part in the scheme of things. In this respect, an assembled invasion armada can be likened to an orchestra. The finest musicians, well skilled in their profession and equipped with the best instruments that money can buy, still must learn to work with one another. Few among the audience are aware of the tremendous effort that went into writing the score, the seemingly endless rehearsals, the continuous and often painful planning and rehoning that must take place before all meshes into an integrated whole.

It is no different with the orchestra of war. A plan is made, followed by the assembly of men and supplies. Only then can the vital and difficult process begin of forging the whole into an instrument of such power and precision that it continues to function even in the face of the most adverse conditions that climate, weather, and enemy opposition can impose. When the curtain rises, the spectator is awed by the booming of the big naval guns, the columns of dirt and smoke rising over the objective from naval shells or aircraft dropping their lethal cargo, as rockets swoosh towards the target. Once this orchestra has begun to play, any flaw still remaining can be measured in the lives of assault troops who are separated from the enemy bullets and shells by no more than a few cubic feet of air, often protected only by the thickness of a uniform.

The forging of the precision instrument of war, under way months before Marines went ashore on Iwo, determined in large measure how many men of the landing force would go on to seize the objective and return home; the number whose fragile and mangled bodies would be carried off Iwo for salvage and repair; and those destined to remain on the island forever.

The Preliminaries[1]

In his capacity as Commanding General, VAC Landing Force, Major General Harry Schmidt was directly responsible for the preparation and training of all units placed under his command for the Iwo Jima operation. Such training, in addition to a routine program, not only featured the participation of VAC units in tests and demonstrations of new types of amphibious equipment such as the Clever-Brooks amphibian trailer and the M-29C cargo carrier (Weasel), but also familiarized personnel with new weapons and techniques scheduled for employment during Operation DETACHMENT. Division training programs stressed attacks against fortified positions; the reduction of pillboxes; detection, marking, and removal of mines; and the employment and coordination of supporting arms.

During the last two weeks of November, the 4th Marine Division carried out amphibious maneuvers on Maui, and a field exercise on the division level. Two command post exercises followed. The 5th Marine Division conducted training exercises at Camp Tarawa on Hawaii Island. At Hilo, the men practiced the embarkation and debarkation of troops and loading and unloading of equipment onto LSTs. The artillery battalions of the 13th Marines went to Maume beach for special loading exercises with DUKWs, LSTs, and LSMs. Using the big amphibious trucks, the artillerymen learned how to load and unload their howitzers and practiced moving in and out of the great jaws of the LSTs, causing at least one Marine to comment: "This reminds me of Jonah and the whale."[2]

Within the 5th Marine Division, the 28th Marines, scheduled to spearhead the assault, received special training.

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from: *TF 51 AR;* TF 52 AR, Iwo Jima, 10–19Feb45, 22Feb45, hereafter *TF 52 AR;* TF 54 AR, 10Feb-10Mar45, hereafter *TF 54 AR; TF 56 AR;* VAC Landing Force AR, Iwo Jima, Oct44–Mar45, 13May45, hereafter *VAC AR; PhibGru 2 AR;* 3d MarDiv AR, Iwo Jima, 31Oct44–16Mar45, 30Apr45, hereafter *3d MarDiv AR;* 5th MarDiv AR, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-26Mar45, 24Mar45, hereafter *5th MarDiv AR;* ComPhibPac TrngO A29–44, Iwo Jima, 18Dec44; TF 31 Rpt of Trng, 31-Jul44; TF 52 OpO No. A105–45, 3Feb45; TG 53.2 AR, Iwo Jima, 31Oct44-4Mar45; TransDiv 32 AR, Iwo Jima, 10Feb-6Mar45; TransDiv 45 AR, 27Jan-19Feb45, hereafter *TransDiv 45 AR;* 3d MarDiv EmbO 1–44, 18Dec44; 3d Mar Div EmbO 1–45, 19Jan45; 3d MarDiv TrngO 1–45, 5Jan45; 4th MarDiv TrngOs, 27Oct44-22Jan45; 4th MarDiv Trng Memo 82–44, 10-Dec44; 5th MarDiv TrngO 64–44, 31Dec44; *Iwo Comments;* Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*; Craven and Cate, *The Pacific;* Smith and Finch,*Coral and Brass*; Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*; Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*; Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*; Proehl, *The Fourth Marine Division*; Newcomb, *Iwo Jima.*

[2] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division,* p. 21.

Each battalion of that regiment conducted exercises that involved landing on beaches resembling those of Iwo, right down to soft volcanic ash. The maneuvers also included the envelopment of a hill that could pass for a fairly close duplicate of Mount Suribachi. Without those in the ranks being aware of it, elements of the division actually executed the scheme of maneuver called for in the Iwo operations plan. The division conducted three command post exercises in Hawaii, including one problem calling for the coordination of air, naval gunfire, and artillery support.

On Guam, the men of the 3d Marine Division trained for the impending operation in accordance with the mission assigned to them. Training stressed the phases a reserve unit had to pass through upon landing and moving up into the interior of the island. Since the division was not scheduled to take part in the amphibious assault, no assault landing exercises were conducted. The 3d Division was to utilize the shore party facilities of the two assault divisions preceding it ashore.

The replacement drafts did not join their divisions until late November. Even though the replacements had received basic individual training in the United States, they had to learn basic small unit tactics and had to exercise in them before qualifying as combat ready. Since the men were to serve with shore parties prior to being assigned to combat duty, they also had to be initiated into cargo-handling duties.

Owing to the advanced state of training in the divisions and the high level of experience of their Marines, VAC training directives were concerned with refinement of combat techniques and provision for supervision and support of divisions and corps troops. Otherwise, training was left to the divisions. A late delivery of DUKWs caused some delay in training the newly activated amphibian truck companies with their vehicles. Considerable retraining was required to familiarize tank crews and maintenance personnnel with the operation and servicing of new M4A3 Sherman tanks.

Upon the conclusion of amphibious exercises, the Hawaii-based assault forces began staging on 24 December 1944; by 9 January, all troops had embarked. Individual units proceeded to Oahu, where they assembled with other elements of the Joint Expeditionary Force for rehabilitation. This period lasted from 19-26 January 1945. During this time, all men received some liberty ashore and took part in supervised recreation.

From 27 December 1944 to 8 January 1945, the 4th Marine Division moved on board its transports off Maui. The 5th Marine Division loaded at Hawaii from 25 December to mid-January. The men of the 3d Marine Division on Guam were not scheduled to begin embarkation for another month.

Final rehearsals for the remainder of the landing force were held in the Marianas during the second week of February. Also participating in these rehearsals were aircraft and ships of the Amphibious Support Force (TF 52), commanded by Admiral Blandy, and the Naval Gunfire and Covering Force (TF 54), under Rear Admiral Bertram J. Rodgers. The final exercises had the primary aim of testing coordi-

nation between the attack force and the supporting arms. Shore fire control parties actually landed on Tinian and tested communications in connection with a simulated bombardment. Sea conditions made it impractical to boat the troops during that part of the exercises conducted on 12 February; on the following day, however, the troops debarked, waves were formed, and landing craft were taken to within 300 yards of the beaches on the west coast of Tinian.

On 15 February, the combat-loaded LSTs (tractor groups) departed for the target area; during the afternoon of the following day, Transport Squadrons 15 and 16, carrying the landing force assault troops moved out, screened by cruisers and destroyers. On the same day, ships carrying the 3d Tank Battalion, corps engineers, naval construction battalions, one corps artillery and two U. S. Army antiaircraft artillery battalions left Guam. On 17 February, Transport Squadron 11 departed Guam, carrying the 3d Marine Division as Expeditionary Troops Reserve. During the voyage to Iwo Jima, RCT 26 was released from Corps Reserve to the 5th Marine Division. RCT 21, which was embarked in Transport Division 32, left Guam on the evening of 16 February, to be released from Expeditionary Troops Reserve to Corps Reserve when it reached Iwo in midmorning of 19 February.

As the invasion fleet silently moved towards the objective, Admiral Turner's flagship, the USS *Eldorado*, carried a distinguished passenger, who on 15 February had boarded the ship with such little fanfare that a large number of the crew initially was unaware of his presence. It was James V. Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy, intent on witnessing the imminent operation as an observer. Dressed in khakis without insignia of any kind, he might easily have been mistaken for one of the civilian war correspondents on board the command ship.[3]

The Japanese were aware of the armada's departure from Saipan almost as soon as it had gotten under way. Whether the fleet was spotted by an enemy aircraft or submarine has never been clearly established, though at least one source credits a naval patrol plane with having reported on 13 February that 170 ships were moving northwest from Saipan.[4] As a result, all Japanese troops in the Volcano-Bonins were placed on a state of alert.

The reaction to the news that an American invasion force was moving towards the Bonins or the Volcano Islands was nothing short of explosive in the home islands, where emotions had already been whipped to a fever pitch:

> Uniformed schoolboys stormed into Perry Park at Kurihama, near Yokohama, the site where Commodore Perry had come ashore nearly a century before to reopen Japan to the Western world. The boys, rallying under the banner of the Imperial Rule Assistance Youth Corps, rushed the granite shaft and in a frenzy of patriotism toppled it to the ground and spat upon it.[5]

No such hysteria gripped General Kuribayashi and his Iwo Jima garrison. The Japanese defenses on the island had progressed as far as they ever would. In the time available to fortify

[3] Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, p. 251.
[4] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 59.
[5] *Ibid.*

the island, all that could possibly be done had been accomplished. Filled with great fighting spirit, reverence for the Emperor, and determination to drive the invaders back into the sea, the enemy sat in his dugouts and waited.

PRELIMINARY AIR AND NAVAL BOMBARDMENT[6]

Actually, the battle for Iwo Jima had opened long before the first ships of the American invasion fleet hove into view off the island. Following the first large-scale carrier raid of June 1944, regularly scheduled air strikes against the target began in August. Air operations against Iwo passed through two stages. First, there was the strategic phase prior to 16 February 1945, carried out mainly by Marianas-based B-24 bombers of the Seventh Air Force. Beginning on 8 December, and continuing for 74 consecutive days, the bombers rained death and destruction on the Volcano-Bonin Islands. Iwo Jima received special attention.[7] Marine PBJs (B-25 medium bombers) of VMB-612 participated in this bomber offensive from early December 1944 until the last days of January 1945. Operating from the Marianas under the Army Air Forces VII Bomber Command, the Marine aviators flew night missions over the Volcano-Bonin Islands with special emphasis on the disruption of enemy shipping, since it was known that the Japanese, vulnerable to American air attack during the daytime, were making a frantic effort to rush supplies to Iwo and nearby islands at night.

As of 31 January 1945, all air missions were executed in accordance with the Iwo Jima Air Support Plan.[8] During the last three weeks preceding the invasion, B-24s from the Marianas flew 30 sorties a day or more against the island.[9] The overall purpose of the bombing was to neutralize the airfields and installations on Iwo, destroy gun positions and fixed defenses, and unmask additional targets.[10] Initially, the

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[6] Additional material in this section is derived from: FMFPac, Naval Gunfire Section, Rpt on NG Support in Operations, hereafter *FMFPac NGS*; FMFPac, Naval Gunfire Section, The Bargaining Phase, Iwo Jima Bombardment, 24Oct44-20Jan45, hereafter *Iwo Preliminary Gunfire Requirements;* FMFPac, Naval Gunfire Section, Preliminary Rpt on NGF in Iwo Jima Operation, 1Apr45; Amphibious Forces, U. S. Pacific Flt, Amphibious Gunnery Bulletin No. 1, Capture of Iwo Jima, 11Mar45; Fifth Flt, NGF Support, Exp Trps Rpt, 16Jun45, hereafter *Fifth Flt NGF Rpt;* TF 56, Sp Rpt on Air Ops in Support of the Capture of Iwo Jima, n.d.; *VAC AR*, Anx C, Apps 2 and 3, NGF and Air Rpts, 30Apr45 and 30May45, hereafter *VAC NGF and Air Rpts;* Col Robert D. Heinl, Jr. "Target Iwo," *U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, v. 89, no. 7, (Jul63), pp. 71–82, hereafter, Heinl, *Target Iwo;* Col Donald M. Weller, "Salvo-Splash! —The Development of NGF Support in World War II," *U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, Pt 1, v. 80, no. 8 (Aug54), pp. 839–849; Pt 2, v. 80, no. 9 (Sep54), pp. 1011–1021.

[7] AAF POA, Rpt of Participation in the Iwo Jima Op, 1945, p. 75.

[8] CTF 51 OPlan, A25–44, dtd 27Dec44.

[9] *TF 51 AR*, Pt V, Sec E, pp. 17–18.

[10] "While it was true that the runways were not kept out of operation for any length of time, it was also true that after 2 January 1945 no enemy air raids were made from Iwo Jima fields against the B–29 bases in the Marianas. The B–24s used large quantities of 100-pound bombs and fragmentation bombs, which obviously were not intended to destroy fixed defense installations such as blockhouses, pillboxes, etc. The B–24 targets on Iwo Jima specified in VII Bomber Command mission

land-based missions against Iwo were executed under the Commander, Task Force 93, Lieutenant General Millard F. Harmon, USA. As the invasion date neared, the bomber raids were conducted in accordance with requests from the Commander, Joint Expeditionary Force.

Beginning 16 February, air attacks against Iwo increased in frequency until a daylight attack hit the island at least once every 24 hours. In addition, Iwo was exposed to night harassing missions and fighter sweeps. Photographic reconnaissance flights attempted to obtain a last-minute picture of enemy defenses prior to the invasion.

At numerous times prior to D-Day, aerial photographic reconnaissance attempted to estimate the effectiveness of both aerial and naval bombardment of the target with particular emphasis on the study of selected target areas which had been the subject of specific strike requests. Among the last of these studies was one submitted to the Chief of Staff (C/S) of VAC on 9 February 1945. The first paragraph of this report poignantly stated:

> Photographic coverage of Iwo Jima to 24 January 1945 indicates that damage to installations resulting from bombing strikes between 3 December 1944 and 24 January 1945 was, on the whole, negligible. These strikes have apparently not prevented the enemy from improving his defensive position and, as of 24 January 1945, his installations of all categories had notably increased in number. The island is now far more heavily defended by gun positions and field fortifications than it was on 15 October 1944, when initial heavy bombing strikes were initiated.[11]

This information was corroborated in a special memorandum submitted by the G-2 to the C/S on 13 February.[12] This memorandum compared the enemy's static defenses between 3 December 1944 and 10 February 1945, and noted significant increases in the number of heavy weapons and field fortifications, particularly blockhouses and pillboxes.

A further evaluation of the constant bombing indicated that it was not altogether ineffective: the destruction of aircraft on the ground and the temporary neutralization of the Iwo airfields was accomplished. On the other hand, gun emplacements, blockhouses, pillboxes, shelters, and other strong points proved far less vulnerable owing to the thorough preparation of such installations against attack from the air and naval gunfire. The rugged terrain with its countless caves afforded excellent protection from high level bombing.[13]

Even the bomber attacks against the Iwo Jima airfields could not prevent their use by the enemy for any appreciable length of time. In evaluating the effectiveness of the air strikes, the Army Air Forces had to concede "that at no time were all of Iwo's strips rendered inoperational and no single strip was

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reports for February 1945 were generally AA defenses and radio/radar installations." Dr. Robert F. Futrell ltr to Head, HistBr, G–3 Div, HQMC, dtd 7Jul69, hereafter *Air Force Comment*, in *Iwo Comments*.

[11] Encl C, Extract from Bomb Damage Assessment, G–2 Rpt no. 2, 9Feb45, p. 4, in *TF 56 AR*.

[12] State of Enemy Defenses, Iwo Jima, dtd 13Feb45, in *ibid.*, p. 5.

[13] TF 56 SplRpt, Air Operations in the Support of the Capture of Iwo Jima, n.d., p. 3.

out of service for a whole day: the destructive Christmas raid on Saipan was run the day after a heavy air-sea bombardment of Iwo.[14]

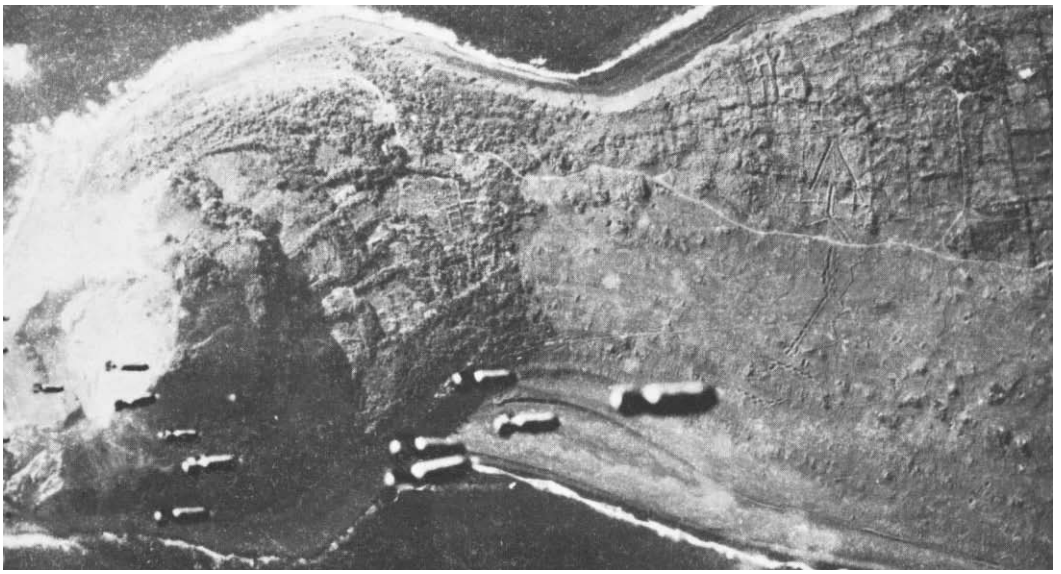
As D-Day for Operation DETACHMENT approached, the Army Air Forces stepped up the assault against Iwo. Between 1 and 16 February, Seventh Air Force bombers flew 283 daylight sorties, dropping 602 tons of bombs and 1,111 drums of napalm; in the same period, B-24s flew 233 night snooper missions, dropping 504 tons of bombs. On 12 February, 21 B-29s of the 313th Bombardment Wing dropped 84 tons of bombs on carefully pinpointed gun emplacements on Mount Suribachi as well as on antiaircraft positions and radio and radar installations elsewhere on the island. Again results were disappointing because the bombers flew at moderately high altitudes and frequently released their bombs by radar because of cloudy weather. In any case, the bomber crews found it extremely difficult to score square hits on the cleverly concealed and deeply dug-in targets. Napalm was dropped for the purpose of burning off the camouflage, but this method was unsuccessful, partly because of inaccurate drops and partly because the rocks and ashes used as cover would not burn.

In view of the failure of the bombing assault to inflict crippling damage on the Japanese on Iwo, the preliminary naval gunfire bombardment of the island, a vital and indispensable prelude to the operation, was bound to grow in importance. The very nature of an amphibious assault against a strongly fortified enemy bastion, largely devoid of the element of surprise, made it mandatory for the preliminary gunfire to eliminate a sizable portion of the enemy defenses. Without this shore bombardment, the very success of the assault could become imperiled or severe casualties could result among the Marines slated to go ashore. It was in this vital realm of naval gunfire support that Marine and Navy leaders of the Iwo expedition failed to achieve complete accord; the former, represented by General Holland Smith, had seen in previous assaults what fire from an enemy not sufficiently subdued could do to Marine assault waves nearing the shore of a well-defended island.

General Smith's anxiety increased the closer D-Day approached. This experienced Marine leader compared Iwo to a worm that became stronger the more it was cut up, for the island seemed to thrive on the American aerial bombardment. The leader of the expeditionary troops was to recall his feeling of what was ahead:

> My own study of early air photographs indicated that a situation of an incredible nature existed on the island. It was plain that Iwo Jima had fortifications the like and extent of which we had never encountered. Mindful of Tarawa, where most of the fortifications were above ground and were still standing when the Marines landed, my opinion was that far more naval gunfire was needed on an island five times the size of Tarawa, with many more times the number of defenses, most of them deep under ground.
>
> I could not forget the sight of Marines floating in the lagoon or lying on the beaches at Tarawa, men who died assaulting defenses which should have been taken

[14] Hist Air War POA, III, Anx to p. 129, pp. 143–150, p. 159. AAF Eval Bd POA, Rpt no. 7, cited in Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, pp. 584–585.



PREINVASION BOMBING *of Iwo Jima by the U.S. Seventh Air Force. Note Mt. Suribachi in left foreground. (USAF 54717 AC)*

AERIAL VIEW OF IWO JIMA LANDINGS *as assault waves head for the shore. Mt. Suribachi looms in the background. (USN 80–G–415308)*

> out by naval gunfire. At Iwo Jima, the problem was far more difficult. If naval guns could not knock out visible defenses, how could they smash invisible defenses except by sheer superabundance of fire?[15]

General Smith and his staff were in agreement that the softening up of Iwo Jima would have to be preceded by an especially lengthy period of intense naval gunfire. The type of guns, as well as the amount and type of ammunition required to do a thorough job, hinged on the intelligence on the kind and number of targets. Based on such intelligence, the number of ships to be employed in the bombardment force could be computed with some degree of accuracy. The guaranteed destruction of a target required visual identification by a spotter on board ship or in the air, followed by precision adjustment. In addition to competence in surface gunnery, the men directing this shore bombardment required special training and experience. On the basis of previous operations at Tarawa, Guam, Saipan, and Peleliu, Marine planners knew that the process of preliminary gunfire could not be hurried.

As early as September 1944, the staff of VAC, supported by members of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, had begun the preparation of detailed planning for the naval gunfire required for the assault on Iwo Jima. This planning was carried out under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel Donald M. Weller, who had been designated Naval Gunfire Officer for both VAC and FMFPac. Since, even at this early stage of the planning effort, it was known that Iwo Jima represented one of the most heavily fortified strongpoints on earth, Marine planners stipulated that a force of battleships and cruisers would require 10 days to reduce point targets on the island that could bring direct fire to bear on either of the two landing beaches then under consideration. On 24 October 1944, VAC submitted to Admiral Turner its naval gunfire requirements, which called for a preliminary bombardment force of seven battleships, seven heavy cruisers, and two light cruisers.[16]

Meanwhile, Admiral Turner's gunnery officers had also worked on the naval gunfire requirements for Operation DETACHMENT. Their conclusions differed materially from those of the Marines. In this respect, the naval officers' viewpoint was influenced by a number of factors that unintentionally were to work to the disadvantage of the Marine assault force. Foremost among these was the consideration that the initial surface bombardment had to be closely coordinated with the first carrier attack against Tokyo by the Fast Carrier Force (TF 58). Admiral Spruance initially had planned that a carrier strike on Tokyo was to coincide with the opening of the prelanding bombardment of Iwo Jima. Once the naval bombardment started, all tactical surprise at Iwo would be lost. The longer the prelanding bombardment continued, the more it became likely that enemy aircraft from the home islands would interfere with the landings. A two-day carrier strike against Japan would detract enemy attention from Iwo. At the same

[15] Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, pp. 243–244.

[16] CG, VAC ltr to ComPhibPac, dtd 24Oct44, in *Iwo Preliminary Gunfire Requirements*.

time, naval aviation could strike a blow at the enemy's aircraft manufacturing plants, which thus far had escaped crippling damage from landbased aircraft. Sustained air attacks would be required to reduce enemy aircraft production. Admiral Spruance observed, nevertheless, that he could see no object in combatting these aircraft around the perimeter if accurate bombing could wreck the factories that produced the enemy planes. As a result, carrier aircraft were to be employed against a strategic, rather than a tactical objective.[17]

Somewhere in the course of the naval planning process, the air strike against Honshu began to loom ever larger in importance until what had started out as a diversionary maneuver began to turn, in the minds of the naval planning staff, into the major attraction. More and more emphasis was placed on the importance of the naval air strike against Japan; the imminent assault on Iwo gradually began to recede further into the background. Naval planners, in reaching their own conclusions as to what could be made available by way of preliminary gunfire, had to consider limitations on the availability of ships, difficulty in replenishing ammunition, and a tight schedule that made it necessary to launch and complete the Iwo operation with all possible dispatch to avoid any delay in the assault on Okinawa, which was to follow closely at the heels of Operation DETACHMENT.

The two widely varying viewpoints of Marine and Navy naval gunfire planning staffs soon found their expression in the times recommended for preliminary naval gunfire by the Navy commanders and those of the Marine landing force. The initial VAC request for naval gunfire not only asked for a minimum of 10 days' bombardment, but also stipulated that D-Day be made dependent on "the successful prosecution of the destruction of enemy defensive installations."[18]

Marine Corps naval gunfire requirements, strongly endorsed by General Holland Smith, were forwarded to the Commander, Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet. The expectation was that the Navy would generally concur with what was considered a carefully prepared and reasonable estimate of the naval gunfire required to ensure the quick seizure of the objective with a minimum of casualties. To the surprise and consternation of Marine planners, Admiral Turner informed VAC on 15 November that "a methodical and thorough bombardment would be instituted by the Amphibious Support Force on Dog minus three."[19]

Faced unexpectedly with a reduction of the vital naval gunfire support from 10 days to 3, General Schmidt had a special staff study prepared, consisting of detailed tabulations, and an appended interpretation and evaluation of these very detailed statistics. As a concession, the study pointed out that the overall time for preliminary fires of all types, including support of Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) and minesweep-

[17] Forrestel, *Admiral Spruance*, p. 171.

[18] CG, VAC ltr to ComPhibPac, dtd 24Oct44, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

[19] ComPhibPac ltr to CG, VAC, dtd 15Nov44, in *Iwo Preliminary Gunfire Requirements*.

ing operations, as well as the systematic preparatory missions, should not be less than nine days.[20]

Admiral Turner countered the VAC recommendations with a letter that praised the Marine planners and at the same time dashed icy water on any hopes that VAC would receive anything approaching the nine days of naval gunfire. In Turner's words:

> . . . the preliminary Naval Gunfire Estimates for the assault of Iwo Jima given in the basic letter are much the best such analysis ever submitted to this command. It is desired not only to meet the wishes expressed in the letter as far as limitations of ships, ammunition, and time permit, but also to furnish even more support than asked for, up to the limit of naval capabilities.[21]

Attached to the basic letter were comments supporting the naval viewpoint. Once again, the efforts of VAC to obtain what it considered a minimum amount of naval gunfire preparation had been thwarted. Nevertheless, General Schmidt was not yet ready to accept the inevitable. By way of another proposal, this one a severe compromise, he asked that the preliminary bombardment begin on D minus 4.

In this request, the Commading General, VAC, was strongly seconded by General Holland Smith, who pointed out that from lessons learned in previous operations and from continued study and analysis of Operation DETACHMENT, he considered four full days for the preliminary bombardment the absolute minimum necessary for success. General Smith went on to warn that unless the strong Japanese defenses were destroyed or at least neutralized, casualties far beyond any heretofore suffered in the Central Pacific had to be expected; in fact, the success of the entire operation might be jeopardized.[22]

On 30 November, it appeared that Admiral Turner was willing to go along with four days of naval gunfire, provided both that the Commander Fifth Fleet agreed, and that the fast carrier strike force could deliver its blow against Japan on D minus 4.[23] Upon being apprised for the recommended extra day of naval gunfire, Admiral Spruance disapproved the request. The rejection was based on three reasons. First, Spruance insisted that the initial surface bombardment had to coincide with the initial carrier attack upon the Tokyo area. Second, the Commander, Fifth Fleet, thought that the situation on Iwo Jima differed from that previously encountered on Saipan for the reason that by D-Day the enemy personnel and fixed defenses at Iwo would have been under heavy shore-based air attack for a considerable period of time. According to Spruance, this prolonged air bombardment, which was not undertaken at Saipan, had to be considered at least as effective as the recommended additional day of ship bombardment. Third, the admiral pointed out that there would be no early opportunity for

[20] CG VAC ltr to CG, FMFPac, dtd 8Nov44, in *ibid.*

[21] ComPhibPac ltr to CG, VAC, dtd 26Nov44, in *ibid.*

[22] CG, FMFPac ltr to ComPhibPac, dtd 26-Nov44, in *ibid.*

[23] ComPhibPac ltr to ComFifthFlt, dtd 30Nov-44, in *ibid.*

replacement of naval ammunition, a large proportion of which had to be saved for support on D-Day. There was a limit to the quantity of ammunition available for pre-D-Day bombardment and no advantage was seen in delivering that quantity in four days rather than in three.[24]

Still, the last word on the subject of naval gunfire support had not yet been spoken, and during the first week of January the Marines tried again. On the 2d, General Schmidt once again pleaded for an extension of the preliminary bombardment period. On this occasion, he suggested that either the time allotted for the preliminary bombardment be increased or the fire be concentrated against the main landing beaches, leaving other parts of the island for later. Once again, General Holland Smith supported the VAC request adding that since the overall time element was an important factor in the capture of Iwo Jima, a preliminary bombardment of sufficient time would actually reduce the duration of the operation. Smith reiterated that the effects of the horizontal bombing attacks on the objective had thus far been negligible and that the final result of the air offensive against the island could not be expected to measure up to the benefits derived from an additional day of naval bombardment. The Commanding General, FMFPac, warned that only an adequate, methodical preliminary bombardment could reduce the island defenses to a point where a quick capture was assured. The preliminary bombardment then planned not only would increase the overall time necessary to complete the operation, but also would require an unnecessary expenditure of lives during the initial assault phase.[25]

In his memoirs, General Smith conceded with some bitterness that his warning did not fall on fertile ground:

> Limited, against our better judgment, to only three days' preliminary bombardment there seemed nothing to do but make the best of the situation . . . Thus we were defeated—a group of trained and experienced land fighters, our full realization of the necessity for naval gunfire based on many previous island operations—again overridden by the naval mind. Finding ourselves in this dilemma, we had tried our best to enlighten the high command, feeling that our judgment would be respected, but naval expediency won again.[26]

Even while the duration of the preliminary naval bombardment was still under discussion, the force required to deliver this fire was being organized. The Amphibious Support Force (TF 52), commanded by Rear Admiral Blandy, consisted of a Gunfire and Covering Force (TF 54) under Rear Admiral Rodgers; a Support Carrier Group (TG 52.2) under Rear Admiral Calvin T. Durgin; a Mine Group (TG 52.3), commanded by Rear Admiral Alexander Sharp; an Underwater Demolition Group (TG 52.4), commanded by Captain B. Hall Hanlon; Gunboat Support Units One and Two (TUs 52.5.1 and 52.2.2), headed by Commander Michael J. Malanaphy; and an Air Support Unit (TU 52.10), under Captain Elton C. Parker.

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[24] ComFifthFlt, ltr to ComPhibPac, dtd 2-Dec44, in *ibid.*

[25] CG, FMFPac ltr to ComFifthFlt, dtd 6Jan45, in *ibid.*

[26] Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, pp. 246–247.

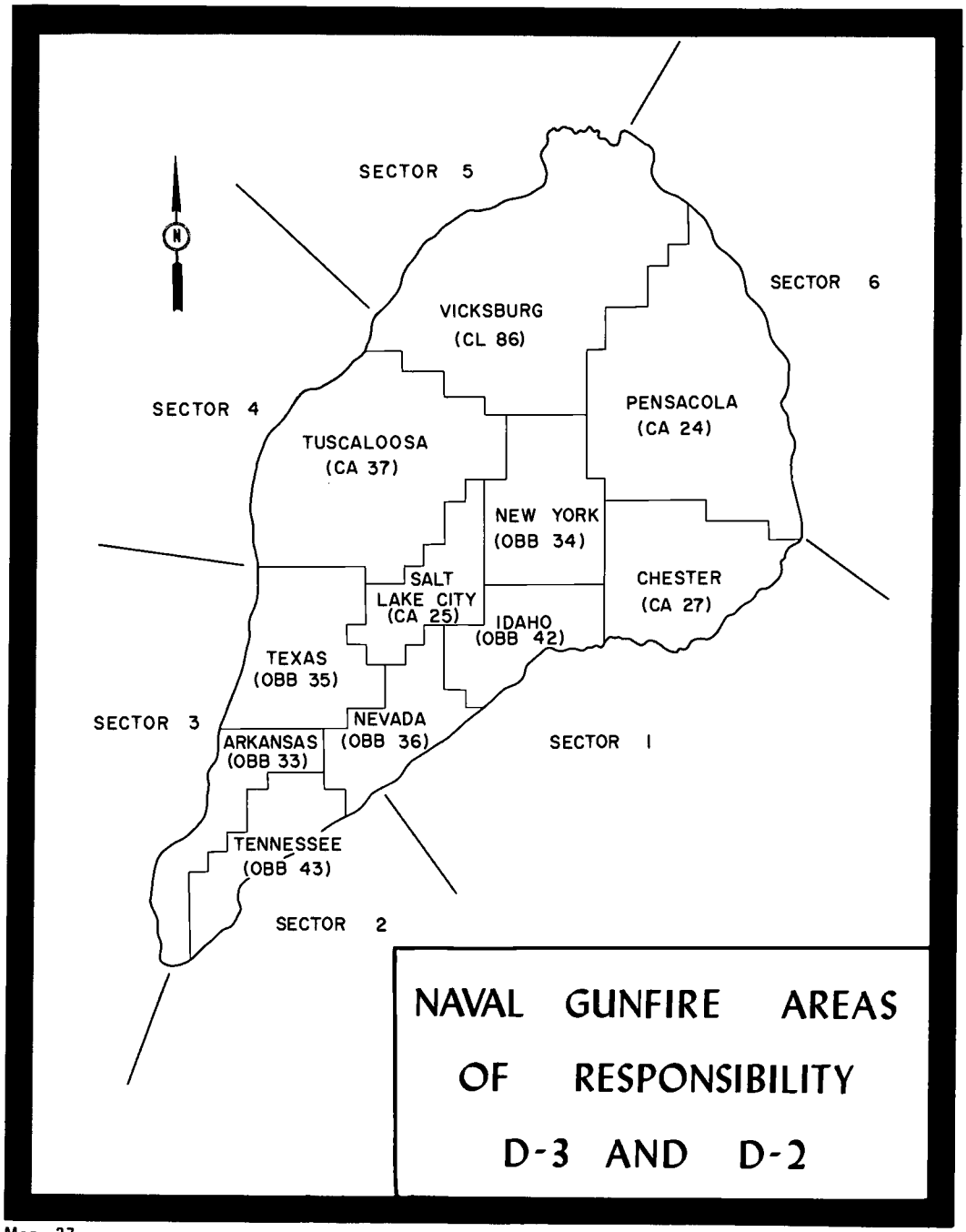
The limitation of the preliminary bombardment to three days placed a heavy burden on the support ships of TF 54, whose mission it was to knock out or neutralize the most powerful and menacing enemy defenses prior to D-Day. There were no less than 724 Type A and B priority targets [27] to be destroyed during 16, 17, and 18 February. The mission was to be executed by 6 battleships, 4 heavy cruisers, 1 light cruiser, and 16 destroyers. The battleships were the *Tennessee, Idaho, Texas, New York, Nevada,* and *Arkansas;* the *Chester, Salt Lake City, Tuscaloosa,* and *Pensacola* made up the heavy cruiser force; the light cruiser was the *Vicksburg.* The *Arkansas, Texas,* and *Nevada* were veterans of the Normandy invasion in June 1944; the *New York* had seen previous service during the invasion of North Africa in 1942. Two new battleships, the *North Carolina* and the *Washington,* each equipped with 16–inch guns, were the most powerful ships initially slated to take part in the preinvasion bombardment. They were withdrawn, however, to take part in the strike of Task Force 58 against Tokyo.

On board the AGC *Estes* were Admiral Blandy and his staff, responsible for all operations against Iwo during the preassault period. Lieutenant Colonel Weller was also on board the *Estes,* heading the Marine gunfire team. Marines under his command were stationed on board each ship participating in the preassault firing. The bombardment plan incorporated lessons learned in the European and Pacific Theaters of Operations. Iwo Jima had been divided into numbered squares and each square was assigned to a specific ship. (See Map 27). Every target was numbered, and on board the *Estes* was a master card index which consisted of a card with appropriate information for each target. Carrier pilots, with special training as gunfire spotters, were ready to take to the air from the carrier *Wake Island* to act as eyes for the bombardment ships. An elaborate radio net had been set up to coordinate the efforts of the various gunfire teams. Since area bombardment had been found wasteful and inefficient in previous operations, all fire support units had been ordered to fire only when specific targets could be identified and the effects of the shelling could be observed from the air.[28]

Early on 16 February, just as Admiral Mitscher was launching his planes against the Japanese homeland, Admiral Blandy's bombardment fleet appeared off Iwo Jima in plain view of the Japanese garrison. Aware of the approach of the invasion force, General Kuribayashi had on the previous night dispatched to Tokyo an urgent request for the *Imperial Japanese Fleet* to come out and engage the American forces. The reply to his urgent plea was negative; the *Imperial Fleet* would not

[27] Target priorities for the preliminary bombardment were: *Priority A:* Installations threatening ships, aircraft, and UDT operations (coast defense and antiaircraft guns, artillery emplacements and antitank guns). *Priority B*: Installations threatening the landing force in the ship to shore movement (blockhouses, covered artillery, pillboxes, machine guns, and command posts). *Priority C:* Installations such as caves, ammunition and fuel dumps, and bivouac areas.

[28] Adm W. H. P. Blandy ltr to CMC, dtd 20Jan53, in *Iwo Comments.*



Map 27 E.L. Wilson

come out now, but on 1 April, when it would sally forth and push the Americans back all the way to the mainland.[29]

The shore bombardment began at 0800, with support vessels following the minesweepers. It became apparent almost at once that prevailing weather conditions precluded the execution of scheduled firing. A low ceiling made it impossible for observers and spotters to perform their duties. Each ship fired in its assigned sector only when the weather permitted. On those infrequent occasions, intensive antiaircraft fire from the island forced observation planes to maintain an altitude above 3,000 feet, too high for an accurate assessment of the effects of the naval gunfire.

Despite the unfavorable weather, the air offensive against Iwo continued on D minus 3, though on a vastly reduced scale. Eight Navy fighters attacked Airfield Number 1 with rockets, while other carrier aircraft attacked gun emplacements on Mount Suribachi. During the afternoon, 42 B–24 bombers arrived from the Marianas, but by this time the overcast had thickened, so Admiral Blandy ordered them back home with their bombs still aboard. Altogether, on 16 February, carrier aircraft from Rear Admiral Calvin T. Durgin's Support Carrier Group (TG 52.2) flew 158 sorties. Until the airfields on Iwo were secured, carrier-based aircraft would have to furnish all the close air support for the combat troops ashore.[30]

During the afternoon of the 16th, little more was accomplished as far as the destruction of primary targets on Iwo Jima was concerned. During one tense moment, the pilot of one of the spotter planes from the *Pensacola*, an OS2U Kingfisher, reported that there was a Zero on his tail. To everyone's surprise, the much faster Zero missed the slow moving target, and as he roared by, the pilot of the spotter plane fired into the Japanese fighter's tail, causing the plane to crash. The appearance of this Zero marked the only aerial opposition the Japanese offered throughout the day.

During the late afternoon, members of UDT 13 proceeded in small boats to Higashi Rock, about 1½ miles off the eastern beaches, where they placed a marker which flashed at two-second intervals, to be used as a guide for the assault troops. The Japanese observed the men on the rock and fired at them, but failed to inflict any casualties. Their mission completed, the frogmen withdrew. At 1800, the bombardment ships sailed further out to sea for the night. An undetermined number of the several hundred priority targets on Iwo had been destroyed by the first day's bombardment. Poor visibility precluded an accurate assessment of the results. It was not an auspicious beginning for the Marines.

Six hundred miles to the north, Admiral Mitscher's Fast Carrier Force had also gone into action on the 16th. From a launching position only 60 miles off the Japanese mainland, TF 58 unleashed its carrier planes against the Tokyo area in the early morning hours, spe-

[29] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 67.

[30] USS *Makin Island* Action Report, Iwo Jima, 10Feb–11Mar45, pp. 2–3.

cifically against aircraft plants that previous Army Air Forces B–29 raids had failed to obliterate. Despite a low ceiling and bad weather, the carrier pilots, in two days of pounding the Japanese homeland, inflicted heavy damage on enemy war plants. In addition, TF 58 claimed 341 enemy planes shot down, 190 destroyed on the ground, at a cost of 60 aircraft lost in combat and 28 operationally.[31] When weather conditions deteriorated on 17 February and temperatures dropped so low that a considerable number of guns of carrier aircraft froze, Admiral Mitscher cancelled further strikes. After recovering its planes, TF 58 began retiring towards Iwo Jima during the afternoon of the 17th, a day sooner than had been planned. During the night from 17–18 February, destroyers of TF 58 en route to the landing force objective destroyed several small enemy picket boats and rammed a fourth. In passing Chichi Jima and Haha Jima to the north of Iwo, carrier planes attacked the airfield on the former and destroyed several small vessels offshore. TF 58 approached Iwo Jima during the afternoon of the 18th and prepared to lend direct support to the landings scheduled for the morning of the 19th.

The activities of Admiral Blandy's bombardment force off Iwo Jima on 17 February were to be of decisive importance, particularly in view of the fact that little damage on the Japanese defenses had been inflicted by the shelling of the previous day. All indications were that the second day of the prelanding bombardment would be more successful than the first, for the morning's weather had brought clear skies and excellent visibility. The schedule for 17 February called for fighter sweeps against Chichi Jima, minesweeping off Iwo Jima, and beach reconnaissance by Underwater Demolition Teams, closely supported by the large ships, destroyers, and LCI gunboats. During the early afternoon, B-24s were slated to give the island another going over.

Shortly after 0800, a dozen minesweepers approached to within 750 yards of the island, searching for mines and obstacles and probing the reefs and shoals. The tiny wooden vessels drew small arms fire from Mount Suribachi, but refused to be deterred from their mission. No mines or shallows were discovered. At 0840, the battleships *Nevada, Idaho,* and *Tennessee* moved to within 3,000 yards from shore to provide close support for the UDT team operations scheduled for 1100 that morning. The three vessels opened fire at almost point blank range. It quickly became apparent that the Japanese did not intend to take this bombardment lying down, and the covering fire support vessels drew heavy fire from enemy shore batteries. First to receive a hit was the *Tennessee,* which had four men injured shortly before 0900, though the ship itself suffered no damage.[32]

Around 0930, the *Pensacola* came close in under the cliffs of the east coast of Iwo in order to provide cover for the minesweepers. Even though the Japa-

[31] TF 58 OpRpt, 10Feb–4Mar45, hereafter *TF 58 OpRpt*; cf. ComAirPac "Analysis of Air Operations, Tokyo Carrier Strikes, Feb45," dtd 28Apr45, cited in Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*, p. 25.

[32] *TF 52 AR*, p. A-38.

nese had received specific orders to hold their fire, the temptation for one gun crew of having such a juicy target pass within 1,500 meters of its gun proved too much; the enemy gunner opened fire at the heavy cruiser with the 150mm gun. The first round was 50 yards short. The *Pensacola* took immediate evasive action, but by this time the Japanese had the range and in a matter of three minutes scored six hits on the vessel. The shells wrecked the combat information center, set fire to a plane on the starboard catapult, punctured the hull, and killed 17 and wounded 120 of the ship's crew.[33] Among the dead was the executive officer. Despite the heavy damage and the extensive casualties, the *Pensacola* continued to fire as she withdrew to extinguish the fire and repair damage. She continued to carry out her mission, ceasing fire from time to time while casualties were being operated on and given blood transfusions.[34]

Shortly before 1100, nearly 100 UDT swimmers headed for the island. The hazardous mission of these daredevil frogmen was to check beach and surf conditions, look for underwater obstacles both at the approaches to the landing beaches themselves and on the beaches, and to destroy any such impediments while in plain view of the enemy. As the swimmers neared the island, they came under heavy mortar and small arms fire. Covering them were 12 LCIs, stationed about 1,000 yards offshore, from where they directed a steady barrage of rockets and 40mm gunfire against the beaches. This fire, and particularly the launching of the rockets, presumably led the enemy to believe that an assault against Iwo Jima was under way. In any case, contrary to the orders they had received to hold their fire until the assault force had landed, Japanese heavy artillery to the north of the eastern beaches and at the foot of Suribachi opened fire on the lightly armored gunboats. In the course of this uneven contest, which continued for 45 minutes, the LCIs absorbed a severe pounding. An official report noted:

> The personnel of these little gunboats displayed magnificent courage as they returned fire with everything they had and refused to move out until they were forced to do so by material and personnel casualties. Even then, after undergoing terrific punishment, some returned to their stations amid a hail of fire, until again heavily hit. Relief LCI(G)s replaced damaged ships without hesitation.[35]

During the furious though unequal exchange of fire, all of the 12 gunboats were hit. The Japanese damaged LCI *474* so badly that the crew had to abandon the ship; when it capsized later, friendly shells sent it to the bottom. Intensive fire from destroyers and fire support ships, and a smoke screen laid by white phosphorus projectiles, were used to cover this operation. Fire support ships took on board casualties from the LCI(G)s as they withdrew. Altogether, 7 men had been killed and 153 wounded in the LCIs; the destroyer *Leutze* also had received a direct hit which killed 7 and wounded 33. Only 6 of the 12 gunboats, LCIs *438, 449,*

[33] *TF 51 AR*, Pt V, Sec H, MedRpt, Table II, p. 6.

[34] *U. S. Fleet OpRpt*, Iwo Jima, pp. 1–13.

[35] *Ibid.*

450, 466, 457, and *469* made it back to Saipan under their own power.

By 1220 all of the frogmen, with one exception, had been recovered; the fate of the missing man was to remain unknown. The members of the four UDT teams had accomplished their mission. Their reconnaissance had disclosed that there were no underwater or beach obstructions or minefields. Beach and surf conditions were found to be favorable for a landing. In fact, some of the swimmers actually had crawled out of the water to collect soil samples for examination on board ship.[36]

While the badly damaged LCIs were withdrawing out to sea, the *Nevada* delivered a heavy and concentrated counterbattery fire against the enemy artillery positions until 1240. At the same time, the battleship *Tennessee* and two others, the *Idaho* and the *Nevada,* put down a smoke screen along the entire eastern beach area to cover the withdrawal of the frogmen. The smoke screen also obscured the view of supporting destroyers and battleships, which experienced difficulty in picking out enemy weapons because of the smoke screen over the water and the dust kicked up by shells bursting on the island.

The work of the UDTs was not completed with the exploration of the eastern beaches; a reconnaissance of the western beaches was scheduled for the afternoon of the 17th. As elements of the UDTs were preparing for the second reconnaissance, heavy bombardment ships began to pound top priority targets on the east coast. The heavy enemy fire from hitherto unsuspected positions had brought home to officers conducting the preliminary bombardment the fact that a large amount of damage remained to be inflicted on the enemy installations. Admiral Blandy revised ammunition allotments upward to permit heavier concentrations of fire against the eastern beaches, particularly those areas sheltering the recently spotted enemy coast defense guns. Admiral Rodgers, commanding the Gunfire and Covering Force (TF 54), recommended to Admiral Blandy that all available fire power be brought to bear against top priority installations around Mount Suribachi and on the high ground north of the eastern beaches. This recommendation was approved, and for the remainder of the 17th, Fire Support Units One and Two, including the *Nevada, Idaho, Tennessee, Vicksburg,* and *Salt Lake City* executed close range fire missions against those areas.

The UDT reconnaissance of the western beaches got under way at 1615, under the protection of three battleships and a cruiser. Once again, the swimmers drew Japanese automatic weapons and rifle fire, but on this occasion there were no casualties and at 1800 the frogmen, having completed the reconnaissance, returned to their APDs. One mine was discovered and destroyed. No minefields or water obstacles blocked the approach to the western beaches. Both beaches and surf conditions were thought to be suitable for landing. Twenty-two Marines from the reconnaissance companies of the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions had accompanied the

[36] *TF 52 AR,* Pt C, p. 1,; Cdr D. L. Kauffman, USN, ltr to HistBr, HQMC, dtd 13Jan53, in *Iwo Comments.*

UDT teams on both beach reconnaissance exploits. Upon completion of these missions, the Marines returned to their units on board command ships at sea. The intelligence collected by the reconnaissance men provided assault unit commanders with current information about the area they were soon to encounter.

As a result of good weather throughout 17 February, aviation also carried out destructive raids on Iwo Jima during the day. Carrier pilots flew a total of 226 sorties, not counting search and patrol missions. The main targets of these attacks were dual-purpose guns and antiaircraft automatic weapons around the airfields and beach areas. Napalm dropped by eight Navy fighters during the day had only limited success. Some of the bombs did not release; others failed to ignite upon hitting the ground. In any case, there was little left to burn on Iwo. The Japanese did not remain passive in the face of the continuous air attacks, for heavy antiaircraft fire met the attacking planes. A force of 42 Army Air Forces B–24 bombers dropped bombs from an altitude of 5,000 feet, scoring hits in the target area. As far as could be ascertained, however, this bombing inflicted little or no known damage to enemy installations.[37]

Late on the 17th, it became apparent that the Japanese really believed that they had repulsed an invasion of Iwo earlier that day. Radio Tokyo reported that the American landings had been frustrated and that five warships, including a battleship, had been sunk. In a similar vein, Admiral Soemu Toyoda, Commander in Chief of the *Combined Fleet*, sent the following message to Rear Admiral Ichimaru on Iwo:

> Despite very powerful enemy bombings and shellings, your unit at Iwo coolly judged the enemy intentions and foiled the first landing attempt and serenely awaits the next one, determined to hold Iwo at any cost. I am greatly elated to know that, and I wish you to continue to maintain high morale and repulse the enemy, no matter how intense his attacks, and safeguard the outer defenses of our homeland.[38]

Even as the Japanese were rejoicing at the thought of having driven an assault force back out to sea, the top echelon of the American invasion force met in Admiral Blandy's cabin on board the *Estes*. The atmosphere was not a joyful one, for only one more day remained, and two days of bombardment had inflicted comparatively little damage on enemy installations on shore. In fact, following two days of heavy shelling, the Iwo defenses looked more formidable than ever. In Blandy's presence, Commander W. P. Chilton, the gunnery officer, and Lieutenant Colonel Weller, representing the landing force, discussed what should be done. Weller urged that on the last day remaining, all available fire-power be brought to bear against the defenses commanding the beaches. Admiral Blandy approved this recommendation at once.[39]

According to the modified plan drawn up on the evening of 17 February, four

[37] *TF 52 AR*, Encl I, p. 1.

[38] Adm Soemu Toyoda msg to RAdm Toshinosuke Ichimaru n.d., in Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, pp. 82–83.

[39] *VAC NGF and Air Rpts*, p. 15.

battleships, the *Tennessee, Nevada, New York,* and *California,* as well as the heavy cruiser *Chester,* were to concentrate their entire armament of 5–, 8–, and 14–inch guns in a blanket bombardment of the landing areas. The ships received permission to fire all unexpended ammunition, except that needed for D-Day, provided the weather permitted it.

Promptly at 0745 on the morning of the 18th, Admiral Rodgers ordered his Gunfire and Covering Force to "close beach and get going."[40] These ships immediately moved to within 2,500 yards offshore and opened fire. In line with Blandy's special order, the *Tennessee* and *Idaho* were to concentrate their fire against the batteries sited at the foot of Mount Suribachi, as well as against the coast defense guns emplaced on the rim of a quarry about 400 yards north of the East Boat Basin. In executing this vital mission in somewhat less than five hours, the *Tennessee* expended a total of 333 rounds; the *Idaho* fired 280 rounds during the same period of time.[41]

Unfortunately, the weather on 18 February was not nearly so favorable as on the preceding day. Visibility, only fair throughout most of the day, was reduced to poor during the frequent light rains on D minus 1. Despite the handicap imposed by poor observation, the massive bombardment was having its effect. When the last day of the preparatory fire ended shortly before 1830, vital enemy installations had sustained massive damage. Among 201 major targets in the main landing area, 11 coast defense guns, 22 out of 33 five-inch dual-purpose guns, 16 of 20 large blockhouses, and nearly half of the 93 pillboxes had been destroyed or heavily damaged.

While Iwo was receiving a final going over by the bombardment group, Seventh Air Force bombers arrived over the island after a long flight from the Marianas. Once again the weather failed to cooperate, and the air strike had to be cancelled. Naval aviators of the Support Carrier Group, commanded by Rear Admiral Calvin T. Durgin, flew 28 sorties against positions flanking the landing beaches. These were the last of 612 sorties flown by carrier planes against ground targets on Iwo Jima prior to D-Day. Only three of the naval aircraft fell victim to enemy ground fire, and their air crews were rescued.[42]

Late on 18 February, a low-flying enemy plane was to strike a brief but vicious blow against the invasion force. At 2130, the *Blessman* (APD-48) was hit by an enemy bomb which exploded in the troop space above the forward fireroom. In addition to serious material damage, 2 of the courageous frogmen of UDT 15, who had emerged from the hazardous beach reconnaissance missions of the previous day unharmed, were killed, and 20 were wounded. The crew of the *Blessman* suffered 11 wounded.[43] This attack on the evening of 18 February was the only action by enemy aircraft to inflict any damage on American units at or near Iwo during the preinvasion operations.

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[40] *TF 52 AR*, p. 11.

[41] *VAC NGF and Air Rpts*, p. 15.

[42] *TF 52 AR*, Encl D, p. 9.

[43] *TF 51 AR*, Pt IV, p. 13; *TF 52 AR*, Encl H, p. 1.

All that remained now before Marines would hit the Iwo beaches the following morning was the execution of the D-Day fires in preparation for the landings. This pre-H-Hour bombardment would be the Navy's final opportunity to pound the enemy defenses before the assault. In fact, when the heavy support units withdrew from Iwo on the evening of the 18th, the softening-up phase had already come to an end. On the eve of D-Day, Admiral Blandy sent this message to Admiral Turner:

> Though weather has not permitted complete expenditure of entire ammunition allowance and more installations can be found and destroyed with one more day of bombardment, I believe landing can be accomplished tomorrow as scheduled if necessary. I recommend, however, special attention before and during landing to flanks and East Coast of island with neutralizing fire and white phosphorus projectiles immediately available if required.[44]

The final night before the landings was one of deep soul-searching for General Holland Smith, who found that "the imminence of action and the responsibility for the most appalling operation we had yet undertaken weighed heavily."[45] This veteran Marine commander was filled with apprehension by the gravity of the coming battle. Weeks earlier, Smith recalled, when the Navy had overruled the Marines' request for nine days of preparatory gunfire and then withdrew two of the 16-inch gun ships to provide antiaircraft fire for Task Force 58, Admiral Spruance had told him: "I regret this confusion caused in your carefully laid plans, but I know you and your people will get away with it."[46] Smith realized even then that any curtailment in the duration and volume of preparatory naval gunfire would be paid for with the lives of many Marines. Years later, the general was to recall:

> I felt certain we would lose 15,000 men at Iwo Jima. This number was the absolute minimum calculated in our plans made at Pearl Harbor, although some of my officers wistfully predicted a lower figure. So far as the Marines were concerned, we had made every preparation humanly possible to capture the island as expeditiously and as economically as possible. We were to land 60,000 assault troops, and the estimate that one in every four would be dead or wounded never left my mind.
>
> I was not afraid of the outcome of the battle. I knew we would win. We always had. But contemplation of the cost in lives caused me many sleepless nights.[47]

As night descended upon Iwo Jima and its surrounding dark waters on the evening of the 18th, the preliminary bombardment phase came to an end. Early on the 19th a new phase, the assault would begin. The invasion of Iwo Jima would take place without modification of the carefully laid plans.

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[44] CTF 52 msg to CTF 51, NCR 60303, dtd 18Feb45, as cited in Bartley, *Iwo Monograph*, p. 49.

[45] Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, p. 253.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 247.

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 253–254.

D-Day on Iwo Jima[1]

PRE H-HOUR BOMBARDMENT[2]

Early on 19 February, the assault ships of Task Force 53 under Admiral Hill arrived off Iwo Jima and joined Admiral Blandy's Amphibious Support Force. As dawn rose over Iwo Jima, more than 450 ships of the Fifth Fleet lay offshore, the largest armada ever assembled thus far for a military operation in the Pacific Theater.

Included in Admiral Hill's Attack Force were the troop ships carrying the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions. The huge vessels headed towards the transport area about 10,000 yards offshore. On board the ships, 50,000 Marines ate a hearty breakfast and went topside for a glance at the island which they would shortly assault. There was little to see. Almost totally obscured by the darkness, the island appeared as a shadowy mass of land, dominated by Mount Suribachi which "gave thousands of straining eyes aboard ship only periodic glimpses of its sharp, vertical-cone."[3]

It was apparent by early morning that the landing force would encounter favorable weather. The sea was relatively smooth and surf conditions were satisfactory. The sky was clear; visibility was virtually unlimited, and the temperature was 68 degrees. Wind velocity was eight to ten knots from the north.

Promptly at 0640, the heavy support ships launched the pre-H-Hour bombardment, as Admiral Rodgers' Gunfire

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from: U. S. Flt Ops Rpt, 16Feb-16Mar45; *TF 51 AR; TF 52 AR; TF 56 AR;* TF 56 G–3 Jnl, 26Jan-14Mar45, hereafter *TF 56 G–3 Jnl;* TG 53.2 AR, 19Feb-4Mar45, hereafter *TG 53.2 AR; PhibGru 2 AR; VAC AR; VAC G–2 Rpts;* VAC C–3 Jnl, 25Jan-27Mar45, hereafter *VAC C–3 Jnl;* VAC C–3 PerRpt, 19Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *VAC C–3 Rpt;* VAC C–4 Jnl, 6-13Mar45, hereafter *VAC C–4 Jnl; 4th MarDiv OpRpt;* 4th MarDiv G–2 PerRpts, 19-25Feb45, hereafter *4th MarDiv G–2 Rpts;* 4th MarDiv D–3 PerRpts, 8Feb-17Mar45, hereafter *4th MarDiv D–3 Rpts;* 4th MarDiv D–4 PerRpts, 3Jan-19Mar45, hereafter *4th MarDiv D–4 Rpts; 5th MarDiv AR;* 5th MarDiv G–1 Jnl, 19Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *5th MarDiv D–1 Jnl;* 5th MarDiv D–2 PerRpts, 19Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *5th MarDiv D–2 PerRpts;* 5th MarDiv D–3 Jnl, 19Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *5th MarDiv D–3 Jnl;* 5th MarDiv D–4 Jnl, 19Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *5th MarDiv D–4 Jnl; Iwo Comments;* Bartley, *Iwo Monograph;* Sherrod, *Marine Corps Aviation in World War II;* Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*; Proehl, *The Fourth Marine Division*; Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*; Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*; Morehouse, *The Iwo Jima Campaign*; T. Grady Gallant, *The Friendly Dead* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964), hereafter Gallant, *The Friendly Dead,* quoted with permission.

[2] Additional material in this section is derived from: *Fifth Flt NGF rpt; Iwo Preliminary Gunfire Requirements; TF 53 AR; TF 56 AirRpt; TF 56 Preliminary NGF Rpt; VAC NGF and Air Rpts;* Henri *et. al., Marines on Iwo Jima.*

[3] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, p. 43.

and Covering Force hurled tons of high explosives into the island. This was the last chance to silence the heavy enemy guns that dominated the boat lanes and beaches, and the gun crews of the *North Carolina, Washington, New York, Texas, Arkansas,* and *Nevada* turned-to with grim determination. As shell bursts flicked flame, smoke, and chunks of Iwo into the air, it appeared as if the bombardment were intended to blow the very island out of the sea. Even the dead crater of Mount Suribachi seemed to come to life as it steamed from successive hits along its lip. Blasts, following one another in close succession, rocked the beaches, the airfields, and the northern portion of Iwo with its numerous hills and gullies.

In addition to the heavy gunfire ships, the gunboat and mortar support groups participated in the preparatory fire. The latter groups consisted of 42 LCI gunboats. Twelve of the LCIs were armed with 4.5–inch rockets and 40mm guns; 18 carried 4.2–inch mortars, and 9 were equipped with 5-inch rocket launchers.[4] The LCIs joined the bombardment by the big ships at 0730 and, throughout the morning, expended nearly 10,000 rockets and large quantities of mortar ammunition while showering the slopes of Mount Suribachi and the high ground to the north of the beaches with rocket and mortar fire.

At the same time, initial preparations for boating the assault force got under way. LSTs and troop transports eased into the areas assigned to them and prepared to discharge their cargo of troops and equipment. The transports lowered the landing craft, which circled as they waited to be boarded by the Marines. On the tank decks of the LSTs, the engines of the LVTs were started, and Marines took their places in the vehicles assigned to them to await the launching signal. The signal was given at 0725; less than half an hour later, 482 amtracs were churning the water, ready to carry eight battalions into battle.[5]

The prelanding bombardment proceeded exactly as scheduled. A few minutes after 0800, the naval guns lifted their fire and 120 fighters and bombers of TF 58 swept over the island in two waves. The aircraft concentrated their attack against the slopes of Mount Suribachi, the landing beaches, and the high ground to the north of the landing beaches. Following the bombing and strafing by the first wave, the second arrived over the island and unleashed napalm, rockets, and machine gun fire against the defenders. Included in the second wave were 24 Marine F4U Corsairs under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William A. Millington, commanding VMF–124 on board the *Essex.*

The squadron commander led his flight over Iwo Jima to attack the flanks and high ground along the landing beaches. From H minus 45 to H minus 35, the planes remained over the island and launched their attacks in accordance with a plan previously worked out between Millington and Colonel Vernon E. Megee, Commander of the Landing Force Air Support Control Unit and Deputy Commander, Aircraft, Landing Force. Prior to the mission,

[4] *VAC NGF Rpt,* pp. 25–26.

[5] Bartley, *Iwo Monograph,* p. 51.

Megee had admonished the fighter squadron commander to "go in and scrape your bellies on the beach"[6] and that is precisely what Millington proposed to do.

While these air strikes were under way, the gunfire support ships moved closer to the shore and assumed positions from which they would deliver the final neutralization fires. A strike by 44 Army Air Forces bombers had also been scheduled prior to H-Hour, but over half of the Liberators failed to complete the trip from the Marianas; only 15 arrived to drop 19 tons of 100-pound bombs on the eastern defenses of Iwo.[7]

At 0825, the naval bombardment resumed. Since only a half hour remained before the first assault wave would hit the beaches, all available fire was directed against the landing sites. As the last phase of the pre-assault bombardment got under way, air bursts were employed to annihilate any Japanese that might be caught out in the open. The naval gunners subsequently shifted to impact rounds as time for the approach of the first assault wave grew near. During the final 15 minutes of the bombardment, the naval vessels offshore blasted the invasion beaches with everything they had. The thunderous roar of the 16-inch guns was supplemented by the sharper bark of the 5- and 8-inch guns of the destroyers and cruisers. Rocket craft unleashed their fire, and mortar boats shelled inland to a depth of about 1,000 yards. As the assault troops approached the shore, the naval bombardment shifted ahead to provide the mightiest preinvasion shelling thus far experienced in the Pacific Theater. In less than 30 minutes, more than 8,000 shells smashed into the beach area.

In other amphibious assaults in the Pacific Theater, naval gunfire had sometimes lifted too far inland when the troops came ashore. This lack of adequate fires close to landing areas had resulted in heavy casualties early in the operation, notably at Saipan. In order to prevent this situation from arising at Iwo Jima, VAC recommended the use of a rolling barrage reminiscent of the massive artillery concentrations of World War I. Such a barrage had to be precisely timed to keep the fire just ahead of the advancing troops; infantry commanders had to exercise maximum care to keep their men from advancing faster than the scheduled time for lifting the barrage forward. The rolling barrage was to be delivered by the 5-inch batteries, whose gunners were to maintain a 400-yard margin of safety ahead of the friendly troops. If, for any reason, the attack bogged down and did not move forward as rapidly as anticipated, certain prearranged fires were to be repeated.[8]

Only minutes remained to H-Hour. None of the officers responsible for the preliminary bombardment could fathom the effect of the damage inflicted on the enemy defenses; at best they could hope that the naval bombardment and the aerial bombing and strafing had seriously diminished the enemy's ability

[6] Colonel Vernon E. Megee, as quoted in Sherrod, *Marine Corps Aviation in World War II*, p. 347.

[7] Craven and Cate, *the Pacific*, pp. 591–592.

[8] *VAC NGF and Air Rpts*, p. 23.

to frustrate the imminent landings. The Marines about to hit the hostile beaches would be the first to know for certain how strongly the enemy could still react to their amphibious assault.

THE AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT[9]

For the Marines in the assault waves, D-Day had started with the traditional meal of steak and eggs. Shortly after 0800, while naval shells were rocking Iwo, the amphibian tractors carrying eight Marine battalions to the Iwo beaches were churning in the water. A line of departure had been established about two miles offshore and parallel to the beach. At each end of this line, a control vessel was stationed to mark its boundaries. A central control vessel occupied the middle of the line. Along the line, at regular intervals, small vessels marked the boat lanes. The assistant division commanders, Brigadier General Franklin A. Hart for the 4th Marine Division, and Brigadier General Leo D. Hermle for the 5th, stationed themselves at each end of the line of departure as observers.

Boated and circling, the first three waves were ready to cross the line of departure by 0815. It was from here that the Marines watched the island take a severe pounding from the naval shelling and cheered as the supporting aircraft unloaded their lethal cargo over the island. The men approaching Iwo Jima were fully aware of what lay ahead; there had been no attempt at concealing the fact that a tough and costly battle awaited them. Men of the 4th Marine Division were going in with the prayer of their commander, General Cates, that as many of them as possible might be spared. General Schmidt felt that it would be a bitter but short fight.

The men in the assault waves hoped that the Navy could come up to its expectation of knocking out all defenses on the beaches, as well as most other targets further inland. Their mood varied from incredulity that any of the defenders could survive the heavy naval bombardment to skepticism born out of past experience. Many Marines remembered how many of the Japanese had survived similar bombardments on Tarawa, Guam, and Peleliu. There was also some wishful thinking; smaller islands in the Volcano-Bonins had been known to sink into the ocean, and there was hardly a Marine in the convoy who did not hope that Iwo might put on such a disappearing act under the weight of the explosives pouring upon it.[10]

At precisely 0830, the central control vessel dipped her pennant, releasing the first assault wave. Sixty-eight LVT-(A)s of the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Reed M. Fawell, Jr., crossed the line of departure and headed for the beaches. While hundreds of naval shells whistled overhead, the first wave followed the gunboats that poured rockets and 40mm shells into the beach before

[9] Additional material in this section is derived from: *TransDiv 45 AR;* 2d Armd Amtrac Bn AR, 17Apr45; 1st SP Bn UJnl, 19-24-Feb45; 2d SP Bn UJnl, 19Feb–3Mar45; 5th SP Rgt. AR, n.d.; LSM Gru 13 AR, 19Feb–14Mar-45, hereafter *LSM Gru 13 AR;* 31st NCB AR, 9Mar45, in *5th MarDiv AR*, Anx U, hereafter *31st NCB AR*; 1st JASCO OpRpt, 5Apr45.

[10] Henri *et al*, *Marines on Iwo Jima*, p. 34.

turning right and left respectively to positions from where they continued to support the flank battalions.

The operations plan had allowed 30 minutes for each assault wave to travel the 4,000 yards from the line of departure to the beaches. Following the first, successive waves crossed the line at 250- to 300-yard intervals. The second assault wave, consisting of 1,360 Marines in LVTs, crossed the line of departure two minutes behind the first wave. Eight more waves formed behind the first two, to be landed at five-minute intervals. The plan called for 9,000 men to be ashore in somewhat less than 45 minutes.

When the leading wave had reached a point 400 yards offshore, the naval bombardment shifted to the interior of the island and to the flanks. At the same time, Lieutenant Colonel Millington's fighters streaked down in magnificent strafing which continued relentlessly as the LVT(A)s approached the beaches. In accordance with their orders, the pilots, who earlier that morning had executed the napalm and rocket strike against Iwo, now hit the beaches in daring low-level attacks. Just as the first wave came ashore, the planes shifted their strafing runs about 500 yards inland.

The ship-to-shore movement of the assault waves was carried out according to schedule. The first wave landed between 0859 and 0903; the second and third waves came ashore at two-minute intervals. The defenders remained strangely silent as the first assault troops approached the beaches, and the initial waves were not subjected to any enemy antiboat fire during the final approach to the objective. For some of the Marines, a small sliver of hope began to emerge that the heavy bombardment had reduced the enemy to impotence.

Up to the point where the first LVT(A)s emerged from the water and ground forward, the entire maneuver had been executed with parade-ground precision. For the incoming Marines, the only indication of the enemy's presence on the island thus far had been confined to the air. One moment, a 5th Marine Division observation aircraft was circling lazily overhead; the next, enemy antiaircraft fire scored a direct hit and the small airplane spiralled into the surf. The first tractors had no sooner reached the beach and commenced heading inland than it was discovered that the 15-foot terrace directly behind the beach blocked their fields of fire. The height and steepness of the terrace was the first unpleasant surprise that the Marines were to encounter on Iwo. A second one was not long in coming. As the Marines of the 4th and 5th Divisions swarmed from their vehicles, it became evident that the composition of the volcanic sand was not what had been expected. Instead of sand with sufficient consistency to support at least tracked vehicles and men on foot, Marines of the landing force, many of them weighted down with more than 100 pounds of weapons and other gear, found themselves floundering in a sea of soft volcanic ash that all but precluded their ascending that 15-foot seawall. Almost immediately, the Marines sank up to their ankles into the loose ash that tugged at their feet and made all forward movement a strenuous undertaking.

ASSAULT TROOPS *of the 4th Marine Division go ashore on Iwo Jima. (USMC 110109)*

MARINES OF 2/27 *hit the beach in the shadow of Mt. Suribachi. (USMC 111688)*

Some of the amphibian tractors never slackened their speed upon reaching the beaches but pushed their way straight inland, up the first terrace and beyond it until they had advanced between 50 and 75 yards. Those LVT(A)s failing to negotiate the incline headed back out to sea, where they turned around and fired inland. At 0907, the third wave of 1,200 men went ashore, followed about five minutes later by another 1,600 men of the fourth wave. Successive assault waves followed closely behind the first ones. There still was no organized enemy opposition though a few isolated artillery and mortar shells began to fall in the surf as the later waves neared the shore. Except for a number of land mines, the beaches were found clear of man-made obstacles.

The eight battalions of the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions that landed abreast on the southeastern shore of Iwo Jima were 1/28, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Jackson B. Butterfield, and 2/28, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Chandler W. Johnson, on Green 1; 2/27, under Major John A. Antonelli, on Red 1; 1/27, under Lieutenant Colonel John A. Butler, on Red 2; 1/23, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Haas, on Yellow 1; 2/23, under Major Robert Davidson, on Yellow 2; 1/25, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Hollis U. Mustain, on Blue 1; and 3/25 under Lieutenant Colonel James Taul, on the southern edge of Blue 2.

As the men headed inland, the Japanese gradually came to life. The first among the landing force to feel the enemy reaction were the men of Major Davidson's 2/23 on Yellow 2 in the 4th Division sector. A moderate amount of mortar fire hit the beach within two minutes after the first wave had landed. Within 15 minutes, Marines on the Yellow and Blue beaches were reporting heavy enemy mortar fire. To the south, on the Red Beaches and Green 1, 5th Division Marines started to advance inland against initially light opposition. By 0930, 1/28 had moved 150 yards inland. Ten minutes later, the battalion reported receiving heavy mortar fire from the left flank. By the time the advance had covered 300 yards, the men were sprinkled, showered, and ultimately deluged by mortar and artillery fire from Mount Suribachi, as well as from the high ground to the north of the landing beaches. The loose, slipping sand offered poor cover; foxholes filled in almost as fast as a man could shovel, and urgent requests for sandbags began to fill the air waves. By 0935, Green 1 and the Red Beaches were on the receiving end of a heavy mortar barrage. Marines moving inland drew intense machine gun and rifle fire from well-concealed pillboxes, blockhouses, and caves as soon as they left the protective cover of the first terrace.

While the Marines advancing into the interior of Iwo were being swamped by enemy fire that was still increasing both in volume and accuracy, congestion among the additional waves along the shore began to mount. The Japanese meanwhile had begun to concentrate their fire on LVTs and landing craft on and near the beaches. Enemy mortars and artillery soon scored numerous direct hits on the hapless vessels. Jeeps and trucks emerging from those landing craft that had been fortunate enough to survive the trip ashore rolled

out on the beaches only to become bogged down in the treacherous volcanic ash even before they had cleared the ramp. Many of the small craft, their bows pinned to the beach, broached and swamped.

Despite the enemy fire, congestion at the water's edge, and initial confusion accompanying the landings, men and supplies continued to pour ashore. Within an hour and a half from the time that the Marines of the first wave had set foot on the island, all of the eight assault battalions were ashore. At 1005, three LSMs carrying 16 tanks of Lieutenant Colonel Richard K. Schmidt's 4th Tank Battalion hit the Yellow Beaches. The tanks encountered considerable difficulty in getting ashore. Even then, their troubles were far from over, and three tanks struck mines less than 150 yards in from the water.

While the naval barrage was still providing cover, the four newly landed Marine regiments prepared to reorganize and begin the push inland. From north to south these regiments were the 25th Marines, commanded by Colonel John R. Lanigan, and the 23rd Marines under Colonel Walter W. Wensinger, both belonging to the 4th Marine Division. The 5th Marine Division was represented by the 27th Marines, led by Colonel Thomas A. Wornham, and the 28th Marines under Colonel Harry B. Liversedge.

THE ADVANCE INLAND[11]

As troop strength built up ashore, the time had come to put the basic plan of attack into effect. Along the northern part of the beachhead, the 25th Marines was to advance towards a quarry just north of the East Boat Basin, which formed the eastern anchor of the O-1 Line denoting the objectives to be seized by the end of D-Day. This line, bisecting Motoyama Airfield No. 2, curved across the center of the island to the western shore at a point approximately 1,200 yards west of the airfield. Moving inland from the Yellow Beaches, the 23d Marines was to advance across the northern portion of Motoyama Airfield No. 1 towards Airfield No. 2. To the 27th Marines fell the task of advancing inland in a northwesterly direction, slicing across the southern tip of Airfield No. 1 and then pivoting more to the north, to reach a point west of Airfield No. 2. The 28th Marines had the mission of isolating Mount Suribachi and assaulting this formidable obstacle. To this end, the 1st Battalion, landing at H-Hour, was to cut across the narrow neck of the island, a distance of only 700 yards. The 2d Battalion was to

[11] Additional material in this section is derived from: 13th Mar UJnl, 19Feb-21Mar45, hereafter *13th Mar UJnl;* 23d Mar OpRpt, 9Apr45, 4th MarDiv OpRpt, Anx F, hereafter *23d Mar OpRpt;* 24th Mar OpRpt, 19Feb-18Mar45, Anx G to 4th MarDiv OpRpt, hereafter *24th Mar OpRpt;* 25th Mar UJnl, 18Feb-23Mar45, hereafter *25th Mar UJnl;* 25th Mar OpRpt, 15Apr45, 4th MarDiv OpRpt, Anx H, hereafter *25th Mar OpRpt;* 28th Mar UJnl, 19Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *28th Mar UJnl;* 5th Tank Bn AR, Feb-Mar45, hereafter *5th Tank Bn AR;* 1/13 UJnl, 19Feb-17Mar45, hereafter *1/13 UJnl;* 1/24 OpRpt, 20Apr45, hereafter *1/24 OpRpt;* 2/24 AR, 19Feb-16Mar45, hereafter *2/24 AR;* 1/27 UJnl, 19Feb-18Mar45, hereafter *1/27 UJnl;* 2/27 UJnl, 19Feb-23Mar45, hereafter *2/27 UJnl;* 3/27 UJnl, 19Feb-23Mar45, hereafter *3/27 UJnl;* 471st Amph Truck Co (Army) OpRpt, 17Mar45, hereafter *471st Amph Trk Co OpRpt.*

advance about 350 yards inland, then turn southward towards Mount Suribachi.

At 0935, 2/28 started to land on Green 1 behind 1/28. Its mission was to take up positions facing Mount Suribachi, protecting the left flank of the landing force. By this time, heavy mortar and artillery fire was enveloping the beaches, making reorganization of the companies difficult.

As the 1st Battalion launched its 700-yard sprint for the western shore with Companies B and C abreast, accurate enemy small arms fire from concealed positions began to rake the advancing Marines. It soon became evident that the advance would prove costly. The intensity of the enemy fire all but precluded a coordinated movement. Men advanced in small groups, heedless of security to their flanks; some units were temporarily pinned down by an enemy who remained largely invisible. Between the bursts of artillery and mortar shells all around them, the Marines strained to get a glimpse of the defenders. What they saw was not reassuring, for halfway across the island a maze of mutually supporting blockhouses and pillboxes extended across the entire front.

In a situation where movement threatened to bog down in the heavily fortified area, the courage of individual Marines kept the attack rolling. Among the first to distinguish himself was Captain Dwayne E. Mears, commanding Company B. Armed with only a pistol, the company commander personally assaulted a pillbox that was retarding the advance of his company. Despite a wound that later proved to be fatal, Captain Mears continued to attack successive enemy positions until he became too weak to move.[12] On the right, Captain Phil E. Roach led the advance of Company C across the island, carefully maintaining the same rate of progress as Company B. While assaulting a heavily fortified position, Captain Roach also became a casualty. Many men who found themselves separated from their platoons during the dash across the island formed small groups that continued to advance independently, thus helping to preserve the momentum of the attack.

The success of the 28th Marines' attack owed much to the support provided by the 60mm mortars which maintained continuous fire against groups of Japanese that had been flushed out of their emplacements. This fire kept the enemy on the run and out in the open, where he presented a visible target to the advancing riflemen. Lieutenant Richard H. Sandberg, commanding Company A's mortar platoon, spotted an enemy 90mm mortar squad and concentrated his fire on the Japanese until they were forced to abandon their weapon. Even more remarkably, in the heat of the engagement this platoon leader was observed firing a 60mm mortar with amazing accuracy, though it was without a base plate.[13] Before noon, Lieutenant Sandberg became a casualty and had to be evacuated.

At 1035, elements of Company B reached the western shore of Iwo. Enemy fire had inflicted so many casualties and made control so difficult that

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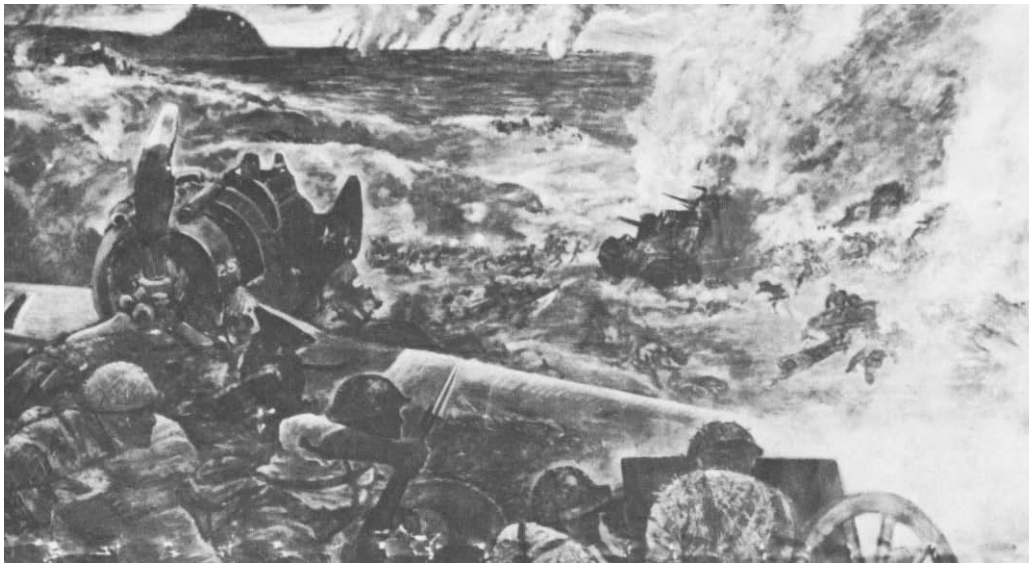
[12] *5th MarDiv AR*, Anx S, p. 2.
[13] *Ibid.*



THE INVASION OF IWO JIMA *as seen through the eyes of a Japanese artist. (USA SC 301128)*

DOBERMAN PINSCHER *of the 6th War Dog Platoon and handler approach enemy cave. (USAF 58252 AC)*

only the platoon leader, Lieutenant Frank J. Wright, and four men of the 1st Platoon, Company B, made it all the way across the island. Lieutenant Wesley C. Bates, leading the 2d Platoon, and six of his men reached the western beach around 1100 and joined forces with Lieutenant Wright.

Even though elements of the 1st Battalion had now crossed the island, bypassed enemy positions continued to offer fierce resistance. Company A, which had landed in 1/28 reserve and faced south towards Mount Suribachi to protect the battalion's left flank, was now relieved by 2/28 and joined the remainder of the 1st Battalion in mopping up. Because of the heavy casualties 1/28 had sustained, Colonel Liversedge requested the release of 3/28, the division reserve, to his control. General Rockey granted this request. The battalion, boated and prepared to land on any 5th Division beach, received the order to land at 1210. Ten minutes later the first boats crossed the line of departure. As the leading wave approached the shore, heavy fire from Mount Suribachi and the high ground north of the landing beaches was directed at the boats. This unit suffered many more casualties during the ship-to-shore movement than had the 1st and 2d Battalions. Shortly after 1300, all elements were ashore, though it was not until late afternoon that the battalion was able to edge its way into the line. Following a naval gunfire preparation, and with adequate air support, the 2d and 3d Battalions were to jump off jointly at 1545 to attack south towards Mount Suribachi.

For such an attack, the support of armor was necessary. Company C of the 5th Tank Battalion was therefore ordered to land in direct support of the 28th Marines. This company had 14 Sherman M-4 tanks, two flametanks, one tankdozer, and one retriever. When they landed on Red One Beach about 1130, the tanks found it rough going because soft sand and storm terraces made exit difficult and the first terrace was mined. By the time additional elements of the 5th Tank Battalion got ashore, the beach was congested by stranded wheeled vehicles disabled by enemy fire. The increasing concentration of men and equipment in a restricted area was beginning to cause considerable confusion.

An eye witness had this to say about Company C's arrival on Iwo Jima:

> An infantryman picked up one of the first tanks to land and started to guide him off the beach; the route he used was marked with white tape. When the tank reached the top of the first terrace, he was guided to the right, across the tape and immediately struck a horn mine. One casualty was suffered, the driver having both legs broken, the remainder of the crew was badly shaken up. The interior of the tank was so badly damaged no attempt was made to repair it. Later it was turned into spare parts.[14]

Altogether, eight of the battalion's tanks were unable to get off the beaches. Five threw tracks, one hit a mine, one stuck in the sand, and one stalled.[15] Even less fortunate were other sup-

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[14] Co C, 5th Tank Bn AR, Encl C, p. I, to *5th tank Bn AR.*

[15] *5th Tank Bn AR*, p. 4.

porting arms units, such as the regimental rocket section of RCT 28 which landed during the morning. Enemy artillery smashed three of the four truck-mounted rocket launchers immediately after landing. When the remaining launcher finally got into action and opened fire, a terrific explosion rocked the target area bringing loud cheers from Marines nearby.[16]

The tanks of Company C eventually exited the beach by a road between Red Beach 1 and 2, arriving in the zone of action of 1/28 about 1400. Lieutenant Colonel Butterfield's battalion at the time was pinned down, suffering casualties from Japanese fire coming from pillboxes and blockhouses bypassed earlier. It was decided to use the entire tank company in cleaning up the area. Because of minefields and tank traps, the tanks advanced in a column which came under antitank fire immediately after moving out. Armor-piercing shells penetrated the turrets of two tanks, each of which suffered three casualties. Shortly thereafter, the enemy scored a hit on a third tank, rendering the turret inoperative. The tankers ultimately knocked out the hostile gun. This completed their mission with 1/28.

About 1600, the tanks formed up to support 2/28 and 3/28 in the planned attack towards Mount Suribachi but enemy fire was so heavy that the attacking battalions could not get into their proper positions. The 3d Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Charles E. Shepard, Jr., was unable to get into jumpoff positions alongside the 2d Battalion. The tanks of Company C had moved out about 200 yards when it was observed that the troops on the right were not moving. By the time the 3d Battalion did get on line, it was considered too late to launch the attack, and Shepard's men began to dig in for the night.

Shortly before 1700, 2/28 launched an attack of its own, supported by tanks of Company C. By 1730, the battalion had advanced only 150 yards and even this slight gain, obtained at the cost of many casualties, had to be relinquished when 2/28 was ordered to fall back and tie in with the 3d Battalion for the night. The tanks of Company C thereafter found themselves in the unusual role of remaining forward of the lines, firing at pillboxes and covering the infantry units as they prepared for the night. Company C was released from this assignment about 1845. One tank, bogged down in a shell crater, had to be abandoned after the crew removed the gun mechanism and destroyed the radio. The company withdrew to a point about 300 yards from the front lines and dug in for a first night marked by almost continuous mortar fire.

At the same time that the 28th Marines was advancing inland from Green Beach, Colonel Wornham's RCT 27 was preparing to advance inland from Red 1 and 2, where 2/27 and 1/27 had landed abreast. On the left, 2/27 pushed inland, initially meeting only scattered resistance. Both battalions advanced rapidly against stiffening resistance, bypassing numerous enemy positions along the way. By 1130, 1/27

[16] LtCol Oscar F. Peatross ltr to CMC, dtd 23Dec52, in *Iwo Comments*.

was infiltrating the southern end of Motoyama Airfield No. 1 and consolidating along the western edge of the field. Company C had passed the field and occupied a line extending for about 250 yards from its southwestern part to the northwest. The 2d Battalion was generally abreast of the 1st, maintaining contact with it. The 27th Marines also was receiving its share of enemy mortar and artillery fire, and casualties mounted as the advance continued. Among those wounded at this time was the executive officer of the regiment, Colonel Louis C. Plain, who was hit in the arm and subsequently evacuated.

The support of armor was needed to overcome the stubborn enemy resistance, so Company A of the 5th Tank Battalion was attached to 1/27. Earlier that morning, this company had been the first tank unit ashore, landing on the Red beaches at 0925. In attempting to get off the beaches, four tanks broke their tracks in the loose sand; the engine of another Sherman malfunctioned so that it could no longer move. The remaining tanks finally found a way off the beach and proceeded towards Motoyama Airfield No. 1. With their support, 1/27 was somewhat better able to reduce the strongly defended enemy positions, although the presence of armor in the front lines proved a mixed blessing to the hard pressed Marines who found that the Shermans attracted enemy antitank fire. Even with tank support, however, the 1st Battalion was unable to make any significant advance for the remainder of the day.

It was a different story with Major Antonelli's 2d Battalion, hell-bent on driving to the opposite side of the island. Moving inland from Red Beach 1, the battalion ran into heavy fire from light machine guns and rifles; progress was further impeded by the enemy's use of hand grenades.

About 50 yards inland, the battalion encountered its first pillbox, one of many carefully camouflaged in this area. In accordance with their orders to cross the island as quickly as possible, Companies E and F bypassed many enemy installations, eliminating only those directly in their path. Assault teams equipped with flamethrowers and hand grenade-throwing riflemen neutralized the Japanese inside while engineer teams blew up the pillboxes with explosive charges.

Leading a machine gun platoon of 1/27 past the southern end of Motoyama Airfield No. 1 was Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone, know as "Manila John" and famous for his exploits on Guadalcanal in October 1942 that had won him the Medal of Honor. On Guadalcanal he had thwarted a Japanese assault by alternately firing two machine guns and a pistol. His presence on Iwo Jima was his own choice; he had previously turned down a commission in favor of remaining an enlisted man. As Manila John rushed for the west coast of Iwo, a few steps ahead of his men, a mortar shell suddenly burst close behind him, mortally wounding this great fighting Marine and four of his men.

Although the 1st Battalion, 27th Marines could not advance to the north, 2/27 was able to push its attack west-

ward and seized the cliffs overlooking the west coast by mid-afternoon. The regimental reserve, 3/27 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Donn J. Robertson, had landed at 1130 and, moving up behind 2/27, assisted in mopping up positions bypassed by the 2d Battalion.

Despite heavy Japanese shelling of the entire beachhead on D-Day, additional units arrived on shore throughout the day. At 1500, 1/26, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Daniel C. Pollock, completed its landing and moved into an assembly area about 300 yards inland from Red Beach 1. Shortly thereafter, the battalion was attached to the 27th Marines and ordered to take up defensive positions behind 2/27. Company B, 5th Tank Battalion, began landing on Red Beach 1 at 1300. As in the case of the armor that had landed earlier, the tanks encountered trouble in getting off the beach, but by 1600 they had reached the western side of the island, where they were attached to the 27th Marines.

Meanwhile, the 26th Marines, under Colonel Chester B. Graham, had spent most of the day on board ship in corps reserve. Just before 1000, General Schmidt released the regiment, less the 1st Battalion, to its parent division; the 21st Marines of the 3d Marine Division became the corps reserve. The 26th Marines was ordered to proceed to the line of departure shortly after 1100, but the crowded condition of the beaches and limited space inland precluded a landing until late afternoon. It was 1730 before Colonel Graham's regiment finished coming ashore over Red Beach 1. The regiment moved into an assembly area just south of Motoyama Airfield No. 1, where it took up defensive positions.

The four artillery battalions of the 13th Marines, commanded by Colonel James D. Waller, were also preparing to go ashore. Reconnaissance parties sent to the beaches as early as 1030 had discovered that the previously selected battery positions were still in enemy hands. As a result, 3/13, under Lieutenant Colonel Henry T. Waller, did not reach the island until 1400. Half an hour later, 2/13, commanded by Major Carl W. Hjerpe, went ashore, to be followed at 1645 by 1/13 under Lieutenant Colonel John S. Oldfield. Major James F. Coady's 4th Battalion reached Iwo between 1930 and 2000. The darkness and enemy fire took their toll of 4/13. Three DUKWs swamped; their cargo, consisting of two guns and badly needed radio equipment, was lost.

Major Hjerpe's 2d Battalion had been scheduled to land on Red Beach 2, but just as the first DUKWs approached the shore, they were hit by a heavy enemy barrage. One 105mm howitzer was destroyed by enemy fire; another was slightly damaged. The landing of 1/13 took place under more favorable conditions. One hour after landing, despite the same beach conditions that had slowed up the other battalions, the first battery was in position and ready to fire, a state achieved by the entire battalion at 2245. Last to go ashore, 4/13 was able to emplace eight howitzers by 0440 on D plus 1; two of the 105s and other equipment did not reach the position until later in

the morning because their access road was blocked by crippled LVTs.

Landing four artillery battalions on beaches that were still exposed to incessant enemy fire was a hazardous undertaking. When the DUKWs of the Marine 5th and the Army 471st Amphibian Truck Companies reached the beaches with their cargo of 75mm and 105mm guns, they found it difficult to negotiate the deep sand. The wheeled vehicles could not get over the steep terrace behind the beaches until bulldozers and LVTs were pressed into service to pull them over the crest. Inland, the cargo was unloaded amidst heavy mortar and machine gun fire, while many furiously working artillerymen used their helmets and whatever else they could lay hands on to dig gun pits.

The arrival of the artillery on Iwo Jima underscored the fact, if any such emphasis was required, that the Marines had come to stay. To the men pinned down by heavy enemy fire, the presence of friendly artillery had additional implications:

> The 13th's guns got over the south beaches somehow, and up the terraces. Within thirty minutes the crack of artillery, clearly recognizable to the foot soldiers, gave heart to the men on both fronts. Sergeant Joe L. Pipes' "Glamor Gal" was first to fire on Suribachi. At about the same instant, Sergeant Henry S. Kurpoat's 75 let go from behind Yellow 2, firing north.
>
> They never settled the argument over which gun fired first, and it really didn't matter. Other guns were right behind them. The Marines shouted as the shells went over them. Dukws of the Army's 471st Amphibian Truck Company, their Negro drivers pressing ashore through the wreckage, landed the field pieces of the 13th Marines in a steady column.[17]

Most of the artillery managed to get ashore. From that time on, the Japanese no longer had it all their way, though they retained the capability of inflicting major punishment on the assault force for some time to come.

The experience of the 13th Marines is typical of what was accomplished on D-Day and of the difficulties all Marines were to encounter on Iwo Jima. The 3d Battalion, going ashore at the northern end of Green Beach, went into position close to the water's edge. Within 20 minutes, one section of the 105mm guns was registered; by 1745, all guns were in position and ready to support the 28th Marines.

Throughout D-Day, reinforcements poured ashore as the organizational component of the landing force began to build up. At 1430, General Hermle went ashore with the ADC group and a headquarters reconnaissance party and established an advanced 5th Division command post. The assistant division commander, the first American general officer to set foot on the island, crossed Motoyama Airfield No. 1 while it was still under heavy enemy fire and gained first-hand information from units in the front lines.

The picture that presented itself to the observer at the beaches during the afternoon of D-Day was not a pretty one:

> At the water's edge amtracs, LCMs and LCVPs were hit, burned, broached, capsized, and otherwise mangled. The loose, black volcanic cinders, slid past the churn-

[17] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 119.

> ing tires of wheeled vehicles, miring them axle-deep; the steep terraces blocked egress from the beach and extensive minefields took a heavy toll. Debris piled up everywhere.
>
> Wounded men were arriving on the beach by the dozen, where they were not much better off than they had been at the front. There was no cover to protect them and supplies of plasma and dressings ran low. The first two boats bringing in badly needed litters were blown out of the water. Casualties were being hit a second time as they lay helpless, under blankets, awaiting evacuation to ships.[18]

A similar situation prevailed on the 4th Marine Division beaches. There also, men's feet sank to the ankles in the loose, coarse, volcanic ash and jeeps sank to the hubcaps. Trucks could not operate at all, and supplies had to be manhandled from the water's edge to the front. On the congested beaches, the enemy laid down a sustained fire along the water's edge that at times caused heavier casualties among Seabees and engineers and in evacuation stations than those suffered by combat units. One account likened operating in such terrain to "trying to fight in a bin of loose wheat."[19]

While 5th Division Marines struggled for the southern portion of Iwo Jima, fierce action developed on the northern beaches, where General Cates' 4th Division had gone ashore. Precisely at H-hour, Colonel Walter W. Wensinger's 23d Marines had landed on the Yellow beaches with two battalions abreast. The 1st Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Haas, landed over Yellow 1; the 2d Battalion, under Major Robert H. Davidson, landed to the right over Yellow 2. As in the 5th Division sector to the south, RCT 23 encountered little initial resistance until the two assault companies reached the second terrace. At this point, they began to draw heavy and accurate fire from the front and flanks, where the enemy was very much alive and firmly entrenched in pillboxes, ditches, and spidertraps. Squarely astride the regiment's front were two huge blockhouses and 50 pillboxes. Even though the blockhouses had sustained massive damage from the pre-landing bombardment, they still afforded cover for the enemy. Before an advance inland could get under way, the formidable enemy obstacles had to be eliminated, a task requiring the employment of armor.

Shortly before 1000, Company C of the 4th Tank Battalion was dispatched from the line of departure for Beaches Yellow 1 and 2, in three LSMs, carrying a total of 16 tanks. The first tank to leave LSM 216 bogged down after getting off the end of the ramp. Discharge of the armor from the remaining landing ships proceeded more smoothly, but after moving inland less than 150 yards from the water's edge, three tanks were immobilized by mines or the terrain.[20] After attempting for half an hour to recover the tank that had bogged down just off the ramp, LSM *216* withdrew to the line of departure. At 1100, another attempt was made to land the tanks, this time on Yellow 1, but none succeeded in getting ashore. Instead, LSM *216*, having received a number of hits, proceeded to the hospital LST to

[18] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, p. 53.
[19] Proehl, *The Fourth Marine Division*, p. 149.
[20] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, Anx F, p. 9.

discharge casualties. At 1245, LSM *216* finally succeeded in landing its tanks on Yellow 1. These tanks proceeded inland, but were unable to locate a route to the hard pressed 2/23. Nor was such a route ever found on D-Day.

Thus, only 1/23 received any tank support on 19 February, and due to difficult terrain and heavy enemy resistance, this support was relatively ineffective. Colonel Wensinger eventually requested that two tank retrievers be landed to assist the assault tanks which were in trouble along the beach. Some progress was made, but the nature of the terrain and heavy mortar and artillery fire from the flanks severely hindered retrieving operations.

RCT 23 had to fight its way forward with limited armored support. A hail of shells and small arms fire took a heavy toll of casualties. It was generally agreed that of all the unpleasant beaches on Iwo that day, those of the 4th Division were the hottest. At 0930, 1/23 reported that its forward elements had advanced 250 yards inland. Continued progress was slow. Ten minutes later, 2/23 sent word that it had advanced inland a similar distance, but that its leading elements were pinned down by machine gun fire from pillboxes to its front and flanks.

At noon, 1/23 had advanced 500 yards further inland to within 200 yards of Airfield No. 1. The advance of the 2d Battalion, still meeting intensive resistance, was lagging. In fact, 2/23 had made only 250 yards since its earlier report. The absence of tank support for the 2d Battalion was beginning to make itself felt; at the same time, it became apparent that such support would not be available for some time. In view of this situation, the regimental commander decided to land 3/23, the reserve battalion, commanded by Major James S. Scales. The battalion received orders at 1300 to land along Yellow 1 Beach, move 200 yards inland, and support the attack of 2/23 with 81mm mortars.

Upon going ashore, the reserve battalion came under very heavy mortar and artillery fire. Fortunately, none of the landing craft received direct hits during the approach to the beach. Once they had come ashore, it was a different story; enemy shells could not help but hit something on the congested beaches, and casualties and destruction of materiel caused serious disorganization.

More trouble for the landing force on the beaches was in the offing, and for a time it appeared as if nature had joined hands with a stubborn and determined enemy to thwart the invasion of Iwo. At the same time that the intensity and accuracy of enemy fire on the beaches reached a climax, the surf began to rise. As LVTs bogged down or were hit, the congestion and confusion on the beaches grew immeasurably. But no real trouble developed until the arrival of the LCVPs. As the light boats hit the beaches, the surf broke over them, broaching some and swamping others. Other boats, some already disabled, piled in behind the first ones and were soon hurled on the beach by the waves.

Despite this combination of unfavorable surf and deadly resistance, Marines continued to advance inland, though

often every yard gained was paid for in blood. In the zone of attack of RCT 23, tanks finally reached the front lines during the afternoon. The left flank of 1/23 had advanced to the edge of Airfield No. 1 shortly after 1400, but heavy antitank fire forced the armor to beat a hasty retreat behind the revetted edge of the field. In order to get 3/23 off the congested beaches, Colonel Wensinger ordered the battalion to pass through 1/23 and carry the attack across the airfield. This order was partly carried out despite casualties and confusion, and, by 1700, 3/23 had reached the airfield boundary. The 2d Battalion derived little benefit from the arrival of armor in its zone of attack, where enemy mines, the soft volcanic ash, and accurate enemy fire precluded effective tank support. By 1730, Company F was barely able to reach the apron of Airfield No. 1, and there halted its advance for the remainder of the night.

As a result of the heavy resistance encountered by the 23d Marines, General Cates shortly after 1400 committed two battalions of the division reserve, the 24th Marines, commanded by Colonel Walter I. Jordan. The 1st and 2nd Battalions were to be attached to the 25th and 23d Marines respectively. At 1615, 2/24, under Lieutenant Colonel Richard Rothwell, was ordered to land on Yellow Beach 2 to relieve 2/23. Shortly before 1700, the battalion landed and moved inland about 700 yards to the front line. By 1800, it had relieved 2/23 and dug in for the night just short of the airfield, tying in between 2/23 and 1/25.

Among all of the Iwo beaches, the one most exposed to enemy fire was Blue Beach 1, the northernmost of the invasion beaches, located right below a cliff that was held by the enemy in great strength. It was the unenviable task of the 25th Marines to secure the Blue Beaches. The regiment, under Colonel John R. Lanigan, landed two battalions abreast over Blue Beach 1 and the southern edge of Blue Beach 2. As on the remaining beaches, the first waves, landing shortly after 0900, reported only light enemy fire until the troops disembarked and moved approximately 25 yards from the LVTs, when they came under very heavy machine gun, mortar, artillery, and rocket fire.

At 0935, 1/25, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Hollis U. Mustain, reported that the battalion was still under heavy fire of all types but had moved inland 300 yards.[21] Half an hour later, 3/25, under Lieutenant Colonel Justice M. Chambers, reported that elements of the battalion had moved 350 yards northeastward along the beach and that the battalion's left flank was inland 400 yards and in contact with 1/25. The continuous, well-aimed enemy fire caused some disorganization along the beach and the men sought cover in large bomb craters along the shore. Casualties were heavy. By midafternoon, Company K had lost eight officers; Company L had lost five by 1630, and Company I lost six.[22]

At 1020, Company A, 4th Tank Battalion, which had been attached to 3/25, went ashore on Blue Beach 1. Almost at once the enemy concentrated the fire

[21] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, Anx H, p. 1.

[22] Colonel Justice M. Chambers ltr to CMC, dtd 5Nov52, in *Iwo Comments*.

of his mortars, artillery, and antitank guns on the tank landing ships (LSMs). All three of the LSMs were hit and damaged while unloading. The enemy fire could not prevent the LSMs from landing, but caused a delay in launching the tanks. After having discharged the tanks, the LSMs retracted from the beach. A tank dozer cut a road from the first terrace inland from Blue Beach 1, but became a total loss when it hit a mine and turned into a sitting target for Japanese mortars and artillery.

The remaining tanks formed a column and gingerly proceeded inland for about 100 yards. At that time, the column came to a halt when it encountered an enemy minefield. Though immobilized for the time being, while engineers cleared the mines, the tanks supported the Marine riflemen with their 75mm guns, which fired on enemy positions and pillboxes behind the beach and in the cliffs to the north.

Meanwhile, the withering enemy fire had inflicted very heavy casualties on the 25th Marines, which doggedly continued its advance against a continuous mortar barrage and intense rifle and machine gun fire both from the front and the flanks. By noon the attack of the two assault battalions had become so channelized that a 100-yard gap had opened between 1/25 and 3/25. At this time, Colonel Lanigan decided that it was imperative for RCT 25 to seize the high ground northeast of Blue Beach 2. To this end, he ordered Lieutenant Colonel Lewis C. Hudson to land 2/25, which constituted the regimental reserve, on Blue Beach 1. The battalion was to attack in a column of companies astride the boundary between 1/25 and 3/25, seize the high ground to the northwest near a quarry, and assist the advance of 3/25.[23]

By 1400, 2/25 had moved one company into the line between the other two battalions and a coordinated attack to the north got under way. From the very outset, the regimental attack moved slowly because of heavy enemy resistance. The 3d Battalion advanced for about 300 yards along the beach, then headed for the quarry about 400 yards north of the East Boat Basin. On the battalion's left, elements of 2/25 and 1/25 advanced 100 yards, but were driven back by intense small arms fire. By 1730, casualties and disorganization of 3/25 had assumed such proportions that Colonel Lanigan requested and received permission to commit one company of 1/24. An hour later, 2/25 and 3/25 had seized the high ground on top and inland of the quarry, but this advance had been paid for with extremely heavy casualties. At 1900, Lieutenant Colonel Chambers reported that the combat strength of 3/25 had diminished to only 150 men.[24]

In order to compensate for the heavy losses his regiment had sustained on D-Day, and because the Japanese were expected to counterattack along the right flank of the regiment, Colonel Lanigan requested from division the use of one company of 3/24, the division reserve, which was in position directly behind 3/25. This request was denied, but the regimental commander received permission to use one more company of 1/24. As a result, Company B of 1/24

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[23] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, Anx H, p. 2.
[24] *Ibid.*

was attached to 3/25. Units began digging in at 1700 and firm contact was established along the front of RCT 25 except on the left flank where a 75-yard gap remained. This gap was covered by fire and observation during the night. In the course of the evening, the depleted 3/25 was relieved by 1/24 and took up defensive positions to the rear of 1/24. The relief, which took place under occasional enemy fire, was not completed until close to midnight.

The last battalion of the 24th Marines to go ashore was 3/24, under Lieutenant Colonel Alexander A. Vandegrift, Jr. The battalion landed before 1900 and moved inland a short distance from Blue Beach 2. All of the 4th Marine Division's infantry battalions were now ashore, and Marines were busily making preparations for an enemy counterattack they felt sure would develop during their first night ashore.

As in the 5th Marine Division sector on the southern beaches, additional units reached Iwo on the northern beaches during D-Day. With most of the infantry ashore, the time had also come for the artillery regiment of the 4th Division, under Colonel Louis G. DeHaven, to land on the island. Reconnaissance parties from the artillery battalions had already debarked early in the afternoon in order to select positions for their batteries. In doing so, they faced difficulties similar to those encountered by the 13th Marines on the southern beaches. The front lines had advanced more slowly than planned; no routes had been cleared to enable the DUKWs to carry artillery pieces inland. One of the first members of the reconnaissance teams to become a casualty was Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. McFarlane, commanding the 3d Battalion.

At 1405, General Cates ordered 1/14 under Major John B. Edgar, Jr. to land in direct support of the 25th Marines; Major Clifford B. Drake's 2/14 was to lend direct support to RCT 23. Upon hitting Blue Beach 1, the DUKWs of the 4th Amphibian Truck Company with their cargo of 75mm Pack Howitzers of 1/14, became immobilized at once. They quickly bogged down and settled in the volcanic ashes. Bulldozers attempting to get the DUKWs mobile again tugged and strained, but more often than not cables snapped and towing cleats sheered. One howitzer was lost when the DUKW in which it was loaded sank immediately after being discharged from its LST.[25] Nevertheless, by 1715 the 1st Battalion had succeeded in getting 11 howitzers into position after wrestling them up the terraces by hand. Half an hour later, all batteries of 1/14 were registered and ready to fire.

An even more difficult feat was to get the 105mm howitzers of 2/14 ashore. Because of the increased weight of these guns, it proved impossible to manhandle them up and over the terrace. The only feasible expedient was to keep each howitzer in the DUKW and then attempt to get the loaded DUKWs over the terrace. Surf conditions, the slippery sand, and continuous enemy fire combined to make this movement a miserable undertaking that took hours to complete. None of the DUKWs received a direct hit, though several casualties resulted from near misses.

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[25] *14th Mar OpRpt*, App. 6, p. 3.

Shortly before dusk, all 12 howitzers of Major Drake's 2/14 were in position near Yellow Beach 1.

The 3d Battalion, under Major Harvey A. Feehan, was ordered to launch its DUKWs shortly after 1500. At this time, for unknown reasons, several DUKWs could not be started and more than an hour elapsed before all of the vehicles were in the water. Because of the congestion ashore and approaching dusk, Colonel DeHaven decided that the 3d and 4th Battalions were to delay going ashore until the following day, and 3/4 was reembarked on board the LST. During the reembarkation, a howitzer and a DUKW were lost when the amphibian truck's motor failed as it headed back up the ramp.

As D-Day on Iwo Jima came to an end, Marines all along the VAC front lines braced for a major Japanese counterattack they felt sure would come before the night was over.[26] The carnage which had taken place on the island on D-Day differed from anything the Marines had encountered elsewhere in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Despite the enemy presence, which made itself felt everywhere and continuously on the island, and to which the numerous dead and wounded could attest, few of the men who had landed on Iwo that day had actually seen a live Japanese. No prisoners had been taken that first day, and only an occasional enemy corpse was visible.

Nevertheless, a steady flow of American casualties from the front to the beaches underscored the ferocity of the enemy resistance. Along the surf line, the litter of war continued to pile up in an almost unimaginable jumble: smashed landing craft surged upward and forward with every wave, crashing headlong into trucks, crates, and bodies at the edge of the water. Nearby, the wounded were gathered in small groups sitting or lying, just as exposed to the incessant enemy shelling as anyone else on the island and even more helpless in the face of it. For the remainder of D-Day, and into the night, boats approached Iwo Jima, loaded with reinforcements and supplies; having unloaded these, they took on a new cargo: the wounded, for whom surgeons would be waiting in transports and hospital LSTs especially prepared for this purpose.

FIRST NIGHT ON IWO JIMA[27]

As D-Day on Iwo Jima came to an end and darkness descended over the island, Marines could take well justified pride in having seized a solid foothold on a heavily fortified bastion, where both the advantage in terrain and troop disposition rested with the defending

[26] "It was realized by VAC that there was much confusion and congestion on the beaches as D-Day wore on, but it was considered essential to avoid confusion afloat also, and Divisions were requested to get as many troops ashore as possible on D-Day, and to prepare for the anticipated banzai attack that night. We had more troops on the island by nightfall than the enemy had all told." *Rogers ltr.*

[27] Additional material in this section is derived from: 28th Mar AR, 19Feb-26Mar45, in *5th MarDiv AR*, Anx S, hereafter *28th Mar AR; 28th Mar UJnl;* VAC Rpt on Night Operations, Iwo Jima, 12Aug45, hereafter *Iwo Jima Night Ops Rpt.*

garrison. Even though the advance nowhere came near to reaching the 0–1 Line, VAC had succeeded in getting six infantry regiments and six artillery battalions—nearly 30,000 men and thousands of tons of equipment—ashore. (See Map 28).

From General Holland Smith down through the ranks, it was generally believed that according to their earlier tactics, the Japanese would throw all the manpower they had against the vulnerable Marines during their first night ashore. The enemy was known to have a large reserve force of infantry and tanks available for such an all-out counterattack.[28] None of the intelligence personnel of VAC could suspect at the time that General Kuribayashi planned to conserve his manpower and would find other means to decimate the Marines that were crowded into the narrow beachead.

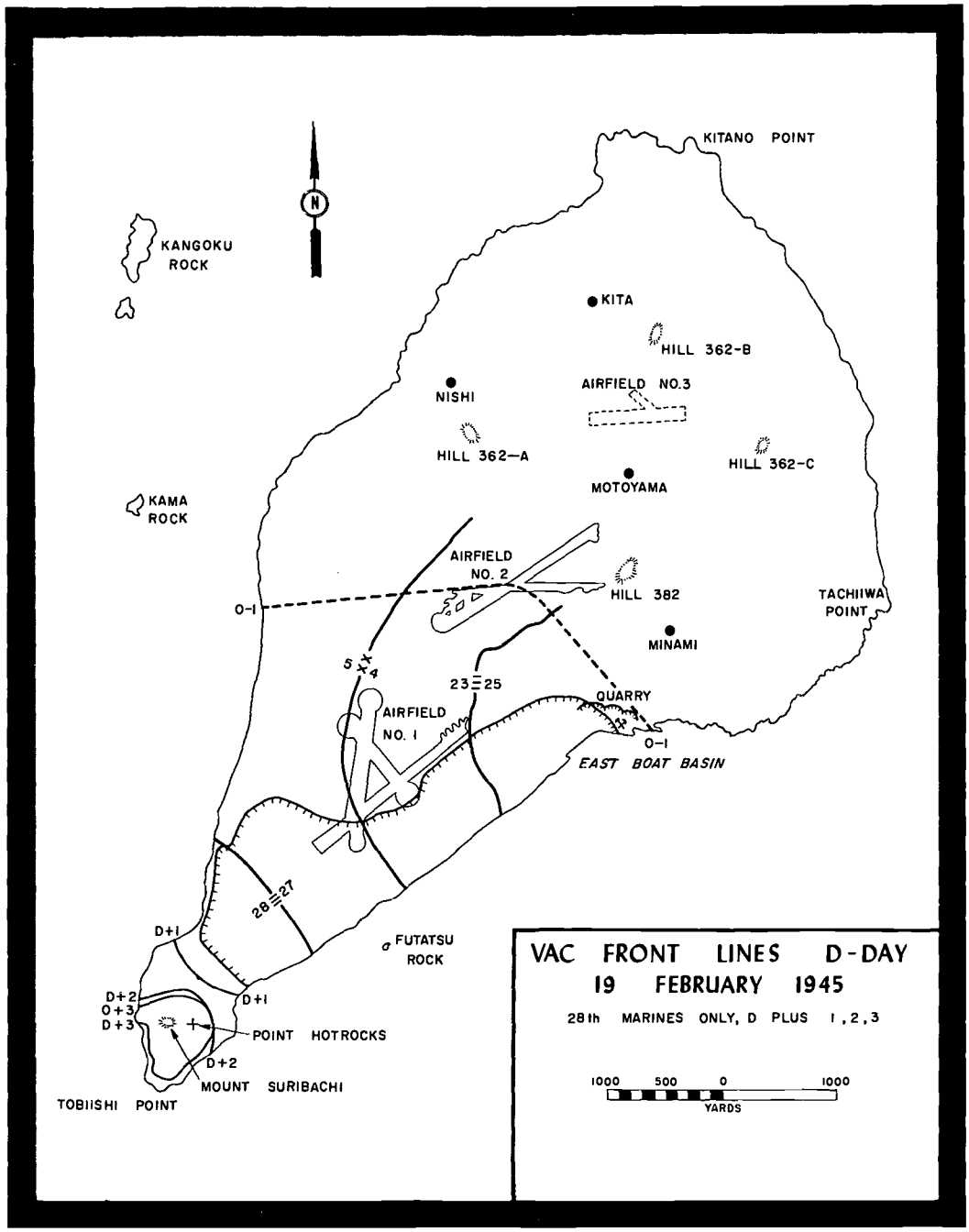
The burden of battle was not only borne by the Marine assault units who had gone ashore on D-Day. Throughout the day, the supporting arms of the Amphibious Support Force had done all they could to assist their hard pressed comrades in arms. Carrier pilots of TF 58 and the escort carriers of TF 52 flew missions as long as daylight prevailed; airborne observers and spotters kept a continuous vigil over the target area. More than 600 aircraft flew 26 missions in the course of the day, including strikes prior to H-Hour, dropped 274,500 pounds of bombs, not including more than 100 napalm bombs. Offshore, naval guns continued to shell enemy positions on Iwo in response to Marine requests. Gunfire support ships shelled enemy gun emplacements on the high ground north of the beaches and did their best to destroy the concealed enemy mortars whose fire was causing so many casualties on the beaches.[29]

The heavy enemy fire on the beaches, as well as unfavorable surf conditions, precluded the landing of all but highest priority cargo on D-Day. In order of importance, this cargo was limited to ammunition, rations, water, and signal equipment. Once this equipment had been unloaded on the beaches, the shore party teams could do little more than stack the supplies. LVTs and weasels carried these supplies inland and returned with a cargo of wounded.

As night fell, most of the transports and other vessels retired from Iwo, but some of the command ships, preloaded LSTs, and hospital LSTs remained behind. The work of stacking supplies on the beach and terraces continued after nightfall. Offshore, mortar boats concentrated their fire against the enemy positions on the high ground overlooking the 4th Marine Division beaches. Bulldozers continued hauling vehicles inland, and whenever possible, pulled equipment out of the sand. Under cover of darkness, critical items, especially 81mm ammunition, were brought in. The 81mm shells that had been hand-carrried ashore with these mortars had lasted for only one hour after the mortars opened fire. With the 81mm mortars out of ammunition, the assault battalions lost the services of a large

[28] *VAC G-2 PerRpt* No. 1, dtd 19Feb45.

[29] *TF 54 OpRpt*, p. 13.



Map 28 E. L. Wilson

portion of high trajectory weapons support during most of the violent action on D-Day.[30]

While the Marines anxiously awaited the big *banzai* charge that would finally bring the enemy out into the open, General Kuribayashi cannily began to employ his plan which would destroy the Americans and their supplies on and near the beaches without his risking many of his own men. In short, his plan consisted of a few attempts at infiltration, while at the same time stepping up the fire of his deadly artillery and mortars against the crowded American beachhead. As the night progressed, the rain of enemy shells mounted in intensity, as did the number of American casualties.

By 2300, the enemy shelling of the Yellow and Blue Beaches had become so heavy that both beaches were ordered closed. Elsewhere, it proved to be a sleepless night for most of the Marines on Iwo. On the southern beaches, a few vessels still attempted to bring in cargo, as runners crawled in and out of command posts, bearing reports and orders. Other men were shuffling around in the darkness looking for their units and their equipment. Because of the disorganization of units, it proved impossible at this time to obtain an accurate account of D-Day casualties, though it was known that they were heavy. It was to be determined later that 501 Marines had died on this first day of the invasion; 1,775 had been wounded in action; an additional 47 died of wounds, and 18 were missing in action; 99 of the assault force suffered from combat fatigue.[31]

Despite the heavy casualties, on the evening of D-Day VAC still rated the combat efficiency of the assault force as very good to excellent.[32] As the day ended, the 5th Marine Division had established a beachhead approximately 1,500 yards wide and 1,000 yards in depth, dividing the enemy forces in the northern and southern part of the island and effectively isolating Mount Suribachi. The 4th Marine Division had reached a line extending northward and inland from Blue Beach 2 for about 200 yards on low ground, then from the Quarry on top of the ridge for about 300 yards, then south across the low ground which led off the beach towards Motoyama Airfield No. 2, and from there to a line which was roughly a projection of the main runway of Airfield No. 1. It was clear that the landing had been successful. The Marines were dug in and occupied positions that were difficult but tenable. Supplies were scanty but sufficient for immediate needs.

As the night progressed, there was movement of all kinds on and around Iwo Jima. Offshore, transports carrying the 3d Marine Division were arriving in the reserve area 80 miles southeast of the island. Amidst the steady thump-

[30] Lieutenant Colonel Fenton J. Mee ltr to CMC, dtd 15Dec52, in *Iwo Comments*.

[31] Casualty figures taken from statistics prepared by the Casualty Section, HQMC. It should be noted that in the confusion of D-Day, casualties were thought much more severe than was actually the case. 1/28 alone reported 600 missing. However, many of these men had returned by D plus 2. They had been fighting with other companies and in some cases other regiments. *28th Mar AR*, p. 17.

[32] *VAC AR*, Anx B, Encl A, p. 12.

ing and crashing of the enemy artillery and mortar shells deluging the 30,000 Marines that had gone ashore, there was stealthy movement as some of the enemy, their guns near Mount Suribachi rendered useless by American air and naval bombardment, moved through the lines and headed for northern Iwo. The enemy had lost a good part of his artillery, and within three hours after H-Hour, all of the heavy guns on the slopes of Mount Suribachi had been silenced.

There were several enemy attempts at infiltration. Shortly after 2300, a barge carrying 39 Japanese approached the west coast of Iwo and prepared to land them. The enemy was spotted by alert riflemen of 1/28, who picked the Japanese off one by one as they tried to get ashore, until all had been killed.[33] On the east coast of Iwo a member of a naval construction unit had a strange experience. He was watching a log in the surf which the current bore south along the shore. Suddenly, the log made a sharp turn. The Seabee fired 13 rounds and at dawn found a riddled Japanese body at the water's edge.

What it felt like to be a member of the VAC assault force during that first eerie night on Iwo Jima has been graphically described as follows:

> Bunched in foxholes along the perimeter, the Marines took turns on watch, fighting to stay awake, waiting, waiting for the crazy *banzai*. Now and then, shouting and ragged fire broke out in hysterical patches as the rocks and bushes seemed to move in the eerie light of the star shells. Still the rush didn't come.[34]

[33] *28th Mar AR*, p. 17.

[34] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 135.

Japanese artillery kept pounding the American positions. Shortly after midnight, the enemy scored a direct hit on the command post of 1/23 on Yellow Beach 1, killing Lieutenant Colonel Haas and the regimental operations officer, Captain Fred C. Eberhardt. Minutes later, one of the giant spigot mortar shells, which many Marines first thought to be a P-61 night fighter because of the peculiar sound it made while passing over, came wobbling down from the north and exploded on one of the Green Beaches near Mount Suribachi. Around 0400, the 25th Marines ammunition and fuel dump went off with a terrifying roar. Two full boatloads of 81mm mortar shells, gasoline, and flamethrower fuel exploded, caving in foxholes for yards around.

Initially, these disasters were attributed to lucky enemy hits on these vulnerable targets. It remained for a Japanese postwar history to clear up this point. According to the Japanese version:

> Instead of all-out desperate banzai charges, Kuribayashi organized small packs of prowling wolves—three or four in a pack—which sneaked in at night to enemy depots or concentration of fuel and ammunition and attacked with demolition charges and hand grenades. This new tactic again proved quite successful at the nights of February 19 and 20. For instance, heaps of 81mm mortar shells of the 4th Marine Division blew up at the southern coast; flamethrower fuel and gasoline at the same coast also burned.[35]

[35] Excerpts from Masanori Ito, *Fall of the Imperial Army* (Teikoku Rikugun No Saigo) v. IV, pp. 55–110), in *Newcomb Notes*, hereafter Ito, *Fall of the Imperial Army*.

As dawn rose over the island on 20 February, less than 24 hours had passed since the first Marines hit the Iwo beaches. A newspaper correspondent, looking at the scene surrounding him, made this comment:

> The first night on Iwo Jima can only be described as a nightmare in hell. About the beach in the morning lay the dead. They died with the greatest possible violence. Nowhere in the Pacific have I seen such badly mangled bodies. Many were cut squarely in half. Legs and arms lay 50 feet away from any body. All through the bitter night, the Japs rained heavy mortars and rockets and artillery on the entire area between the beach and the airfield. Twice they hit casualty stations on the beach. Many men who had been only wounded were killed.[36]

It appeared that General Kuribayashi's strategy was paying off. There had been no *banzai* that first night; but from dusk to dawn Japanese shells had steadily killed off Marines on the congested beaches at no cost to the enemy. As the new day dawned, it would be up to the tired Marines to strip the enemy of his excellent observation posts and firing positions, their only means of eliminating the deadly fire in which the entire landing force was engulfed.

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[36] Robert Sherrod, as cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137.

The Struggle for Suribachi [1]

SECURING THE BASE[2]

Dawn on 20 February saw VAC Marines engaged in two distinct operations. One was the capture of Mount Suribachi whose forbidding slopes glowered down on the Americans on the exposed ground beneath. The other was a prolonged drive to the north, intended to seize the vital airfields and eliminate all enemy resistance.

The story of the capture of Suribachi is basically that of the 28th Marines. After landing on D-Day, Colonel Liversedge's men were facing southward, prepared to tackle the mountain, while the remainder of the 5th Division and all of the 4th had wheeled to the right to complete the capture of Airfield No. 1, and then continue the advance to the northeastern part of Iwo.

The assault on the extinct volcano promised to be difficult. To some of the Marines, gazing at the mottled, bare mountain, "Suribachi resembled the head of a fabulous serpent, with fangs ejecting poison in all directions from its base."[3] Between Colonel Liversedge's men and the base of Suribachi lay a wasteland of broken rock and stubble. This wasteland, guarding the one approach to the volcano, was studded by hundreds of caves, pillboxes, blockhouses, bunkers, spider traps, mines, and every other conceivable defense. It was in the slow and costly approach to the mountain that many Marines were to die or be wounded.

On the mountain itself, 1,600 Japanese were occupying well-camouflaged defensive positions with orders to hold out to the very end. That the Marines had cut the southern portion of Iwo off from the northern part on D-Day had little effect on General Kuribayashi's dispositions and plans. The wily enemy commander had foreseen that the island defenses would be split early in the operation. In relation to his overall defensive plan, Mount Suribachi was

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from: *TF 51 AR; TF 56 AR; VAC AR; VAC G-2 Rpts; 5th MarDiv AR; 5th MarDiv D-2 PerRpts; 5th MarDiv D-3 Jnl; 5th MarDiv D-4 Jnl;* 28th Mar R-2 Jnl, 19Feb-25Mar45, hereafter *28th Mar R-2 Jnl; 28th Mar UJnl; 28th Mar AR*; 2/28 OpRpt, 19Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *2/28 OpRpt; 5th Tk Bn AR;* 5th Tk Bn UJnl, 19Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *5th Tk Bn UJnl*; 5th EngBn OpRpt, 9Mar45, hereafter *5th Eng Bn OpRpt*; Bartley, *Iwo Monograph; Iwo Comments;* Henri *et al, Marines on Iwo Jima;* Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division;* Newcomb, *Iwo Jima; Newcomb Notes;* Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign;* Morison, *Victory in the Pacific;* Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War.*

[2] Additional material in this section is derived from: Richard Wheeler, *The Bloody Battle for Suribachi* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), hereafter Wheeler, *Suribachi,* quoted with permission.

[3] Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War,* p. 488.

37MM GUN *firing on Japanese positions on the slopes of Mt. Suribachi. (USMC 110139)*

DEBRIS OF BATTLE *litters Iwo beaches on D plus 2. (USMC 110252)*

but one of several semi-independent defense sectors capable of resisting the American assault with their own resources.

Colonel Liversedge's plan of attack was for the 28th Marines to surround the base of the mountain, maintain a steady pressure on enemy positions that could be identified in the cliffs, and seek out suitable routes to the summit. The regiment was to advance towards Suribachi with the 2d Battalion on the left, the 3d on the right, and the 1st in reserve. H-Hour was 0830, 20 February.[4]

At first light, carrier planes attacked the mountain with bombs and rockets. Napalm was dropped at the foot of the slopes, since most of the enemy fire seemed to come from that area. A destroyer stood offshore close to the west coast to support the advance of the 3d Battalion; a minelayer stood off the east coast to assist 2/28. The weather had changed for the worse; a light rain was falling and it had turned chilly. Four-foot waves were pounding the beach and the wind from the south was rising.

As Colonel Liversedge's men waited to jump off, they felt far from rested. The exertions of the previous day had been followed by a night of continuous enemy bombardment. The sense of gloom and foreboding felt by many men on the morning of D plus 1 was due not only to lack of sleep and the weather, but to the nature of the objective. Mount Suribachi itself imposed a mental hazard on the assault troops similar to that faced by the Allies in Italy a year earlier when they suddenly found themselves confronted by Mount Cassino. The impact of such a terrain feature, known to be held in strength by the enemy, can be formidable. As one account of the Iwo operation was to report:

> On this day, and increasingly as days went by, Suribachi seemed to take on a life of its own, to be watching these men, looming over them, pressing down upon them. When they moved, they moved in its shadow, under its eye. To be sure, there were hundreds of eyes looking at them from the mountain, but these were the eyes of a known enemy, an enemy whose intent was perfectly clear. In the end, it is probable that the mountain represented to these Marines a thing more evil than the Japanese.[5]

The assault of the 28th Marines against Suribachi began on schedule, preceded by a bombardment of the mountain by destroyers, rocket gunboats, and artillery. This bombardment destroyed a few enemy emplacements and at the same time unmasked many concrete structures buried in the scrub and rocky ground leading to the base of Suribachi. It soon became evident that the caves on the lower slopes and at the base of the mountain were as formidable as its pillboxes and blockhouses. The caves had from two to five entrances with interconnecting tunnels. Prior to the invasion they had served as air raid shelters and living quarters. They were linked with supply and command caves containing food, water, and ammunition. From the entrances to the caves, 6-inch guns, protected by five-foot walls, pointed down the island.

[4] *5th MarDiv AR*, Sec VIII, p. 19.

[5] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, p. 57.

Almost immediately, the advancing Marines came under heavy fire from small arms, mortars, and artillery. Working against the success of the attack was the lack of needed tank support. The 5th Tank Battalion had been scheduled to support RCT 28. Even though eight tanks were available, no fuel or ammunition was at hand. The tankers finally salvaged some from disabled tanks and divided it up. During this redistribution, the enemy put a heavy mortar barrage on the vehicles, forcing them to move to another position. Almost immediately, the mortar fire shifted to the new position. This occurred three times; there was no place where the tankers could move that was not under direct enemy observation.

During the morning, the Marines advanced only 50 to 70 yards. Support from aircraft and ships helped, as did the artillery support from 3/13. However, even the best efforts of these combined arms failed to neutralize enemy fire, particularly that coming from the well-camouflaged pillboxes hidden in the scrub around the base of the mountain. Once the Marines advanced into these formidable enemy defenses, they would be too close for support from aircraft and artillery. Assault demolition teams, using flamethrowers and explosive charges, would have to do the job. Once again, the continuation of the advance depended on the skill and bravery of the individual Marine.

At 1100, the tanks were finally ready to support the advance. The 37mm guns and 75mm half-tracks of the regimental weapons company were also moved up in support. In the face of bitter enemy resistance, only split-second teamwork by every unit could gain any ground. The procedure employed was for infantry and tanks to take each pillbox under fire, while a flamethrower team worked up to one of the entrances. After several bursts of flame had been squirted at the fortification, the remainder of the assault squad closed in to finish the job with grenades. Once the occupants had been eliminated, engineers and demolition teams blasted the positions to ensure that they would not be reoccupied by the Japanese after nightfall. Whenever the rugged terrain permitted, flamethrowing tanks were employed against the pillboxes.

By 1700, RCT 28 had laboriously moved 200 yards closer to the objective, at the cost of 2 officers killed and 6 wounded, and 27 men killed and 127 wounded.[6] The advance had taken the Marines of 2/28 and 3/28 close to the base of the mountain; in the course of the afternoon, they had closed off nearly 40 caves with demolitions. As the men prepared to dig in for the night, they found themselves surrounded by the debris of the heavy enemy coastal guns which the naval bombardment had smashed prior to and during D-Day. Moving towards Mount Suribachi along the western shore of Iwo, 3/28 killed 73 of the enemy. The Japanese corpses presented an encouraging sight in an operation where, thus far, little had been seen of the enemy, dead or alive.

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[6] *28th Mar AR*, 19-20Feb45, p. 18.

FLAME THROWERS *in action at the base of Mt. Suribachi. (USMC 110599)*

LONE MARINE *protects flank of patrol headed for summit of Mt. Suribachi. (USMC A419741)*

As the 28th Marines pressed their assault, the enemy situation on Suribachi steadily deteriorated. The American naval and air bombardment on D-Day had knocked out all of the 140mm guns. Inside the mountain, the commander of the Suribachi Sector, Colonel Kanehiko Atsuchi,[7] pondered his mounting casualties and dispatched a message to General Kuribayashi asking the latter's permission to go out and seek death through a *banzai* charge, rather than sitting it out in his present position. Shortly thereafter, the advancing Marines found and cut the buried cable linking Suribachi with the northern sector. Colonel Atsuchi never received a reply from the island commander, either because communications were now disrupted or simply because General Kuribayashi felt that his sentiments regarding the outdated *banzai* charge were sufficiently well known to his subordinates to require no repetition.

Some postwar Japanese sources, emphasizing that Atsuchi was actually in charge, have implied that the island commander was not happy with having entrusted Atsuchi, then 57 years old, with command of the crucially important batteries on Suribachi.[8] One of the Japanese officers, initially stationed on Iwo, who was familiar with the enemy command organization, later was to refer to the *Suribachi Sector* commander as "a poor superannuated amateur," adding "that it was the Army's mistake to send such an aged and rusted character to Iwo, who was simply a misfit for leading many people."[9] Other accounts were somewhat more charitable towards Atsuchi. In any case, there can be no doubt that a *banzai* attack was precisely what General Kuribayashi did not want. He much preferred to force the Americans to fight for the mountain foot by foot, and to inflict heavy losses as a price for seizing the strongly defended elevation.

Loss of telephone communications with the command post in the northern part of Iwo did not mean that Atsuchi's men had been abandoned by their comrades. As darkness fell, the Japanese on Suribachi fired white and amber flares as a signal that artillery and mortar support were desired from the northern sector. For the second night in succession, artillery and mortar fire from Suribachi and northern Iwo pounded the Marine positions. American guns, ashore and afloat, answered this barrage, as the din of battle echoed and resounded well into the night.

As on the eve of D-Day, the men of the 28th Marines peered into the dark-

[7] Mistakenly referred to as Navy Captain Kanehiko Atsuchi in Ito, *Fall of the Imperial Army*, pp. 55–110. There is some disagreement as to who was in charge at Mount Suribachi. According to one Japanese source, Major Nagahiko Matsushita, commanding the *10th Independent Antitank Battalion*, was the unit commander in the Mount Suribachi area, while Colonel Atsuchi (also spelled Atsuji) was dispatched from the *109th Division* headquarters to provide operational guidance. *Japanese Defense Agency Comment.*

[8] Major Yoshitaka Horie comments on Iwo Jima operation, in Fred Saito ltr to Richard R. Newcomb, dtd 27Jan64, in *Newcomb Notes.*

[9] *Ibid.*

ness, ever watchful for signs of an enemy counterattack. Tired eyes strained to the south in an effort to detect enemy activity, but for the second night the expected counterattack failed to develop. Division orders for D plus 2 called for a continuation of the 28th Marines attack towards Mount Suribachi. Despite enemy artillery and mortar fire, the tired men tried to obtain what little sleep they could get in anticipation of the rigors that awaited them on the following day.

On the morning of 21 February, the rough weather of the previous day showed no signs of abating. The wind had risen to 19 knots from the northeast and six-foot waves were pounding the landing beaches. Since the distance between the forward elements of the 28th Marines and the base of Mount Suribachi was still significant for air strikes, naval gunfire, and artillery support, the combined force of air and artillery was again brought to bear against the Japanese before the Marines jumped off.

Prior to the scheduled jumpoff at 0825, 40 aircraft struck at the enemy with bombs and rockets, and, strafing within 100 yards of the forward Marine lines, concentrated against an area inaccessible to tanks. This was the closest air support thus far provided and possibly the last, since another day's advance would bring the men too close to their objective.

The 1st Battalion was assigned a one-company front on the regimental right. When the regiment jumped off for the attack at 0825, the units and boundaries assigned to it were identical to those of the previous day. Once again, the tanks were unable to meet H-Hour because of delays in rearming and refuelling, and the attack had to get under way without them.

Under cover of fire from warships and land-based artillery, the 1st Battalion attacked towards Mount Suribachi along the west coast. Because the terrain there precluded effective employment of tanks, their absence at the beginning of the attack was immaterial. On the left, it was a different story; even with naval gunfire support no gains were made until the tanks arrived. By 1100, the attack gained momentum when armor, 37mm guns, and half-tracks mounting 75mm guns, as well as rocket detachments, joined in pounding the enemy positions. By noon, the 1st Battalion had reached the western base of Suribachi.

During the advance it became apparent that the enemy was particularly vulnerable to the heavy explosive blast of the rockets and retaliated by concentrating his fire on the rocket launching trucks which were unprotected by armor-plate. When caught in such a concentration of fire, the crews withdrew to cover and ran up singly to load the rocket platform. When the order to fire was given, one Marine would scamper forward, dive under the truck, then reach his arm around the side to push the firing button. The resulting explosion when the rocket hit the target usually meant that the Marines had one less enemy position to contend with.

Advancing in the center, the 3d Battalion encountered heavy resistance from the same positions that had

blocked the advance on the previous day. Nevertheless, the attack of this battalion also was gaining momentum by 1100. Within the hour, an enemy counterattack struck the front of 3/28; this action failed to halt the advancing Marines, and by 1400 the forward elements had reached the foot of Mount Suribachi. There, 3/28 spent the remainder of the day.

The attack of the 2d Battalion down the eastern shore also got under way slowly. At first, there was little resistance and for a few moments, the hulking natural fortress remained quiet, but enemy reaction was not long absent. First came the crack of rifles and the chatter of machine guns. The chatter turned into a heavy clatter and bullets began to snap and whine around the advancing Marines. Some of them found their mark. Then the Japanese began firing their deadly mortars. Some of the Marines could see the high arc of the mortar rounds. Soon the area was blanketed by roaring funnels of steel and sand. The noise and fury increased until the hearing of the attacking Marines was numbed and their thinking impaired. It seemed as if the volcano's ancient bowels had suddenly come to life and the men were advancing into a full-scale eruption. One of the Marines, speaking of the holocaust, was to remark later:

> It was terrible, the worst I can remember our taking. The Jap mortarmen seemed to be playing checkers and using us as their squares. I still can't understand how any of us got through it.[10]

Not all of the attacking Marines did get through the lethal curtain of fire, but there were enough of them to carry the advance forward. The feelings of these men, as they faced what seemed to them almost certain death, were expressed by one of their number who lived to tell about it:

> We were now part of a real hell-bent-for-leather attack, the kind the Marines are famous for. But there was nothing inspiring about it. None of our ex-raiders shouted "Gung Ho!" . . . and none of our southerners let go the rebel yell. We felt only reluctance and enervating anxiety. There seemed nothing ahead but death. If we managed somehow to make it across the open area, we'd only become close-range targets for those concealed guns. I myself was seized by a sensation of utter hopelessness. I could feel the fear dragging at my jowls.
>
> It is in situation like this that Marine Corps training proves its value. There probably wasn't a man among us who didn't wish to God he was moving in the opposite direction. But we had been ordered to attack, so we would attack. Our training had imbued us with a fierce pride in our outfit, and this pride helped now to keep us from faltering. Few of us would have admitted that we were bound by the old-fashioned principle of "death before dishonor," but it was probably this, above all else, that kept us pressing forward."[11]

Two uncommon acts of heroism, among many, were to occur during the day, indicative of the caliber of the men who had gone ashore on Iwo Jima. The first one was unpremeditated, nor was there time for lengthy thought. It took place in 2/28 when Private First Class Donald J. Ruhl deliberately threw himself on a hand grenade that had landed

[10] Wheeler, *Suribachi*, p. 108.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

next to him and his platoon guide, Sergeant Henry O. Hansen, sacrificing his own life in order to save the sergeant. The second involved the rescue of two Marines who lay wounded for more than 24 hours at the eastern base of Mount Suribachi. A hospital corpsman had been keeping them alive by creeping up to them and treating their wounds under fire. One of the wounded was breathing through a glass tube in his neck. Since evacuation by land was out of the question because of enemy fire, a group of Marines, headed by Staff Sergeant Charles E. Harris, manned a raft, landed it on the rocky shore in a heavy surf, and succeeded in evacuating both men under the noses of the enemy. Both casualties survived the ordeal.

By evening of 21 February, the 28th Marines occupied a line which formed a semicircle just north of Mount Suribachi. The 1st Battalion was halfway around the mountain on the western shore; 2/28 had advanced an equal distance along the eastern base of the mountain; the 3d Battalion was squarely facing the volcano in the center of the semicircle. During this third day ashore, the 1st Battalion had advanced 1000 yards, the 2nd Battalion 650 yards, and the 3d, 500 yards. These gains were made at a cost of 34 Marines killed and 153 wounded. Due to these heavy additional casualties, by evening of 21 February the combat efficiency of the 28th Marines had declined to 75 percent.[12]

Much of the success of the day's advance had been due to the tank support available on D plus 2. Altogether, seven tanks supported the advance towards Mount Suribachi. Two of them were put out of action by the enemy and one by the terrain. One ran over a mine, one was hit by antitank fire, and one broke a track. About 1630, after the advance halted for the day, the tanks were released. To avoid any delay when the attack resumed on the following morning, the tanks were rearmed and refueled before dark. Despite the damage sustained by the three vehicles, the tankers engaged near Mount Suribachi had suffered no casualties on this third day of the invasion.[13]

As the afternoon of 21 February wore on, a cold rain began to fall on Iwo, greatly increasing the discomfort of the Marines holding positions around the base of Suribachi. Behind them, and all around them were the remnants of the main defenses guarding the volcano. Some of the pillboxes and bunkers had been crushed like matchboxes by naval gunfire; others had been seared black by napalm flames. The entire area was pervaded by the smell of death and burned flesh, where flamethrowers had done their deadly work. The expenditure of flamethrower fuel had reached such proportions that a temporary shortage developed — overcome only when versatile Weasels carried additional supplies to the front lines.

In the gathering dusk, many Marines could clearly hear the enemy talking inside the mountain. They succeeded in killing a large number of Japanese by pouring gasoline down the fissures and setting it aflame. Inside the volcano, Colonel Atsuchi was dying from a shell

[12] *28th Mar AR*, 20-21Feb45.

[13] Co C, *5th Tk Bn AR*, p. 3.

fragment wound incurred during the day.[14] His last order was that a squad of men attempt to break through to General Kuribayashi's headquarters to report the situation on Suribachi. Many of the enemy felt extremely bitter at their own lack of air support while American aircraft filled the sky. Nevertheless, enemy morale remained unshaken and nearly all were determined to go down fighting.

Actually, air support for the Japanese garrison on Iwo was closer at hand than anyone, friend and foe alike, might have suspected. At dusk, as the Marines were digging in for the night, the enemy made one effort from the air. About 50 *kamikazes* had left an airfield near Tokyo early in the day and, after refuelling at Hachijo Jima in the Bonins, headed towards Iwo Jima. Each member of the Special Attack Unit had but one objective: to hurl his aircraft and himself at the invasion fleet that was gathered around Iwo.

Radar equipment on the *Saratoga,* about 35 miles northwest of the island, picked the aircraft up when they were still 100 miles away, but they were first mistaken for friendly planes. At 1700, interceptor aircraft reported that the approaching formation was Japanese and that they had downed two of the intruders. Shortly thereafter, two *kamikazes* struck the *Saratoga* and set her on fire. These fires had barely been put out when another Japanese plane grazed the flight deck and crashed overboard, its bomb blowing a hole in the flight deck. Nevertheless, shortly after 2000, the *Saratoga* once again was able to recover planes. Losses were 123 killed and missing and 192 wounded; in addition, the carrier lost 36 planes by burning and jettisoning, and six by water landings in the choppy seas.[15] The *Saratoga,* once her fires had been extinguished, limped back to Pearl Harbor for repairs.

Another carrier, the *Bismarck Sea,* was in position 20 miles east of Iwo when, shortly before 1900, a *kamikaze* hit the ship square abeam. Gassed planes on board caught fire and ammunition exploded in the rapidly spreading blaze. As a 22-knot wind fanned the fires, it became necessary to abandon ship. Following a tremendous explosion, the *Bismarck Sea* turned over and sank. Many of the men who had gone overboard were picked up by the escort vessels; others succumbed to the cold waters. Altogether, 218 men of the *Bismarck Sea* were lost, out of a crew of 943 officers and men.[16]

Other ships attacked by the *kamikazes* were the escort carrier *Lunga Point,* which fought off four torpedo bombers without loss; the net tender *Keokuk,* set afire, losing 17 men killed and 44 wounded; and LST *477* carrying artillery for the 3d Marine Division. The LST was struck a glancing blow by a *kamikaze,* which failed to do any major damage. None of the Japanese pilots survived the attack.

As 21 February came to an end, the hospital ship *Samaritan* sailed from

[14] Official Japanese sources claim that Colonel Atsuchi was killed during the daylight battle on 20 February. *Japanese Defense Agency Comment.*

[15] Morison, *Victory in the Pacific,* p. 54.

[16] *Ibid.,* p. 55.

Iwo Jima to Guam. Her cargo consisted of 623 seriously wounded Marines. The care given to these wounded was in stark contrast to the little attention the Japanese received from their own medical personnel. Japanese defense plans for Iwo Jima had made no provision for the evacuation of any wounded. Those Japanese who were wounded either crawled back or were carried to aid stations behind the lines. There, they might be placed in niches in the walls of tunnels, where their comrades would look after them as best they could. Some of the Japanese bound up their wounds and remained with their units, either to fight again if physically able or else perform other work behind the lines.

For the Marines dug in around the base of Mount Suribachi, another restless night was in the offing. The rain was still coming down, increasing their discomfort. Some of the Japanese inside the mountain were moving around and talking, but no *banzai* charge developed. Enemy artillery and mortar fire continued to fall in the area, though its effect was not as deadly as during the preceding night. The enemy confined himself to two attempts at infiltrating the American lines in the 28th Marines sector. Men of the regiment's 81mm mortar platoon killed some 60 Japanese in front of 2/28 during one of these efforts. Company C accounted for 28 more who, in accordance with Colonel Atsuchi's final orders, attempted to infiltrate north along the western beaches.

The following morning, 22 February, began with all the earmarks of a miserable day. The cold, hard rain had turned Iwo's loose soil and cinders into a sloshy gumbo. At 0800 the enemy scored a mortar hit on the regimental CP which killed the regimental surgeon, Lieutenant Commander Daniel J. McCarthy. The rain, driven from the southeast by a strong wind, not only caused great discomfort to the Marines, but the wet volcanic ash clogged automatic weapons, which could fire only single rounds. Nevertheless, the 28th Marines continued their attack at the foot of Mount Suribachi. Because of the bad weather and the Marines' proximity to the mountain, no air support was available, and artillery support was severely curtailed. Once again, it became the task of individual Marines to pick a path through the rubble, blasting and burning their way through the enemy defenses. The Japanese within the mountain and isolated pillboxes around the base still resisted with heavy mortar and small arms fire.

Once again, seven tanks of Company C, 5th Tank Battalion, supported the attack of the 28th Marines. Two were attached to 2/28 to work around the east side of Suribachi; three were sent to 1/28 to advance around the right, and two remained in support of 3/28 in the center. The heavy rainfall that continued throughout the day severely limited the operation of the tanks. At one time during the afternoon, the rain became so heavy that the crews, unable to see where they were going, had to be guided by men on foot.

Poor weather and enemy resistance to the contrary, 22 February marked the day on which Mount Suribachi was neutralized and surrounded. The men of 3/28 cleared out the base of the north

face of the volcano during the day and sent a patrol around the west coast down to Tobiishi Point, Iwo Jima's southernmost extremity. There, the men of 3/28 encountered a patrol from 2/28 which had advanced down the east coast. By 1630, the 28th Marines halted operations for the day. One sergeant of Company I who scrambled part way up the north face of Mount Suribachi reported seeing no Japanese. He asked whether he should continue up the mountain, but Colonel Liversedge felt that it was too late in the day, and the final advance to seize the mountain was delayed until the following morning.

By the end of D plus 3, the fight for Mount Suribachi was virtually over. Substantial numbers of the enemy, perhaps 300 in all, still occupied caves and other places of concealment within the volcano. But in the course of the 28th Marines' advance, hundreds of the enemy had been killed, and the pernicious power of the fortress was now broken. As Marines, shivering from the cold and wetness, huddled at the foot of Suribachi, the enemy survivors within debated whether they should stay or attempt to fight their way north. Only half of them decided to remain and fight it out. The remainder crawled out into the murky darkness and tried to make their way north through the American lines. Most of them fell victim to accurate fire from alert Marines, determined to halt any infiltration. About 20 of the enemy made it across the lines and reached General Kuribayashi's headquarters near Motoyama in the northern part of the island where they were reassigned.

For the Marine survivors of the drive to Mount Suribachi, the final act in the drama was about to open. The time had come to start climbing. On the evening prior to that venture, no one could guess what the following day would bring.

SEIZING THE HEIGHTS[17]

Friday, 23 February, marked the day on which the Marines climbed to the top of the craggy 550-foot rim of Mount Suribachi. The steep slopes of the mountain fortress all but precluded a converging ascent from various directions. When it was discovered that the only practical route to the crater lay up the north face of the mountain, in the zone of the 2d Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Johnson became directly involved in planning the climb. The battalion commander's decision was to send several small reconnaissance patrols to the top before ordering a platoon-size combat patrol to make the ascent.

At 0800, Sergeant Sherman B. Watson of Company F led a four-man patrol up the mountain. On top of Suribachi this patrol encountered a battery of heavy machine guns with ammunition stacked alongside around the rim of the crater. There was no sign of the enemy. The bald, gray rock was now surrounded by silence; the caves and underground chambers seemed devoid of life. Uprooted blockhouses and pillboxes offered mute testimony to the destructive power of the heavy naval

[17] Additional material in this section is derived from: 5th EngBn UJnl, 19Feb-24Mar45, hereafter *5th EngBn UJnl;* Maj Yoshitaka Horie (IJA) Rpt, Iwo Jima, dtd 11Feb46, hereafter *Horie Rpt.*

guns; most of the tunnels on the slopes were closed and smoking. Unaccustomed to the silence, the men wondered why they drew no fire. They slid and scrambled down Suribachi to report to the battalion commander.

Even before the first reconnaissance patrol returned from its climb, Lieutenant Colonel Johnson dispatched two three-man patrols from Companies D and F at 0900 to reconnoiter other suitable routes up the mountain and probe for enemy resistance. None drew any fire. While the small reconnaissance patrols were still executing their mission, Colonel Johnson assembled the combat patrol that was slated to seize Mount Suribachi in force and hoist the American colors over the mountain. The 3d Platoon, Company E, was selected for this mission. The Company executive officer, 1st Lieutenant Harold G. Schrier, led the patrol. A member of the patrol was to recall later:

> The 25 men of the 3d Platoon were by this time very dirty and very tired. They no longer looked nor felt like crack combat troops. Although they had just had a relatively free day, their rest had been marred by a chilling rain. They hardly yearned for the distinction of being the first Marines to tackle the volcano. But the colonel didn't bother to ask them how they felt about it.[18]

Lieutenant Schrier assembled the platoon at 0800 and bolstered its thin ranks with other men of Company E until it totalled 40 men. Before starting the ascent, he led the men back around the base of Suribachi to battalion headquarters just northeast of the base. Johnson's final orders were simple and to the point: the patrol was to climb to the summit, secure the crater, and raise the flag. As the patrol prepared to move out, the battalion commander handed Schrier a folded American flag that had been brought ashore by the battalion adjutant, 1st Lieutenant George G. Wells. The flag, measuring 54 by 28 inches, had been obtained from the *Missoula,* the transport that had carried 2/28 from its staging area to Iwo Jima.

Forming an irregular column, the patrol headed straight for the base of Suribachi. They moved at a brisk pace at first. When the route turned steep and the going became more difficult, the patrol leader dispatched flankers to guard the vulnerable column against surprise attack. The men, heavily burdened with weapons and ammunition climbed slowly, stopping occasionally to catch their breath. At times, the route became so steep that they moved upward on their hands and knees. Along the way, they passed close to several cave entrances, but the caves appeared deserted and no resistance developed. The only Japanese encountered were the dead. Friendly eyes were observing the patrol's laborious ascent: Marines near the northeast base of Suribachi and men of the fleet, who, cognizant of the drama unfolding before them, were watching through binoculars.

Higher and higher the patrol picked its way, avoiding heavily mined trails and keeping men out on the flanks to thwart any enemy ambush. Within half an hour after leaving battalion headquarters, the patrol arrived at the rim of the crater. There, Schrier called a halt while he sized up the situation. He

[18] Wheeler, *Suribachi,* p. 128.

MEN OF THE 28TH MARINES *raise Old Glory on Mt. Suribachi, morning of 23 February 1945 (USMC 112720)*

spotted two or three battered gun emplacements and several cave entrances, but no sign of the enemy. He signalled the men to start filing over the rim. As the patrol entered the crater, the men fanned out and took up positions just inside the rim. They were tensed for action, but the caves along the rim and the yawning floor below remained silent.

While half the patrol deployed around the rim, the remainder pressed into the crater to probe for resistance. Part of their mission had been executed. It now remained for them to locate something to serve as a flagpole. Scouting along the rim of the crater, a couple of men located a 20-foot section of pipe. Lashing the flag to one end, they thrust the other into soft ground near the north rim. At 1020, the Stars and Stripes rose over the highest point of the island, where it fluttered in a brisk wind. Small though it was, the flag was clearly visible from land and sea, proof that Suribachi had fallen.

Far below, on the sandy terraces and in foxholes, still exposed to deadly fire from enemy artillery and mortars in the north of Iwo Jima, exhausted and unshaven men openly wept, while others slapped each other on the back and shouted. Out at sea, ships' whistles, horns, and bells rang out in jubilation. On deck of the hospital ship *Solace*, badly wounded Marines raised themselves on their elbows to look up at the tiny speck on the summit.

Not far from the CP of the 28th Marines, a group of men stood on the beach near the surf. They had just stepped ashore from a Higgins boat to become fascinated spectators of the most dramatic moment of the Iwo operation. Deeply moved by the sight was Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, accompanied by General Holland Smith and an assortment of Navy and Army personnel including two admirals. Turning towards General Smith, Forrestal said gravely: "Holland, the raising of that flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years."[19]

Atop the mountain, the men of Lieutenant Schrier's patrol had little time for rejoicing. The sight of the American flag waving over Suribachi was too much for the remnants of Colonel Atsuchi's garrison to take lying down. Sergeant Louis R. Lowery, a Marine photographer, had just clicked the shutter of his camera, taking pictures of the flag raising on the rim of the crater, when two Japanese charged out from a cave near the summit. One of the Japanese, running towards the flag and waving his sword was promptly shot down. The other heaved a hand grenade at the Marine photographer who escaped injury or death by vaulting over the rim and sliding about 50 feet down the mountain before his fall was broken. His camera was smashed, but the negatives inside remained safe. The second Japanese was also killed. Other Japanese, frenzied by the sight of the American flag, started to emerge from caves near the crater and met the same fate.

Three hours later, a larger flag, almost twice the size of the first one, was raised over Mount Suribachi. It was the raising of this second flag, obtained

[19] Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, p. 261.

from LST *779*, that resulted in photographer Joe Rosenthal's picture of the flag raising that became perhaps the most famous photograph of World War II and that has since served as an inspiration to countless Americans.

Proportionate to the elation of Americans at the fall of Suribachi, the Japanese on Iwo Jima and elsewhere felt great consternation. Upon receiving the news of the fall of the volcano, one Japanese staff officer, once himself stationed on Iwo, but subsequently reassigned to Chichi Jima, later recalled that "he was bursting with emotion."[20] Equally shocking to this officer was the fact that the mountain fortress had fallen in only three days. According to the Japanese timetable, Suribachi was to have been held for at least two weeks.[21]

For the remainder of the afternoon, 2/28 continued to mop up on and around Mount Suribachi. Marines annihilated enemy snipers and, together with the engineers, blasted shut a large number of cave entrances. Many Japanese were sealed in and though undoubtedly some later managed to dig their way out of these tombs, an unknown number succumbed from their wounds or were asphyxiated. A few Japanese who survived the fall of Suribachi managed to get back to their own lines in the northern part of Iwo where they faced yet another ordeal. As the survivors from Suribachi entered the Japanese lines, the following incident took place, to be remembered long after by a Japanese petty officer who survived the operation:

> I remember a very dramatic scene I saw February 24, 1945. A Navy lieutenant, whose name I don't recollect, and several of his men—all blood stained wearing torn uniforms, reached the command post and said they broke through the enemy encirclement of Suribachi and managed to reach the command post for a report. When I showed the lieutenant up to Captain (IJN) Inouye's desk, Inouye became furious and bellowed: "Why did you come, you son of a bitch? Wasn't your assignment to hold that fortress at any cost? Shame on you to come here. Shame, shame, shame! Don't you know what shame is? I tell you that you are a coward and deserter!" His aides tried to calm the Captain down. But Inouye was madder and howling more profanity, and finally said: "Under any military regulations, a deserter is executed summarily. I shall condescend myself to behead you."
>
> So the Captain drew his sword and pulled it up. The wounded lieutenant knelt down silent, immobile. Presently, the aids clung to the captain and physically wrested his sword away. Inouye burst into tears, mumbling: "Ugh, ugh, Suribachi's fallen! Suribachi's fallen!" The aides took the lieutenant away to the sick bay for first aid treatment.[22]

While the reinforced platoon of Company E scaled Suribachi, part of the same company patrolled down around the eastern end of the island until it made contact with elements of 1/28 advancing down the west side.[23] Temporary contact between patrols in this

[20] *Horie Rpt*, p. 8.

[21] Ito, *Fall of the Imperial Army*.

[22] Fred Saito interview with Riichi Koyatsu, former Intendance Petty Officer 3/c, in Saito ltr to Richard F. Newcomb, dtd 10Feb64, in *Newcomb Notes*.

[23] "My recollection is that, on my way down the mountain (I was up there between the two flag raisings) I met the rest of E Company, its commander at its head, marching up with the second flag." BGen Robert H. Williams ltr to Head, HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, dtd 25Jun69, in *Iwo Comments*.

THE SECOND FLAG RAISING, *afternoon of 23 February 1945. (USMC 113062)*

area had already been made on the previous day. The two patrols met near Tobiishi Point at 1015, just a few minutes before the first flag raising. There was no enemy resistance, though a mine killed two men of 1/28.

To garrison the summit of Mount Suribachi during the coming night, 40 men from Company E remained on the crest; the rest of the regiment occupied positions around the base of the mountain. During the night, 122 Japanese were killed trying to infiltrate the American lines. Many of them had demolitions tied to their bodies and probably were trying to blow up Marine command posts and artillery positions along with themselves.[24]

During one predawn breakthrough attempt early on 24 February, 30 grenade-throwing Japanese assaulted the command post and aid station of 1/28. Personnel of battalion headquarters, corpsmen included, used whatever weapons were at hand to kill the infiltrators while protecting wounded Marines who lay helpless on stretchers amidst the turmoil.

There were to be no easy victories on Iwo Jima, and the cost of seizing Mount Suribachi was high. The operation from D plus 1 to D plus 4 cost the 28th Marines 519 casualties. Of these, 3 officers and 112 men were killed and 21 officers and 354 men were wounded.[25] These figures do not include the 385 casualties sustained by the regiment on D-Day.[26]

[24] *28th Mar AR*, p. 22.
[25] *5th MarDiv AR*, Sec VII, pp. 17–22.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

It proved impossible to obtain an accurate figure of Japanese killed on and around Suribachi, though 1,231 enemy were counted and hundreds more were sealed inside caves and blockhouses.[27] Except for a handful of men that succeeded in getting through to northern Iwo, the entire garrison of Mount Suribachi was virtually killed to a man. In the days following the fall of the fortress, an occasional Japanese might succeed in digging his way out of a cave or tunnel that had been blasted shut, only to be shot by the alert Marines stationed on and around the mountain for the purpose.

Working together with the infantry, members of the 5th Engineer Battalion had destroyed 165 concrete pillboxes and blockhouses, some with walls 10 feet thick. They had blasted 15 strong bunkers and naval gun positions; destroyed thousands of enemy shells, grenades and land mines; and had sealed 200 caves, some of them three stories high and equipped with heavy steel doors. In addition, the supporting troops evacuated several hundred wounded Marines and bulldozed 1,500 yards of roads and tank paths up to the crater.

Immediately after it was secured, Mount Suribachi was put to practical use. The 14th Marines rushed echo and flashranging equipment to the top in order to spot Japanese artillery and fortifications in the northern end of the island from this vantage point, which thus was turned into a vital observation post. Colonel Liversedge's regiment remained in corps reserve in the Suri-

[27] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, p. 68.

bachi area for the next five days, picking off occasional enemy survivors, salvaging arms and equipment, and training new replacements.

As vital and dramatic as the capture of Mount Suribachi was, it marked but one step in the conquest of the stubbornly defended island. A grim and deadly battle was being fought to the north. Few Marines at this stage suspected the strength of the enemy defenses and the cost to be exacted in advancing to the northern end of the island. For the Marines on Iwo, the capture of Suribachi marked the end of a beginning; for General Kuribayashi's well entrenched main force it was the beginning of the end.

Drive to the North [1]

CAPTURE OF AIRFIELD NO. 1[2]

While the 28th Marines was engaged in the epic assault on Mount Suribachi during the first four days of the invasion, a bloody slugging match involving the main body of General Schmidt's VAC was developing to the north. The battalions in line for the offensive were, from west to east, 1/26, 3/27, 3/23, 2/24, 1/25, 2/25, and 3/25. Two companies of 1/24 were attached to the latter battalion. The seven battalions were deployed along a 4,000-yard front extending from the western shore just north of Mount Suribachi northeastward across the southern end of Airfield No. 1. From there, the line followed the eastern fringes of the field and then pivoted sharply to the east, meeting the coast at the East Boat Basin. (See Map II, Map Section).

It had already become evident on D-Day that, despite extensive naval gunfire and air support, numerous enemy positions had survived the preliminary bombardment completely unscathed. At this juncture, the depth of the enemy defense system on the island was still a matter of conjecture. The dramatic drive of the 28th Marines towards Mount Suribachi had initially captured the limelight; but it was in the central and northern part of Iwo that General Kuribayashi had concentrated the bulk of his forces. The wily enemy commander had left nothing undone to make his defenses in the northern and central sectors impregnable. In this, he was aided by the topography of the island, for the entire area comprised a weird looking array of cliffs, ravines, gorges, crevices, and ledges. Jumbled rock, torn stubble of small

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from: *TF 51 AR; VAC AR; VAC C–1 PerRpts; VAC G–2 Rpts; VAC C–3 Jnl; VAC C–3 PerRpts;* 3d MarDiv AR, 19Feb-25Mar45, hereafter *3d MarDiv AR;* 3d MarDiv D–2 Jnl, 14Feb-27Mar45, hereafter *3d MarDiv D–2 Jnl;* 3d MarDiv G–3 Jnl, 6Feb-3Apr45, hereafter *3d MarDiv G–3 Jnl;* 3d MarDiv G–1 PerRpts, 14Feb-11Apr 45, hereafter *3d MarDiv G–1 PerRpts;* 3d MarDiv D–1 Jnl, 14Feb-12Apr45, hereafter *3d MarDiv D–1 Jnl; 4th MarDiv G–2 Rpts; 4th MarDiv D–3 Jnl; 4th MarDiv D–3 Rpts; 4th MarDiv OpRpt; 5th MarDiv D–1 Jnl; 5th Mar Div D–2 PerRpts; 5th Mar Div D–3 Jnl; 5th MarDiv AR;* 5th MarDiv Casualty Rpts, 17Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *5th MarDiv Casualty Rpts; 5th TkBn AR; Iwo Comments;* Bartley, *Iwo Monograph;* Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign;* Newcomb, *Iwo Jima; Newcomb Notes;* Aurthur, Cohlmia, and Vance, *The Third Marine Division;* Proehl, *The Fourth Marine Division;* Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*; Morison, *Victory in the Pacific;* Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War.*

[2] Additional material in this section is derived from: 1/24 OpRpt, 19Feb-18Mar45, hereafter *1/24 OpRpt*; 2/24 AR, 19 Feb–16Mar45, hereafter *2/24 AR;* 25th MarRgt UJnl, 18Feb-23Mar45, hereafter *25th MarRgt UJnl;* 26th MarRgt UJnl, 19Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *26th MarRgt UJnl*; 3/27 UJnl, 19Feb–23Mar45, hereafter *3/27 UJnl.*

trees, jagged ridges, and chasms sprawled about in a crazy pattern. Within this maze, the enemy sat deeply entrenched in hundreds of carefully constructed positions, ranging from blockhouses to bunkers, pillboxes, caves, and camouflaged tanks. All fields of fire were well integrated.

One of the reasons for the failure of American naval gunfire and aircraft to neutralize or destroy an appreciable number of enemy positions prior to the landings was the masterful use of camouflage by the enemy. So skillfully had the Japanese hidden their positions that American ships and aircraft failed to detect them. Even those that were spotted and became targets of American naval gunfire and bombs frequently escaped major destruction because of their structural strength.

In the northern part of Iwo Jima, just as in the south, the first night ashore proved to be a restless one. Damage and casualties to the 1/23 command post on Yellow 1, as well as the explosion of the 25th Marines ammunition dump during the early morning hours, have already been recounted. Elsewhere, it was a similar story. At 0230, about 500 Japanese formed in front of the 27th Marines but were dispersed by artillery fire from the 13th Marines. Shortly after 0700, the enemy scored a mortar hit squarely on the command post of 2/25 above Blue Beach 1. The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Lewis C. Hudson, Jr., the executive officer, Major William P. Kaempfer, and the operations officer, Major Donald K. Ellis, were badly wounded. The commander of Company B, 4th Tank Battalion, who had stopped by to obtain further details about the impending attack, scheduled to be launched within the hour, was killed. The executive officer of 3/25, Lieutenant Colonel James Taul, took over the command of the 2d Battalion.

The initial objective of the assault on D plus 1 was to seize the 0–1 Line extending eastward from Iwo's west coast to the southern tip of Airfield No. 2, whence it curved southward in the form of a horseshoe and continued generally east to the coast northeast of the East Boat Basin. In order to reach the 0–1 Line, VAC units would have to complete the northward pivot from west to east, which had already begun on D–Day. Units along the left flank of VAC and those in the center were to sweep across Airfield No. 2 and straighten the sagging portions of the line until they had advanced generally abreast of the 25th Marines, with 1/24 attached, which occupied the hinge position on the right.

For many of the Marines preparing to jump off on the morning of D-plus 1, daylight brought with it a most depressing sight. At least one observer was to record:

> . . . it was not until the next morning, when Marines along the airfield could look back on the beach, that the full extent of our losses was apparent. The wreckage was indescribable. For two miles the debris was so thick that there were only a few places where landing craft could still get in. The wrecked hulks of scores of landing boats testified to one price we had paid to put our troops ashore. Tanks and half-tracks lay crippled where they had bogged down in the coarse sand. Amphibian tractors, victims of mines and well aimed shells, lay flopped on their backs. Cranes, brought ashore to unload cargo, tilted at

insane angles, and bulldozers were smashed in their own roadways.

Packs, gas masks, rifles, and clothing, ripped and shattered by shell fragments, lay scattered across the beach. Toilet articles and even letters were strewn among the debris, as though war insisted on prying into the personal affairs of those it claimed.

And scattered amid the wreckage was death. An officer in charge of an LCT had been hit while trying to free his boat from the sand and was blown in half; a life preserver supported the trunk of his body in the water. Marines, killed on the beach, were partially buried under the sand as the tide came in. Perhaps a hand stretched rigidly out of the sand, and that was all.[3]

In the face of all this death and destruction, the battle continued and, following an intensive artillery, naval gunfire, and air preparation, the VAC attack to the north jumped off as scheduled at 0830. Along the 1,000-yard front in the 5th Division zone of attack, Colonel Wornham committed 1/26 and 3/27 abreast, keeping 1/27 and 2/27 in reserve. General Rockey had designated the 26th Marines, less 1/26 which had been attached to RCT 27, as division reserve, standing by in positions near the southwestern tip of Airfield No. 1.

The advance of 1/26, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Daniel C. Pollock, and 3/27, under Lieutenant Colonel Donn J. Robertson, soon was seriously slowed down by numerous enemy pillboxes and land mines; even more deadly was the well-aimed enemy mortar and artillery fire and particularly a heavy concentration of air bursts from Japanese antiaircraft guns fired from their minimum angle of elevation. West of the airfield, Colonel Wornham's men had to move through relatively open terrain that offered neither cover nor concealment from an enemy who enjoyed both excellent observation and fields of fire. Supported by Companies A and B of the 5th Tank Battalion, the 5th Division Marines moved forward steadily, taking heavy losses as they advanced. At 1800, when Colonel Wornham ordered the two battalions to halt and consolidate, the advance had gained 800 yards. However, 1/26 on the left had to pull back about 200 yards to more favorable ground for night defense. As D plus 1 came to a close, the two 5th Division battalions dug in along an east-west line extending from the northwestern edge of Airfield No. 1 to the west coast. For the night, 2/27 backed up 1/26 while 1/27 dug in behind 3/27 to provide a defense in depth.

For the attack on D plus 1, the 4th Marine Division committed two regiments abreast. On the left of the division zone of attack, the 23d Marines, with 2/24 attached, jumped off at 0830 and almost immediately encountered intense enemy machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire. In attempting to pinpoint the source of this fire and silence it, Colonel Wensinger's men temporarily lost contact with Lanigan's 25th Marines. Even though the terrain in this area was unfavorable for the employment of armor, a reinforced platoon from Company C, 4th Tank Battalion was able to support the advance of the 23d Marines. By noon, an aggressive attack had carried past the northern fringes of Airfield No. 1. This thrust breached an important portion of the Japanese defensive system and at the same time

[3] Proehl, *The Fourth Marine Division*, pp. 152–153.

reduced a number of well-concealed pillboxes and infantry strongpoints. The attacking Marines also had suffered severe casualties. Movement, both on the airfield flats and on the slopes from the beaches, was almost entirely under enemy observation, and the Japanese made the most of their favorable situation.

During the afternoon, the 23d Marines continued the advance. However, minefields and increasingly rough terrain all but precluded effective armored support. The enemy directed deadly rocket, artillery, and mortar fire against the advancing Marines, and after the morning's gains little more ground was taken for the remainder of the day. Altogether, in crossing the airfield, Colonel Wensinger's men had advanced roughly 500 yards. At 1630, the reserve of the 23d Marines, consisting of 1/23 and 2/23, moved forward to positions along the seaward edge of the airfield to form a strong, secondary line of defense. The 23d Marines linked up with the 27th Marines on the left and the 25th Marines on the right before nightfall.

The attack of Colonel Lanigan's 25th Marines on D plus 1 was to be carried out by three battalions abreast. On the left, 1/25 under Lieutenant Colonel Hollis U. Mustain, was to make the main effort; the 2d Battalion in the center, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel James Taul, was to seize the high ground directly to its front and, after taking it, give fire support to 1/25. On the extreme right flank, the attached 1/24 under Major Paul S. Treitel, was to remain in place until 1/25 and 2/25 could come abreast. Because of heavy casualties sustained on D-Day, 3/25 was pulled out of the lines and held in regimental reserve.

The 25th Marines jumped off on schedule. Tanks of Company B, 4th Tank Battalion, supported the attack, but the exceptionally rough terrain made this support practically worthless. In addition, each time that a tank reached a firing position, it immediately attracted accurate enemy mortar and artillery fire. Crossfire from enemy machine guns mounted in concealed emplacements, combined with a heavy volume of well-aimed rifle fire, seriously interfered with the advance of Colonel Lanigan's regiment and inflicted heavy casualties.

In discussing the advance on D plus 1, a survivor of the Iwo battle later was to remark:

> There was no cover from enemy fire. Japs deep in reinforced concrete pillboxes laid down interlocking bands of fire that cut whole companies to ribbons. Camouflage hid all the enemy installations. The high ground on every side was honeycombed with layer after layer of Jap emplacements, blockhouses, dugouts, and observation posts. Their observation was perfect; whenever the Marines made a move, the Japs watched every step, and when the moment came, their mortars, rockets, machine guns, and artillery, long ago zeroed-in—would smother the area in a murderous blanket of fire. The counterbattery fire and preparatory barrages of Marine artillery and naval gunfire were often ineffective, for the Japs would merely retire to a lower level or inner cave and wait until the storm had passed. Then they would emerge and blast the advancing Marines.[4]

The deadly effectiveness of the enemy fire was not limited to the front lines. At

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

1100, Japanese artillery scored a direct hit on the aid station of 1/25, killing six Navy corpsmen and wounding an additional seven. It was apparent that General Kuribayashi had so sited his artillery that all the beaches and routes into the interior of the island were covered. Japanese gunners could search out various supply dumps, evacuation stations, and command posts at will. Normally, LVTs had the task of bringing supplies to the front lines. In the zone of attack of the 25th Marines, however, even these versatile vehicles were unable to get through and work details from units in reserve had to manhandle critically needed materiel.

Colonel Lanigan's Marines continued to press the attack throughout the afternoon of D plus 1, but progress was woefully slow. At 1600, the exhausted men were cheered by the arrival of friendly aircraft which, it was hoped, might lend some impetus to the advance. This joy, however, soon, turned into terror when .50 caliber machine gun bullets, rockets, and bombs from a friendly air strike hit men of Company B, 1/24, standing upright on the southern slope of the quarry about 400 yards inland from the eastern shore. This strike, neither called for nor controlled by 1/24, was delivered without a preliminary run and placed on the front lines despite the fact that yellow front-line marking panels had been displayed prior to and during the attack. In consequence of this error, 1/24 suffered five killed and six wounded.[5] As if attempting to advance under heavy enemy fire and being strafed, bombed, and rocketed by friendly aircraft were not enough, the hapless company also was shelled by naval gunfire and found friendly artillery registering on its positions.[6] This misguided naval gunfire, consisting of two complete salvos fired by an unidentified cruiser, landed in the front line of 1/24 and resulted in approximately 90 casualties.[7]

By 1800, 1/25 and 2/25 had made gains of 200-300 yards. The left flank of 1/25, on the other hand, had been unable to move at all throughout the day because of extremely heavy fire received from the left front in the zone of action of the 23d Marines. At 1800, orders were issued to all units to consolidate, dig in, and establish firm contact with each other.

As night descended over bitterly contested Iwo Jima on 20 February, the capture of Airfield No. 1 had been completed and the 4th Division front had advanced between 200 and 500 yards. For these gains, the Japanese had exacted a heavy price. As the second day ended, the 5th Marine Division had lost 1,500 men killed and wounded and the 4th Division about 2,000.[8] The first prisoners, a total of three, had been taken during the day, but two of them died. A total of 630 enemy dead had been counted, but it was assumed that many others had been killed.

Early on D plus 1, General Schmidt had ordered the corps reserve, the 21st Marines, commanded by Colonel Hartnoll J. Withers, to boat and prepare to

[5] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, Anx H. p. 4.

[6] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, Anx G, p. 121.

[7] LtCol Paul S. Treitel ltr to CMC, dtd 5Feb53, in *Iwo Comments*.

[8] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 146.

land on order. The regiment began debarking before noon, in rain and rough water. Dozens of men missed the drop into the bobbing boats and after they had been fished out, the boats went to the rendezvous area. There the LCVPs circled for six hours, the Marines cold, wet, and miserable. The congestion at the beaches which was steadily increasing, combined with a rising surf that made landing conditions hazardous, precluded their landing. In the end, General Schmidt ordered the regiment back to its transports to be landed later when conditions had improved.

At the same time, on D plus 1, there was a desperate need for artillery, whose landing could not be postponed. As a result, the 4th Marine Division landed the 3d and 4th Battalions of the 14th Marines during the day. Shortly after 1000, 3/14 had launched all of its DUKWs, but the landing was delayed by enemy fire. Finally, in midafternoon, the amphibian trucks carrying 3/14 began to land over the southernmost portion of Yellow 1. The battalion's 105mm howitzers moved into positions prepared by the 3/14 reconnaissance party just inland from the boundary separating Yellow 1 and Red 2. Around 1730, the howitzers opened fire and reinforced the fires of the 1st Battalion of the division artillery.[9]

The landing of the 105s of 4/14 turned into a disaster. The first DUKW to emerge from LST *1032* remained afloat only for a moment. Then waves surged over the side, the engine stopped, and the DUKW sank, taking the 105 down with it. Seven more DUKWs waddled out of the LST and sank in succession. As a result, a total of eight 105s were lost, as well as a dozen officers and men. It was subsequently determined that motor failure of the DUKWs was caused by water in the gasoline, and by insufficient freeboard resulting from extremely heavy loads and choppy water. Thus, 4/14 had lost 8 out of 12 howitzers before firing a round on Iwo Jima.[10]

The disaster for Lieutenant Colonel Youngdale's battalion did not end here. The remaining four DUKWs headed for the beach late in the evening and two of them broached at the surf line while attempting to go ashore at 2230. Out of a dozen DUKWs and howitzers, only two finally made it to shore. The guns, having gone into position, began firing northward into the inky darkness.

In order to offset the critical artillery shortage, some of the big 155mm howitzers also were ordered to land. In late afternoon, LST *779* forced its way through the wreckage littering Red Beach 1 and discharged Battery C of the 2d 155mm Howitzer Battalion. Despite extremely difficult beach conditions, the four howitzers were hauled up the steep bluffs by tractors and were in position by 1840 in the 5th Marine Division sector near the west coast. The two remaining batteries of Major Earl J. Rowse's battalion were not landed for another two and four days respectively. Even those artillery battalions that did make it ashore encountered unusual problems from the

[9] *14th Mar OpRpt*, App. 3, pp. 8–10.

[10] *14th Mar OpRpt*, App. 5, p. 3.

very outset. Before the 28th Marines put the Japanese artillery on Mount Suribachi out of action, artillerymen firing to the north received enemy fire from the south that proved more troublesome than enemy rounds from the front.[11]

ADVANCE TOWARDS THE 0–1 LINE[12]

At the cost of heavy casualties, the Marines at the end of D plus 1 controlled nearly one-third of Iwo Jima and occupied a two mile-wide beachhead extending along the landing area and 2,000 yards up the southwest coast. Motoyama Airfield No. 1 was completely in American hands. Marine lines stretched in an east-west direction from the west coast opposite the end of the airstrip, past the end of the airfield, with a slight curve to the quarry. Just beyond that point the line curved at right angles to face east with the right flank resting on the shore along the ridge facing the East Boat Basin. The 0-1 Line had not yet been reached at any point, but positions were well knit and more artillery and serviceable tanks were available for support. Even though enemy resistance on 20 February was even heavier than that encountered on D-Day, both Marine divisions were holding the ground they had seized.

Beach conditions remained extremely difficult throughout the day, both because of a high surf and the continuous enemy artillery fire. The shore party battalions were raked by artillery, mortar, and small arms fire as they desperately attempted to clear the beaches and unload incoming landing craft. They stacked supplies well above the high-water mark, but gear piled up there faster than it could be moved inland. In order to cope with this crisis, the entire logistical plan of establishing shore-party dumps had to be abandoned. Without pausing on the beaches, incoming amtracs—the only vehicles that could climb the terraces and reach firm ground unassisted—waddled up the slopes into the front lines, where they delivered ammunition, rations, and water directly to the combat units. The tractors freed weapons and vehicles that had bogged down and hauled supply-laden DUKWs over the terraces, thus enabling the latter vehicles to move supplies right up to the front lines. In addition to the vehicles shuttling back and forth between the beaches and the lines, Marine working parties hand-carried ammunition forward in order to alleviate critical shortages.

In view of the overall situation, it became apparent to Generals Smith and Schmidt at the close of D plus 1, that the strength of enemy resistance dictated the necessity of employing the 3d Marine Division, still afloat, before long. The requirement of furnishing food and

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[11] LtCol Roland J. Spritzen ltr to CMC, dtd 7Nov52, in *Iwo Comments.*

[12] Additional material in this section is derived from 13th MarRgt UJnl, 19Feb-21Mar45, hereafter *13th MarRgt UJnl;* 14th MarRgt OpRpt, 22Feb-14Mar45, hereafter *14th MarRgt OpRpt;* 5th EngBn UJnl, 19Feb-24Mar45, hereafter *5th EngBn UJnl;* 5th Shore Party Rgt AR, 19-28Feb45, hereafter *5th Shore Party Rgt AR;* 2/26 UJnl, 19Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *2/26 UJnl*; 3/26 UJnl, 19Feb–26Mar-45, hereafter *3/26 UJnl*; VAC Transl of Jap Docs, Iwo Jima, hereafter *VAC Translations.*

ammunition to an additional 20,000 Marines would impose an added strain on available beach facilities, but the dwindling combat strength of the two Marine divisions already on the island left no other choice. As a result, the 21st Marines of the 3d Marine Division were again ordered to land on D plus 2, to be placed at the disposal of General Cates.

The night of 20-21 February was punctuated by loud explosions as the Japanese exchanged artillery fire with the Americans. At the same time, U.S. Navy gunfire support ships and LCIs mounting 4.2-inch mortars delivered counterbattery and harassing fires. Early in the evening, around 2000, a group of Japanese was observed massing opposite the 27th Marines. Immediate fire by the 13th Marines and attached corps artillery killed a number of the enemy and dispersed the rest. Shortly before 0500, about 100 Japanese attempted to pierce the lines of the 4th Marine Division in the 1/25 sector, but were driven off with heavy losses.

As 21 February dawned, 12 destroyers, 2 cruisers, 68 aircraft, and 33 howitzers took turns at battering the enemy-held portion of Iwo before VAC resumed the attack on D plus 2. At 0810, both the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions jumped off. On the left flank of VAC, the 27th Marines met immediate and violent resistance from the enemy's main defensive positions, which consisted of a belt of caves and concrete-and-steel emplacements. This defense system had a depth of a mile and a half and extended from the west coast to the east coast of Iwo. It featured innumerable pillboxes and around 1,500 caves.

The terrain in the 27th Marines' zone of advance was suitable for the employment of armor; elements of the 5th Tank Battalion moved forward just ahead of the infantry. By 1340, 1/26 on the left and 3/27 on the right had advanced nearly 1,000 yards and had reached a point just south of the 0–1 Line. Because of the relative speed of the advance and heavy enemy shelling, a sizable gap had developed by this time between the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions. Company B, 1/27 was committed from regimental reserve to fill this gap between 3/27 and the 23d Marines. Under continuous enemy fire, the 5th Marine Division spent the remainder of the afternoon reorganizing, evacuating casualties, and consolidating its lines. In the course of the afternoon, General Rockey and his staff came ashore and established their headquarters near the southern end of Airfield No. 1.

At the same time that the 5th Marine Division jumped off on D plus 2, the 23d and 25th Marines continued their attack. The 23d, with 2/23 on the left and 2/24 on the right slowly pushed forward with 1/23 and 2/23 following at a 600-yard interval. Almost immediately, the advancing Marines encountered severe mortar, machine gun, and artillery fire, as well as a number of minefields. The advance through the minefields and against numerous pillboxes was very time-consuming and costly. Engineer units went forward to remove the mines. The only significant advance made was on the left flank in the 23d Marines zone of advance, where slightly defiladed areas permitted local

and restricted envelopment. But even the progress of the 23d Marines averaged only slightly more than 100 yards during the entire day. After reestablishing contact with the 27th Marines on its left, the 23d dug in for the night shortly before 1800.

On the extreme right, the 25th Marines attacked with 1/25, 2/25, and 1/24 in line, and 3/25 in reserve. Even though the enemy had laid minefields in front of the 25th Marines, the terrain here was so rocky and irregular that the enemy had not been able to mine all avenues of approach. Tanks of Company A, 4th Tank Battalion, supported the advance of 1/25 and 2/25, while tanks of Company B fired on pillboxes and dugouts on the cliff facing 1/24, driving the enemy from the heights of the quarry and cliff areas. Howitzers of 1/14 placed counterbattery and supporting fire across the regimental front. Resistance in the center of the regimental zone gradually weakened and fair progress was made on the right along the shore of the East Boat Basin. Altogether, the 25th Marines gained from 50-300 yards in the course of the morning. Casualties were heavy throughout; at 1000, while checking his frontline positions, Lieutenant Colonel Hollis U. Mustain, commanding 1/25, was killed by enemy shellfire. The battalion executive officer, Major Fenton J. Mee, assumed command.

The irregular advance of units over difficult terrain caused a serious gap to develop between the 1st and 2d Battalions, 25th Marines; in midafternoon Colonel Lanigan committed his 3d Battalion between the two. Since all units were under heavy enemy fire, 3/25 encountered major difficulty in moving into the line. By 1700, the move had been accomplished and the regiment consolidated for the night. Similarly, in order to fill a sizable gap between the right flank of the 5th Marine Division and the left flank of the 4th, 1/27 was moved into position along the 5th Division's right flank. Lines of General Rockey's division had to be extended about 400 yards into the 4th Division zone of attack.

Throughout the day, the two-divisional advance towards Airfield No. 2 received effective air and naval gunfire support. More than 800 aircraft flew direct support missions with a total of 32 strikes carried out by 14-20 planes each. Eleven destroyers stood by offshore to provide direct support and illuminating fires for VAC; 1 destroyer, 2 LCI mortar support units, and 2 cruisers fired deep support missions.[13] Naval gunfire and artillery air spotters continued to use carrier-based aircraft, since Airfield No. 1 was still unable to accommodate VMO units.

A pressing need for reinforcements made it necessary to land more troops on Iwo as soon as possible. Improved beach and landing conditions on the morning of D plus 2 finally permitted the 21st Marines of the 3d Marine Division to come ashore. The regiment, commanded by Colonel Hartnoll J. Withers, was ordered to land at 1130 over the Yellow Beaches; it was to be attached to the 4th Marine Division to assist in the capture of Airfield No. 2.[14] Colonel Withers landed his battalions through-

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[13] *VAC AR*, Anx B, p. 16.

[14] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, Sec IV.

out the afternoon of 21 February. Despite a heavy surf, the regiment did not incur any casualties and by 1800 all three battalions and the regimental command post were ashore. After being attached to the 4th Marine Division, RCT 21 assembled near the edge of Airfield No. 1.

Shortly after noon, the assistant commander of the 4th Marine Division, Brigadier General Hart, also went ashore in order to report on beach conditions and select an appropriate site for the division command post. Finding the beaches under heavy fire and littered with the debris of the invasion, General Hart recommended that division headquarters remain afloat at least until 22 February. The assistant division commander also recommended, after consultation with the regimental commanders, that the 21st Marines, instead of relieving the 25th Marines as previously planned, would relieve the 23d Marines on D plus 3. His recommendation was approved.

As 21 February drew to a close, VAC held a very irregular line which passed between the two airfields. When units consolidated their positions for the night, a total of eight battalions was facing the enemy across the island. The slow Marine advance during D plus 2 had forced the Japanese back yard by yard. Once again, for the gains made in the course of the day, VAC Marines had paid with heavy casualties. During the first 58 hours ashore, the landing force had sustained more than 4,500 casualties, and combat efficiency of the 4th Marine Division had been reduced to 68 percent.

The night from 21-22 February proved to be a bad one for men of the landing force, who felt extremely uncomfortable in the cold drizzle. Within the overall scope of General Kuribayashi's prohibition of any major *banzai* charges, the Japanese did all within their power to make their unwanted guests as miserable as possible.

At dusk, enemy aircraft attacked American shipping offshore and scored hits on the outer ring of the warships surrounding Iwo Jima. Taking advantage of the commotion resulting from the sudden air attack, the enemy executed local counterattacks and infiltration against both the 4th and 5th Divisions. Along the left front of VAC, an enemy counterattack in undetermined strength hit the 27th Marines at 2100. No penetration resulted from this attack, which was stopped within the hour. At 0245, the exhausted men of Colonel Wornham's regiment repulsed an attempted infiltration. An hour later, the enemy tried his luck once again, and at 0400, RCT 27 reported 800 enemy massing in front of its lines.[15] As the long night finally ended, the regiment's lines were still intact, though an undetermined number of the enemy had managed to infiltrate.

It also proved to be a restless night for Marines of the 4th Division. Shortly before midnight, an enemy force of about 200 men massed on Airfield No. 2 and headed for the lines of 3/23. Before this attack could get organized, the enemy was hit by naval gunfire and artillery and was forced to withdraw.

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[15] *5th MarDiv AR*, p. 21.

During the long night, the 25th Marines reported that an enemy aircraft had bombed Blue Beach behind its lines. Almost as steady as the rain was the volume of enemy mortar and artillery fire that covered the Marine front lines, beaches, and rear areas throughout the night.

D plus 3 was, if anything, even worse than the three days that had preceded it. A cold, heavy rain pelted the island, coating Marines and their weapons with a sort of grayish paste on top of the layer of volcanic ash they had already acquired. The front lines of VAC, on the morning of 22 February, bent back in the form of a horseshoe in the center of the 3,400-yard line, where elements of the 23d Marines still were 1,200 yards short of the 0-1 Line. Fatigue and heavy casualties both had left their imprint on the men in the lines, and the three days and nights of incessant, nerve-shattering action were beginning to have an adverse effect on combat efficiency. Without rest or sleep, subsisting solely on a diet of K rations and water, occasionally supplemented by unheated C rations, the men were beginning to show a marked drop in morale.

In order to provide added impetus for the attack on this fourth day of the operation, both Generals Rockey and Cates decided to relieve some of the frontline units, notably the 23d and 27th Marines. Along the left flank of VAC, the 26th Marines under Colonel Chester B. Graham moved out at daybreak with the mission of relieving the 27th Marines and continuing the attack to the north. Once RCT 26 had passed the lines, 1/26, which previously had been attached to RCT 27, was to revert to its parent regiment. The 27th Marines reserve, 2/27, would become attached to the 26th Marines.

At 0500 the 21st Marines prepared to relieve RCT 23 with the attached 2/24. Upon being relieved, the 23d Marines, less two mortar platoons, was to be held in VAC reserve near the northeastern edge of Airfield No. 1. The mortar platoons were to remain in position to support the attack of RCT 21. The 25th Marines, with 1/24 attached, was to remain on the 4th Division right, while the 24th Marines, less 1/24, would continue in division reserve.

The relief of the 27th Marines took place in a heavy downpour of rain, which turned the ground into gumbo. Mortar fire, coming from the higher ground ahead and in the center of the island, fell as steadily as the rain, and both combined to create confusion and disruption. The 26th Marines, with 2/27 attached, passed through the lines of the 27th Marines with the mission of attacking to the northeast, following the western contour of the island. At the same time to the right, the 21st Marines moved in on the left of the 4th Marine Division.

The zone of attack of the 5th Division extended from the western beaches to a formidable terrain obstacle which ran from northeast to southwest down the west center of the island, curving west across the division's front near Airfield No. 2. This obstacle was a bluff almost 100 feet high, whose slopes dropped almost vertically towards the American lines. The high ground above the bluff provided the enemy with perfect obser-

vation into the division area and enabled him to effectively block any advance from both the front and the right flank.

At 0835, following preparatory naval gunfire and air strikes, both divisions jumped off. In the zone of attack of the 5th Marine Division the 26th Marines attacked with three battalions in the line. Almost immediately, the advancing Marines drew heavy fire from the front and right flank. Enemy shells and bullets were no respectors of rank; around 0940, Lieutenant Colonel Tom M. Trotti, commanding 3/26, and his operations officer, Major William R. Day, were killed by a mortar shell. Captain Richard M. Cook, commanding Company G, took over until noon, at which time Major Richard Fagan, the division inspector, assumed command. Despite heavy losses, the 26th advanced for about 400 yards. In the course of the day, the weather turned from bad to worse. Rain was falling in torrents and visibility became extremely poor. Because of the heavy rain, no air support could be made available. The poor weather even handicapped the tanks, whose drivers could see but a few yards ahead.

During the afternoon it became apparent that the attack by 3d Division Marines against the bluff itself had stalled, leaving the 26th Marines exposed to heavy fire from the front, the right flank, and the right rear. In addition, the Japanese were beginning to launch several thrusts against the regiment's left flank and center. As if to mock Colonel Graham's drenched and dispirited Marines, Japanese artillery and mortars on the bluff directed heavy fire into the 26th Marines' lines. At 1400, the exhausted and severely mauled Marines were forced to relinquish the 400-yard gain they had made earlier in the day and pulled back to the line of departure. Japanese mortar and artillery fire harassed the men for the remainder of the afternoon during the withdrawal and continued after the Marines had occupied defensive positions for the night.

In the sector occupied by the 4th Marine Division, things had gone little better during D plus 3. At 0500, the 21st Marines began the relief of the 23d. The newly arrived 3d Division Marines faced very rough going from the outset. In the heavy downpour and continuous enemy fire, the relief of the 23d Marines required nearly six hours. Even before the relief was completed, Colonel Withers committed his 1st and 2d Battalions, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Marlowe C. Williams and Lieutenant Colonel Lowell E. English, respectively, against an intricate network of mutually supporting pillboxes on the high ground between the two airfields. The 3d Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Wendell H. Duplantis, remained in reserve.

As the 21st Marines advanced northward, with 1/21 on the right and 2/21 on the left, it had to push its attack uphill against mutually supporting pillboxes and bunkers with mined approaches. These pillboxes were well protected on the flanks and only direct hits by large caliber weapons appeared to have any effect on them. In the taxiways between the airfields, bunkers blocked the advance, and the area adjoining the runways of Airfield No. 2 was dotted with pillboxes that were

covered with sand and often protruded only a foot or so above the ground. This was the beginning of the enemy main line of resistance. The restricted nature of the area and the excellent defensive system precluded any maneuver but a frontal assault.

Bad weather and a well-entrenched enemy who took full advantage of the terrain with prearranged fires, presented the 21st Marines with an exceedingly brutal introduction to Iwo Jima. By afternoon of D plus 3, 2/21 had advanced 250 yards in places; 1/21 had gained about 50 yards. Casualties had been out of all proportion to the gains made. Lieutenant Colonel Williams was wounded by a mortar shell but refused evacuation until nightfall, at which time he turned command of 1/21 over to the battalion executive officer, Major Clay M. Murray.[16] At about 1700, the attack halted for the day and all units began to prepare positions for the night.

To the right of the 21st Marines, the 25th, with three battalions and the attached 1/24 in the line, was to have attacked on D plus 3 in order to straighten its regimental front in conjunction with the advance of the 21st Marines. Once the lines had been straightened out, both the 21st and 25th Marines were to launch a coordinated drive to the north to seize the 0-1 Line. Failure of the 21st Marines to make any sizable gains had an adverse effect on operations of the 25th Marines, which was unable to launch a full-scale attack. Nevertheless, in the course of the morning, 1/25 advanced about 200 yards, only to find its left flank completely exposed. As a result, the advance had to be halted until the battalion could tie in firmly with the 21st Marines. In the center of the 25th Marines line, the 3d and 2d Battalions found themselves marking time. The only cheerful note for the day was sounded when 3/25 requested and received rocket support against a hill some 800 yards northwest of the quarry. Two salvoes fired against enemy positions on this hill drove about 200 Japanese from their emplacements. Caught out in the open by well-placed machine guns of 3/25, a large part of the enemy force was wiped out.

Around 1530, the Japanese struck back. While leaving his forward observation post, Lieutenant Colonel Chambers was severely wounded by enemy machine gun fire, when a bullet struck his left collarbone. Since Lieutenant Colonel James Taul, the battalion executive officer, had assumed command of 2/25 on 20 February, when the commander of 2/25 had been wounded and evacuated, Captain James C. Headley assumed command of 3/25.

The 2d Battalion of the 25th Marines, meanwhile, remained largely stationary during the day. Even so, it took its share of casualties. In midmorning, the Japanese laid a heavy and accurate mortar barrage on the battalion lines; an attempted enemy counterattack was quickly smashed. At 1830, Japanese were observed moving towards the bat-

[16] Major Murray himself was wounded on the following day and forced to turn command of the battalion over to Major Robert H. Houser, who led 1/21 for the duration of the Iwo operation. LtCol Robert H. Houser ltr to CMC, dtd 3Apr53 and Col Marlowe C. Williams ltr to CMC, dtd 9Feb53, in *Iwo Comments*.

talion lines. Before an attack could get under way, infantry heavy weapons fire and artillery support from the 14th Marines dispersed the Japanese.

At the right end of the VAC lines, 1/24 spent most of the day in mopping up along the east coast above the landing beaches. Major Treitel's men blasted caves and pillboxes in an attempt to reduce the heavy enemy mortar and sniper fire originating in the bluffs around the quarry. In its operations during D plus 3, the battalion fared better than the 25th Marines on its left and casualties were comparatively light. At 1700, the battalion consolidated its positions and established contact between units.

The ferocious battle raging between the airfields took its toll not only of men but also materiel. Thus, at the end of D plus 3, the 4th Tank Battalion reported that 11 of its tanks had been destroyed and 8 were under repair, leaving 28 operational.[17] The 5th Tank Battalion reported 34 tanks operational, 4 under repair, and 13 destroyed.

Even though the advance towards the north of Iwo had made little headway during 22 February, the command organization and activities on the Iwo beaches became somewhat better coordinated. Headquarters of the 9th Naval Construction Brigade, commanded by Captain Robert C. Johnson, CEC, USN, was set up ashore, and initial work was started on preparing Iwo to serve as a giant aircraft carrier. In the course of the day, burials began in the Fourth Division cemetery halfway between Yellow 1 and Airfield No. 2. Burials in the 5th Division cemetery, located just south of the airfield, had already commenced during the afternoon of D plus 1.[18] Provision was made for those Marines who died on board ship to be buried at sea, provided that this took place in water more than 100 fathoms deep.

Evacuation of the numerous casualties became a critical problem on D plus 3 because of poor beach conditions. LST *807* voluntarily remained on the beach under fire and acted as a hospital ship during the hours of darkness, while the remaining LSTs withdrew for the night. As darkness descended over the battle area, a steady stream of casualties arrived on the *807*, where doctors performed emergency operations in the wardroom. Before morning, more than 200 casualties had been treated on the LST; of this number only 2 died.[19]

At sundown on 22 February, Task Force 58 set sail for its second raid against Tokyo. On board the *Indianapolis*, Admiral Spruance accompanied this strike force. A task group of this fast carrier force, TG 58.5, consisting of the *Enterprise*, two cruisers, and Destroyer Squadron 54, remained at Iwo to provide night fighter protection. The departure of TF 58 materially reduced the availability of aircraft for direct ground support; overall responsibility for providing this type of support for the Marines ashore now fell on the small carriers of the carrier support force under Admiral Durgin, in addition to its mission of conducting air searches for survivors, providing anti-

[17] *VAC AR*, p. 18.

[18] *VAC C-1 PerRpts*, p. 21.

[19] *5th Shore Party Rgt AR*, p. 6.

submarine and combat air patrols, and strikes against nearby Chichi Jima. As a result, the close air support for Marines fighting on the ground would henceforth have to be curtailed due to the shortage of aircraft.[20]

Marines shivering from wetness and cold in the front lines, faced another restless night. The Japanese began to probe the American lines shortly after dusk. Following an extremely heavy mortar and artillery barrage around 1800, a strong enemy force attacked the northernmost lines of the 26th Marines and succeeded in driving back the outposts. The enemy counterattack was brought to a halt after heavy casualties had been inflicted upon the attacking force. During the early morning hours, enemy swimmers, who had infiltrated across the western beaches into the 5th Division area, had to be eliminated. Similarly, in the zone of action of the 4th Marine Division, there was sporadic enemy activity throughout the night. Around 0500, an estimated 100 Japanese attempted to infiltrate the lines of 2/25 and 3/25. Even though these enemy efforts were thwarted, the intermittent firing served to keep the weary Marines from getting some much-needed sleep. In addition to all this activity, Japanese artillery continued to hit friendly positions along the corps front, inflicting further casualties and adding to the sense of uncertainty.

Despite the continuous harassment by enemy infantry and supporting arms, VAC plans called for the continuation of the attack on 23 February. The objective for D plus 4 was to be the 0-2 Line. Jumping off at 0730, the 4th Marine Division was directed to make the main effort on its left against Airfield No. 2. Since the strongly defended bluffs on the far left of the 4th Division's zone of advance dominated all of western Iwo, VAC authorized the 5th Marine Division to advance beyond the boundary separating the two divisions if such an advance promised to neutralize or eliminate these prominent obstacles.

At 0730 on 23 February, the VAC attack continued in the direction of Airfield No. 2 and the 0-2 Line. The 26th Marines, with 2/27 attached, moved forward against very heavy fire from the front and the right flank. After advancing for about 200 yards against bitter opposition, the regiment found the ground untenable and withdrew to its jumpoff positions. Shortly before noon, enemy artillery scored a direct hit on the command post of 2/26. The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph C. Sayers, was wounded and had to be evacuated. Major Amedeo Rea, the battalion executive officer, assumed command. For the remainder of D plus 4, the 26th Marines attempted to advance, but it was driven back each time by heavy enemy fire. At the end of the day, the battalions dug in for the night in about the same positions they had occupied during the preceding night.

In the center of the VAC line, where the 4th Marine Division with the attached 21st Marines was to make the main effort against Airfield No. 2, events took a similar turn. Because of the importance of this airfield General Kuribayashi had assigned the *145th*

[20] *VAC Air Support Summary*, p. 2.

Regiment commanded by Colonel Masuo Ikeda to defend this vital objective. This regiment was considered the best Japanese outfit on Iwo Jima; its 47mm antitank guns were sited to fire straight down the runways. In fact, the Marines were now encountering the enemy main defense line, which began in the west at the rocky cliffs to the north of the western beaches, stretched east across the island to skirt the southern end of Airfield No. 2, and terminated in the cliffs at the northern end of the eastern beaches. This line was organized in depth with all types of heavy weapons within and behind it, capable of delivering fire upon both the isthmus and beach areas. It was also heavily organized with a series of mutually supporting pillboxes, bunkers, blockhouses, tunnels, and other dug in positions. In addition, all approaches to the airfield were mined; enemy dead, saki bottles, helmets, and ammunition dumps were found booby trapped.

It became the lot of the 21st Marines to advance into this cauldron of enemy fire. Typical of the fighting which this regiment was to see at the approaches to Airfield No. 2 on D plus 4 were the experiences of some of the members of this unit:

> Major Clay Murray taking over 1/21 for his first day, figured that if he could find the weakest point and destroy it he could then knock off the supporting positions one by one. He lifted the telephone to give an order and a machine gun burst smashed the phone in his hand. Two bullets tore through his left cheek and out his open mouth, taking five teeth with them, and the rest of the burst sheared the knuckles of his left hand and ripped open his left ear. Major Robert H. Houser became 1/21's third commander in two days.
>
> Private First Class George Smyth, 18, of Brooklyn, had never seen such Japanese. They were six footers, and they never retreated. Smyth's buddy fell beside him, a pistol bullet through his head, dead center. It came from a captured Marine .45. On the other side, a Japanese came down with his sword, both hands grasping the hilt. The Marine put up his right hand to ward off the blow, and his arm was sliced down the middle, fingers to elbow. As Smyth ran forward, a Japanese disappeared before him into a hole. Smyth dropped at the hole to finish him off, but the Japanese was already rising from a tunnel behind him. Smyth turned just in time to kill him. The ground was giving Ikeda's men every advantage, and they were using them all.[21]

In the end, 1/21 was unable to make any gains for the day and had to consolidate for the night in its jumpoff positions. The 2d Battalion, now commanded by Major George A. Percy, had already become engaged in a sharp firefight at daybreak and, as a result, did not jump off until 0935. The heavy curtain of enemy fire prevented any advance until a second artillery preparation had neutralized some of the known targets on Airfield No. 2. The assault companies reached the southwest approaches to the airfield, but every effort to get troops onto the field itself failed, despite heavy support from naval gunfire and a rocket barrage. Finally, some of the advance elements succeeded in crossing the lower end of the northeast-southwest runway following an air strike, only to be driven back later by

[21] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, pp. 175–176.

heavy machine gun and direct antitank fire. The 21st Marines consolidated its lines for the night at the southern edge of the field. For all practical purposes, gains for the day were nil, though the regiment had sustained heavy casualties.

On the right flank of the 4th Marine Division zone of attack, the 24th Marines, now in line with three battalions abreast, was to make the only sizable gains for the day. Advancing against moderate to heavy enemy resistance, Colonel Jordan's men gained as much as 300 yards. Since units along the regiment's left flank failed to advance, the regiment halted around 1500 and dug in for the night.

Even though two air strikes, artillery, and naval gunfire had supported the VAC attack on D plus 4, gains made for the day remained negligible. Before the morning attack opened, the *Idaho* had fired 162 rounds of 14-inch fire within 400 yards of the Marine lines; the *Pensacola* fired 390 rounds of 8-inch ammunition, all apparently without seriously affecting the enemy's power to resist. Discouraging as this tenacious enemy defense was to the frontline troops, there was a brighter side to the picture along the beaches, where, almost imperceptibly, order was beginning to emerge out of chaos. More exits from the beaches were being opened, permitting a steady flow of supplies inland. On 24 February, 2,500 rounds of 81mm mortar ammunition, of which there had been a critical shortage, were brought ashore, as were 25 tanks of the 3d Marine Division. When an eastward shift of the wind made it apparent that Iwo's eastern beaches would have a high surf on the following day, preparations were made to shift the unloading of cargo to the western beaches in the 5th Division sector for the next few days.

At the same time that supplies were coming ashore at a more steady pace, the command organization on Iwo Jima also became more stabilized. During the morning of D plus 4, General Cates came ashore and established his command post just east of the northwest-southwest runway of Airfield No. 1. Now that the headquarters of both the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions had been set up on the island, General Schmidt made an inspection of activities ashore while an advance party of the VAC Landing Force under the corps chief of staff made preparations for the establishment of a command post.[22] In the course of a meeting between General Schmidt and the division commanders it became apparent that more pressure against the enemy would have to be applied if any appreciable progress was to be made on the following day. In consequence, an intermediate objective south of the O-2 Line was established. The new line roughly corresponded at both ends with the O-1 Line; however, in the center it protruded nearly 800 yards to include all of Airfield No. 2. On 24 February, a concerted attack was to be launched against the bluffs that stood squarely in the center of the VAC line. The assault was to be preceded by the heaviest concentration of aerial bombardment, naval gunfire, and artillery

[22] *VAC AR*, p. 20.

that could be mustered. Tanks of the 3d, 4th, and 5th Marine Divisions were to support the main effort. Lieutenant Colonel William R. Collins, Tank Officer of the 5th Marine Division, was charged with responsibility for coordinating the armored support. At the same time, the remainder of the 3d Marine Division, except for the 3d Marines, was to land and move into position, prepared to take over the center of the VAC line on the following day.[23]

As D plus 4 drew to a close, one phase of the Iwo Jima campaign had ended. The Stars and Stripes had been hoisted above Mount Suribachi; Task Force 58 had already pulled out on the previous day, and Secretary of the Navy Forrestal departed for Guam during the late afternoon of 23 February. The Marines of VAC had established a solid foothold ashore, and there no longer was any chance for the Japanese on the island to dislodge them. Yet the most bitter and bloody part of the campaign was just about to begin. No one knew this better than the Japanese who, poised in their massive defenses, somberly awaited the American onslaught. During the night from 23-24 February, Admiral Ichimaru cabled to Admiral Toyoda his apologies for not having annihilated the Marines at the water's edge, adding:

> Real battles are to come from now on. Every man of my unit fully realizes the importance of this battle for the future of the nation and is determined to defend this island at any cost, fulfilling his honorable duty.[24]

Even as the Japanese naval commander was composing this message, small groups of Japanese once again attempted to infiltrate the lines of both the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions. In the 5th Division sector the enemy attempted to infiltrate both from the north and the south. In addition, the enemy shelled the rear areas and beaches during the night, thus assuring another miserable night for the Marines, who were dug in as best they could on the fringes of the enemy's main defense line.

On Saturday, 24 February, Iwo Jima resembled a giant beehive as the strong winds of the previous day diminished and moderate wind and surf under partly cloudy skies favored the unloading of men and supplies. On the beaches, a steady stream of men, machines, and supplies was pouring ashore, heedless of sporadic enemy mortar fire that was still hitting the beaches. At 1000, General Schmidt landed and assumed command ashore; shortly after noon, the VAC command post opened near the western beaches.[25] On Airfield No. 1, men of the 31st Naval Construction Battalion began the hazardous job of restoring the field. With riflemen covering them, they had to crawl up the runways on hands and knees, probing for mines and picking out shell fragments. Hidden Japanese still sniped at the Seabees and enemy artillery occasionally shelled the runways, but the work continued without interruption. By midafternoon, the 9th Marines, commanded by Colonel Howard N. Kenyon, and Headquarters,

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 176.

[25] *VAC AR, Anx* B, p. 21.

3d Marine Division, had come ashore.[26] General Erskine established his command post at the northern tip of Airfield No. 1, preparatory to taking over the central zone of action on the following day.

On the northern front D plus 5 got under way with a terrific bombardment of enemy positions just north of Airfield No. 2 from air, ground, and sea. Beginning at 0800, the *Idaho*, stationed off the western beaches, began to hurl 14-inch salvoes at the heavily fortified area abutting the field; standing off the eastern beaches, the *Pensacola*, still bearing the scars of her previous duel with enemy artillery on Mount Suribachi, was firing her heavy guns against enemy positions lying east of the *Idaho's* target area. This destructive naval bombardment continued for more than an hour. At 0845, howitzers of the VAC artillery joined the bombardment in conjunction with the division artillery, which laid down a powerful preparation directly in front of the VAC line. At 0900, the naval bombardment ceased as aircraft from the escort carriers arrived over Iwo Jima to saturate the target area with bombs and rockets. Following the powerful preparation, VAC opened its attack at 0910 with the 26th Marines on the left, the 21st Marines in the center, and the 24th Marines on the right.

The Corps attack order[27] had placed the axis of the main effort in the zone of action of the 5th Marine Division. For all practical purposes, however, tanks advancing on Airfield No. 2 in the zone of advance of the 21st Marines, were to deliver the main stroke. Once this attack had gained impetus, the combined force of infantry, armor, and artillery was to be brought to bear against the enemy. The concentration of overpowering force at one point, in accordance with the maxims of war, could produce significant results.

It was evident from the outset that the success or failure of the day's operation would hinge largely on the performance of the tanks of the three Marine divisions, which had been placed under the overall control of Lieutenant Colonel Collins. The approach of the tanks to the front lines ran into considerable difficulty almost from the outset. The original plan for the employment of armor had stipulated that the 5th Division tanks, followed by those of the 3d Division, were to proceed to Airfield No. 2 by way of the westernmost taxiway which led from Airfield No. 1 to the second field. Tanks of the 4th Marine Division were to head for No. 2 airfield over the eastern taxiway.

This plan proved impossible to carry out when Company A, 5th Tank Battalion, which spearheaded the advance along the western route, ran into horned mines, buried aerial torpedoes, as well as heavy antitank fire. The first tank in the column struck a mine and was disabled. Shortly thereafter, the second tank in line, which had proceeded some distance beyond the first, ran over a buried aerial torpedo which demolished the vehicle and killed four members

[26] "When the balance of the 3d Division less 3d Marines was released to VAC, a separate beach was assigned by contracting the 4th and 5th Division beaches at the junction, allowing some 700 yards for the 3d." *Rogers ltr.*

[27] OpO 4–45, dtd 23Feb45, in *VAC OpRpt*, Anx A.

of the crew.[28] In the midst of the confusion resulting from the explosion of the aerial torpedo, heavy artillery and mortar fire immediately hit the remaining tanks in the column, four of which were put out of action momentarily, though two of them were repaired under fire. Since the enemy had effectively blocked their route of advance, the remaining tanks returned to the bivouac area and prepared to advance on Airfield No. 2 by way of the eastern taxiway. There, the advancing armor also encountered mines and spent most of the morning in clearing a lane. Eventually, a dozen tanks reached the fringes of Airfield No. 2 and, having arrived there, opened fire on enemy emplacements to the north of the field.

Because of the delayed arrival of the supporting armor, the 26th Marines did not jump off until 0930 when, with three battalions abreast, it advanced making the main effort on its right in coordination with the assault by the 21st Marines. Progress was slow, and many tanks fell victim to mines and accurate enemy antitank fire. For the men of the 21st Marines, who were denied the expected armored support during the early part of the day, the going was extremely rough, and the regiment had to advance into intense enemy fire. Shortly after 1000, both Companies I and K lost their commanding officers in a matter of minutes. Nevertheless, and despite high casualties, the advance continued. By noon, elements of Company K, 21st Marines, had crossed the field and were attacking enemy positions on an elevation just north of the junction of the two runways.

It was rough going for the attacking Marines of 3/21 all the way, as they charged across Airfield No. 2 and uphill against a well-defended belt of interconnected pillboxes, trenches, tunnels, and antitank gun positions. Twice they were driven off the ridge, but they attacked again. Once within the enemy positions, the Marines assaulted Colonel Ikeda's men with rocks, rifle butts, bayonets, knives, pistols, and shovels. Around noon, just as it appeared that the ridge had been secured, heavy artillery fire began to hit the forwardmost elements of 3/21 and the attack ground to a halt. Nevertheless, a gap had been made in the enemy line and through this gap tanks, bazookamen, mortarmen, and machine gunners were now able to advance.

The attack of 2/21 encountered considerable difficulty in moving towards Airfield No. 2 in its zone of advance. The arrival of supporting armor at 1000 proved to be a mixed blessing, since the armor attracted a heavy volume of artillery and mortar fire that pinned down the assault companies. When the supporting tanks tried to advance over the runways, Colonel Ikeda's antitank guns soon put a stop to this effort. Nevertheless, by inching northward around the end of the runway, elements of 2/21 were nearly abreast of the 26th Marines on their left shortly after noon. This advance served to erase the deep bulge which the enemy positions had previously made into the Marine lines.

At 1330, as soon as the 21st Marines

[28] Co A, *5th Tank Bn AR*, p. 2.

had consolidated the morning's gains, a second deadly preparation of naval gunfire and artillery, similar to that which had preceded the jumpoff in the morning, rained down on the Japanese positions north of Airfield No. 2. As aircraft joined in the preparation, the 26th and 21st Marines launched a coordinated tank-infantry attack against the high ground to the north of the airfield. Once again, vicious hand-to-hand combat broke out. By 1415, Companies I and K of 3/21 had occupied the high ground across the east-west runway and tied in with each other. The supporting tanks now were able to operate on the western half of both runways, from where they directed their fire against enemy gun emplacements and pillboxes. The enemy responded with heavy antitank fire and mortar barrages. The latter did little damage to the tanks, but proved extremely detrimental to the infantry advancing alongside the armor. By the time the attack halted in late afternoon, the most forward elements of the 21st Marines had to withdraw to the southern edge of the east-west runway. Companies I and K of 3/21, on the other hand, were determined to hold their hard-won positions north of the airfield and remained in place. Badly needed supplies for these men had to be brought up after dark across the airfield.

At the same time that the 21st Marines swept northward across the airfield during the afternoon, the 26th Marines, with 2/26 and 3/26 abreast, also jumped off. Colonel Graham's men moved forward without significant difficulty over the ground directly in front of the regiment until they pulled abreast of the forward lines of the adjacent 21st Marines. From that point on, they drew continuous fire from cave positions to their right front. As the Marines approached, the Japanese on the high ground lobbed down grenades on the exposed assault force. The Marines retaliated with flamethrowers and white phosphorus grenades. By 1600, 3/26 had advanced about 400 yards beyond the forward lines of the 21st Marines and secured for the day. The 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, was pulled out of reserve and moved up to positions along the foot of the ridge line on the right boundary which the 5th Marine Division shared with 2/21. As in the case of the 21st Marines, RCT 26 had paid for the day's advance with heavy losses. The enemy did not spare the stretcher bearers who were forced to run a gantlet of fire as they attempted to carry wounded Marines to the rear, and losses among these men were heavy.

The most difficult fighting and terrain, with the least gains on D plus 5 fell to Colonel Jordan's 24th Marines on the very right flank of the VAC line. Following the thunderous preparation prior to H-hour, the 24th Marines, with 2/25 attached, jumped off. Both 2/24 and 3/24 attacked alongside the 21st Marines towards Airfield No. 2. Initially, the two battalions made good progress and by 1100, 2/24 was approaching the eastern end of the east-west runway.

At this point the advancing Marines found themselves confronted by a nondescript hill which ran along the south-

east edge of the east-west runway. For lack of a better name, in accordance with military custom, this otherwise insignificant elevation was designated as Charlie-Dog Ridge, so named after the map grid squares in which it was located. To the southeast, a spur of this ridge culminated in a semicircular rise of ground soon to become infamous as the "Amphitheater." There, the Japanese had constructed some of the most formidable defenses on the island. The approach to this terrain feature from the south came squarely under the guns emplaced on the ridge. To the east, the route led across a weird series of volcanic outcroppings and draws.

Just before 1130, as the Marines were preparing to assault Charlie-Dog Ridge, only 150 yards from the eastern end of the east-west runway, the enemy on the ridge fired at point-blank range with heavy machine guns, rifles and antitank guns. At the same time, 2/24 and 3/24 were hit by antiaircraft airbursts and mortar and artillery fire that stopped them cold. The 24th Marines was approaching the core of General Kuribayashi's central island defense system, featuring Hill 382, highest elevation on northern Iwo just beyond the airfield, as well as the Amphitheater, Turkey Knob, and Minami village. A sensitive enemy nerve had been exposed, and the Japanese reacted accordingly. Once the pinned-down men had taken the measure of what confronted them, they called for support from the 105mm howitzers of the 14th Marines and brought fire from their 81mm and 60mm mortars to bear against the firmly entrenched enemy. While these weapons peppered the enemy positions, Marines of 2/24 were able to move four machine guns into positions offering a clear field of fire on some of the enemy emplacements on Charlie-Dog Ridge. At the same time, men of the weapons company moved a 37mm gun close to the front and succeeded in knocking out a number of enemy emplacements.

Under cover of this barrage, the Marines were able to inch their way forward. For the remainder of the afternoon, assault squads, burning and blasting their way to the top of the ridge, led the way, followed by the remainder of Company G. As elsewhere along the VAC line, casualties were heavy; at 1500, the mortars of 3/24 fired 80 white phosphorus smoke shells to screen the evacuation of wounded. Shortly after 1600, just as it appeared that all the enemy resisting on Charlie-Dog Ridge could be mopped up before nightfall, the Japanese unleashed a tremendous mortar barrage which drove 2/24 and 3/24 off the ridge that had been taken at such heavy cost. One of the mortar shells exploded in the command post of 3/24, killing three men and wounding the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Alexander A. Vandegrift, Jr., the son of the Commandant. Wounded in both legs, the battalion commander had to be evacuated and the battalion executive officer, Major Doyle A. Stout, assumed command.

On the right of the 24th Marines, the 1st Battalion had also jumped off for the attack on D plus 5. However, from the very outset, the progress of 1/24 was seriously impeded by the broken terrain, which prevented the

battalion from playing any part in the main effort taking place to its left. Instead, Major Treitel's men crept and crawled forward, while an unseen enemy, operating from cleverly concealed emplacements and caves, poured a steady stream of fire into the attack force. In its attempt to keep the advance from bogging down altogether, 1/24 had the assistance of five LVT(A)s which had been attached to the regiment for fire support. Three of the vehicles went up the coast road a short distance beyond the East Boat Basin and fired on targets designated by infantry commanders; the remaining two fired inland from the water, giving the hard pressed infantry all possible support. At 1700, Colonel Jordan ordered all units of his regiments to consolidate for the night. During the day, the left flank of RCT 24 had advanced about 500 yards; the center approximately 50 yards, and the extreme right flank about 100 yards, thus straightening the line in the regimental sector.[29]

On the whole, 24 February had been a gruelling day for all VAC units. As the day closed, General Schmidt was able to report that gains of 200 to 1,000 yards has been made in the attack and that the VAC objective had been reached on both flanks.[30] The price for the gains made in men and materiel continued to be very heavy. Since D-Day, the enemy had destroyed 32 friendly tanks.[31] As D plus 5 ended, American casualties on Iwo Jima had risen to 7,758, an increase of 5,388 since the end of D-Day. During the five-day drive to Airfield No. 2, 773 Marines had died; 3,741 had been wounded, of whom nearly 300 subsequently were to succumb to their injuries; 5 were missing, and 558 were suffering from combat fatigue.[32] The combat efficiency of the 4th Marine Division at the end of the day had been reduced by casualties and battle fatigue to an estimated 60 percent.[33] The 5th Marine Division with a total of more than 3,000 casualties, had fared little better. The 26th Marines, in particular, had sustained very heavy losses. By evening of D plus 5, Colonel Graham's regiment had lost 21 officers and 332 enlisted men.[34]

Nevertheless, the Japanese were beginning to feel the impact of the VAC assault. Late on 23 February, the commander of the *309th Independent Infantry Battalion* had already reported to Major General Sadasue Senda, commanding the *2d Mixed Brigade*, that communication to all units had been severed, and that his command post had been surrounded for the last three days and harassed by hand grenades and flamethrowers through the entrance. "Nevertheless," the battalion commander concluded, "the fighting spirit of all men and officers is high. We shall continue to inflict as much damage as possible upon the enemy until we are all annihilated. We pray for final victory and the safety of our country".[35]

Japanese intentions for the continued

[29] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, Anx G, p. 11.
[30] *TF 51 AR*, 24Feb45.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] Bartley, *Iwo Monograph*, p. 98.
[33] *4th MarDiv D-3 PerRepts*, 23-24Feb45.
[34] *5th MarDiv AR*, Anx Q, p. 7.
[35] Capt Awatsu Rpt to *2d Mixed Brigade*, 23Feb45, in *4th MarDiv Translations*, Iwo Jima, dtd 25Feb45.

defense of Iwo Jima were correctly formulated in a 4th Marine Division intelligence report which concluded that "lack of a large scale enemy counter-attack to date was an indication of conservation of forces for a continued stubborn defense in depth."[36] Since the enemy had a sizable force left, an eventual counterattack could not be discounted. In fact, since the high ground held by the Japanese now was jeopardized, a counterattack by a large enemy force was a dangerous probability. In any event, the enemy was certain to continue his harassment of the invasion force with artillery and through air attacks launched from nearby islands. The scales of battle had not yet tilted fully in favor of the American assault troops. It was clear to all involved that much heavy fighting lay ahead before all of Iwo Jima was conquered.

[36] *4th MarDiv G-2 Rpts*, 23Feb45, p. 4.

3d Marine Division Operations on Iwo Jima[1]

ADVANCE IN THE CENTER[2]

By the end of the first week on Iwo Jima, VAC had made important gains, though far more slowly than had been anticipated. The key to seizing the remainder of the island north of the two completed airfields was the flat, high ground in the center of northern Iwo, commonly known as the Motoyama Plateau. The plateau itself was relatively level and unmarked by ravines. To the east and west, the ground was broken, descending to the shore in a very irregular pattern of gullies, canyons, and arroyos. The extensive shelling this part of the island had received prior to and since the landings had done nothing to improve the terrain, which was beginning to look like a lunar landscape. Cliffs, often with a sheer drop down to the waterline, were characteristic of the coast along the northwestern, northern, and northeastern shore of the island.

The frontal assault northward from Airfield No. 1 towards the second airfield had thrown the Marines squarely against the most heavily fortified part of the island. There was no way to bypass this area. On the west coast, the 5th Marine Division was confronted with one ridge after another. In each instance, men fought their way up the slope and over the top, only to run into another ravine with another ridge beyond. To the east, the 4th Marine Division was attempting to maneuver on a battlefield devoid of all cover. Where trees once had grown, all that remained was shattered rock, tangled brush, and defiles running to the sea. In the midst of this desolation, three terrain features stood out, each a formidable

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from: *VAC AR; 3d MarDiv AR;* 3d MarDiv Staff Memos, 23Jan-17Mar45, hereafter *3d MarDiv Staff Memos; 3d MarDiv G–1 PerRpts; 3d MarDiv D–2 Jnl;* 3d MarDiv G–2 PerRpts, 14Feb-4Apr45, hereafter *3d MarDiv G–2 PerRpts;* 3d MarDiv G–3 PerRpts, 16Feb-27Mar45, hereafter *3d MarDiv G–3 PerRpts;* 3d MarDiv G–4 Jnl, 16Feb-8Apr45, hereafter *3d MarDiv G–4 Jnl;* 3d Mar AR, 5Nov44-8Mar45, hereafter *3d Mar AR;* 9th Mar URpts, 26Feb-4Apr45, hereafter *9th Mar URpts;* 9th Mar UJnl, 24Feb-11Mar45; 9th Mar AR, 24Feb-4Apr45, hereafter *9th Mar AR;* 12th Mar AR, 25Feb-16Mar45, hereafter *12th Mar AR;* 21st Mar UJnl, 24Feb-16Mar-45; 1st ProvFldArty Gru G–1 Jnl, 9Jan-15Mar45; *Iwo Comments;* Bartley, *Iwo Monograph;* Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign;* Newcomb, *Iwo Jima; Newcomb Notes;* Aurthur and Cohlmia, *The Third Marine Division;* Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War;* Benis M. Frank, *A Brief History of the 3d Marines* (Washington: HistBr, G–3 Div, HQMC, 1963), hereafter Frank, *Brief History of the 3d Marines.*

[2] Additional material in this section is derived from: 1/9 AR, 15Jan-6Apr45, hereafter *1/9 AR;* 2/9 AR, 24Feb-7Apr45, hereafter *2/9 AR;* 3/9 UJnl, 24Feb–18Mar45; 3/21 URpts, 25Feb-12Mar45, hereafter *3/21 URpts;* 3d TkBn AR, 7Nov44–27Mar45, hereafter *3d TkBn AR.*

obstacle in itself: Hill 382, highest elevation in northern Iwo; a bald knob designated as Turkey Hill, and the southeastern extension of Hill 382, known as the Amphitheater.

Since an advance up either coast did not appear promising the only way for VAC to take the remaining two-thirds of the island was to go up the high ground in the center. Since, from D plus 6 onward, the three Marine divisions on Iwo Jima fought jointly but in clearly defined areas, the narrative henceforth will deal separately with the day-to-day progress of each division as it forged a laborious trail across the island.

Fully aware of the limitations imposed upon the assault force by the terrain, General Kuribayashi had established his most elaborate defenses across Motoyama Plateau, right in the path of the 3d Marine Division. A detailed description of the plateau, therefore, appears in order:

> . . . dangling ledges, and caves carved by nature as well as the Japanese. Fissures of steam spewed from cracks in the ground, and evil-smelling sulphur fumes vied with the repulsive odor of decomposing bodies. Everywhere were Japanese defenses, grottoes, bunkers, blockhouses, pillboxes, deep caves, antitank ditches and walls, minefields, and a profusion of flat-trajectory antitank guns, dual purpose automatic antiaircraft weapons, and small arms, all backed by lethal mortars and rockets firing from reverse slopes. At a loss for words to describe this devil's playground, correspondents and officers writing their action reports sometimes recalled a Goya sketch or Dore's illustrations for Dante's *Inferno*.[3]

[3] Isely and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*, pp. 489–490.

In the midst of this rubble, Major General Sadasue Senda had deployed his *2d Independent Mixed Brigade*, consisting of the *310th*, *311th*, and attached *315th Independent Infantry Battalions*, plus an artillery and an engineer battalion. The top of Hill 382 harbored remnants of a thoroughly demolished radar station; on the far bluff of the Amphitheater, cave mouths and tunnel entrances could be seen, yet not a single gun barrel was visible. But, according to one account,

> . . . at every turn and fold in the rock were crosslanes of fire for machine guns and mortars, automatic weapons and rifles, light artillery, and rapid-fire cannon. Behind them were the men, some with sabres or pistols, bamboo lances, and sacks of grenades, waiting.[4]

Since there was no way to bypass the strongest enemy defenses on the Motoyama Plateau, an advance into this veritable hornets' nest became unavoidable. The enemy had to be driven from the high ground in the center of Iwo Jima to permit opening up the western beaches. VAC was working under a tight deadline to clear the beaches, get the airfields back into operation, and unload with all possible dispatch so that ships could be made available for Operation ICEBERG, the invasion of Okinawa, now only five weeks away.

The same urgency applied to driving the Japanese from the high ground in the northeastern portion of the island, which enabled the enemy to place observed fires on VAC reserve areas and rear installations. Even though the Japanese had interfered with the American buildup on Iwo Jima, they had

[4] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 188.

not done so to the extent that they were capable. Probably, they feared that such activity, if carried too far, would expose their guns and mortars to aerial observation, and that these mainstays of the defense would fall victim to American artillery and naval gunfire.

One of the problems facing General Schmidt at the end of D plus 5 was maintaining control of his advance up the island. Fresh in his mind was his experience on Saipan, where the 4th Marine Division had advanced so rapidly that at one point it was left with a 3,000-yard gap on its flank.[5] Similarly, on Iwo Jima, if one division advanced significantly beyond the others, troops for flank security would have to be made available, and the exposed division could expect to receive fire from every direction. Even though the VAC commander was aware of the necessity of executing a frontal assault across the center of the Motoyama Plateau, he was determined, for the time being, to push the VAC front forward all along the line in what may appear to have been "a partial violation of the military principles of mass and economy."[6]

In any case, as of 25 February, General Schmidt still favored a coordinated advance across the island. Since the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions, which had thus far borne the brunt of the fighting, were already seriously depleted in men and materiel, General Schmidt decided to commit the 3d Marine Division for the assault against the enemy's main defenses in the center of the island. Of the 3d Division's three infantry regiments, the 3d, 9th, and 21st Marines, the latter had already been landed and attached to the 4th Marine Division on 21 February. Three days later, the 9th Marines, commanded by Colonel Howard N. Kenyon, had gone ashore, together with division headquarters, leaving only the 3d Marines afloat. Attached to the infantry were units of the 12th Marines, the 3d Tank Battalion, the 3d Pioneer Battalion, and the 3d Engineer Battalion.

By the end of D plus 5, three battalions of the 9th Marines had moved into assembly areas ready to join in the attack. Elements of the 12th Marines, under Lieutenant Colonel Raymond F. Crist, Jr., also came ashore on the 24th, followed by more batteries on the following day. It was 1 March before all of the 3d Division artillery had been landed. Several factors were responsible for the slow debarkation of the artillery. Foremost among these were the lack of landing ships and adverse beach conditions. Having anticipated that his troops would be employed piecemeal, General Erskine had decentralized his artillery while combat loading. Most of the men and equipment of the 3d Division were embarked in attack transport and cargo vessels. It had been planned to put them ashore as needed in landing craft, DUKWs, and amphibian tractors borrowed from the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions.

Participation in the drive to the north by the 3d Marine Division could not wait until all of the division artillery had come ashore. As a result, only one battery of the 12th Marines, and 1/14

[5] General Harry Schmidt ltr to CMC, dtd 28Oct52, in *Iwo Comments*.

[6] Isely and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*, p. 491.

in direct support and 4/13 in a reinforcing role, would be available on the morning of D plus 6.

As of 0700, 25 February, the task of clearing the critical central portion of the Motoyama Plateau fell to General Erskine and his 3d Marine Division. The division's route of advance lay across Airfield No. 2, through the remains of Motoyama Village to Airfield No. 3, which was still largely unfinished. As soon as the 21st Marines was returned to its parent division, General Erskine passed the 9th Marines through the 21st to continue the attack, while the latter unit went to the rear to rest and reequip. On D plus 6, the line of departure for the 9th Marines skirted the southwest edge of Airfield No. 2, protruded across to the high ground due north of the center of the field, and then receded to the southern edge, where the regiment tied in with the 4th Division. On the left, 2/9, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Cushman, Jr., faced heavily defended positions along a line of bluffs that extended northward from the western edge of the airfield and the high ground just north of the east-west runway. On the right 1/9, under Lieutenant Colonel Carey A. Randall, was face to face with a low but strategically placed hill subsequently to become known as Hill PETER. (See Map III, Map Section).

Preparations for the 3d Marine Division attack on D plus 6 were similar to those of the previous day. A battleship and two cruisers fired for 20 minutes before the jumpoff. The naval bombardment was followed by a 1,200-round preparation fired by the VAC artillery. More than half of these shells hit the enemy in front of the 3d Marine Division, where the main effort was to be made. Carrier planes pounded the enemy positions with 500-pound bombs just prior to the jumpoff.

As soon as the attack got under way at 0930, both the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 9th Marines moved out, with 2/9 making the main effort. Lieutenant Colonel Cushman's men almost immediately drew heavy fire from enemy emplacements to their front and left flank and made little progress. The 1st Battalion made some headway and one platoon actually advanced to the base of Hill PETER, but was unable to hold the position. Since the main effort was to be made on the left, 26 tanks from Companies A and B, 3d Tank Battalion, under Major Holly H. Evans, had been attached to the 2d Battalion. Prior to the attack, Lieutenant Colonel Cushman had weighed the idea of having his infantry ride the tanks across the airfield. In view of the heavy enemy mortar and machine gun fire, this idea had to be abandoned, and the tanks moved out across the airstrip 200 yards ahead of the infantry. Almost immediately, the three leading tanks were hit by enemy antitank fire; two of them flamed, the third was immobilized. The heavy enemy mortar fire directed against the tanks did little damage to the vehicles but inflicted heavy losses on the infantry following in their wake. As the agonizingly slow advance of the 2d Battalion continued, nine tanks were knocked out before some of the enemy installations could be destroyed.

By 1400, the situation had reached a comparative stalemate. Both assault

battalions had made slight gains, the biggest one being made by 1/9, which in five hours of bitter fighting had advanced 100 yards. The battalions were now separated by a sizable gap which had developed during the intense fighting. As a result, at 1430, the 3d Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Harold C. Boehm, was ordered to pass through the right of 2/9 and attack to the north until it had bypassed the center of resistance that had thwarted the advance of 2/9.[7] Once this had been accomplished, 3/9 was to effect a junction with the 26th Marines of the 5th Marine Division.

As soon as 3/9 began its advance, it started to receive a hail of rifle and automatic weapons fire from the front and the left flank. At the same time, the mortar and artillery fire increased in volume and accuracy. Casualties mounted with alarming speed. Unless the high ground to the battalion's front was quickly seized, the attack was in danger of bogging down. As the Marines crept ahead, the Japanese adjusted their artillery to keep pace with the advance. Within minutes, the two commanders of the assault companies were killed; many more officers and men became casualties. By 1700, losses had become so heavy that units were beginning to show signs of disorganization; the riflemen could not penetrate the curtain of fire thrown up by the enemy and some of the ground previously seized was being ceded.[8] Despite the confusion of battle, Lieutenant Colonel Boehm succeeded in reestablishing contact with adjacent units, so that shortly after 1900 the situation had again stabilized and contact existed between all units along the regimental front. As D plus 6 came to a close, the 9th Marines had gained little ground, but, at any rate, the line had moved north of Airfield No. 2 at all points except for the extreme right tip. The regiment had seized a foothold on the rising ground north of Airfield No. 2 from where, on the following day, the attack could be continued.

Three additional batteries of the 3d Division artillery came ashore during 25 February and were ready to fire by 1700. The newly arrived units were organized into a provisional battalion under 1/12, and 1/14 was relieved of supporting the regiment. Additional help for the 9th Marines during the day had been furnished by the 21st Marines, which had fired heavy machine guns, 37mm guns, and light mortars at the stubborn enemy defenses. The 81mm mortars of the 21st Marines also had been attached to the 9th Marines during the day, but reverted to control of the parent regiment in late afternoon.

At 0800 on 26 February, the 9th Marines resumed the assault, following a

[7] In commenting on this order, the CO, 3/9 had this to say: "2/9 reported being pinned down by heavy enemy fire—unable to move—and it was through this kind of fire that 3/9 was expected to execute a 'passage of lines'; a poor decision at best!" Col Harold C. Boehm ltr to Head HistBr, G-3 Division, HQMC, dtd 17Jul69 in *Iwo Comments*, hereafter *Boehm ltr.*

[8] "The losses of key and seasoned personnel in this . . . attack manifestly reduced the battalion's effectiveness in later situations." *Boehm ltr.*

45-minute artillery preparation. The 1st and 2d Battalions attacked abreast, with 3/9 and newly attached 3/21 in reserve. The men of Colonel Kenyon's regiment knew that they were now up against the enemy's main defenses. In front of the regimental zone of attack, Hill PETER and 225 yards to the northwest, Hill OBOE, formed the most important obstacles to the advance.

Once again, the 1st and 2d Battalions bore the full brunt of the day's fighting. At the cost of heavy casualties, slight gains were made in the high ground beyond Airfield No. 2. The 3d Battalion remained in position, returning to regimental reserve after the attack jumped off. For the remainder of the day, 3/21 occupied a defensive position just north of the east-west runway. Several aircraft were on station throughout the day and executed four missions for the ground troops. Tanks were also available to support the assault. Naval gunfire was employed against deep targets spotted by aircraft; infantry units called for supporting fire against suspected gun and mortar positions. The effects of this support could not be accurately gauged by the assault units, for enemy resistance continued unabated. With respect to the air support received during this critical phase of the operation, the 3d Marine Division had this comment:

> The number of planes on station daily for support of three divisions was eight fighters and eight torpedo bombers, a decidedly inadequate number. An average of two and a half hours was required before a mission could be executed. . . . Support aircraft, like artillery, should not be frittered away in the execution of piecemeal missions but should be employed in mass in support of the main effort of the ground forces.[9]

In his operation order for 27 February, General Schmidt ordered the 3d Marine Division to continue the assault. The corps artillery was directed to devote half of its fire in support of this main effort, while the remaining 50 percent was to be equally divided between the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions.[10]

At 0800 on D plus 8, the 3d Marine Division continued its attack, which was preceded by a 45-minute artillery preparation in which corps artillery fired 600 rounds. Once again, the 9th Marines, with the 1st and 2d Battalions abreast and 3/9 and 3/21 in reserve, jumped off. The 1st Battalion on the right immediately encountered devastating enemy mortar, artillery, and small arms fire from well concealed emplacements on and around Hills OBOE and PETER. On the left, 2/9 made an initial advance of approximately 150 yards. The increased employment of armor, particularly in the 2/9 zone of advance, aided the attack materially, even though 11 tanks were knocked out. The infantry, using flamethrowers and rocket launchers to good advantage, made small gains throughout the morning. The 2d Battalion finally reached the base of Hill OBOE, while 1/9 took the top of Hill PETER and began working down the northern slope. At this point, 1/9 was pinned down by fire from well-concealed enemy positions on the reverse slope of the hill. Heavy fire from Hill OBOE also caused the advance of the 2d Battalion to grind to a halt.

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[9] *3d MarDiv AR*, p. 48.

[10] VAC OpO 6–45, dtd 25Feb45.

Just as it appeared that the remainder of the day would pass without any major gains being made, the unexpected occurred. Following a 10-minute preparation by the entire 3d Division artillery, reinforced by the corps artillery, 1/9 and 2/9 jumped off in a coordinated attack. This time, the coordination of all arms brought results, and the Japanese, stunned by the massed artillery fire, were temporarily unable to halt the Americans. Following the preparation, the 2d Battalion moved forward rapidly for a distance of 700 yards. The 1st Battalion overran Hill PETER, continued down the reverse slope and drove up to the crest of Hill OBOE. Now that most of the enemy fire from the two important hills had been silenced, Lieutenant Colonel Cushman's 2nd Battalion moved forward rapidly for approximately 1,500 to 1,700 yards. For the first time since the beginning of the attack, the lines of 2/9 now were abreast of those of the 1st Battalion.

Thus, after three days of ramming headlong into the main enemy defenses, the 9th Marines had scored a major advance. All of Airfield No. 2 and the commanding terrain to the north were now in American hands, even though enemy troops, many of them bypassed in their caves, continued to offer stubborn resistance. Mopping up operations in the area would require two more days, but General Erskine's men were now coming out on the Motoyama Plateau, with relatively level terrain ahead. As D plus 8 came to an end, yet another phase of the heavy fighting for Iwo Jima had been brought to a close, at least in the 3d Marine Division zone of advance. In summing up the overall results of this phase, the 9th Marines listed gains of 800-1,200 yards. Beyond that, the regiment stated that highlighted in this fighting were:

> . . . the skill, determination and aggressiveness displayed by our troops; the unprecedented tenacity and defensive resourcefulness displayed by the enemy (in the left of the 2d Battalion 77 large pillboxes were counted); the decisive aid rendered infantry troops by tanks; and finally, the excellent coordination of all supporting units with infantry maneuvers.[11]

ADVANCE TO MOTOYAMA VILLAGE[12]

On Wednesday, 28 February, the 3d Marine Division continued its drive to the north. The last day of February marked the tenth day since the Marines first had stormed ashore on Iwo Jima. Optimistic forecasts to the contrary, somewhat less than half of the island had been taken thus far. No one ashore doubted that fighting of the utmost severity still lay ahead.

Since the 5th Marine Division on the left also had made gains during the last days of the month, the center and western portion of the VAC front now was approaching the O-2 Line. As a result, in his operation order for 28 February, General Schmidt established an O-3 Line. This line started on western Iwo about 1,000 yards south of Kitano Point, then curved southeastward, generally following the northern and northeastern contour of the island

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[11] *9th Mar AR*, p. 5.

[12] Additional material in this section is derived from: *VAC Arty Rpt*; 21st Mar URpts, 26Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *21st Mar URpts*.

until it reached the eastern shore just north of the eastern terminus of the O-2 Line near Tachiiwa Point.

Before dawn on D plus 9, the 21st Marines, with the 3d Tank Battalion and the 81mm mortar platoons of RCT 9 attached, relieved the 9th Marines. Enemy snipers and machine gunners interfered with these movements, but by 0815 the relief was essentially completed and the 9th Marines passed into division reserve.

Following a 30-minute preparation by the division artillery, reinforced by corps artillery, the 21st Marines continued the attack at 0900 with the 1st Battalion on the left and 3/21 on the right; the main effort was to be made by 1/21. The artillery preparation was followed by a seven-minute rolling barrage which lifted 100 yards every minute to extend 700 yards beyond the front lines. The 1st Battalion advanced about 500 yards when it was stopped by hostile mortar and small arms fire. On the right, 3/21 also made good progress, closely following the barrage and, within a half hour after the jump-off, had gained 400 yards. As the morning wore on, elements of 3/21 became intermingled with 4th Division troops near the division boundary.

Shortly after launching its attack, Company I of 3/21 was to have an eerie experience. As the men moved forward in the wake of the rolling barrage:

> . . . Company I was confronted with tanks rising from the earth. These were Colonel Nishi's tanks, flushed at last from what had appeared to be hillocks. They churned forward, throwing off mounds of dirt, shrubbery, and rocks, and firing rapidly. The Marines faltered in shock before the heavy fire, and for moments the battle teetered. Captain Edward V. Stephenson, who had fought at Guam with great valor, rushed forward and rallied his company. Massing flamethrowers and bazookamen, he led a counterattack that smashed the tanks. Three were destroyed on the ground, and planes caught two more of them with 20mm fire.[13]

Now there were only three tanks left out of the 22 which Colonel Nishi had been able to obtain the previous December, all of which had been carefully dug in. Shortly before noon, the attack bogged down all along the 3d Division front. At this time, 3/9 was attached to the 21st Marines and by VAC order, 4/13 reverted to the 5th Division control, after having been attached to General Erskine's division for several days.

At 1300, following a five-minute preparation by the corps and division artillery, the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 21st Marines launched a coordinated attack. The 1st Battalion bogged down almost at once, but 3/21, following closely behind an artillery barrage, advanced rapidly and seized the remnants of Motoyama Village and the high ground overlooking Airfield No. 3. The advance of 3/21 created a gap between the left of the 3d Battalion and the right of 1/21; into this gap, 2/21 was committed at 1530 with orders to attack. (See Map IV, Map Section). Following a five-minute preparation, the battalion moved out in an attempt to outflank the enemy positions which were holding up the advance of 1/21. Because of the heavy fire it received as it moved up to the line of departure, 2/21 was unable to launch its attack on time and consequently did not closely follow the

[13] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, pp. 203–204.

rolling barrage. As a result, only small gains were made. At 1700, when the assault troops halted for the night, units held a winding but continuous line across the division front.

As night fell over the battle-scarred island, it appeared that the 3d Marine Division had burned and blasted its way through the center of the Japanese main line. To either side of the 3d Division, however, neither the 4th nor the 5th had kept pace with General Erskine's men. As a result, the VAC operation order for 1 March made a change in the quantity of supporting fires that would be made available. The lion's share of artillery support no longer would go to the 3d Marine Division; instead, the corps artillery henceforth was to divide its fires equally among the three divisions.

General Erskine believed that this division, in breaking through the enemy's main defenses in the center of Iwo Jima, had not received all of the neutralizing support it should have had. In commenting later on the Iwo Jima operation, he stated:

> . . . that the zone of action assigned this division was the most suitable for making the main effort as it extended along the high ground in the center of the island. Had the bulk of all supporting weapons been allotted to this division instead of being more or less equally distributed between all three divisions, it is believed that penetration would have been effected sooner at less cost.[14]

By morning of 1 March, all battalions of the 12th Marines were ashore. For the remainder of the operation, until the 3d Marine Division reached the northeast coast, Erskine's *modus operandi* remained the same. He brought all the fire power available to him to bear against the enemy. Neutralization furnished by his own guns and by the corps artillery, when available, enabled him to push forward. As soon as he sensed a weak spot in the enemy defenses, he exploited the situation by committing reserves at the flanks and through the gaps that were created as his two assault regiments moved forward. The advance across Motoyama Plateau did not leave room for any additional maneuver.

The tactics employed by General Erskine during this critical phase of the operation have been explained as follows:

> Erskine's zone of action was sufficiently narrow and his reserve sufficiently deep to permit him to employ these tactics more readily than could the other division commanders who were operating on wider fronts and across more difficult terrain. Cates and Rockey were equally competent, but the Third Division was in the pivotal position.
>
> These tactics saw Erskine's men advance across the second airfield and up onto the Motoyama Plateau, through the stench of the sulphur refinery, and beyond the shambles that was Motoyama Village. No longer could the Japanese sit atop the central ridge and place observed fire on every inch of lower Iwo. The Third Division had cut its way through the main line of resistance into the guts of Iwo

[14] *3d MarDiv AR*, p. 38. In connection with this report the VAC chief of staff was to comment that: "It was essential that no substantial gaps occur, therefore it was necessary for the 4th and 5th Divisions to advance also, which necessitated adequate support"; and "Half of the Corps artillery was assigned to the 3d Division as well as the bulk of the naval gunfire support, in addition to elements of the 12th ashore, and at least standby support from the 13th and 14th." *Rogers ltr.*

Jima. The evening of the 28th found these Marines looking down on the third airfield. It was believed that penetration to the coast would be easy, and the final airfield was quickly overrun, but then the secondary line of resistance was struck, and again the assault slowed and halted.[15]

At 0830 on 1 March, the 21st Marines continued the assault with 2/21 and 3/21 abreast, the latter making the main effort. Once again, the attack was preceded by a heavy artillery preparation. The 12th Marines fired a 15-minute preparation in support of the attack, reinforced by VAC artillery. Direct support destroyers fired a half-hour preparation from 0800 to 0830, deepening the fires of the 12th Marines. The heavy artillery preparation was followed by a rolling barrage which lifted 100 yards every eight minutes for 300 yards. The 1st Battalion remained behind on the left flank to mop up the enemy pocket that the regiment had bypassed on the previous day.

As the two battalions jumped off, the 2d Battalion, which had attacked to the north on 28 February, pivoted on its right and advanced towards the northeast. Initially, both battalions made good progress, particularly 2/21 which was receiving effective tank suport. As a result, the 21st Marines was moving well ahead of elements of the 5th Marine Division to the left. In order to protect the left flank of 2/21 and seize the left boundary of the division's zone of action, at the same time encircling the enemy pocket, 3/9 was committed in support of 1/21 in the course of the morning.

[15] Isely and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*, p. 494.

The 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, advanced against light resistance and prior to 1500 had arrived at the division's left boundary. By this time 1/21, attacking generally north to mop up the pocket of resistance to its front, had eliminated it and also had reached the boundary of the division to the left of 3/9. By VAC order, at 1500, the boundary between the 3d and 5th Marine Divisions was adjusted to shift the position held by 1/21 to the 5th Division sector. The latter division was ordered to extend to the northeast and relieve 1/21.

In mid-afternoon, 2/21 and 3/21 were unable to advance further in view of effective enemy opposition. After having broken through the center of the first line of resistance, Marines of General Erskine's division now had to advance into even more nightmarish terrain whose outstanding features are described below:

Beyond the low-lying final airfield, the ground rose again sharply into a saddle, and then fell off to the sea. The high points of the saddle were two additional hill masses of almost identical height, which represented the northwestern and southeastern corners of the Motoyama tableland. These terrain features were intermingled with caves and bunkers in deep criss-crossing crevices, and were studded with huge standstone boulders, many outcroppings, and defensive weapons of all calibers and types. Their height gave the enemy full observation of the Marines to the east of the third airfield, and Erskine found it impossible to snake between them. The job was all the more difficult since there were no feasible ridge lines which could be followed onto their summits. On the contrary, just to the northwest of the right point of the saddle, commanding direct approaches to the high

ground in the center, was a third heavily fortified hill, almost as high as the other two.[16]

The three hills were situated in such proximity that the two on the right fell into the zone of advance of the 3d Division, while a portion to the left was just beyond the division boundary. Since the capture of this high ground was deemed essential for the further advance of General Erskine's division, it was shifted from General Rockey's zone to that of the 3d Marine Division. Even so, the Japanese would be able to delay any advance on General Erskine's left until the 5th Division had been able to pull up alongside. The center of the secondary line of resistance thus would have to be broken by a frontal assault against the southeastern hill mass.

Several days were to pass before this second line could be cracked. In the meantime, General Erskine, "his available infantry substantially weakened by the furious fighting of late February,"[17] had little choice but to continue the assault. Thus, at 1545 on 1 March, he decided to launch a coordinated attack with both regiments abreast, while the 9th Marines took over a portion of the zone of action of the 21st Marines, with 3/21 and a tank company attached. The 3d Tank Battalion, less one company, was to remain attached to the 21st Marines. The attack actually got under way at 1645, the 9th Marine passing 1/9 through 3/21, which took up a reserve position in the vicinity of Motoyama Village. The 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines, went into reserve.

The afternoon attack was preceded by a five-minute preparation fired by the division artillery and direct support destroyers, followed by a rolling barrage. Enemy resistance remained heavy, particularly in front of the 9th Marines, and little ground was gained. When lines were consolidated shortly after 1800, General Erskine had contact with both adjacent divisions. Even though the afternoon attack had brought little gain, some progress had been made during the day, and the 21st Marines, in the course of the morning, had advanced 500 yards to deepen the breach in the heavily fortified enemy defense line. On the evening of 1 March, the two 3d Division regiments faced northeast from positions about 600 yards east of Motoyama Village, along a line running north across the western portion of Airfield No. 3.

The peculiarities of the terrain within the 3d Marine Division's zone of attack dictated some changes in the division boundary. While Hill 362B did not physically block the advance of the 21st Marines, the division left flank was completely exposed to it. The decision to attack this hill was made on the evening of 1 March and permission to do so was obtained at that time. This decision departed from convention in that in attacking and seizing the hill, 3/9 which was still attached to the 21st Marines, would attack north across the division boundary to seize the ground vital to the division's progress.[18]

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[16] Isely and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*, p. 496.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Boehm ltr.* There were three hills with an elevation of 362 feet on Iwo Jima. In order to avoid confusion, they were designated as A, B, and C. Hill 362A was located in northwestern Iwo in the 5th Division sector. Hill

On the morning of 2 March, the 3d Marine Division continued its attack with the 21st Marines and the 9th Marines abreast. The 21st Marines attacked with 3/9 attached on the left and 1/21 on the right, while the 9th Marines attacked with 2/9 on the left and 1/9 on the right. The attack, which jumped off at 0800, followed a 15-minute artillery and naval gunfire preparation. Again, a rolling barrage preceded the assault units. Tanks, using direct fire, participated in the advance.

Almost immediately, the 9th Marines ran into heavy small arms, mortar, artillery, and antitank gun fire. The supporting tanks were able to destroy one enemy gun and several emplacements; at the same time, it was becoming apparent that Colonel Kenyon's men were facing an exceptionally strong and well-organized enemy position.

The 21st Marines, advancing in a column of companies, made only small gains before the attack bogged down by heavy machine gun and antitank gun fire from Airfield No. 3. Only 3/9, supported by tanks firing directly on emplacements, was able to move forward. By 1300, 3/9, advancing against strong enemy resistance, had secured a foothold on the rising ground in front of Hill 362B. By this time, the battalion had advanced beyond the units on its right and left regardless of flank security. Using 60mm and 81mm mortars, the Marines slowly moved up to a ridge that would serve as the final jumpoff position for a direct attack on the final objective.

As a result of heavy enemy resistance, the attack came to a standstill in early afternoon. A new assault, following a powerful artillery preparation, was launched at 1530. Eight artillery battalions took part in this preparatory fire. As had become customary by this time in 3d Marine Division attacks, the original preparation was followed by a rolling barrage. But even with such powerful support, the infantry was unable to score any notable gains. At 1730, the commanding officer of 2/21, Lieutenant Colonel Lowell E. English, was wounded, and the executive officer, Major George A. Percy, took over command. In tying-in for night defense, one company of 2/21 had to be pulled back a short distance from its exposed position. A slight withdrawal also became necessary for 3/9 to more favorable night positions.

As D plus 11 drew to a close, there had been some significant progress on the division left, but little gain elsewhere. The attack of 3/9 had driven a 700-yard salient into the enemy lines, and the battalion had occupied positions on the lower slopes of Hill 362B.[19] At the same time, 2/21 had advanced northeast along the left boundary. However, the 9th Marines had gained almost nothing against the enemy stronghold in the right of the 3d Division zone of advance. In their exposed positions, the

362B, also in the 5th Division sector, was in the north-central portion of the island. Hill 362C, located to the northeast, was in the 3d Division zone.

[19] "This enabled the 5th Division to occupy the hill with little difficulty the following day, which they hadn't previously been able to do at all. The majority of enemy gun emplacements on the 362B hill mass had been destroyed." *Boehm ltr.*

3d Division Marines were to spend a restless night. Throughout the hours of darkness, the enemy remained very active in the broken terrain in front of the 21st Marines. Since Airfield No. 3 was still covered by enemy fire, it was not possible to occupy a continuous line.

During the night 2-3 March, luck played into the hands of the 3d Marine Division. An enemy sketch of the defensive area facing the division, particularly the zone of action of the 9th Marines, fell into General Erskine's hands. This map had been captured by the 21st Marines and was immediately forwarded to the division command post, where it was translated. The captured sketch bore out the belief that the 9th Marines was in contact with a strongly organized enemy position, if there had been any doubt left. General Erskine now hoped that he might find a soft spot in the enemy defenses, through which a wedge could be driven, somewhere between the enemy holding up the 9th Marines and the strong enemy defenses near Hill 362B.

The VAC operation order for 3 March called for elements of the 5th Marine Division to relieve 3d Division units near Hill 362B by 1000. In line with this relief, General Erskine planned to adjust the boundary between his regiments so that the zone of attack of the division was again equally divided. In consequence, the 21st Marines once again would be attacking northeastward.

At 0800 on 3 March, the 3d Marine Division resumed the attack with the same formation but with a new boundary between the regiments. The assault was preceded by a 10-minute preparation by the division artillery and direct support destroyers, followed by a rolling barrage. Almost immediately, the 9th Marines drew such heavy fire that it was unable to advance. In the zone of action of the 21st Marines, 3/9 maintained its position while waiting to be relieved by elements of the 5th Division. This relief was accomplished in the course of the day, but the maneuver was complicated by the fact that both the relief force and 3/9 became embroiled in time-consuming fire fights with the enemy.

In the zone of action of the 21st Marines, 2/21 advanced slowly under heavy fire and shortly before noon secured a foothold on Hill 357. At this time it was believed that no major resistance remained in front of 2/21, though it was still receiving heavy fire from the high ground to its left in the zone of action of the 5th Marine Division. General Erskine decided to change the direction of attack by assigning a new boundary between regiments in order to attack the flank of the enemy defensive area opposite the 9th Marines. Accordingly, an attack to the southeast was launched at 1500 with the main effort on the left.

At this time, 1/21 was pulled out of reserve and moved to the rear of 2/21 with orders to launch a drive towards the southeast with the mission of seizing Hill 362C. At the same time, 2/21 was to advance northeastward to the 0–3 Line. The 3d Battalion was to remain in 9th Marines reserve, but could not be committed without General Erskine's specific permission.[20].

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[20] *3d MarDiv AR*, p. 12.

The afternoon assault followed a five-minute artillery and naval gunfire preparation. The 1st Battalion, 21st Marines, initially made rapid progress and advanced for about 250 yards to its front. The 2d Battalion seized the high terrain on Hill 357 along the eastern edge of the Motoyama Plateau, but was unable to continue its drive because of heavy flanking fire from hills in the 5th Marine Division zone of action. The movements of 1/21 were facilitated by a platoon of tanks attached to the 21st Marines which, from positions in the vicinity of Motoyama Village, effectively supported the battalion's attack by placing direct fire on targets in front of 1/21.

In resuming its attack during the afternoon of 3 March, the 9th Marines once again ran into a stone wall and no gains were made. In an attempt to make some progress, Colonel Kenyon committed tanks singly and in small groups in the broken terrain. The armor did what it could and, in fact, reduced a number of enemy emplacements and some guns. Nevertheless, the tanks were unable to breach this enemy position sufficiently to permit an advance by the infantry.[21] The Japanese emplacements, cleverly hidden in the chaotic jumble of torn rocks, could not be detected, because enemy artillery, mortars, and small arms firing from these positions were using smokeless powder as a propellant. In addition, the heavier weapons were not as active as they had been on previous days, but the fire from antitank guns and machine guns was devastating.

[21] *Ibid.*

At 1800, the attack halted and the assault battalions consolidated for the night as best they could. In the zone of action of the 21st Marines, 2/21 and 1/21 made physical contact, but an open flank remained on the right of the 21st adjoining the 9th Marines. The gap was 250 yards wide and covered by fire. It would not take the combat-wise Japanese long to note the existence of this gap and take advantage of it.

Most of the action in the 3d Division zone of attack on D plus 12 had taken place in the northern half of the zone, where the 21st Marines had seized nearly all of the high ground northeast of the airfield. Beyond that, they had launched a drive to the southeast to envelop the enemy to the south. The 9th Marines, having made little headway, remained in substantially the same positions it had occupied all day.

At this point, an assessment of the situation from the Japanese point of view appears in order. In seeking to block General Erskine's drive to the sea, the Japanese resisted at every hill, rise, and rock. Every fold in the earth was cut with trenches and tank traps and covered by mortar and machine gun fire. Artillery had been sited across the unfinished runways of Airfield No. 3, and the roads and edges of the field were strewn with mines. From Hill 362B, north of the airfield, the fire came straight down into the flanks of units moving east. As one account of the battle was to sum up the situation:

> The enemy was making a last organized stand, and doing it well. This was Kuribayashi's order. He had estimated that losses on both sides had been about equal until the end of February. He felt these early days of March to be the crucial ones

> and believed that if he could apply enough force, possibly even a counterattack, the Americans might fall back, or at least halt. If not victory, he would buy time, which is all he really hoped for.[22]

During the night of 3–4 March, General Kuribayashi decided that the time was ripe for a limited counterattack. How the Japanese learned of the existence of the gap between the 21st and 9th Marines is not clear, but at approximately 0300, 4 March, an estimated 200 enemy troops attempted to infiltrate the eastern end of Airfield No. 3 between 2/9 and 1/21. After a sharp fire fight, the brunt of which was borne by the left company of 2/9, the enemy was repulsed with 166 casualties; 2/9 also had heavy losses. Reports indicated that some of the enemy infiltrators had succeeded in crossing the lines and were observed moving along the airfield. Patrols were sent to intercept this enemy force and 3/21, which ordinarily would have moved out for the attack at dawn of 4 March, was directed to remain in place and continue patrolling until after daybreak, when the situation could be clarified. Around dawn, patrols of 3/21 killed two or three of the enemy and the situation was found to be under control.[23]

The VAC attack on 4 March had been scheduled to jump off at 0815. General Erskine initially had issued orders for 3/21 to be released to the 21st Marines. The battalion was to have moved prior to daybreak, passing through 1/21 and continuing the attack to the southeast to seize Hill 362C. In view of the confusion caused by the enemy infiltration, General Erskine had to secure permission from VAC to delay the 3d Division attack until 3/21 could complete its mopping up and get into position to attack. The battalion started to move shortly before 0700, at which time it reverted to its parent regiment. In crossing the area to the northwest and north of Airfield No. 3, the battalion drew heavy fire from enemy mortars and small arms. Extremely poor visibility further delayed and hindered preparations for the passage of lines, so that 3/21 did not reach its positions until 1100.

Forty minutes later, the division attack jumped off, again preceded by an artillery preparation and a rolling barrage. The same scheme of maneuver used on the previous day was employed, except that 3/21 passed through 1/21. Once again, the 9th Marines was unable to penetrate the enemy positions to its front. Similarly, the 21st Marines encountered heavy resistance, including direct fire from artillery pieces that were difficult to locate; little progress was made. Still unable to advance because of hostile flanking fire from the high ground to its left in the zone of action of the 5th Division, 2/21 suffered heavy casualties.

In the course of the morning, elements of the 5th Marine Division relieved 3/9, which, together with 1/21 withdrew to reserve positions near Motoyama Village. One company of 1/21 was employed to cover the gap between the 9th and 21st Marines when lines were consolidated for the night. At 1800, the units dug in with assault battalions just east of Airfield No. 3 and Motoyama Village. All of the assault battalions

[22] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 218.
[23] *3d MarDiv AR*, p. 12.

of the 3d Marine Division were tied in with each other, as well as with 5th Division units on the left and the 4th Division on the right.

Late in the afternoon of D plus 13, a welcome dispatch from VAC reached the exhausted troops of all three Marine divisions.[24] Except for limited adjustment of positions, no attacks were to be launched on 5 March. Instead, present positions were to be held and one battalion of each regiment was to be rested, reorganized, and prepared to resume the assault on the following day, when all three divisions were to launch a coordinated attack.

On 5 March, the 3d Marine Division held an irregular line with 2/21, 3/21, 1/9, and 2/9, while the other two divisions spent the day receiving replacements and equipment to strengthen their tired and depleted units for the attack on 6 March. Two companies of the 21st Marines were pulled back from their positions on the line to rejoin the 1st Battalion in an assembly area north of Airfield No. 2. The men of 3/9 remained in position as division reserve between the northeast-southwest runway and Motoyama Village.

The day of rest and rehabilitation passed without any major ground action, though artillery duels took place and naval guns continued their harassing fires throughout the day. One air strike was conducted in the area of Hill 362C. It appeared as if even the Japanese welcomed a respite, as shown by their lack of aggressiveness. On their part, the men of VAC also were badly in need of a rest. Their condition on 5 March has been described in the following words:

> All were tired and listless, their key personnel were largely casualties, and it was little short of miraculous that they could advance at all. Some gained comfort and a much-needed lift from a powerful drink called "Suribachi Screamer," sick bay alcohol and fruit juice. But even where units were pulled back in corps or division reserve, there was only relative quiet and rest, because night infiltration and minor counterattacks were constant; and day and night, Japanese appeared from overrun caves and tunnels, necessitating mopping up of seized ground.[25]

In military operations enemy opposition often surpasses all expectations. According to this maxim, after seeing most of its carefully scheduled and supparted attacks frustrated day after day, VAC may have tended to overestimate the extent of the resistance of which the enemy on Iwo Jima was still capable. Actually the position of the Japanese during the first week of March was far from reassuring. According to at least one account:

> The fact was the island defenders were in a bad way. Most of their artillery and tanks had been destroyed, and 65 percent of the officers had been killed. On Saturday, March 3, General Kuribayashi estimated that he had 3,500 effectives left. Communications had broken down to the point that General Senda was virtually isolated in the east. Captain Inouye still commanded a small remnant of sailors near Airfield No. 3. Admiral Ichimaru was in the north, in touch with Kuribayashi but no longer having effective control over Inouye. In the northern corner of the island, no organized force remained —only small groups of survivors of individual units, acting locally and almost

[24] VAC Dispatch, 1624, 4Mar45.

[25] Isely and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*, p. 97.

independently. Spirit was still strong, however, and in no unit was there the thought of surrender.[26]

VAC orders called for a resumption of the attack on 6 March. Since any further advance by 2/21 was dependent directly on the progress made by the adjacent 5th Division, the 2/21 attack was to be coordinated with that of General Rockey's men. The advance of 2/21 was so timed that the battalion would move out at 0800, one hour ahead of the remainder of the 3d Division, which would launch its assault in conjunction with that of the 4th Division. Except for the staggered timing, no other changes were made in the previous scheme of maneuver.

At 0600 on 6 March, 3/9 was attached to the 21st Marines in preparation for the attack. For ten minutes prior to the jumpoff of 2/21, three battalions of the 12th Marines, three battalions of the 14th Marines, and one battalion of the corps artillery laid down a heavy preparation, which was further supplemented by naval gunfire. However, no sooner had 2/21 attacked than it became apparent that the artillery preparation had been totally ineffective. The advance bogged down almost at once in the face of heavy enemy mortar and small arms fire coming from the high ground in the zone of action of the 5th Marine Division.

Prior to the jumpoff of 3/21 and the 9th Marines, three battalions of the 12th Marines and one battalion of the corps artillery fired two five-minute preparations, which were further supplemented by naval gunfire which continued for an hour and a half. A rolling barrage was also fired in support of the attack. Nevertheless, despite all this expenditure of ammunition, results remained negligible. As soon as the remainder of the 3d Division attacked at 0900, it drew such heavy fire from enemy small arms, mortars, artillery, and antitank guns that any advance was all but out of the question.

A second push was ordered for 1440, again preceded by a heavy artillery preparation. This time 1/21, having passed through 3/21, was able to score some gains against continued bitter enemy resistance, slowly advancing for 200 yards before lines were consolidated at 1800 for the night. Once again, the progress made was completely out of proportion to the ammunition and effort exerted. During the two preparatory fires on the morning of 6 March, 11 artillery battalions had expended 2,500 rounds of 155mm howitzer ammunition and 20,000 rounds of 75mm and 105mm shells.[27] In addition, a battleship and cruisers had fired an additional 50 rounds of 15-inch and 400 rounds of 8-inch ammunition. Carrier-based aircraft had bombed and strafed the Japanese positions, all apparently without eliminating the enemy's power to resist.

There was one bright note on this otherwise very discouraging day. During the bitter fighting, two platoons of Company G, 3/21, fought their way to the top of a ridge. Before enemy fire drove them off, they were able to get a glimpse of the sea, just 400 yards away. It was an inspiring view, for it indicated

[26] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 224.

[27] *VAC Arty Rpt*, *pp.* 14–15.

to the weary Marines just how far they had come, despite all adversities. It also served as a distant promise that there would be an end to the ordeal all of them were undergoing.

DRIVE TO THE SEA[28]

On the evening of 6 March it was apparent that the Japanese positions on northern Iwo would not yield to the tactics that had been thus far employed. At the same time, General Erskine was keenly aware of the heavy losses that were draining the offensive strength of his division. As a result, despite the known risk inherent in such an operation, he ordered an attack against Hill 362C under cover of darkness. It was hoped that employment of the element of surprise would yield results where all other conventional means had failed. Instead of attacking at 0730 on the morning of 7 March, as specified in VAC orders issued late on 6 March,[29] General Erskine requested and received permission to jump off at 0500. The 21st Marines was to make the main effort. Its objective was to seize Hill 362C, while the 9th Marines was to advance for about 200 yards in the darkness as a diversionary measure. Actual seizure of Hill 362C was to be executed by Lieutenant Colonel Boehm's 3/9, which was attached to the 21st Marines.

In reconstructing the events leading to this attack and the preparations made, Lieutenant Colonel Boehm later was to comment:

> The order for the attack on Hill 362C, received verbally over the telephone from Colonel Eustace Smoak, executive officer of the 21st Marines, was simply to attack at 0500, using the present front lines of 1/21 as a line of departure, maintain maximum secrecy and silence, and seize the hill. My complaint that I had never seen the ground was countered by the assurance that Major Bob Houser, CO 1/21, would give me all the details on the lay of the land to the front, point out the objective, etc. etc., "Don't worry about a thing, Houser's been observing the ground all afternoon, he'll give you all the dope."
>
> I had my company commanders meet me at the K Company CP, which was nearest 1/21's disposition, briefed them, then took them to the 1/21 CP. Major Houser accompanied us up to a point about the center of his lines, pointed to a hill mass about 300 yards to the front and said that was Hill 362, my objective. I told him it didn't seem possible that his position was so close to the hill. He assured me that it was, and his company commanders determinedly agreed, so we went back a short distance and, under cover, consulted a map. He confidently indicated the position of his front lines and, although highly skeptical, I had no alternative but to accept his description as an accurate picture.[30]

There was a good chance that the surprise attack would succeed. As a rule, during previous World War II operations in the Pacific Theater, Marines had not carried out night attacks. Aside from night patrols, Americans had not ventured in front of the lines after dark on Iwo Jima. To prevent the enemy from learning of the proposed attack, special precautions had to be taken. No mention of the attack was

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[28] Additional material in this section is derived from: 3d EngBn URpts, 26Feb-9Apr45, hereafter *3d EngBn URpts;* 3d Amtrac Bn, AR, dtd, 18Mar45, hereafter *3d Amtrac Bn AR.*

[29] VAC OpO 14–45, dtd 6Mar45.

[30] *Boehm ltr.*

made in any radio traffic, nor was the assault to be preceded by any artillery preparation, except for white phosphorus shells fired around the objective five minutes before the jump-off. The men were ordered to move as quietly as possible. No one was to fire until it became certain that the enemy had discovered the main body of the assault force.

The assault companies moved out of their assembly areas at 0320 for the line of departure. A light rain was falling throughout the night, and the darkness that engulfed everything on the island was broken only by the naval gunfire illumination, which ceased before the attack was launched.

Minutes before H-Hour, the situation at the 3d Marine Division command post was tense. Even though there was a good chance that surprise would be achieved, there had been no opportunity for Lieutenant Colonel Boehm's battalion to carry out any detailed prior reconnaissance. In the inky darkness, his men would be stumbling into the unknown. The risks inherent in the venture were only too apparent. The atmosphere prevailing at General Erskine's command post during these crucial minutes has been recaptured as follows:

> In the Division CP, the staff checked watches; it was 0430. Every few minutes someone would look outside through the foul and rainy weather. If a burst of fire or a stray round was heard, faces tensed. At 0450, the illumination slacked and ceased. Five more minutes, and there followed the familiar crack and swish of an outgoing harassing concentration from the artillery. You could set a watch by the 12th Marines. Then at King-hour, a star-shell burst. Hadn't all illumination been checked? Get the naval gunfire officer! It was a 4th Division ship, he reported, and lunged to the field phone and radio. Meanwhile, word came back that the attack had jumped off. Still no sound. Were they moving at all? Had the steaming earth swallowed them?[31]

It had not. At 0500, the assault companies climbed out of their holes and silently headed southeastward towards Hill 362C assumed to be 250 yards away. The surprise attained was total and 3/9, catching the enemy asleep in his emplacements, took a heavy toll with flamethrowers and automatic weapons. Shortly after 0530, a Japanese machine gun came to life. It was quickly silenced by a flamethrower, and Lieutenant Colonel Boehm's battalion continued its slow but determined advance towards the objective. By this time, sporadic enemy resistance was making itself felt, but still the advance continued.

Shortly before daybreak, around 0600, 3/9 reported that it had taken Hill 362C. Japanese were being killed out in the open with flamethrowers as they stumbled out of their caves. The battalion had advanced 400 yards with no resistance whatever for the first 40 minutes, and only a smattering of it afterwards. Just when it appeared that complete success had been attained, the light of day revealed a somewhat different and sobering picture. It became apparent that on the basis of the instructions received from 1/21 the preceding evening, 3/9 had captured Hill 331 instead of Hill 362C. The real

[31] Maj Robert D. Heinl, Jr., "Dark Horse on Iwo," *Marine Corps Gazette*, v. 29, no. 8 (Aug 45), p. 58.

objective still lay 250 yards ahead. Apparently, the battalion's jumpoff positions had been somewhat further back than anyone had realized.

Determined to strike while the iron was still hot, Lieutenant Colonel Boehm called for artillery support and continued to press the attack against the real objective. By this time, the element of surprise had been lost. Jumping off at 0715, 3/9 savagely slashed its way forward from Hill 331 towards 362. The advance progressed over broken and treacherous ground, which exposed Lieutenant Colonel Boehm's men to fire from the front, the flanks, and the rear. Bitter fighting continued throughout the morning, and in approaching the objective, Marines had to eliminate caves and bunkers one by one with flamethrowers, rockets, and demolition charges. At 1330 3/9 reported that it had captured the objective.[32] This report proved correct, and a major obstacle in the path of the 3d Marine Division's advance was thus eliminated. In outlining the activities of 3/9 on 7 March, the battalion commander was to make this comment:

> Most notable in the night attack was the fact that, although nearly all the basic dope was bad, the strategy proved very sound, since it turned out that the open ground taken under cover of darkness was the most heavily fortified of all terrain captured that day, and the enemy occupying this vital ground were taken completely by surprise (actually sleeping in their pillboxes and caves). . . . It should be kept in mind, however, that a stroke of luck went a long way toward making the attack a success.[33]

[32] *3d MarDiv AR*, p. 15.
[33] *9th Mar AR*, Encl C, p. 11.

While 3/9, as part of the 21st Marines, was to make the most spectacular gains for the day, the remainder of the 9th Marines was to see some of the most bitter fighting of the Iwo operation. While 3/9 was attacking southward towards Hills 331 and 362C, 1/9 and 2/9 attacked eastward, also in the general direction of Hill 362C. By daybreak the 9th Marines, with the 2d Battalion on the left and the 1st Battalion on the right, had advanced about 200 yards. However, at first light of day the enemy, consisting of Baron Nishi's *26th Tank Regiment*, awoke to the presence of the intruders and put up a fierce opposition. The 2d Battalion, which had already advanced into the enemy fortifications, began to draw heavy fire from the front, flanks, and rear. For all practical purposes, the two battalions were cut off and casualties were heavy.

By midmorning it became apparent that the 9th Marines could not break through the resistance it faced from the front, and General Erskine shifted the regimental boundaries so that the advance of the 21st Marines would pinch out the 9th. Around noon, 1/9 regained some freedom of movement and attempted to establish contact with elements of 3/9 atop Hill 362C. This attempt which, if successful, would have caught Baron Nishi's men in a giant vise, failed. Instead, elements of 2/9 were themselves surrounded and unable to move in any direction. Tanks sent forward in support of 2/9 were unable to get through, though they did relieve some of the pressure on the surrounded units. At dusk on 7 March, elements of 2/9 were still pinned down.

It would be 36 hours before two companies of Lieutenant Colonel Cushman's battalion would be able to extricate themselves from the encirclement.

Just about that length of time would be required before the first Marines of the 3d Division reached the coast. It would not be an easy advance for the men of 2/21, 1/21, and 3/9 who would continue the drive for the sea, while Marines of 3/21 and 2/9 would continue to chip away at a stubborn pocket of enemy resistance that still showed no sign of disintegrating.

On the morning of 8 March, D plus 17, the men of the 3d Marine Division resumed the attack, this time with conventional tactics. The attack was preceded by a 10-minute artillery preparation. Destroyers offshore supported the division and corps artillery with a half-hour bombardment. Once again, a rolling barrage was employed. The 21st Marines jumped off with the 1st and 2d Battalions abreast, 1/21 on the right. The advance of 2/21 had to be coordinated with that of the adjacent 5th Marine Division.

This time, the Japanese were wide awake and the 21st Marines received heavy flanking fire from the sector of the adjacent division, as well as from the zone of action of the 9th Marines, whenever an attempt was made to move down to the cliff overlooking the beach. Nine tanks from the 3d Tank Battalion supported 2/21 as best they could by shelling caves and pillboxes in the rugged terrain over which the battalion had to advance. To the right of 2/21, the 1st Battalion was making slow progress and by evening had advanced 300 yards through what was believed to be the final organized enemy defenses before the coast was reached.

In the zone of action of the 9th Marines, 3/9 attacked eastward from Hill 362C, passing 3/21, which had been attached to it, and moving through the right of 1/9. The intermediate objective of 3/9 was the edge of the plateau overlooking the beach; the final objective was the beach itself. Despite tenacious enemy resistance, the battalion advanced some 400 yards beyond Hill 362C towards the beach. At times it appeared that, despite the ferocity of the battle, enemy resistance was less organized and assumed the dimensions of a "last ditch" fight.[34] In order to assist the battalion in its drive through the broken terrain, in which sandstone buttes abounded, a destroyer fired into the draws that led down to the sea; an air strike also was directed into the same general area. By late afternoon, 3/9 had seized the intermediate objective and was ordered to hold up the advance on the high ground.

Meanwhile, the attack of the remainder of the 9th Marines had bogged down in the inaccessible terrain in which the Japanese had holed up. Remnants of Colonel Nishi's force were making their last stand here, fighting from caves and emplacements in the sandstone with all they had. The materiel at their disposal was still formidable: well concealed antitank guns, and dug-in tanks, equipped with 37mm and 47mm guns. As a result, no coordinated advance was possible. Small teams of

[34] "This is exactly what it was, but with the inevitable 'handwriting on the wall' they fought like Hell." *Boehm ltr.*

men, rushing from one standstone butte to another, fought Indian style, blasting away at the enemy defenses here and there, but nowhere could the pocket be dented.

The following day, 9 March, saw the continuation of the 3d Division drive to the sea. Once again, 3/9 jumped off following the customary preparation and advanced towards the beach. While still very much in evidence, enemy resistance was becoming more sporadic. By late afternoon, 3/9 had penetrated down to the beach, both 3/9 and 1/21 dispatching patrols to the water's edge. In support of the two battalions, an air strike was directed against an obstinate enemy pocket in the zone of action of the 5th Division. In addition, a destroyer offshore, with the 3d Division naval gunfire officer on board, fired on caves and enemy positions in the beach area.

Once again, the 9th Marines, with 3/21 attached, hit a stone wall of resistance. Even though tank support was available, the terrain severely limited the employment of armor. The enemy was not slow to take advantage of this situation. He first fired a number of air bursts over one of the tanks in order to disperse the infantry. Once this had been accomplished, he dispatched a demolition detachment under cover of a smoke screen which put the tank out of action with a demolition charge and a Molotov cocktail. Neither 2/9 nor 3/21 were able to score any sizable gains during the day.

Ever since the 3d Marine Division had entered the fight for Iwo Jima and begun its drive through the center of the island, General Erskine had been deeply disturbed by his losses and their adverse effect on his division's combat efficiency. He strongly felt that some of these casualties could have been avoided and subsequently made this statement:

> Infantry battalions were now definitely beginning to feel the presence of the large number of replacements, manifested by a sharp drop in combat efficiency. These men were found to be willing but very poorly trained, especially in basic individual conduct. The faulty teamwork, resulting from lack of small unit training, was also a definite hindrance to the operation of the infantry battalions. Many needless casualties occurred in these replacements because of a lack of knowledge of the proper use of cover and concealment.[35]

The situation described by General Erskine resulted from an organizational innovation employed for the first time in the Marianas and subsequently on Iwo Jima. Six replacement drafts, totalling 7,188 officers and men, all of them recent arrivals from the United States, had been attached to the three divisions. It had been planned to feed these replacements into the combat units as warranted by casualties, in hopes that such a steady flow would guarantee a high degree of combat efficiency. Prior to being channeled into the combat units, these men were to supplement the shore party, thus serving a dual purpose. The basic thought behind this procedure may have been sound, but:

> . . . unfortunately, this plan did not work out nearly so well as had been hoped. Like most replacement drafts, these had been sent overseas with inadequate combat training, the idea being that they would complete this in the field. But the

[35] *3d MarDiv AR*, p. 17.

> necessity of mastering shore party duties prevented this, with the result that most of them had to be broken in during actual battle by the units into which they had been incorporated. This was hard on all hands, and there were times during the later stages when it appeared that progress was being hindered rather than helped by the presence of the new men.[36]

In reviewing the handling of replacements during the Iwo Jima operation, the former VAC chief of staff was to comment:

> 1. These replacements were the only ones available. VAC could do nothing about additional training.
> 2. If not used for shore party duty, separate troops would have been required for that, necessitating additional shipping.
> 3. Shore party requirements should be reduced as the advance continued. In fact some pioneers were used later as frontline troops.
> 4. Duty with the shore party in itself necessitated some training in self protection, which should have proved useful at the front.[37]

In any case, by evening of 9 March, General Erskine had achieved his primary mission which was to break through to the northeastern shore of the island. The initial approach to the beach had been made by elements of Company A, 21st Marines, who were later joined by 3/9. By nightfall the 3d Division Marines held nearly 800 yards of shoreline, thus cutting the area still in enemy hands into two separate sectors. At the northern tip of the island, near Kitano Point, General Kuribayashi would continue to offer stubborn opposition. This last vestige of enemy resistance would be eliminated only after protracted fighting by elements of both the 3d and 5th Marine Divisions. Upon reaching the northeast coast after their arduous and costly advance through the center of Iwo, elated 3d Division Marines sent back a canteen filled with sea water to General Schmidt, marked "for inspection, not consumption."

Another milestone in the prolonged battle for Iwo Jima had been reached. In the words of one historical narrative:

> Not as dramatic an incident as the flag raising on Suribachi, this was far more significant. The enemy in the bulge of the island was split, and Americans controlled the terrain approaches from the Motoyama tableland down the deep ravines to the cliffs and to the sea.[38]

General Kuribayashi and the remnants of his garrison still held one square mile in the north of the island, determined as ever to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Small though tenacious pockets of resistance remained in the southeastern portion of Iwo. But an end to the terrible slaughter was finally in sight.

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[36] Hough, *The Island War*, p. 335.
[37] *Rogers ltr.*

[38] Isely and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*, pp. 497–498.

Airfield Development and Activities Behind the Lines

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE AIRFIELDS[2]

While three Marine divisions were inching their way northward against tenacious resistance, an equally difficult battle was being fought to the rear of the combat troops. Aside from the Japanese who, particularly during the early days of the operation, were able to blanket any part of the island with artillery and mortar fire, the biggest enemy was the time factor. The basic premise on which the entire operation had been planned was to secure the two southernmost airfields on the island as quickly as possible, and it was for this purpose that Marines up front were hourly giving their lives. Unless the airfields could be quickly put into operation, the sacrifice of these Marines would serve little, if any, purpose.

On D plus 5, men of the 31st Naval Construction Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Commander Dominick J. Ermilio, began work on the southern airfield. This job initially had been assigned to the 133d Naval Construction

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from U. S. Pacific Fleet, Base Development Plan, Iwo Jima, *TF 51 AR; TF 52 AR; TF 56 AR; TF 56 TQM Rpt; TF 56 Air Rpt; TF 56 Med Rpt*, dtd 28Mar45; *VAC SAR; VAC C-1 PerRpts; VAC C-3 Rpt; VAC C-4 Jnl; VAC Logistics Rpt; VAC NGF and AirRpts; 3d MarDiv G-1 PerRpts;* 3d MarDiv G-4 Per Rpts, 27Feb-1Apr45; 3d MarDiv G-4 Jnl, 23Feb-8Apr45, hereafter *3d MarDiv G-4 Jnl; 4th MarDiv D-4 Rpts; 5th MarDiv Casualty Rpts; 5th MarDiv D-1 Jnl;* 5th MarDiv SerTrps UJnl, 19Feb-8Mar45, hereafter *5th MarDiv SerTrps UJnl; 5th SP Rgt AR; ComPhibGru 2 AR; Iwo Comments;* Bartley, *Iwo Monograph;* Newcomb, *Iwo Jima;* Sherrod, *Marine Corps Aviation in World War II*; Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*; Gallant, *The Friendly Dead*; Carter, *Beans, Bullets, and Black Oil*; Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*; Brooks E. Kleber and Dale Birdsell, *The Chemical Warfare Service: The Technical Services —U. S. Army in World War II—Chemicals in Combat* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1966), hereafter Kleber and Birdsell, *Chemicals in Combat*; Leo P. Brophy and George J. B. Fisher, *The Chemical Warfare Service: The Technical Services—U. S. Army in World War II—Organizing for War* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1959), hereafter Brophy and Fisher, *Organizing for War;* David E. Lilienthal, *The Journals of David E. Lilienthal, The Atomic Years, 1945-1950*, v. II (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), hereafter Lilienthal, *The Atomic Energy Years;* Department of the Navy, *Building the Navy's Bases in World War II*, v. II (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1947); William Bradford Huie, *From Omaha to Okinawa* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1945).

[2] Additional material in this section is derived from: *31st NCB AR:* 1st JASCO OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 27Nov44-19Mar45, hereafter *1st JASCO OpRpt;* 2d Sep Eng Bn URpts, 25-Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *2d Sep EngBn URpts;* 3d JASCO AR, Iwo Jima, 7Nov44-16Mar45, hereafter *3d JASCO AR;* 2d Bomb Disposal Co. UJnl, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-22Mar45, hereafter *2d Bomb Disposal Co UJnl.*

Battalion under Lieutenant Commander Raymond P. Murphy, but the battalion had suffered such heavy casualties on D-Day that it was still undergoing reorganization four days later. While, to the north, the battle for Airfield No. 2 was in progress, the Seabees, with riflemen covering them, were crawling up the runway of No. 1 Airfield on hands and knees, probing for mines and picking up the most jagged shell fragments that could wreak havoc with the rubber tires of aircraft.

Throughout the day, the Seabees and elements of the VAC 2d Separate Engineer Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Charles O. Clark, sifted the dirt on the runways, often under enemy sniper and artillery fire. By late afternoon of 25 February, the engineers had filled, bladed, and rolled 1,500 feet of the north-south runway of Airfield No. 1, which was then ready for use by small aircraft. This was the scene that took place at the airfield on the following day:

> Down on Airfield No. 1 the first planes came in, two little OY-1s of the 4th Division (VMO–4), their wheels kicking up spurts of dust as they touched down. Dirty engineers and Seabees lined the runway and cheered as the little spotter planes rolled to a stop. The Grasshoppers (Stinson Sentinels), or "Maytag Messerschmitts," stayed only a few minutes and then took off again, to fly over Turkey Knob and the Amphitheater to spot targets for the 4th Division. As they left, the first of the 133d Seabees' rollers and scrapers climbed up onto the runway. After a week of fighting, and heavy casualties, and reorganization, the 133d was ready to start on the job it had come for.[3]

[3] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, pp. 193-194.

Once the first spotter aircraft had flown in from the escort carrier *Wake Island*, others followed in rapid succession. By 1 March, 16 planes of VMO–4 and –5 had reached the island. Since the airstrip was still under enemy artillery and mortar fire, many of the small planes sustained damage which had to be patched up in frantic efforts. Of the seven aircraft which VMO–4 brought ashore, six eventually were so badly damaged that they had to be surveyed after the end of the operation.

Completion of the first 1,500–foot strip of Airfield No. 1 was but the initial step in the restoration of the entire field. The 2d Separate Engineer Battalion was charged with the reconstruction of the north-south and northwest-southeast runways, while the 62d Naval Construction Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Commander Frank B. Campbell, was responsible for rebuilding the northeast-southwest runway. Quarries available on the island yielded an excellent sand-clay fill that could be used for the construction of roads and was widely utilized in rehabilitating and extending Airfield No. 1. In fact, it was the use of this material that had made possible the early completion of the short strip for the land-based observation planes.

Good progress was made in restoring the airfield, except for the hours of darkness and those times when the enemy took the field under fire. On the last day of February, Airfield No. 1 invited emergency landings by carrier aircraft. This offer was promptly accepted by a damaged torpedo bomber. From this time on, the popularity of

HOLY COMMUNION *during Mass atop Mt. Suribachi. (USMC 110322)*

FIRST MARINE OBSERVATION PLANE *lands on Motoyama Airfield No. 1 (USMC 110595)*

the airfield among carrier pilots rapidly increased. By 2 March, a 4,700–foot runway had been completed and the first air transport, a R4D of Air Evacuation Squadron 2, departed with 12 wounded Marines on board. Noting increased activity on the newly restored airfield, the enemy concentrated his artillery fire on the strip. For the remainder of the day, the field remained inoperative, but subsequent evacuation flights became an almost daily occurrence without any further serious enemy interference.

A new milestone was reached during the afternoon of 4 March, when a B–29 bomber, returning from an air attack against the Japanese homeland, made a forced landing, refueled, and continued on its return flight. This was only the first of hundreds of the giant B–29s which were to make emergency landings on the island for the remainder of the war.

As early as 28 February, planes of the Army Air Forces 9th Troop Carrier Squadron had dropped more than 9,000 pounds of supplies near the western beaches. Beginning 1 March, airdrops were made over the southern airfield. The cargo dropped consisted of badly needed 81mm mortar shells, medical supplies, radio gear, and mail. Work on the two short runways was completed on 4 March. On this date, the first Marine transport, a R5C, piloted by Lieutenant Colonel Malcolm S. Mackay, commanding VMR–952, landed on the island. The aircraft, carrying 5,500 pounds of badly needed mortar shells and ammunition from Guam, had stopped at Saipan before continuing the flight to Iwo. Once Airfield No. 1 had become operational, a variety of aircraft could be brought into the island. The value of Iwo Jima was further enhanced when, on 12 March, the 5,800-foot strip was completed. By this time, landings and takeoffs on Airfield No. 1 had become a daily occurrence.

In addition to the aircraft using the southern airfield for bringing in supplies and evacuating the wounded, fighter planes were needed to assist the ground forces fighting on Iwo. Their mission was both an offensive and a defensive one. On the one hand, the fighters had to give the closest support possible to Marines fighting on the ground. Their second mission, of no less importance, was to make continuous sweeps over Japanese islands in the vicinity of Iwo to preclude any reinforcement of the Iwo garrison, and at the same time to eliminate any Japanese air power still remaining in the Bonins. Above all, the enemy had to be prevented from interfering with the progress of the Iwo ground operation or with the numerous supply ships standing by offshore.

During the first two weeks of the Iwo Jima operation, Colonel Vernon E. Megee acted as the Commander, Landing Force Air Control Unit. In this capacity, he came ashore on 24 February but did not assume control of support aircraft until 1 March, at which time he also became Commander Air, Iwo Jima. The establishment of these functions ashore greatly facilitated coordination and control of fire support for VAC,[4] particularly since Colonel Megee, using forward observers, developed a

[4] *TF 51 AR*, Pt V, Sec E, p. 15.

system of close air support controlled from VAC Headquarters.[5]

This proved to be a very busy time for the representative of Marine aviation, who was to reminisce later:

> You see, I had a dual status there really. In fact, I stayed Commander there even —let me see, we were supposed to have an Air Force Brigadier for that job but he never showed up until a couple of weeks after the landing and during the interim I was the Air Commander, Iwo Jima. . . . And I had air defense responsibility and the logistical responsibilities during that time so I was like the proverbial paper hanger with the itch.[6]

On 6 March, Brigadier General Ernest Moore, USA, arrived on Iwo to assume his duties as air commander. With him came an initial complement of 28 P–51 Mustang fighters and 12 P–61 Black Widow night fighters of the 15th Fighter Group. On 8 and 9 March, the forward echelon of VMTB–242 arrived from Tinian. This squadron, commanded by Major William W. Dean, began to fly air defense missions around Iwo Jima day and night. Based on the southern airfield, the bomber squadron also relieved carrier aircraft of antisubmarine patrol missions. After 23 days of well executed and strenuous operations, the Support Carrier Group departed from Iwo.[7]

On 11 March, 15 of the Iwo-based P–51 fighters launched their first attack against nearby Chichi Jima. This was only the first raid of many to follow. Throughout the assault and occupation phase, Army Air Forces bombers based in the Marianas conducted day and night raids against Haha and Chichi Jima with two raids being directed against enemy positions on Iwo Jima in general support of our forces. Aircraft from the Support Carrier Group, while it was still in the Iwo area, in addition to their numerous daily local commitments, also flew several strikes against Haha and Chichi Jima. Once the southern airfield became operational, an increasingly large number of B–29s sought refuge on the island while returning from raids over Japan, often in a precarious condition. By 14 March, D plus 23, 24 of the giant bombers had made emergency landings on the island,[8] often under the very noses of the enemy still holding out in northern Iwo.

Even as Airfield No. 1 was becoming operational and the number of aircraft using its facilities increased, first steps were under way to restore the second

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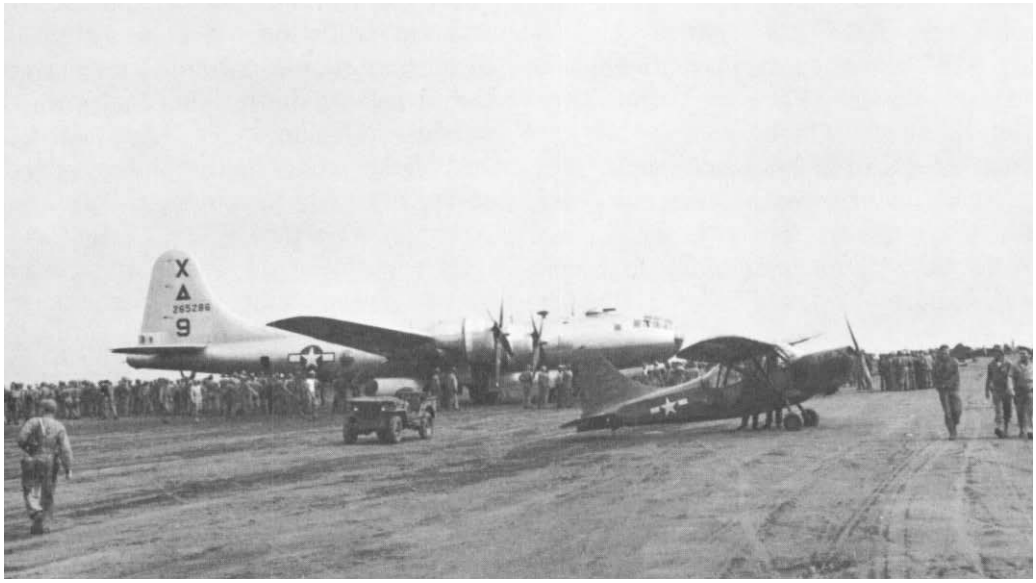
[5] *Rogers ltr.*

[6] Gen Vernon E. Megee interview with HistDiv, HQMC, dtd 17May67 (Oral History Collection, HistDiv, HQMC), p. 32. According to USAF historical sources, "On 10 January 1945 General Moore recommended that Colonel Megee (as Landing Force Commander, Air Support Control Unit) would continue to act as the Landing Force Aircraft Commander during the assault phase at Iwo until the arrival of the designated Landing Force Aircraft Commander, namely Moore. He stated that Colonel Magee concurred in the plan since it would provide unity and continuity of command. Moore also pointed out that he would be needed on Guam to get aircraft prepared to go forward as scheduled, and it would be more important for him to do this than to be on Iwo during the assault phase. . . . On 6 March, General Moore led the air echelon of the 15th Fighter Group to Iwo Jima, and upon arrival there promptly assumed the Air Commander duty. *Air Force Comment.*

[7] *TF 56 AR*, Encl F, p. 4.

[8] *ComPhibGru 2 AR*, pp. 9–10.



B-29 SUPERFORTRESS, *the first of many, makes emergency landing on Iwo Jima. (USAF 57013 AC)*

4TH MARINE DIVISION *observation post near wrecked enemy aircraft at northern end of Motoyama Airfield No. 1. (USMC 110251)*

airfield. Since the field, shortly to become known as the Central Airfield, was still under enemy fire during the latter part of February and early March, little could be done by way of actual reconstruction. As a first step, an abundance of mines and booby traps, which the enemy had left behind, had to be cleared, an unenviable task that was handled by the 2d Bomb Disposal Company, a Marine unit specializing in the removal of mines and duds. The company had already performed a similar job creditably at the southern airfield before restoration could get under way. By 16 March, the Central Airfield had been restored to a point where it also became operational. It featured one strip graded to 5,200 feet, another to 4,800 feet.[9]

As the assault phase on Iwo Jima came to a close, attention turned to the execution of plans for the development of the island as an important air base. To this end, once the objective was secured, a naval construction brigade was organized and additional construction units were employed. Original plans for the development of Iwo Jima had called for three airfields and installations to accommodate the garrison. The fields were to be designed to handle up to 90 B-29s daily, as well as five groups of escort fighters. The Central Airfield was to be utilized for staging Superfortresses en route from the Marianas to Japan. Airfields No. 1 and 3 were to serve fighters and smaller bombers. Alternate plans, however, were more ambitious than the earlier ones and eventually it was anticipated that the Central Field would be turned into one huge complex featuring two B-29 strips, two fighter strips, and a combat service center. It was finally decided that once the island was secured, the North and Central Fields would be combined, covering more than four square miles, just about half of the surface of the island.[10]

In rebuilding the Iwo Jima airfields, the engineers ran into complex and exasperating problems. Because of the recent volcanic origin of Iwo, laying out the runways or putting in subsurface gasoline lines became a very difficult undertaking when steam pockets or sulphur laden crevasses were encountered. Construction of runways on the volcanic rock also posed a major problem and it became necessary to put the naval construction units on a schedule of two 10-hour shifts daily.[11]

By mid-July, the first B-29 runway had been paved to its full length of 9,800 feet. The second strip had been graded to 9,400 feet by the end of the war but was never resurfaced. The old runway, running from west to east, became a 6,000-foot fueling strip. The fighter strip on Number 1 Airfield was eventually paved to 6,000 feet and was equipped with 7,940 feet of taxiways and 258 hardstands. The rough terrain in the area of the northern strip delayed construction, so that by the end of the war it had been paved to 5,500 feet for the use of fighters; in addition, some 10,000 feet of taxiway had been graded. Two large tank farms and facilities at each field took care of the supply of fuel.

[9] Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, p. 595.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 596.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 521.

The utilization of Iwo Jima as a fighter base was to be greatly affected by the overall war situation. The reduction of enemy air strength in Japan proper proceeded so rapidly during the late spring and early summer of 1945 that in time fighter escorts from Iwo were no longer required for the B-29s. Nevertheless, some 1,191 escort sorties were to be flown from Iwo, as well as 3,081 strike sorties against enemy targets in Japan.[12] The primary use to which the airfields on the island were put was as an intermediate landing point, particularly for big B-29s in distress. By the time the war came to an end, about 2,400 of the giant bombers had made emergency landings on Iwo runways, involving a total of 25,000 airmen.

LOGISTICS, REAR INSTALLATIONS, AND NEWS COVERAGE[13]

A combination of enemy fire, deep volcanic ash, and heavy surf resulted in grave supply problems during the Iwo Jima operation. The early phase, in particular, became a nightmare for the Navy beach parties and the Marine shore parties. In the days following the initial landings, the main emphasis was on meeting the urgent requirements of the combat troops. The supplies brought ashore in LVTs and DUKWs often were sent directly inland without any rehandling on the beaches. For the first five days, until roads capable of supporting wheeled vehicles could be utilized, LVTs, DUKWs, and the versatile Weasels took care of transporting the bulk of supplies from the beaches to the inland dumps.

The landing of ammunition and supplies took place under extremely difficult conditions. Heavy swells caused extensive broaching of landing craft. With each wave, boats were picked up bodily and thrown broadside of the beach, where succeeding waves swamped and broached numerous landing craft. Other craft in succession hit the wrecks already beginning to pile up on the beaches until considerable wreckage had accumulated. The LSTs and LSMs sent to the beaches once the beachhead was secured also had great difficulty in keeping from broaching. Tugs were in constant attendance to tow them clear. Since unloading continued day and night, the beach parties had to work around the clock.

In order to facilitate getting supplies to the combat troops, Marston matting and armored bulldozers were utilized on the beaches. The matting was of tremendous value in overcoming the obstacle created by the soft volcanic ash on the landing beaches. The armored bulldozers, equipped with steel plates to protect both the driver and the machine, were employed on the beaches to level sand terraces and carve out

[12] *Air Force Comment.*

[13] Additional material in this section is derived from: *3d EngBn AR;* 3d Pioneer Bn URpt, 25Feb-26Mar45, hereafter *3d Pioneer Bn URpt;* 4th MedBn OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-Mar45, hereafter *4th MedBn OpRpt;* 4th Ser Bn OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 27Dec44-19Mar45, hereafter *4th SerBn OpRpt;* 5th Eng Bn UJnl, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-24Mar45, hereafter *5th EngBn UJnl;* 5th MedBn UJnl, Iwo Jima, 27Feb-18Mar45, hereafter *5th MedBn UJnl;* 5th Pioneer Bn UJnl, Iwo Jima, 7-23Jul45, hereafter *5th Pioneer Bn UJnl.*

exits. When fighting shifted to the northern part of the island, several bulldozers were used to cut roads through the rocky gorges characteristic of northern Iwo, notably in the 5th Marine Division zone of advance.

In discussing the value of the Marston matting and the armored bulldozers, the Commander of the Attack Force Beach Party Group, Captain Carl E. Anderson, USNR, pointed out that these two items of equipment:

> . . . contributed materially to the success of the landing and the moving of heavy equipment off the beaches, which could not have otherwise been accomplished without almost insurmountable hardship.[14]

The pioneer battalions were the basic component of their respective division shore parties. The 133d and 31st Naval Construction Battalions provided equipment operators and cargo handlers for the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions. In addition, the Army's 442d and 592d Port Companies, assigned to the 4th and 5th Divisions respectively, and Marine service and supply units were given special tasks within the shore party organizations. Invaluable service was also rendered by the three Army DUKW companies which, like the port companies, were Negro units. Replacement drafts furnished the largest source of labor for ships platoons and shore details, though their subsequent integration into the depleted combat units left much to be desired. As of D plus 3, units of the 8th Field Depot went ashore and were assigned to assist the divisional shore parties, which were becoming depleted from casualties and fatigue.

There were slow but steady signs of progress. On D plus 6, the day that General Erskine launched his drive up the center of Iwo, engineers of the 5th Marine Division began the operation of the first water distillation plant on the West coast. Cognizant of the geological characteristics that were peculiar to the island, the engineers drove intake pipes into the natural springs. The water emerging from the ground was so hot that it had to be cooled with sea water. One of the first amenities of civilization, the hot shower, thus became a welcome arrival on the island.

On the same day, the VAC Shore Party assumed control of all shore party activities, a further indication that the situation on the beaches was stabilizing. The general unloading of cargo ships on the eastern beaches now got under way. As large quantities of supplies began to reach the shore, it soon became evident that additional beaches on the west coast of the island would have to be utilized. Preliminary surveys had indicated that conditions on the west coast were suitable for beaching LCTs and smaller craft. By D plus 8, beach exits and roads had been constructed on western Iwo. Simultaneously, a number of beaches, designated as Purple, Brown, White, and Orange, were established.

The Japanese, increasingly compelled to watch the beehive of activity along the eastern shore in helpless frustration, saw an opportunity to interfere with operations on the western beaches. On 1 March, an ammunition resupply ship, the *Columbia Victory,* was ap-

[14] RAdm Carl E. Anderson ltr to CMC, dtd 26Nov52, in *Iwo Comments.*

proaching the west coast with a cargo of artillery ammunition when mortar fire from Kama and Kangoku Rocks, as well as northwestern Iwo, bracketed the vessel. One shell exploded so close to the ship that it wounded one man and caused light damage to the vessel. Anxious eyes were watching the Japanese artillery fire, including those of Generals Holland Smith and Schmidt, who viewed the action from VAC headquarters on the west beach. More than the loss of a ship was involved. If the *Columbia Victory's* cargo of ammunition blew up, the entire west coast of Iwo could go with it, along with thousands of Marines working on the beaches. Keenly aware of the danger, the cargo ship reversed course and, miraculously evading additional near misses, headed back out to the open sea.[15]

As a result of enemy interference, the western beaches could not be opened until D plus 11, when Purple 2 went into operation. By 3 March, all assault shipping had been unloaded and retired from Iwo Jima, and Garrison Force Zero began to discharge its cargo. This element consisted of troops of the garrison force, commanded by Major General James E. Chaney, USA. The Zero echelon had been embarked in additional shipping to arrive at the objective on call after the assault ships, but prior to the first echelon garrison ships.[16] General Chaney, together with his staff and elements of the Army's 147th Infantry Regiment and men of the 7th Fighter Command, had already gone ashore on D plus 8 as the advance echelon of Army ground and aviation troops that would play an important part in garrisoning the island. Meanwhile, the Army 506th Antiaircraft Battalion, having landed on D plus 6, was firing its 90mm guns at Kama and Kangoku Rocks off the west coast, from which the enemy had harassed the *Columbia Victory*. Men of the 5th Marine Division advancing up the west coast had already become the target of mortar and rocket fire from these islets.

While the Marines in the front lines were pitting their bodies against a cruel and remorseless enemy, the battle to save lives was being waged with equal devotion in the rear. American skill at improvisation, coupled with determination and medical know-how, were destined to save many lives. On Purple Beach on the west coast, a Navy evacuation hospital opened on the evening of D plus 6 with a capacity of 200 beds. At the 4th Marine Division hospital, located at the northern tip of the southern airfield, 17 doctors, operating in four surgical teams, worked around the clock. The Army's 38th Field Hospital, consisting of 22 officers and 182 enlisted men, came ashore on 25 February. Working together with the Navy medical facilities, it was to make a major contribution in providing medical care to the wounded in the days to come. Hospital facilities on Iwo were further supplemented when the 5th Marine Division Hospital went into operation at the southern tip of Airfield No. 1.

In order to provide the best possible care for the wounded, time was of the essence. This applied particularly to the

[15] CominCh 1–9.
[16] *TF 56 TQM Rpt*, p. 6.

availability of blood at the company medical aid stations. Blood plasma had been used in earlier operations, where its life-saving capabilities had already become legend. On Iwo Jima fresh whole blood, recently drawn on the west coast of the United States, packed in ice and airlifted directly to the scene of action was used with excellent effects. Initially, whole blood was flown in by seaplane to a base established near Mount Suribachi at the southeastern tip of Iwo. Use of the seaplane base continued until 8 March, at which time it was decommissioned and the seaplanes, which had also been used to conduct rescues at sea, were returned to Saipan.

Once the southern airfield became operational, whole blood was flown into Iwo by casualty evacuation planes. Up to D plus 25, a total of 960 pints had been flown in. Additional supplies of blood plasma were obtained from the hospital ships. Before the Iwo operation came to a close, the Landing Force had used up 5,406 pints of whole blood. The total used for the care of the Iwo casualties up to this date amounted to 12,600 pints.[17]

Before the Iwo Jima operation ended, Army and Marine air transports, consisting of C-46s and C-47s, airdropped 78 tons of supplies and delivered another 40 tons by air freight. The cargo planes involved were from the Army Air Forces 9th Troop Carrier Squadron and Marine VMR-253, -353, and -952.[18]

On D plus 9, the hospital LSTs, which thus far had provided emergency treatment for the wounded, were released and left the area, fully loaded with casualties. At this time, shore-based medical facilities took over the task of caring for the wounded. Serious cases were subsequently evacuated directly from the beach to hospital ships and transports. By D plus 14, more than 9,500 casualties had been evacuated to rear areas by transports and hospital ships, not counting another 125 evacuated by air.[19] Plans called for the evacuation of the wounded to Saipan, where 1,500 beds were available and to Guam, which had beds for 3,500.[20] From the Marianas, the casualties were to be transported to Hawaii by such surface ships as were available and by air as the condition of the men permitted.

Part of the activities carried on in the rear involved the collection and burial of the dead. This task was performed by service troops, often under extremely hazardous conditions, since the dead were in close proximity to the front lines. Carrying parties often became the target of enemy small arms and mortar fire. The ever present specter of death on Iwo Jima was to give rise to this description by a veteran of the battle:

> As the struggle in the dust of Iwo Jima, in the rocks and ravines, continued night and day, the act of war became a monotony of horror, a boredom of agony and death; it became a way of life, a task, a burden,

[17] HQ FMFPac MedRpt, Iwo Jima, dtd 28-Mar45, p. 19, hereafter *FMFPac MedRpt.*

[18] *VAC Logistics Rpt.* Encl A, pp. 16-23.

[19] Bartley, *Iwo Monograph,* p. 113.

[20] *TF 56 MedRpt,* p. 3.

> a work that was repetitious, galling to the body and mind.
>
> Death was so commonplace as to be without interest to the living, for the living were resigned to it. They no longer expected to survive. Fear was not of death, but of mutilation. And there was no end to this; no end to mutilating wounds.[21]

Because of the heavy casualties during the Iwo operation, burial of the dead posed a special problem. Disposition of the dead was the responsibility of the 4th Marine Division burial officer, Captain Lewis Nutting, who occupied a dual position as VAC burial officer. Headquarters personnel, and especially members of the division band, performed this sad but necessary duty, which in time became a never-ending chore, as outlined here:

> All day long, men carried litters to the field and placed them in neat rows. Two men passed along the rows, taking fingerprints, if the right index finger remained. Other men picked up one dog tag from each body, leaving the other for burial. If there were neither hands nor dog tags, and often there were not, the teams tried to establish identification by means of teeth, scars, tattoos, birthmarks, clothing stencils, jewelry, or uniform marks. Sometimes there was so little left that it was necessary to ascertain which section of the battlefield the body came from in order to determine to which unit the man had belonged.
>
> When a row was ready, the bodies were wrapped in blankets or ponchos and placed in a trench. The bulldozer covered them with 6 feet of Iwo Jima sand, and a grader spread clay on top to keep it from blowing away. The sounds of battle off to the north were ignored. Since D plus 3, Captain Nutting's unit had suffered five casualties of its own. Even in the cemetery there was no security.[22]

The Japanese, on their part, appeared reluctant to abandon their dead on the field, presumably not for sentimental reasons but in order to keep the advancing American forces from becoming aware of the true extent of the enemy losses. As a result, frequently under cover of darkness, Japanese carrying parties sneaked into the battle area and removed the dead. Where the disposition of bodies proved impractical, the enemy burned his dead or buried them in pillboxes.

As the campaign progressed, the efficiency of the landing force organization increased. Improved coordination of air, naval gunfire, and artillery was achieved through the VAC artillery officer, Colonel John S. Letcher, who already had worked out detailed guidelines back in Hawaii with the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions.[23] In close teamwork with members of the Landing Force Air Support Control Unit and the corps air and naval gunfire officers, Letcher screened requests for supporting fires with members of the three division artillery regiments. Some of the members of this coordinating group continued to function on board the *Auburn* even after corps headquarters had gone ashore on 24 February. On the other hand, Colonel Letcher left the

[21] Gallant, *The Friendly Dead*, p. 164.

[22] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, pp. 254–255.

[23] For a detailed account of the procedure laid down for obtaining various types of artillery and air support, and the sequence in which such type of support was to be requested by the infantry, see *Letcher ltr.*

155MM GUN *on Iwo Jima at moment of firing. (USMC 110636)*

MARINE ROCKET TRUCKS *furnishing fire support for advancing infantry. (USMC 111100)*

Auburn at 1430 that date and half an hour later went ashore, where he remained until the operation had ended.

Along with the demands of the situation, there were changes in the organization of the shipping that stood by off Iwo Jima. A new type of logistic vessel, the small craft tender, was introduced here. This vessel was a self-propelled barracks ship, later designated as the APB. Two of these vessels were employed at Iwo Jima on an experimental basis. Actually, the vessels were LSTs converted to meet the needs of the numerous small craft employed around the island with insufficient endurance for long voyages and long periods at objectives. In order to effectively support the small craft, the converted LSTs each carried about 225 tons of frozen and dry provisions, 120,000 gallons of water, and about 235,000 gallons of fuel; they had berthing facilities for 40 transient officers and 300 men, a sick bay for 14 patients, and messing arrangements for 750 men on a round-the-clock basis. The ships serviced by these tenders at Iwo included destroyers, destroyer escorts, destroyer minesweepers, landing ships, minelayers, patrol and landing craft, minesweepers, submarine chasers, and rescue tugs. From 19 February through 7 March, the two APBs refueled and rewatered 54 vessels and reprovisioned 76.[24]

The above does not by far represent the total accomplishment of the two vessels, whose performance was to lead to the following observation:

> Perhaps the best thing of all was the way the tenders mothered the landing boats and their crews. Many of these were caught at the beach when their own ships moved out of sight. Many were temporarily disabled, some lost. These tenders berthed a total of 2,500 officers and men, and fed 4,000 on the scale of one man, 1 day. It was a great help to a tired and hungry boat crew to have a place to eat and sleep. The tenders did not carry landing-craft spares or repair facilities. The principal part of the maintenance and repair work at Iwo was done by 3 landing ships (dock), 3 repair ships, 1 diesel repair ship, and 1 landing-craft repair ship. The job was no small one, totaling work on 30 landing ships (tank), 3 destroyers, 5 attack transports, 1 net ship, and numerous landing boats. It has been said that every small boat used in landing on beaches had sustained damage of some sort, many of them more than once. The LSDs worked 24 hours a day on repairs. The divers of the repair ships practically lived in diving suits from sunrise to 10 or 11 o'clock at night clearing propellers and doing underwater repair and salvage work.[25]

An account of developments on and around Iwo Jima would not be complete without mention of the 3d Marines. This regiment, commanded by Colonel James A. Stuart, constituted the Expeditionary Troops Reserve. As early as D plus 9, 28 February, both Generals Schmidt and Erskine had requested commitment of this reserve to lend impetus to the lagging drive up the center of the island.[26] This request was made at a time when the landing

[24] Carter, *Beans, Bullets, and Black Oil*, p. 290.

[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 290–291.

[26] CTG 56.1 Dispatch to CTF 56, 1732, 28-Feb45.

force already had sustained crippling casualties, and the loss of manpower, coupled with exhaustion of the men, was beginning to seriously impair the combat efficiency of all three Marine divisions committed on Iwo Jima. Despite the energetic efforts on the part of VAC to get the 3d Marines landed, General Holland Smith felt compelled to repeat the argument of Admiral Turner, Commander of the Joint Expeditionary Force, that the number of troops already ashore was sufficient to complete the capture of the island and that the employment of an additional regiment would only add to the congestion.[27] This contention was to be strongly disputed by the VAC operations officer who was to make this comment:

> It was my considered opinion while on Iwo Jima, having visited all parts of the island in our hands, and keeping in close touch with the situation, that the 3d Marine Regiment could have been landed without in any way overcrowding the island. Commitment of this well trained and experienced regiment would have shortened the campaign and saved us casualties.[28]

The pros and cons of committing the 3d Marines were to spark a controversy that has remained unresolved more than two decades later. Members of the landing force still consider with bitterness that "commitment of a fresh regiment at that time would have cheered up the exhausted troops ashore and would have permitted the final capture of Iwo Jima in much less time and with far fewer casualties."[29] According to one analysis of the situation:

> The consequences of using battle replacements rather than landing the infantrymen of the Third Regiment and shortening the fronts of the units in the line are, in retrospect, evident. Completing the assault was delayed. Key personnel in the front lines were unduly exposed, and casualties relative to the resistance encountered began to increase both among regular infantrymen and among the battle replacements.[30]

In almost all respects, the conversion of Iwo Jima into an American military base was influenced by the small physical size of the island. There were no buildings, roads, wooded areas, fields, or streams. But above all, there was little room in the rear area, such as there was. Always close to the front lines and never more than two or three miles to the rear, the airfields, gun positions, supply dumps, and troops occupied virtually every inch of the island.

The lack of space in the rear had its effect as much on the location of medical facilities as it did on the headquarters of the three divisions operating on the island and VAC headquarters. The medical organizations dispersed their units into such areas

[27] According to the VAC chief of staff: "I was present when General Smith discussed this with General Schmidt, and to the best of my recollection General Smith stated categorically that Admiral Turner would not release the 3d Marines unless General Schmidt stated that he could not capture the island without them. This, of course, General Schmidt could not do." *Rogers ltr.*

[28] LtGen Edward A. Craig ltr to Head, HistBr, G–3 Division, HQMC, n.d., in *Iwo Comments*, hereafter *Craig ltr.*

[29] *Rogers ltr.*

[30] Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*, p. 528.

AIR VIEW OF *Iwo Jima beachhead on D plus 11. (USMC 112223)*

SHORE PARTIES *prepare to haul supplies to the front line. (USMC 109635)*

as were allotted "and with the help of the ubiquitous bulldozer literally dug themselves a place on the island."[31] Portable plywood operating rooms were set up in holes in the ground and covered with tarpaulins to keep out the dust and cold. The engineers built roofs over sunken water reservoirs which made good operating rooms. Ward tents were set up in airplane revetments or simply in long trenches bulldozed in the ground. The electric lights went in, the field surgical units were set up, the blood bank moved ashore, and by the time the transports left, a system of excellent surgical facilities was in operation.

In his memoirs, General Holland Smith recalled his impression of the command posts on Iwo Jima which he had occasion to inspect:

> I went ashore every second day, calling on Harry Schmidt at V Corps Headquarters, or on Rockey, Cates, and Erskine at their Command Posts, and going forward to watch the progress of the fighting. None of these Command Posts was the Hotel Splendide the invading general seizes for himself and his staff in fictional war. Cates' post, overlooking the sea near the fortified quarry, was a knocked-out Japanese pillbox, where the smell of decomposing enemy dead, buried in the ruins, grew more loathesome every day. Erskine, just south of Motoyama Airfield Two, occupied an abandoned Japanese gun emplacement, with a tarpaulin slung over a 4.7-inch dual purpose gun. Over on the left, Rockey had a ramshackle place up against a cliff, where the Japanese had been flushed out recently.[32]

Supply of the landing force was a highly complex operation. Thus, the average daily expenditure of artillery ammunition right up to the final phase of the campaign, exceeded 23,000 rounds daily. Enough ammunition of various types was unloaded across the beaches to fill 480 freight cars, plus enough food to feed the entire city of Columbus, Ohio, for an entire month.[33] Expressed in definite numbers, for the naval bombardment alone the total of ammunition actually expended came to a staggering 14,650 tons. This amount was divided into 2,400 rounds of 16-inch, weighing 2,280 tons; 5,700 rounds of 14-inch, 3,640 tons; 1,440 rounds of 12-inch, 520 tons; 11,700 rounds of 8-inch high capacity, 2,020 tons; 8,400 rounds of 6-inch high capacity, 440 tons; 152,000 rounds of 5-inch high capacity, 4,160 tons; 17,700 rounds of 5-inch star, 300 tons; 12,000 rounds of 5-inch, 270 tons; 10,000 rounds of 4-inch, 145 tons; and 70,000 rounds of 4.2 mortar, 875 tons.[34]

In addition to ammunition, an amazing quantity of fuel and other items were to be required for the capture of the five-mile long island. These included: 4,100,000 barrels of black oil, 595,000 barrels of diesel oil, 33,775,000 gallons of aviation gasoline, and 6,703,000 gallons of motor gas; plus about 28,000 tons of various types of ammunition; 38 tons of clothing; more than 10,000 tons of fleet freight; more than 7,000 tons of ship supplies of rope, can-

[31] *FMFPac MedRpt*, p. 21.

[32] Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, p. 267.

[33] CG FMFPac, Arty Anx to Encl G, Iwo AR; *New York Times* Editorial, 25Feb45, p. 8E, columns 2-3, as cited in Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*, p. 517.

[34] Carter, *Beans, Bullets, and Black Oil*, p. 289.

vas, fenders, cleaning gear, and hardware; approximately, 1,000 tons of candy; toilet articles, stationary, and ship's service canteen items; and about 14,500 tons of fresh, frozen, and dry provisions.[35]

General Holland Smith himself was to remark later "that the amount of effort that had gone into the capture of the barren island was staggering. The Navy had put more ammunition on Iwo Jima than anywhere else in the Pacific. Marine artillery expended 450,000 shells and we used huge quantities of mortar shells, grenades, and rockets."[36]

Closely connected with the expenditure of ammunition by shore-based artillery and naval gunfire was the Air Support Control Unit, in charge of the combat air and antisubmarine patrol. The unit was composed of Marine and Navy officers and Marine enlisted technicians and operators. Here the cramped space available on Iwo Jima was an advantage. In this case, the unit was located only 75 feet from the Landing Force Command Post. As a result of this proximity, troop requests for air support could be handled much more expeditiously than before.

For the coordination of artillery fire and air strikes, a brief of each air strike was broadcast over the Corps Artillery Fire Direction Control Net. Each air strike was given a number and information obtained on number and type of aircraft, direction of approach and retirement, minimum altitude, and other pertinent data. Each artillery battalion thus was able to control its fire so that it did not interfere with strikes. A complete cessation of artillery fire became necessary only once or twice when aircraft delivered a low-level napalm attack.[37]

Progress in developing the island did not stop with the construction of new facilities. In some instances, the very shape of the island had to be changed to meet the requirements of the new occupants. Even Iwo's most outstanding landmark, Mount Suribachi, was to be affected by these changes. The Army garrison troops planned to get various trucks housing radar, weather, and navigational equipment for the coming assault against the Japanese home islands on top of the mountain. Before such plans could be realized, it became necessary to construct a road to the top, a project that had never been realized by the Japanese. On D plus 15, construction of a two-lane road, 35 feet wide, got under way, winding its way up and around the mountain for nearly a mile. Early the following morning, the first bulldozer drove into the crater at the top of Suribachi. The Japanese, a number of whom were still living inside the mountain after surviving the battle for Suribachi, were powerless to interfere with the road construction. They stole out of their caves only at night in search of food and water and were methodically eliminated when spotted.

In the midst of the multitude of supporting headquarters and units operating on the island, there was a special complement of men, neither wholly military or civilian, whose job it was

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

[36] Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, p. 275.

[37] *ComPhibGru 2 AR*, Pt 5, pp. 1–2.

to photograph the action on the island or write about it. They were representatives of American and Allied news services, radio networks, and local newspapers. The news reporters were given the widest possible latitude in covering the operation and thus could be found among the invasion force, in the landing boats, and occasionally in the foxholes.

In addition to the accredited civilian correspondents, each of the military services had its own news writers and photographers, including a special Navy film crew which recorded the entire operation on color film. Radio teletype equipment was set up on the beaches for the benefit of the press, and a Navy floatplane was made available to carry copy, photographs, and newsreels directly to Guam, where this material was processed and flown back to the United States. Another precedent was established when, on D plus 7, Admiral Turner and General Holland M. Smith were interviewed on Iwo Jima in a live broadcast while the battle was still raging on the island.

The events on the battlefield received wide coverage and distribution in American newspapers and magazines. None of the ferocity of the fighting was withheld from the American public. As casualties mounted and the full impact of the cost in lives expended to secure the island began to hit home, plaintive voices arose to question the need for such a bloodletting. Then as now, sincere and serious-minded Americans, appalled witnesses to the savage fighting they could not stem, groped for a way out, at least a more inexpensive way to subdue the enemy. Among the expedients suggested was the employment of toxic gas.

THE CASE FOR AND AGAINST CHEMICAL WARFARE[38]

Unknown to the public at large, the employment of chemical warfare agents in the Pacific Theater had already undergone active consideration while the Iwo operation was still in the planning stage. Through collaboration with the Office of Strategic Services, forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency, a special report had been compiled on the subject of gas warfare on Iwo Jima.[39] Its primary feature was the recommendation that Japanese transmitters on the island be jammed. Once the enemy's communications had been rendered inoperable and he was isolated, the entire island was to be inundated with gas. In late June 1944, the director of Research and Development, OSS, had made a special trip to Hawaii to discuss the project with Admiral Nimitz.

The difficulties of employing gas warfare were twofold, both technical and moral. During the early part of World War II, the United States had thought

[38] Additional material in this section is derived from: Frederic J. Brown III, *Chemical Warfare, A Study in Restraint* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), hereafter Brown, *Chemical Warfare.*

[39] A chapter dealing with this matter, known as the Lethbridge Report, appears in the recollections of Stanley P. Lovell, former Director of Research and Development, OSS, in his memoirs entitled: *Of Spies and Strategems* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 70–78.

of the use of toxic gases only as a retaliatory measure. In this connection, the 100-pound mustard-filled bomb was considered by chemical warfare officers as the most suitable munition for retaliation. The peak stock of this item attained in the Pacific Theater in July 1944 was 15,244 bombs with 541.2 tons of toxic filling. In the words of a chemical warfare service officer:

> This supply was token only. If, for example, this entire supply had been used on Iwo Jima, which had an area of seven and one-half square miles, it would only have contaminated a little more than half, or four and one half square miles. Considering the vapor effect of mustard and the fact that the entire island would not have been regarded as a target, the stock would have been sufficient for one contamination. In the opinion of most chemical officers one contamination would have been enough to end all enemy resistance on the island. The question of resupply for other objectives would then arise.[40]

The second difficulty in employing chemical warfare against the Japanese could be found in the attitude of most of the nation's civilian and military leaders. In fact, military reluctance to use this weapon had its origin in the experiences of the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I. In connection with the possible employment of toxic gas on Iwo Jima, General Holland Smith made this comment:

> I am not prepared to argue this question. Certainly, gas shells smothering the island, or gas introduced into caves and tunnels would have simplified our task, but naturally the use of this prohibited weapon was not within the power of a field commander. The decision was on a higher level. It was in the hands of the Allied Powers, who alone could authorize its use in a war which would have assumed even more frightful proportions had gas been allowed.[41]

In the end, it was the Chief Executive of the United States who had a final voice in approving or disapproving the entire plan. Regardless of their divergent political views, both Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt in the years between the two world wars had been in favor of eliminating gas as a military weapon. In 1937, when vetoing a bill that would have changed the designation of the Army Chemical Warfare Service to that of Chemical Corps, the President had expressed his views on this subject in no uncertain terms:

> It has been and is the policy of this Government to do everything in its power to outlaw the use of chemicals in warfare. Such use is inhuman and contrary to what modern civilization should stand for.[42]

One of the official Army histories dealing with chemical warfare has pointed out in this connection that "gas warfare had no advocates in high places."[43] While this may have been true during the early years of World War II, there is some evidence that, as of early 1945, the atmosphere in Washington has begun to shift in favor of chemical warfare.[44] Another reason for increased

[40] Kleber and Birdsell, *Chemicals in Combat*, pp. 269–270.

[41] Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, p. 276.

[42] Veto msg of Bill S.1284, as cited in Brophy and Fisher, *Organizing for War*, pp. 21-22.

[43] Kleber and Birdsell, *Chemicals in Combat*, p. 653.

[44] In Brown, *Chemical Warfare*, the author attributes this change to three factors: Germany's imminent collapse, removing the last

American readiness to accept initiation of chemical warfare towards the final phase of the war may be found in the extremely heavy American casualties sustained in the Western Pacific. None other than General of the Army George C. Marshall was to testify after the war had ended that "following the terrible losses at Iwo Jima, he was prepared to use gas at Okinawa."[45]

It is interesting to note that, at the same time that American views towards the employment of gas offensively became more aggressive, the Japanese policy shifted in the opposite direction. With the loss of the Marianas in the spring and summer of 1944, the home islands had suddenly become extremely vulnerable to American chemical attack. In the firm belief that the United States would not initiate gas warfare, and since Japanese ability to retaliate was in any case too low, Japan, in mid-1944:

> . . . decided to discontinue production of toxic agents and to recall all stocks of gas munitions from the hands of troops in the field. Thus, in mid-1944, the Japanese started a policy of disarmament. Readiness spiraled downward until hostilities ended.[46]

Thus we are faced with the strange spectacle of a hostile nation, pledged to fight to the death, and confronted by an immense military machine, dismantling its limited chemical warfare apparatus as operations reached their climax. Stranger still, Japanese reasoning apparently was based on the declared policy of the United States not to initiate gas warfare. The Japanese failed to consider that, given different time and circumstances, such a policy might be subject to change.

With present knowledge, not available to Allied planners in 1944, it becomes clear that by the time the Iwo Jima operation got underway, Japan was no longer in a position to retaliate with chemical means in response to Allied action, with one minor exception.[47] All that prevented the employment of gas on Iwo Jima was the President's aversion to gas warfare. Even though the United States had not signed any international instrument outlawing such warfare, national policy clearly limited the conditions under which toxic gas might have been introduced. In consequence of this policy, heavy casualties to the contrary, Marines would continue to assault Iwo Jima with rifle, hand grenade, and flamethrowers until all resistance had been overcome.

In a matter of roughly three weeks from D-Day, Iwo Jima had been transformed from a strongpoint in the Japanese defense system to an important American air base of strategic and tac-

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Axis possibility of retaliating with gas against an Allied population; President Roosevelt's death; and the over-riding importance of bringing the war against Japan to a speedy conclusion.

[45] Quoted in Lilienthal, *The Atomic Energy Years*, p. 199.

[46] Brown, *Chemical Warfare*, p. 260.

[47] "The Japanese troops on Iwo Jima had been supplied with glass containers—I suppose they could be called gas grenades—which was liquid hydrogen cyanide. These containers of clear glass were a little larger than a baseball. When the container was broke the liquid released cyanide gas. These could have been effective if they had been used inside pillboxes or caves or other closed spaces." *Letcher ltr.*

tical importance to the overall air offensive against Japan. The capture and development of the island denied its use to the enemy and at the same time it served as an emergency haven for aircraft returning from raids against Japan. In American hands, Iwo Jima represented an advance base for search and reconnaissance. It further provided a base within fighter range of Japan. Furthermore, the island could be utilized as a staging point for bombers, permitting greater bomb loads in lieu of gasoline, though the island was not much used for this purpose.[48] Iwo Jima could also become a refuelling stop for short-range aircraft en route to bases closer to Japan yet to be seized before the general assault against the Japanese homeland got underway later in the year.

This, then, was the significance of the fiercely contested island. This is why General Kuribayashi had decided to adopt those tactics that would prove most costly to the invasion force and that would cause the most delay in the conversion of the stronghold to American use. After three weeks of bitter fighting, his intention has been partially realized as far as taking a toll in American lives was concerned. But, just behind the front lines, bulldozers were shifting earth, changing the very landscape of the island; communications were humming, and heedless of tenacious Japanese holed up in the northern part of the island, the task of reconstruction was proceeding at an ever-increasing pace.

[48] Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, p. 597.

The 5th Marine Division Drive on the Left[1]

ADVANCE UP THE WEST COAST[2]

As the battle for Iwo Jima neared its climax, the full force of three Marine divisions was employed to reduce the main enemy defenses near the Central Airfield. General Erskine's drive up the center of the island to the northern shore has already been narrated. In addition to the men of the 3d Marine Division who fought and died at such landmarks as Hills OBOE and PETER, Motoyama Village, and Hill 362C, Marines of the adjacent 4th and 5th Divisions were making similar sacrifices to the east and west respectively. In the sectors of the latter two divisions the landmarks may have varied in some respects. They were to bear names like Hill 362A, 362B, Nishi Ridge, and Bloody Gorge. Men of the 4th Division would suffer at places appropriately named the Meat Grinder, the Amphitheater, and Turkey Knob. For all of them the enemy remained the same: fanatical, utterly devoted to his mission, bent on the destruction of the invaders who had dared violate sacred Japanese soil.

An attack by the 5th Marine Division on 24 February had resulted in sizable gains by the 26th Marines, which by the end of the day advanced 400 yards north of the 3d Division ele-

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from: ComPhibPac AR, Iwo Jima, 12Jan-26Mar45, dtd 19May45, hereafter *ComPhibPac AR; TF 51 AR; TF 56 AirRpt; TF 56 G-3 Rpt; VAC AR; VAC G-2 Rpts; VAC C-3 Jnl; VAC C-3 Rpt; VAC NGF and AirRpts; VAC Translations; 5th MarDiv AR; 5th MarDiv D-1 Jnl*; 5th MarDiv D-2 Jnl, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-27Mar45, hereafter *5thMarDiv D-2 Jnl; 5th MarDiv D-2 Per Repts; 5th MarDiv D-3 Jnl; 5th MarDiv Casualty Rpts;* 1st ProvFldArtyGru G-1 Jnl, 9Jan45-15 Mar45, hereafter *1st ProvFldArtyGru G-1 Jnl; 13th Mar UJnl; 13th Mar AR; 26th Mar UJnl;* 26th Mar AR, Iwo Jima, 1Jan-26Mar45, dtd 20Apr45, hereafter *26th Mar AR;* 27th Mar UJnl, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-22Mar45, hereafter *27th Mar UJnl;* 27th Mar AR, Iwo Jima, 19Oct44-23Mar45, dtd 18Apr45, hereafter *27th Mar AR; 28th Mar UJnl; 28th Mar AR; 28th Mar R-2 Jnl; Horie Rpt; Iwo Comments;* Bartley, *Iwo Monograph; Newcomb Notes;* Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign;* Morison, *Victory in the Pacific;* Henry *et al, U. S. Marines on Iwo Jima;* Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War;* Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*; Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*; Robert Leckie, *Strong Men Armed;* Newcomb, *Iwo Jima.*

[2] Additional material in this section is derived from: *5th TkBn UJnl; 5th TkBn AR; 2/26 UJnl*; 2/26 Obs Rpt, Iwo Jima 18Feb-23Mar45, hereafter *2/26 ObsRpt;* 2/26 AR, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-27Mar45, dtd 18Apr45, hereafter *2/26 AR; 3/26 UJnl;* 3/26 AR, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-26Mar45, dtd 19Apr45, hereafter *3/26 AR; 1/27 UJnl;* 1/27 AR, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-23Mar45, dtd 20Apr45, hereafter *1/27 AR; 2/27 UJnl;* 2/27 AR, Iwo Jima, 10Nov44-23Mar45, dtd 17Apr45, hereafter *2/27 AR; 3/27 UJnl;* 3/27 AR, Iwo Jima, 10Nov44-23Mar45, dtd 10Apr45, hereafter *3/27 AR.*

ments on its right. The gains were made at a heavy cost; 21 officers and 332 enlisted men became casualties on D plus 5.[3] In order to give the 9th Marines a chance of straightening the lines, the 26th Marines was ordered to remain in place on 25 February.

On the morning of D plus 6, the 5th Marine Division held a line extending for 1,200 yards from west to east. From the left to right, 2/27 held the cliffs overlooking the western beaches; the center of the line, protruding into enemy territory, was held by 2/26; to the right of this battalion, the line slanted southward, held by 3/26 with one attached company of 1/26. (See Map V, Map Section). It had become evident by this time that the high ground in the zone of action of the adjacent 3d Marine Division exerted a paramount influence on the further advance of the 5th Division. No major progress could be expected until General Erskine's division had driven the enemy from this high ground in the center of the island.

While the 26th Marines consolidated its positions on 25 February, the adjacent 9th Marines of the 3d Division attacked northward along its joint boundary with the 5th Marine Division. On this day, the 9th Marines failed to make any noteworthy gains, and the situation along Colonel Graham's right flank remained substantially unchanged. Throughout the day, heavy enemy fire from the right front raked the positions occupied by the 26th Marines, greatly interfering with supply and evacuation. Nevertheless, the men of the 5th Division were to get one break during the day. Around 1500, one of the spotter planes reported enemy artillery moving north along a road following the contour of the island on northern Iwo. Three batteries of the 13th Marines immediately adjusted on the target and fired nearly 600 rounds. At the end of this fire mission, the observer reported that three artillery pieces had been destroyed, several prime movers were burning, and an ammunition dump was ablaze.[4] This was the only time during the Iwo Jima campaign that the enemy ever offered such a choice target. Hereafter, Japanese artillery deployed to new firing positions only at night.

On D plus 7 General Rockey's division resumed the attack. Following a 45-minute artillery and naval gunfire preparation, the 26th Marines jumped off in the main effort. Almost immediately, the attack ran into heavy resistance. The enemy poured fire from small arms, machine guns, and mortars into the ranks of the advancing Marines. At the same time, heavy artillery and mortar fire from the northern part of the island hit the assault troops. As the Marines closed with the enemy, hand grenade duels ensued.

During the advance, the nature of the terrain underwent a subtle change. Thus far, General Rockey's division had been operating in soft, sandy, and open terrain. As the 26th Marines moved northward, the level ground gave way to heavily fortified cliffs. Essentially, the 5th Marine Division now entered a difficult complex of ridges. In each case, the attack had to be carried up one

[3] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, p. 81.

[4] *13th Mar AR*, p. 13.

slope, across the top, and then down into another ravine beyond. Above the ridges, there loomed a major enemy bastion, Hill 362A, just south of Nishi Village. This terrain feature impressed the advancing Marines because its sinister presence overshadowed all other obstacles in the area. The hill was rugged and rocky, devoid of all vegetation on its southern slopes. To the north, as yet unseen by the Americans advancing from the south, there was a sheer drop of about 80 feet. The Japanese had exploited this formidable obstacle to the utmost. The entire hill bristled with caves of varying sizes, many of them serving as mortar and machine gun emplacements. The elevation enabled the enemy to observe western Iwo all the way south to Mount Suribachi, and thus exposed to his view all American activity in the front lines, as well as on the western beaches.

Despite fierce enemy resistance, the 5th Marine Division attack on 26 February moved steadily towards Hill 362A, still about 800 yards away, whose very prominence made it a natural objective. The three battalions in the main effort were the 2d and 3d Battalions, 26th Marines, commanded respectively by Major Amedeo Rea and Major Richard Fagan, and 2/27 under Major John W. Antonelli. Because of heavy automatic weapons fire from an enemy strongpoint consisting of pillboxes and caves, the advance of 2/26 was so slowed that in two hours gains of only 50 yards were registered. Tanks of Company B, 5th Tank Battalion, took a hand in the fighting. At 1000, Company F of 2/26, thus far held in reserve, was committed. With the support of armor, the infantry launched a spirited attack against the stubborn enemy position. The efforts of this company were quickly crowned with success. For the first time since 2/26 had come ashore, the battalion came face to face with the usually elusive and unseen enemy. In the resulting pitched battle, the Japanese came out second best. Those of the enemy who sought to flee were killed out in the open. Catching the ordinarily well entrenched enemy for once in such a vulnerable position greatly boosted the morale of the Marines engaged in this action, "for no man likes to fight something he cannot see, and the sight of running Japs was, if nothing else, reassuring."[5]

Advancing on the right and supported by tanks of Company A, 5th Tank Battalion, 3/26 gained about 100 yards, smashing fortifications as it went along and destroying numerous guns in the ravines that led down from the plateau perpendicular to the route of advance. Gains made by the adjacent 9th Marines helped 3/26 in its forward movement.

To the left of the 26th Marines, 2/27 initially made rapid progress, gaining 400 yards during the first two hours. For the remainder of the day, the battalion stayed in place in order to permit 2/26 to come abreast. The terrain in the zone of advance of 2/27 precluded the employment of tanks. Instead, 20 LVT(A)s of the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Reed M. Fawell, Jr., supported the battalion attack from the sea. The 75mm fire from the armored

[5] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, p. 85.

SOLIDLY EMPLACED *tank of the Japanese 26th Tank Regiment after capture. (USAF 70317 AC)*

MARINE COMBAT PATROL *moves through jagged terrain in northern Iwo Jima. (USMC 142316)*

amphibians knocked out several enemy caves, but in the choppy seas their fire began to endanger friendly troops and, as a result, they were ordered to cease fire.[6]

When action halted on the evening of 26 February, the lines of the 5th Marine Division still formed an arc whose apogee extended some 400 yards into enemy territory. Gains for the day amounted to roughly 300 yards. Most important of all, the day's advance had netted the 26th Marines two Japanese wells, the last ones believed to be under enemy control. Henceforth, the Japanese would have to rely on such water as they had been able to store or on rainfall.

Enemy reaction to the loss of this vital resource was not long delayed. Following a rainy afternoon, the skies cleared. In bright moonlight, a company-size force of Japanese assembled and started to move down the west coast, presumably with the intention of recapturing the two vital wells. Men of the 26th Marines spotted a sizable enemy force heading for one of the wells near the cliffs south of Hill 362A. The Japanese represented a splendid target in the moonlight. Both artillery and naval gunfire racked the enemy force and dispersed it before it reached any of the wells.

In another incident during this restless night, at the observation post of Company D, the company commander, Captain Thomas M. Fields, and a member of his staff observed three Japanese walking boldly within 25 feet of them with picric acid satchel charges. The two officers routed the enemy with hand grenades, killing one of the intruders.[7] This was only one example of the enemy's boldness in approaching or penetrating the American lines. Marines up front could never be sure of who or what was approaching them in the darkness. One of the early incidents which occurred on D plus 2, involved the compromise of the password "Chevrolet" in the area then occupied by Company F, 2/26. A sentry challenged a moving figure, who gave the correct password. Not satisfied with the pronunciation of "Chevrolet," the sentry repeated his challenge. Once again the password was mispronounced. The sentry fired and killed the intruder, who the next morning was identified as Japanese.[8]

Confrontations of this type tended to increase the vigilance of Marines on Iwo Jima. At times, such alertness was carried to the extreme and, a few nights later, resulted in a humorous incident involving the same company. During the night of 25-26 February, Company F, 2/26, seized a Navajo Indian, who was mistakenly identified as Japanese.[9] His poor English, made worse by a bad case of fright, made his position pre-

[6] *5th MarDiv AR*, Anx M, pp. 12, 15.

[7] *2/26 AR*, p. 8.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[9] On Iwo Jima, as in other military operations in the Pacific Theater during World War II, the U. S. Marine Corps employed specially trained Navajo communicators or "talkers," whose language was not known to the Japanese and thus not open to enemy translation. In tactical situations where time was of the essence, precious minutes were gained since radio voice transmissions could be used without coding or decoding.

carious for a while. Fortunately, he escaped physical harm; his ordeal ended when he was finally identified by another Navajo Marine.

At 0630 on 27 February, the 27th Marines, with 1/26 attached, relieved the 26th Marines. Ninety minutes later, following a half-hour preparation by the 13th Marines, reinforced by corps artillery, Colonel Wornham's men jumped off with 2/27 on the left, 1/27 in the center, and 3/27 on the right. The 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, remained in regimental reserve. Shortly before the jumpoff, truck-mounted launchers of the 3d Rocket Detachment showered the area directly in front of the lines with a heavy barrage of 4.5-inch rockets, then pulled back before the enemy could retaliate. At the same time, naval gunfire was brought to bear against Hill 362A, followed by carrier aircraft which bombed and rocketed the hill.

Moving forward in the center, 1/27 gained 200 yards before running straight into a heavily defended cluster of pillboxes. A half-track was able to knock out one of these strongpoints with its 75mm gun before its crew was hit by well-aimed small arms fire. A decision to move up 37mm guns for support could not be implemented because no suitable positions could be found. Consequently, the task of reducing the formidable obstacle once again fell to small flamethrower-demolition teams who would reduce one pillbox after another in the slow, dangerous, but time-proven method.

During the afternoon, when the company advancing on the left of the 1st Battalion encountered a heavily fortified area, the call went out for tanks. The arrival of a flamethrower tank, in particular, was eagerly awaited. When it finally reached the scene of action, accompanied by other armor, it received a mortar hit and was disabled before it had a chance to take part in the engagement. Nevertheless, the remaining Shermans lent effective support. They fired with everything they had and then moved forward in concert with the infantry. In the course of this advance, several more enemy pillboxes, as well as a dug-in tank, were put out of action. Once the momentum of the attack had been regained, the Marines moved forward for an additional 200 yards until they halted shortly after 1900.

Advancing on the left of the 27th Marines, the 2d Battalion faced not only a determined enemy, but extremely difficult terrain. The cliff on the high ground adjacent to the west coast beaches was honeycombed with caves and emplacements, most of them sheltering mortars and machine guns. In such terrain the employment of tanks was out of the question; furthermore, the few existing routes of approach were heavily mined. Once again, the full burden of the attack fell on small infantry and demolition teams, each one advancing more or less independently, taking its losses as it eliminated one enemy strongpoint after another. Of necessity, such a movement is slow and extremely exhausting, yet steady gains were made and by late afternoon, 2/27 had advanced 500 yards.

On the right of the division line, 3/27 moved against a ridge which guarded the approach to Hill 362A.

Company G launched a frontal assault against this ridge and was promptly thrown back. A group of 30 men attempting to outflank this position was initially repulsed; a second try appeared more promising. As the Marines advanced up the slope they were hit by a hail of hand grenades thrown by the enemy from the reverse slope. Ten Marines were killed on the spot, including Gunnery Sergeant William G. Walsh, who dived on a hand grenade which landed in a hole where he and several of the men had taken cover. As other elements of the company reached the scene, the enemy was driven from the reverse slope, and the ridge remained in friendly hands.

As D plus 8 came to a close, the 5th Marine Division had gained roughly 500 yards through the heart of the enemy main line of resistance in some of the heaviest fighting in which any Marine unit on Iwo Jima was to take part. Losses throughout the day had been heavy, some units being harder hit than others. In one instance, Company A, 1/27, occupied a ridge only to discover that it was exposed to heavy enemy rifle and machine gun fire. The company suffered additional casualties from enemy hand grenades, thrown from bypassed positions in the flanks and rear. For all practical purposes, the Marines of Company A on top of the ridge were cut off. The 1st Platoon, in particular, was hard hit. By the time the company was relieved by Company B, 8 men had been killed and 50 wounded.[10] While the Company A losses were unusually heavy, they serve as an indication of the 5th Marine Division's losses since D-Day. By noon of D plus 8, the division had sustained 32 officers and 530 men killed, 134 officers and 2,360 men wounded, and 2 officers and 160 men missing in action, a total of 168 officers and 3,058 men.[11]

The 5th Marine Division had now reached the 0-2 Line across its entire zone of advance, though the lines on the evening of D plus 8 were not perfectly straight. Not all of the action occurred in the front lines. Continuous vigilance was required to clear the enemy out of the previously captured ground. Japanese kept appearing seemingly out of nowhere. Only later was it determined that they could move at will through a carefully constructed system of tunnels. As a result, before a day's attack could get under way, some mopping up remained to be done in the rear area. Despite the gains made by the 27th Marines on 27 February, an even more difficult operation awaited 5th Marine Division units on the following day.

THE ASSAULT ON HILL 362A[12]

On the morning of D plus 9, the last day of February, the 5th Marine Divi-

[10] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, pp. 86-87.

[11] *5th MarDiv AR*, App 3, Sec VIII, p. 15.

[12] Additional material in this section is derived from: 5th Eng Bn AR, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-26Mar45, dtd 13Apr45, hereafter *5th EngBn AR;* 1/26 AR, Iwo Jima, 15Nov44-26Mar45, dtd 19Apr45, hereafter *1/26 AR;* 1/28 AR, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-26Mar45, n.d., hereafter *1/28 AR; 2/28 OpRpt*; 2/28 AR, Iwo Jima, 19 Feb-26Mar45, dtd 10Apr45, hereafter *2/28 AR;* 3/28 AR, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-26Mar45, n.d., hereafter *3/28 AR.*

sion was squarely up against Hill 362A, the highest elevation on western Iwo. The hill loomed forbiddingly above the Marines huddled at its approaches. Around the base of this hill mass, rocky outcrops dominated every approach. The Japanese had fortified each one of these rocky spurs, which afforded excellent fields of fire. For the attack on 28 February, the 27th Marines had been ordered to seize an intermediate objective between the 0-2 and 0-3 Lines.

Initially, the mission of taking Hill 362A had been entrusted to 3/27, while 1/27 was to simultaneously attack an irregular line of ridges extending from the objective down to the western beaches. During the night, 1/26 had relieved 2/27 and was committed along the left flank of the regiment along the beaches. Following a 45-minute preparation by artillery, naval gunfire, and rockets, and supported by carrier-based aircraft, the 27th Marines jumped off at 0815 for what was to develop into one of the bloodiest encounters on the island.

From the outset, the enemy offered stubborn resistance all along the regimental front. Advancing in the center and on the right of the regimental line, 1/27 and 3/27 encountered some of the heaviest small arms fire yet directed against them. The 1st Battalion called for and received tank support as it had on the previous day, but the terrain in the zone of advance of 3/27 precluded the employment of armor, and the battalion had to rely strictly on its own fire power. Advancing gingerly across 200 yards of difficult terrain, the two assault battalions reached the foot of the hill around noon.

At this point, the attack began to bog down. In accordance with General Kuribayashi's orders, the Japanese remained in their positions and fought to the bitter end. Those who were bypassed continued to fire into the rear of the advancing Marines. At such close range, the enemy snipers were extremely effective and inflicted heavy casualties on the assault force. In the course of the afternoon, several patrols from 3/27 probed the defenses on the hill itself, seeking for a way to seize it. A patrol from Company I actually made it up the southwest slopes to the crest of the hill around 1630. However, since cohesion between 1/27 and 3/27 had been lost, the patrol had to be recalled in late afternoon and Company I pulled back about 100 yards, where it tied in with elements of the adjacent 21st Marines on the left of the 3d Marine Division.

Far from being content with halting the Marine advance, 50-100 enemy troops sallied forth from positions on Hill 362A during the late afternoon and counterattacked the 3/27 lines. The brunt of this blow fell upon Company H, which engaged in desperate hand-to-hand fighting with frenzied Japanese before the latter were driven off.

By nightfall, men of the 27th Marines were still stalled at the foot of Hill 362A, which towered above them, seemingly as impregnable as ever. After a day of extremely bitter action, which had cost numerous casualties, the overall regimental gain had been about 300 yards. To the left, 1/26 had sent out advance detachments along the beaches, but the northward movement of any large body of troops was seri-

ously impaired by the enemy's possession of the adjacent high ground.

The night from 28 February to 1 March turned out to be a very quiet one for the exhausted 5th Division Marines in the front lines. Four listening posts had been established by 2/26 along the beaches to frustrate any enemy intentions of landing reinforcements on the island. Each listening post had been augmented with one dog and its handler from the 6th War Dog Platoon. Eventually, things became so quiet that even the dogs found it difficult to remain awake.[13]

Elsewhere on Iwo Jima, it was a different matter. In the southern part of the island, in the vicinity of Mount Suribachi where they had been positioned ever since that elevation was captured, the 28th Marines was preparing to move north to join the 5th Division drive. At midnight, the enemy began shelling the positions of the corps artillery and those of the 13th Marines. This bombardment continued at some length. Shortly after 0200, the 5th Marine Division ammunition dump blew up with a tremendous roar, blazing fiercely for the remainder of the night. At least 20 percent of the division small arms ammunition supply was lost in the conflagration, along with large quantities of heavier ammunition. One of the exploding shells landed in the corps artillery fire direction center but caused no casualties, though it did wreak havoc with the telephone wire.[14]

In the course of the operation, VAC Headquarters itself came under fire a number of times from mortars and artillery. This shelling resulted in several casualties. On at least two occasions, all work in the operations tents of the various staff sections came to a stop and officers and men piled together on the ground as shells landed nearby.[15]

In the midst of the commotion caused by the exploding ammunition dump, the island's air alert system went off. The nerves of personnel in the southern part of the island were further strained when exploding white phosphorus shells were mistaken for gas shells and someone gave the gas alarm at 0300. Within ten minutes, the gas alarm was cancelled; not so the air alert, which continued until 0430.[16]

As it turned out, there was some substance to the air alert. No enemy planes appeared over Iwo Jima during the night, but shortly before 0300 an enemy aircraft, skimming in low over the water, dropped a torpedo near the destroyer *Terry* a few miles north of Kitano Point. The destroyer took evasive action and barely avoided getting hit by the torpedo. However, a few hours later, while passsing the northernmost point of Iwo Jima, the ship came under fire from enemy shore batteries, which scored hits on the main deck and forward engine room. Eleven destroyer crewmen were killed and 19 wounded before the *Terry*, assisted by the *Nevada* and *Pensacola*, made good her escape. In addition to the loss in lives, the ship had suffered substantial damage.[17] Another vessel, the destroyer *Colhoun*, an-

[13] *26th Mar AR*, App. 4, p. 9.

[14] BGen John S. Letcher ltr to CMC, dtd 13Mar53, in *Iwo Comments*.

[15] *Craig ltr*.

[16] *VAC OpRpt*, p. 28.

[17] Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*, p. 64.

chored off the northeastern coast of Iwo to repair damage sustained in a collision, took several hits from enemy shore batteries which wrecked a torpedo tube, exploded the air flask of a torpedo, and caused other extensive damage. One man was killed and 16 were wounded in the course of this action.[18]

At 0630 on 1 March, the 28th Marines, with the 5th Tank Battalion and 3/27 attached, moved forward through the 27th Marines in order to continue the attack on Hill 362A. Between 0745 and 0830, the objective and surrounding area received a heavy shelling from all four battalions of the 13th Marines and the corps' 155mm howitzers. Offshore, a battleship and two cruisers joined in the bombardment. The volume of fire was such that it was deemed best, in the interests of coordination, to exclude aircraft from the preparatory fires. They would have ample opportunity to support the attack later in the day.

Shortly before 0900 the 28th Marines jumped off with the 1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions from right to left. The attack moved ahead slowly under heavy enemy mortar and small arms fire. To Colonel Liversedge's men, the dogged defense of Hill 362A was reminiscent of the action at the base of Mount Suribachi. The scheme of maneuver called for 1/28 and 2/28 to attack around the right and left of Hill 362A respectively and link up on the north side of the hill. Meanwhile, 3/28 was to advance up the west coast to the left of 2/28.

By 1030, both the 1st and 2d Battalions had reached the top of the ridge and the ridgeline running east and west of Hill 362A. As they attempted to advance beyond the crest, they discovered that a steep drop of nearly 100 feet into a rocky draw confronted them. To make matters worse, heavy fire from small arms, automatic weapons, and mortars hit the advancing Marines from the adjacent ridge to the north, subsequently to become known as Nishi Ridge. The draw itself ran parallel to the ridge line and was bisected by an antitank ditch that ran perpendicular to the hill. Covering the ditch were cleverly constructed positions in the face of the steep cliff, inaccessible from the top. Beyond the antitank ditch and the draw, the ground leveled off for about 200 yards before again rising sharply to form Nishi Ridge.

In order to keep the attack moving, Lieutenant Colonel Jack B. Butterfield, commanding 1/28, sent his reserve, Company A, around the right of Hill 362A. This maneuver proved unsuccessful and the company came under such withering fire, accompanied by a shower of grenades, that it was stopped short in its tracks. During this assault the company commander was killed. A similar attempt by Company B to get into the draw proved equally unsuccessful, and the company commander was wounded. In this jumble of rock, both companies suffered heavy casualties. Among these was Corporal Tony Stein of Company A, who had already made a name for himself on D Day. He set out with 20 men to clear the ridge of snipers. Only seven men returned from

[18] *Ibid.*

this mission. Among the men of Company B killed near the base of Hill 362A this day were three who had raised the American flag on Mount Suribachi; one of them had taken part in the first and the two others had participated in the second flag raising.

Throughout the day, 10 regular tanks and 2 flame tanks of Company C, 5th Tank Battalion, gave all possible support to 2/28 to the extent that the terrain permitted, with fire on the cliffs and the high ground to the front. Shortly after noon, two platoons of tanks spearheaded an attack along the left flank of the battalion; subsequently, one platoon was withdrawn and shifted to the right of the zone of action of 2/28, just north and west of Hill 362A. Even with the support of tanks, 2/28 proved unable to advance. The battle raged hot and heavy at close quarters; in one instance, one of the tanks bogged down, surrounded by 30-40 Japanese, some of them occupying a cave only 10 feet from the tank. Fighting as infantry, the tank crew was able to make a harrowing escape after disabling the gun and radio.

For the remainder of the afternoon of D plus 10, the 1st and 2d Battalions, 28th Marines, remained stalled along the crest of Hill 362A and at the base of the hill, where the enemy still held out in caves. In the course of the afternoon, the boundary of General Rockey's division was extended about 200 yards to the east to facilitate the advance of the adjacent 3d Marine Division. As a result, General Rockey committed 3/26 on the right of the 28th Marines. Shortly before 1900, 3/26 relieved 1/21 and established contact with 3/9 on the right and 1/28 on the left. At the same time, 2/26 displaced forward as 28th Marines reserve.

While the 1st and 2d Battalions, 28th Marines, were making little progress in the extremely difficult and well defended terrain, 3/28 was making a steady advance with two companies abreast near the west coast. The battalion moved forward against moderate resistance until its assault elements on the left were ahead of those on the right, at which time they drew heavy fire from the right front. The battalion had gained about 350 yards and since the regimental attack to the right had stalled, 3/28 halted its advance.

By the end of 1 March, Hill 362A and a rocky ridgeline extending to the west coast had been seized. In all, elements of the 5th Division held a 1,000-yard front, which was exposed to heavy artillery and mortar fire from positions to the north. In order to obtain better observation over the northwestern coast of Iwo Jima, artillery observers were placed on board an LCI(G) which cruised up and down the northwest shore. This expedient was successful and several enemy positions were located and silenced.[19]

At the end of 1 March, the 5th Marine Division had taken a total of 12 prisoners; it was estimated that 3,252 of the enemy had been killed in the 5th Division area of responsibility.[20] Casualties sustained by the division to this

[19] *5th MarDiv AR*, pp. 23–24.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

date were 48 officers and 952 men killed, 161 officers and 3,083 men wounded in action, and 2 officers and 47 men missing.[21] The capture of Hill 362A and the ridges on either side of it in a one-day operation had cost the 28th Marines alone 224 casualties.[22]

While General Rockey's men were engaged in reducing Hill 362A, the adjacent 3d Marine Division had penetrated the enemy defense system in the center of the island and had pivoted to the northeast. This move threatened to open a widening gap between the 3d and 5th Marine Divisions. As a result, for 2 March, General Schmidt directed the 5th Marine Division to make the main effort on the right while maintaining contact with General Erskine's men. In order to carry out the newly assigned mission calling for an expansion of his boundaries, General Rockey committed the 26th Marines to the right of the 28th. For the continuation of the 5th Division attack on D plus 11, the fire of the 13th Marines was augmented by half of the corps artillery fires.[23]

At 0800 on 2 March, the 26th Marines jumped off along the division boundary with 3/26 in the assault. As the battalion moved forward, a gap arose on the left, and Companies D and F of 2/26 were committed to regain contact with 1/28. In the zone of advance of the 26th Marines the Japanese made maximum use of cleverly concealed positions, whose approaches were mined. Progress was correspondingly slow. Even though the terrain did not favor the use of armor and abounded in antitank obstacles, 3/26 requested tank support, and tanks from Company A, 5th Tank Battalion, spearheaded the attack.

Companies D and F of 2/26 were in the midst of blasting their way into and through the enemy defenses when the battalion had to shift to the right to close a new gap that had developed between the 3d and 5th Divisions. In executing the shift, the two companies had to disengage under heavy fire; they were further harassed by mortars and minefields. A solid line was finally formed in late afternoon just before nightfall. In order to fill the void created when the two companies of 2/26 were shifted to the northeast, it became necessary to commit 1/26.

When fighting came to an end on D plus 11, 3/26 had gained 500 yards. (See Map VI, Map Section). Responsible for these gains to a large measure were the division engineers, who moved alongside the assault units to clear minefields and open supply roads in the rear. In front of the 26th Marines, the enemy had mined the approaches to his pillboxes and permanent fortifications; without the help of the engineers, the advance of Colonel Graham's regiment on D plus 11 would have been doomed to failure.

In the left of the 5th Division zone of advance, the 28th Marines jumped off at 0800 with its three battalions employing the same scheme of maneuver as on the previous day. The 1st and 2d Battalions were to attack around both sides of Hill 362A and join on the north side for a coordinated assault against

[21] *Ibid.*
[22] Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign*, p. 53.
[23] VAC OpO 10–45, dtd 1Mar45.

the next elevation 200 yards to the north. This obstacle, extending westward from the plateau almost to the water's edge, was squarely in the path of the 28th Marines. Beyond were the stark remains of what had once been a small hamlet called Nishi. From it, the elevation took its name: Nishi Ridge.

As the two battalions jumped off, they encountered undiminished resistance. Every time the Marines moved into the depression north of Hill 362A, they drew heavy fire from both the front and the rear. Tanks from Company B, 5th Tank Battalion, tried to give effective support, but were severely limited in their movements by the antitank ditch extending across their front.

As a result, the 28th Marines made only little progress. The 13th Marines gave all possible support to the infantry, concentrating its fire on enemy mortar positions identified from the air and through forward observers. Finally, elements of the regimental weapons company succeeded in setting up three .50 caliber machine guns to cover the caves that honeycombed the northern slopes of Hill 362A. Friendly mortar fire saturated the defile in front of the infantry.

Eventually, armored bulldozers of the 5th Engineer Battalion got close enough to the antitank ditch to fill in a portion of it. This permitted the tanks to move out and advance for 200 yards until the terrain narrowed and precluded any further forward movement. Caught in this type of cul de sac, the tank crews fought with the enemy at closest quarters. At 1400, tanks of Company C relieved those of Company B, which was beginning to run out of ammunition. En route to the front lines, the tanks of Company C, including a flame tank, blasted and burned enemy positions in the steep northern face of Hill 362A, from which the enemy was still firing into the rear of the advancing infantry.

The enemy made numerous attempts to destroy the supporting armor with satchel charges. Apparently, the appearance of tanks in close support of the infantry in terrain that all but precluded the effective employment of armor confounded the Japanese. One of the officers on General Kuribayashi's staff was to make the following comment on this subject:

> When American M–4 tanks appeared in front of Osaka Yama (Hill 362A), Lieutenant General Kuribayashi was very anxious to know how to dispose of this tank. Even our 47mm antitank gun could not destroy it, and at last came to the conclusion that bodily attacks with explosives was the only way to destroy it.[24]

Actually, the Japanese island commander may have overestimated the structural strength of the M-4 tank, which was indeed vulnerable to 47mm antitank fire. Nevertheless, the Shermans were indispensable on Iwo, and without them the assault might have failed. Ideally, a tank with heavier armament and a lower silhouette, as well as improved traction, would have been more desirable, but at the time of the Iwo Jima operation only the Shermans were available to the Marines engaged in the assault.

While the tanks were keeping the enemy to the rear occupied, Company E, 2/28, charged across the exposed terrain north of Hill 362A to the foot

[24] *Horie Rpt*, p. 8.

of Nishi Ridge. Enemy reaction to this move was immediate and, in the words of the regimental report, "All Hell broke loose"[25] as the Japanese fought back from the cliff line to the north, from Hill 362A, and from a blockhouse in front of and to the east of Hill 362A. Combined with the heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire was a counterattack by a large group of Japanese against 1/28. This attack was repulsed with 129 Japanese killed.

Losses among the Marines of 2/28 also were beginning to mount. Shortly after 1400, Lieutenant Colonel Chandler W. Johnson, commanding 2/28, was hit squarely by an artillery shell as he was inspecting the front lines. The battalion commander was killed instantly and the battalion executive officer, Major Thomas B. Pearce, Jr., assumed command. For the remainder of the afternoon, reserve units mopped up in the vicinity of Hill 362A, whose northern face was giving the advancing Marines infinitely more trouble than the southern slopes had.

While bitter fighting was raging along the center and eastern portion of the division line, 3/28 was advancing along a narrow front near the west coast. Movement in this area was seriously impeded by numerous caves and heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire. The caves were attacked and slowly neutralized with 37mm guns, heavy mortars, and demolition charges; a total of 68 were blasted during the day. At 0900 and again around noon, shells falling within the battalion zone of advance gave off a green-yellowish gas which induced vomiting and caused severe headaches to some of the men exposed to it. A brief gas scare resulted until it became apparent that only those men in the immediate proximity of a shell burst were affected; symptoms lasted only for a short time. In the end, the ill effects were ascribed to the presence of picric acid fumes.[26]

At 1700, VAC ordered the lines to be consolidated for the day. In the 5th Division zone of advance, fighting continued until nightfall, some of it at very close quarters. For the night, 5th Division Marines were generally dug in at the base of Nishi Ridge; on the far right, the 2/26 lines extended to the northeast along the division boundary where they tied in with 3/9 near Hill 362B. The biggest advance for the day had been made by the 26th Marines, which had gained 500 yards. There were indications that the regiment was moving into a different type of defensive position than had been previously encountered. There were fewer concrete fortifications and more rock barriers and tank ditches. Even though the enemy was resisting as fiercely as ever, he was abandoning some of his equipment. Items captured on D plus 11 were a generator truck found behind one ridge and a large searchlight behind another.

As night fell, the enemy made several attempts to infiltrate the 5th Division lines. About 50 Japanese sallied forth near Hill 362A and some of this force succeeded in getting into the Marine positions. Once the Marines became aware of their presence, bitter

[25] *28th Mar AR*, p. 27.

[26] *Ibid.*

hand-to-hand fighting ensued, in the course of which knives, sabers, pistols, and hand grenades were liberally used. The alertness of the Marines in dealing with the infiltrators led General Kuribayashi to report that "the lookout of American forces has become very strict and it is difficult to pass through their guarded line. Don't overestimate the value of cutting-in attacks."[27]

On the evening D plus 11, the battle of Hill 362A was over, but an even bigger challenge was to confront General Rockey's men for the following day: the capture of Nishi Ridge and Hill 362B.

NISHI RIDGE, HILL 362B AND BEYOND[28]

On the morning of D plus 12, the 5th Marine Division resumed the attack with basically the same formations it had employed on the previous day. From the very outset, both the terrain and enemy resistance combined to make it a difficult day. The 26th and 28th Marines were to make the main effort. In the path of the 28th Marines lay a series of gorges and ridges; in front of the 26th Marines the terrain was heavily mined; in addition, from strongly held Hill 362B, the enemy was able to sweep the area with fire. New roads would have to be dozed out before tanks could move in to support the advance.

The attack jumped off at 0745. Supported by 75mm half-tracks, 37mm guns, and a reinforced tank platoon, 1/28 and 2/28 in the regimental center moved out and almost immediately ran into heavy mortar and small arms fire. As the two battalions inched forward, the men soon came to close grips with the enemy and numerous hand grenade duels were fought. Within two hours after the jumpoff, Nishi Ridge had been seized and the battalions prepared to move into the rugged terrain beyond. As the advance gained momentum, the 28th Marines swept down from Nishi Ridge into the remnants of Nishi Village, and by late afternoon had reached a point about 200 yards beyond, despite mounting casualties, for enemy resistance never slackened. At the close of the day, when the fury of the battle receded, 1/28 made further gains which brought it ahead of the other two battalions. Since morning, 1/28 had gained 500 yards, while 2/28 had scored gains of only 150 yards, as had 3/28 along the coast.

By far the most spectacular fighting and resultant gains were made in the zone of advance of the 26th Marines. The mission assigned to the 26th Marines for D plus 12 had been to advance northeastward to relieve elements of the 3d Marine Division near Hill 362B. The line of departure for 2/26 and 3/26 formed an inverted horsehoe with 3/26 on the left and 2/26 on the right. The two battalions moved out rapidly, even though both began taking casualties almost at once. Company B

[27] *Horie Rpt.*, p. 9.

[28] Additional material in this section is derived from: *133d NCB AR;* 2/13 UJnl, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-27Mar45, hereafter *2/13 UJnl;* 2/13 AR, Iwo Jima, 27Oct44-21Mar45, n.d., hereafter *2/13 AR;* 3/13 UJnl, Iwo Jima, 19-Feb-17Mar45, hereafter *3/13 UJnl;* 3/13 AR, Iwo Jima, 27Oct44-21Mar45, n.d. hereafter *3/13 AR;* 4/13 AR, Iwo Jima, 27Oct44-21Mar-45, dtd 7Apr45, hereafter *4/13 AR.*

of the 5th Tank Battalion supported the 2d Battalion by covering the left flank of Company F. Just as it had done on D plus 7 when first committed in the assault, this company smashed into the enemy defenses with great force and aggressiveness. Since, at the outset, the terrain was comparatively level and thus favored the employment of armor, the company commander was able to radio instructions to the armor through a tank liaison man assigned to the command post of 2/26. The assault swept on for about 300 yards before the open terrain changed into the deep gorges and rock formations characteristic of northern Iwo Jima. In these rocky badlands the battle continued, frequently man against man. The Japanese fiercely contested the advance behind every rock and boulder but could not stop it. In some of the most bitter fighting of the entire operation, every weapon at hand was brought into play.

By the time the forceful advance came to a halt, Company F had advanced more than 600 yards to the high ground to its front. Even then, the Japanese grimly contested every foot of the freshly seized ground, and numerous hand grenades continued to harass the Marines from cleverly hidden caves and gullies whose presence had hitherto been unsuspected. But the enemy was mortal, and bazooka shells accurately fired into such defensive positions usually eliminated this resistance in short order.

The 600-yard advance of 2/26 eliminated the horseshoe and for all practical purposes, straightened the line. With the severe threat to its left flank gone, 3/26 was able to launch an advance of its own, which resulted in a 200-yard gain. While Company F was tackling the enemy at close quarters, Companies D and E launched an attack northeastward along the division boundary in order to seize Hill 362B and relieve 3/9. The relief was completed by 1430 and the two companies, from positions just southwest of the hill, prepared for the assault.

When it came, at 1600, the battle for the hill proved to be a bloody one. Using rocket launchers, flamethrowers, demolitions, plus a goodly amount of sheer courage and will, the two companies forced their way to the top. The southern and western slopes of the hill were honeycombed with caves and pillboxes, each of which required an individual assault. By the time the crest of the hill was reached, both company commanders and many of their men had become casualties.

The advance made by the 5th Marine Division on 3 March was almost spectacular under the conditions in which the battle was fought. The cost of seizing this ground was correspondingly high. On D plus 12, the 26th Marines alone had 281 casualties.[29]. Total losses for the 5th Marine Division on 3 March were 9 officers and 127 men killed or dead of wounds, and 15 officers and 357 men wounded.[30] As of D plus 12, total casualties for the division since D-Day numbered 4,960 officers and men.[31]

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[29] *26th Mar WarD*, Mar45.
[30] *5th MarDiv Casualty Rpts*, dtd 25Jun45.
[31] *Ibid.*

As the fury of the battle receded on the evening of D plus 12, the 5th Division lines extended from the west coast at a point roughly 200 yards north of Nishi Village along the northern edge of Motoyama Plateau to the crest of Hill 362B. All along the front, the casualty rate had reached alarming proportions and it became necessary to send men from headquarters and weapons companies into the line as riflemen to bolster the tired and depleted units. Not all of the 5th Marine Division men were able to get much rest that night. In the sector of the 28th Marines, there were relatively few attempts at infiltration. It was another story in the 26th Marines area, where the enemy infiltrators appeared more aggressive and crowded the 26th Marines throughout the night. Almost all of the nearly 100 would-be infiltrators were killed.

Following an artillery preparation and rocket barrage, the 5th Marine Division resumed the attack on the morning of D plus 13. As the men jumped off in the same formation they had employed on the previous day, they were hit by intensive fire from small arms and mortars. Once again, the Marines advanced into terrain dotted with interconnected caves. The lines were now so close to each other that artillery support could be used only on special occasions. Because of a low cloud ceiling, the air support which had been scheduled for the day had to be cancelled.

The low clouds soon gave way to intermittent showers, which did little to lift the morale of the men who were still exhausted in spirit and body from the rigors of the preceding days' combat and lack of sleep caused by the continuous Japanese infiltration attempts of the previous night. The rugged terrain seriously limited the use of 75mm half-tracks and 37mm guns. With Japanese lurking all around them, the crews of these vehicles felt progressively more exposed to enemy fire. Beyond that, the enemy was beginning to take a toll in vehicles with mines, skillfully emplaced in the few avenues of approach available to the supporting armor.

Perhaps the biggest difference between the success attained on D plus 12 and the fighting on the following day was the fact that the attacks were not closely coordinated. Once again, the brunt of the battle was borne by small detachments, moving more or less haphazardly against those enemy caves and pillboxes that were unmasked. As a result, only small gains were made, even though in this jungle of rocks the bravery of the individual Marine continued undiminished. As on the previous day, losses were heavy and many of the combat units were operating at half strength or less. The enemy was noticeably more aggressive in the daytime than he had been before, and the 26th Marines beat back several counterattacks executed in company strength. Nowhere did the Japanese succeed in breaking through the 5th Division lines, but the counterattacks served to take additional steam out of the drive of the fatigued Marines, and net gains for the day remained practically nil. As one account of the day's operations put it, "The only successful move, in fact, was made by Division headquarters which

moved from its original location near the eastern beaches to a position north of Airfield No. 1 on the west side of the island.[32] At about this time, General Kuribayashi shifted his headquarters from the center of Iwo Jima to a large cave in the northwestern section of the island, between Hiraiwa Bay and the ruins of Kita Village, where he prepared to make his final stand.

General Schmidt's order to his three divisions that 5 March was to be utilized for reorganization, resupply, and preparations for the resumption of the attack on the following day reached 5th Division units during the afternoon of 4 March. At a time when physical strength and fighting spirit were beginning to flag, this order was more than welcome. Logically, the day of rest would be used, above all, to funnel replacements into the depleted ranks of the frontline units. The exigencies of combat had already necessitated sending some men with specific and critical skills, such as demolition personnel and bazooka or flamethrower operators into the lines prior to 5 March. On the whole, except for small emergency details, replacements were sent forward when the combat battalions were out of the lines. Replacements, no matter how willing and well trained, always tended to present something of a problem before they were wholly integrated. The reasons for this were outlined in the following report:

> Reports from infantry units indicate that the average replacement, upon being assigned to a rifle unit and immediately subjected to the type of fierce fighting encountered, was initially bewildered and terrified resulting from a mental attitude of his being "alone," and not knowing his leaders and companions on the battlefield. This lack of a sense of security, even when among battle-experienced troops, was brought about by his separation from contact with those with whom he had previously trained and not yet having become assimilated into a fighting team. Those who did not readjust themselves quickly had a high percentage of casualties since in their bewilderment they usually carelessly exposed themselves.[33]

For the resumption of the attack on 6 March, General Rockey directed 1/26 to relieve 1/27 and ordered the 27th Marines into reserve. At the same time, the 28th Marines was to reorganize so that 3/28 would take over the sector of 2/28. This would leave all three battalions of the 26th Marines in the line, the 28th Marines holding a front with 3/28 on the left and 3/27 on the right, and the 27th Marines, less the 3d Battalion, in reserve.

In accordance with VAC orders, combat activity by 5th Division units was limited to local attempts to straighten the lines during the morning. Throughout the day, artillery and naval gunfire were brought to bear on suspected enemy positions, and carrier aircraft flew 18 missions. Within the 26th Marines sector, a few tanks engaged in reducing caves and other strongpoints that were directly menacing the front lines. Those tanks not actually engaged with the enemy received badly needed maintenance in the bivouac areas.

Despite general inactivity on the part of the Japanese infantry, the 5th

[32] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, p. 95.

[33] *5th MarDiv AR*, Anx A, p. 14.

Division suffered casualties through enemy action even on this day of rest. One of the tanks operating near the 26th Marines lines ran over a mine and was disabled, another was hit by enemy antitank fire. Japanese mortars continued to harass the Marines throughout the day, particularly when the enemy observed troop movements near Road Junction 338 northwest of Motoyama Village. Even though this junction was situated in the 3d Marine Division area, it constituted a supply road for the 26th Marines and other 5th Division units.

A particularly unfortunate incident occurred shortly after the relief of 1/27 by 1/26. The 1st Battalion, 27th Marines, was in the process of moving to an assembly area in the vicinity of Road Junction 338 when an enemy shell hit the jeep carrying the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel John A. Butler, who had been observing the relief. The battalion commander was killed, and two other men in the vehicle were wounded. Later that afternoon, Lieutenant Colonel Justin G. Duryea, the operations officer of the 27th Marines, took over command of 1/27.

While all three Marine divisions on Iwo remained in place and prepared to continue the assault, several important changes occurred to the rear, indicative of what had been accomplished and how much remained to be done. At the foot of Mount Suribachi, the 133d Naval Construction Battalion put into operation six portable water distillation units. The processed water was sent to the front and there was enough to furnish three canteens per day per man, a vast improvement over what had been previously available. As early as 3 March, the situation from a naval viewpoint had become relatively quiet. Unloading and evacuation progressed favorably over both the eastern and western beaches. It thus became possible for all of the assault shipping including the Defense Group and the Joint Expeditionary Force Reserve to retire to rear areas.

On the morning of D plus 15, it was business as usual for all three assault divisions on Iwo. The only change from the norm was that the heaviest artillery barrage thus far fired preceded the attack. Shortly before 0700, 11 artillery battalions, a total of 132 guns ranging from 75mm to 155mm in caliber, unleashed a tremendous bombardment of enemy positions in northern Iwo, followed by a rolling barrage. Offshore, a battleship, two cruisers, three destroyers, and two landing craft added their fire to that of the land-based artillery, which in little more than an hour expended 22,500 shells, some of them falling within 100 yards of the Marines waiting to jump off. At pretimed intervals, carrier planes strafed, rocketed, and bombed the enemy positions. The portion of the island still in Japanese hands literally rocked under the punishment being meted out, and it appeared that little could withstand such an extensive pounding.

As soon as they jumped off at 0800, the Marines of the 5th Division, as well as those of the two remaining divisions, discovered to their dismay that the barrage had done little to soften up enemy resistance. When the artillery fire lifted,

the Japanese, little the worse for wear, contested the advance of General Rockey's men from prepared bunkers, pillboxes, and caves. Marines attempting to advance north from Hill 362B immediately drew heavy rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire interspersed with white phosphorus shells. It was almost as if the heavy bombardment had never happened. The broken terrain all but precluded close tank support and, instead of a big push, the advance could be measured in yards. The vigorous drive to the 0–3 Line that had been envisaged could not materialize under such conditions and the attack soon bogged down. By the end of the day, the 26th and 27th Marines had gained between 50 and 100 yards; the 28th Marines' advance bogged down altogether.

The only progress made could be measured, not in yards, but in the number of enemy caves and emplacements destroyed. Engineers operating with the 28th Marines were able to seal off numerous caves. As in preceding days, the Japanese harassed the advance from the front, flanks, and rear. Casualties were correspondingly heavy. The type of vicious close in fighting the Marines were engaged in during this period was reflected in the nature of the casualties evacuated to the rear. In the words of one observer:

> At the Fifth Division hospital, Lieutenant Evans was noticing a change in the type of wounds coming in. They were bad ones, from close range sniper or machine gun fire. The earlier wounds, mostly from mortar bursts, had been numerous and ragged, but not so penetrating. The whole blood was being used as little as twelve days after it was given on the West Coast, but often it could not help.[34]

After the heavy volume of artillery fire on 6 March, expended with such little effect, VAC limited the use of ammunition, particularly for harassing missions. In his orders for 7 March,[35] General Schmidt directed the 5th Marine Division to seize the high ground overlooking the sea with the main effort to be made in the northeastern portion of the division zone of action. Within this zone, the main effort was to be carried out by the 27th Marines, while the 26th and 28th Marines were to execute limited objective attacks.[36]

THE DRIVE TO THE SEA[37]

Just as General Erskine's division on the right jumped off for a surprise attack without an artillery preparation early on 7 March, so the 26th Marines, less 2/26 in VAC reserve, duplicated the maneuver on a minor scale. Jumping off 40 minutes prior to H-Hour without an artillery preparation, 1/26 and Company H, 3/26, set about to reduce the stubborn enemy defenses that had thwarted the regiment's advance on the previous day. After overcoming moderate resistance, the battalion reached a 30-foot knoll just north of Nishi Village. As Marines wearily surrounded this hill, enemy fire all but ceased. The sudden stillness was broken only when

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[34] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 247.

[35] VAC OpO 14–15, dtd 6Mar45.

[36] 5th MarDiv OpO 13–45, dtd 6Mar45.

[37] Additional material in this section is derived from *1/13 UJnl;* 1/13 AR, Iwo Jima, 27Oct44-21Mar45, dtd 5Apr45, hereafter *1/13 AR.*

demolitions men blasted and closed one cave entrance, while machine gunners made short work of several of the enemy who rushed out of a rear entrance. Marines of Company H ran towards the top of the hill in a suspicious silence that was most unnatural for Iwo, until about 40 had gathered on the crest. Then the unbelievable occurred:

> . . . The whole hill shuddered and the top blew out with a roar heard all over the island. Men were thrown into the air, and those nearby were stunned by the concussion. Dozens of Marines disappeared in the blast crater, and their comrades ran to dig for them. Strong men vomited at the sight of charred bodies, and others walked from the area crying. The enemy had blown up his own command post, inflicting forty-three Marine casualties at the same time.[38]

All that remained of the ridge was a mass of torn, twisted, and burning rock and sand. Smoke emerged from a ragged hole so large that it might well have harbored a good sized apartment building. Many of the men, not directly injured by the blast but stunned by the concussion, were staggering around in a daze. It remained for the commander of Company H, Captain Donald E. Castle, to gather the remnants of his men and lead them in a renewed attack.[39]

Meanwhile, 3/26 had also jumped off and almost at once ran into such heavy resistance that continuous fighting at close range, which lasted until nightfall, produced a gain of only 150 yards. Once again, even this meager advance had to be paid for with heavy casualties.

The 5th Marine Division main effort on D plus 16 was made by 2/27, supported by a company of 1/27. Following a 15-minute preparation by a battery of the 13th Marines, the battalion jumped off for an attack that was coordinated with elements of the 21st Marines operating beyond the division boundary. The objective was a stretch of high ground squarely astride the regimental zone of advance. Initially, good progress was made until the forward elements entered a draw directly in front of the first of a series of ridges. At this point, enemy machine gun fire, coming from two directions, raked the exposed men, who sought in vain to pinpoint the well-camouflaged positions. Casualties mounted as a 37mm gun was arduously manhandled to a forward position, from where it engaged the hidden machine guns with undetermined results.

Throughout the day, fighting raged at close quarters, each side making generous use of hand grenades. In the end, the overall gain for the 27th Marines on D plus 16 was 150 yards, similar to the ground seized by the 26th. Even such a limited advance, executed against a firmly entrenched enemy force

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[38] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 252.

[39] This was the first time that men of the 5th Marine Division had become involved in a disaster of this type. A similar incident, on a somewhat smaller scale, involved 2/24 of the 4th Division on Roi-Namur in November 1943. Then, a large blockhouse used to store aerial bombs and torpedo warheads blew up as the Marines surrounded it. At the time, in an instant, the battalion suffered more than half of its total battle casualties for the operation. Proehl, *The Fourth Marine Division*, p. 29.

that contested every foot of ground with knee mortars, grenades, and deadly accurate sniper fire, was a major accomplishment. The task of the Marine infantrymen might have been greatly eased had tank support been available. As it was, the broken terrain was altogether impassable for armor. During the afternoon, platoon-sized elements of 2/27 attempted to outflank some of the enemy positions, only to be caught by heavy flanking fire that all but isolated them from the main body. A withdrawal became possible only with the help of a smoke screen. Fighting continued throughout the afternoon and individual enemy caves were assaulted and taken. But there was no way of telling how many hidden tunnels led into these caves, or how long it would take the enemy to restock them with new men and weapons after the Marine assault squads had moved on.

The only sign of progress of the 5th Marine Division on 7 March occurred on the division's left wing. There, in the zone of advance of the 28th Marines near the west coast, 3/28 and 3/27 dispatched combat patrols before the main body launched a general attack. These patrols moved out at 0900, met with little resistance, and reported this fact back to the regiment. One hour later, without any special artillery preparation, the main body moved out. There was scattered resistance, but not enough to delay the forward movement as 3/28 and 3/27 struck out in a northeasterly direction. In this instance, the extremely difficult terrain proved to be much more of an obstacle than the sporadic resistance encountered. In order to maintain the momentum of the attack, numerous caves were bypassed, to be mopped up later by 1/28 and 2/28. Mortar and rocket fire was directed well ahead of the advancing Marines; additional fire support came from a destroyer offshore.

By 1530, the two battalions had advanced about 500 yards over and through rocky gorges in terrain that was passable only for men on foot. Included in the ground taken this day was Hill 215, located about 500 yards northeast of Nishi Village, only 750 yards from the northern shore. The relative absence of enemy resistance in this sector was to be the most surprising development of the day's operations. In addition to making the longest advance yet in the 5th Division zone, the attacking units killed nine of the enemy in this area and captured one.[40] According to the battalion action report, "a little further advance might have been made, but the positions for the night would have been weak, so the defenses were laid out in the area indicated."[41]

From the time the advance halted for the day until dusk, all three battalions of the regiment dug in for the night in the vicinity of Hill 215, while some of the Marines were engaged in mopping up in the immediate vicinity of the hill. In the midst of this activity, few Marines paid much attention to the fact that a stiff breeze had begun to blow from the north towards the American lines. This nonchalance changed to

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[40] *3/28 AR*, 7Mar45.
[41] *Ibid.*

near-panic when this ill wind was found to be:

> . . . bringing with it eye-smarting sulphur fumes and smoke from a burning enemy ammunition dump. Unit commanders, always alert to the possibility of the enemy's employing poison gas, sounded an alert which brought hundreds of gas masks into use. The alarm soon passed, however, and CT 28 went on with its reorganizing.[42]

The 5th Division advance on D plus 16 had moved the lines forward from 500 yards in the west to 150 yards along the boundary with the 3d Marine Division, where resistance had been the stiffest. In support of the day's operations, naval gunfire had played a significant part. Following the tremendous expenditure of ammunition by the shore-based artillery on 6 March, VAC had restricted the use of the corps 155mm howitzers to "deliberate destructive fires against known enemy targets."[43] The resulting gap in artillery support had been taken up by naval gunfire. All naval gunfire control parties received instructions to expend 500 rounds per ship. On the basis of data furnished by the corps intelligence section, the 5th Division intelligence officer, Lieutenant Colonel George A. Roll, assigned target priorities.[44] Additional support was obtained through air strikes, even though the shrinking enemy perimeter and the proximity of the lines made such support a rather risky undertaking. Altogether, 119 carrier aircraft flew 147 sorties. The employment of napalm bombs was somewhat less than successful: of 40 carried, 7 failed to release; of the 33 released, 7 failed to ignite.[45] An additional 67 500-pound bombs, 170 100-pound bombs, and 426 rockets were not subject to technical failures, but no estimate as to their effectiveness against a well dug-in enemy could be obtained.

The night of 7–8 March was characterized by relatively light enemy activity, though it was far from quiet. In the zone of action of the 5th Marine Division, the Japanese kept things lively with small arms and knee mortar fire and hand grenades. Enemy patrols probed the Marine lines at various points. The only determined attempt at infiltration occurred in front of 1/26, where approximately 25 Japanese tried their luck. The attempt ended in dismal failure when the enemy, tripping flares in his stealthy approach, became a good target and was mowed down by the alert Marines.

The operations order issued by General Schmidt for D plus 17 was simple and to the point. Instead of naming phase lines to be reached in the coming day's assault, the VAC commander directed all three divisions "to capture the remainder of the island."[46] For General Rockey's division, these orders meant that the main effort would continue to be made on the right by the 27th Marines, advancing to the northeast coast along the division boundary parallel to the movements of the adjacent 3d Marine Division.

The terrain over which the 27th Marines was to advance featured a series

[42] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, p. 101.
[43] VAC OpO 14–45, dtd 6Mar45.
[44] 5th MarDiv D/3 PerRpt No. 17, dtd 7Mar45.
[45] *VAC AirRpt, Encl* A, p. 5.
[46] VAC OpO 15–45, dtd 7Mar45.

of interconnected caves and tunnels. All approaches to these defenses were heavily defended. Colonel Wornham planned to meet this challenge by having trails bulldozed into enemy terrain, over which the infantry could advance into close proximity of the enemy. Once there, Marines could reduce the Japanese fortifications at close range with time proven methods. As added insurance, tanks would support the infantry advance over the newly bulldozed trails.

At the first glint of dawn, prior to the jumpoff of 2/27 scheduled for 0750, Shermans of the 5th Tank Battalion slowly crawled forward from their bivouac area over a previously reconnoitered route. In the rough, unfamiliar terrain, the tanks moved slowly and did not reach the front until 0930. Meanwhile, 2/27 had launched its assault on schedule, but little progress was made until the tanks arrived. The armor immediately commenced cleaning out pillboxes and emplacements, permitting the infantry to move in close to caves in order to seal them. The enemy opposed the Marines with accurate small arms fire, grenades, and mortar fire. Despite this opposition and the heavily mined terrain, elements of 2/27 by 1030 had gained 100 yards. Company E, 2/27, reported killing 75 Japanese during the first two hours.[47]

On the battalion left, Companies D and F attempted an advance without tank support and were soon halted by heavy machine gun and mortar fire. A 15-man crew from Battery B, 13th Marines, manhandled a 75mm pack howitzer and 200 rounds of ammunition close to the lines to provide badly needed fire support. This unorthodox employment of artillery raised the eyebrows of the 1/13 intelligence officer, impelling him to leave this statement for posterity:

> We thought this morning that this battalion had done everything it was possible for an artillery unit to do. We had landed under machine gun, artillery, and mortar fire; gone into position at night; repelled Jap pre-dawn counterattack on D plus 1; fired countless counterbattery missions; had snipers in our position area; participated in regimental missions; fired T.O.T. missions; had our observers on land, on sea, and in the air, and we hauled ammo all night. But today we detached No. 4 Baker and sent it forward to knock off some Jap pillboxes. A report came back that their fire on pillbox was very effective. This was a new twist but the same result—Japs destroyed.[48]

The infantry received additional support from rocket launcher crews who blasted the Japanese in their holes and buried them alive. Despite the punishment doled out to the enemy, neither company made much progress, and gains were limited to less than 100 yards.

In the center of the division line, the 26th Marines failed to make even that much progress. With 1/26 and 3/26 still in the assault, Colonel Graham's men found themselves facing a complex system of pillboxes and interconnected caves among the debris that was all that had remained of Kita Village. In the midst of such forbidding defenses, the regimental attack barely got off the ground and, at the end of another exhausting day, the regiment was still in

[47] *2/27 AR*, p. 12.

[48] 1/13 G-2 memo, dtd 8Mar45, in *1/13 UJnl.*

substantially the same position it had occupied prior to the jumpoff. A gain of 400 yards laboriously carved out by 1/26 during the day had to be relinquished at dusk because it was untenable.

The 28th Marines on the division left nearly equalled the previous day's advance. Moving along the coast against initially weak enemy resistance, 2/28 actually advanced another 500 yards. Once again, opposition became more stubborn on the regiment's right where 1/28 gained a respectable 300 yards. Both battalions covered the initial 100 yards before serious resistance developed, both from the front and the rear. Within the limitations imposed by the terrain, the attached 75s and 37mm guns of the weapons company supported the regiment, as did the 81mm mortars. Ahead of the advance, naval gunfire attempted to neutralize enemy positions near the coast, while carrier planes struck twice at Hill 165, one of the last significant obstacles separating the 5th Division Marines from the northern shore. For these carrier aircraft, 8 March was the last day of support for the ground forces. Effective 9 March, such close support would become the responsibility of the Army Air Forces.

The violent battle of attrition raging in the craggy terrain of northern Iwo on D plus 17 was to have more than its share of personal drama in the informal setting of war. Tragedy struck within the setting of Company E, 2/27, which in the course of the morning had already scored an advance of 150 yards through engineer-tank-infantry teamwork. Only a jumble of rocks separated the Marines of Company E from the sea, but hidden behind every crag and in every crevice was an enemy determined to block any and all egress by the advancing Marines to the sea just east of Kitano Point.

As bitter close fighting raged in this inaccessible area, one man began to stand out among the rest of Company E. He was 1st Lieutenant Jack Lummus, a former gridiron star at Baylor University, now determined to overcome the final obstacle barring his men from the sea. Rushing forward at the head of his platoon, the lieutenant was knocked down by an exploding grenade. He got to his feet, shook off some of the dust, and rushed an enemy gun emplacement. A second grenade exploded, knocking him down again and shattering his shoulder. Undaunted, the platoon leader got up, rushed a second enemy position and killed all of its occupants. As his men watched, Lummus continued his rush. When he called to his platoon, the men responded, now moving forward with a deadly purpose. As the attack gained momentum, the entire company began to move, hesitantly at first, then with growing speed and assurance.

Lummus was still at the head of his men, viciously slashing at the enemy in his path, when the incredible happened:

> Suddenly he was in the center of a powerful explosion obscured by flying rock and dirt. As it cleared, his men saw him, rising as if in a hole. A land mine had blown off both his legs, the legs that had carried him to All-American football honors at Baylor University. They watched in horror as he stood on the bloody stumps, calling them on. Several men, crying now, ran to him and, for a moment, talked of shooting him to stop his agony.

> But he was still shouting for them to move out and the platoon scrambled forward. Their tears turned to rage, they swept an incredible 300 yards over impossible ground, and at nightfall they were on a ridge overlooking the sea. There was no question that the dirty, tired men, cursing and crying and fighting, had done it for Jack Lummus.[49]

Lieutenant Lummus died later that day and was subsequently awarded his country's highest decoration. Even in death his triumph over the enemy and the slaughter that was Iwo Jima was complete. His devotion to duty and personal sacrifice had supplied the impetus for the wild charge.[50] A mixture of love and compassion for their leader, mixed with anger and frustration, had supplied the spark to an explosive mixture which set off a reaction that, for all practical purposes, was the American equivalent of the traditional enemy *banzai* charge.

Throughout D plus 17, tanks of the 5th Tank Battalion supported the infantry assault units as best they could. Tanks of Company B, backing up 2/27, advanced into an important enemy bivouac area replete with ammunition dumps, motor vehicles, and trailers. In the course of this advance, tankers observed at least 100 of the enemy killed, many of them wearing U. S. Marine uniforms.[51] Eleven regular tanks and two flame tanks of Company C, 5th Tank Battalion, moved out in support of 2/28 but soon were unable to keep up with the infantry advance when the engineers, who were checking the road for mines, were pinned down by sniper fire. As a result, tank support was limited to four rounds of 75mm and half a load of flame fuel in this area for the entire day. At about 1300, one platoon with a flame tank was dispatched to the center of the division zone of advance to support 1/26. Even though the area allegedly had been checked by the engineers, two of the tanks hit mines causing considerable damage to both. These tanks had to be abandoned after the guns and radio had been disabled.[52]

As fighting came to a close on the evening of 8 March, the 5th Marine Division had slashed deeply through the enemy lines and was within reach of the northern shore. It had rained intermittently throughout the day and the men were utterly exhausted. However, the enemy was in little better shape, as indicated by the following report submitted by General Kuribayashi on the day's action:

> Troops at "Tamanayama" and Northern Districts are still holding their position thoroughly and continue giving damages to the enemy. Their fighting situation believing their country's victory looks godlike.[53]

Two hours later, the Japanese commander conceded:

> I am very sorry that I have let the enemy occupy one part of the Japanese territory, but am taking comfort in giving heavy damages to the enemy.[54]

On the evening of D plus 17, the 5th Marine Division stood within reach of victory, but more than two weeks of bitter fighting over the island's most

[49] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 256.
[50] *27th Mar AR*, p. 13.
[51] Co B, *5th Tk Bn AR*, p. 7.
[52] Co C, *5th Tk Bn AR*, p. 7.
[53] *Horie Rpt*, 1800, 8Mar45.
[54] *Ibid.*

treacherous terrain in northwestern Iwo would be required before Japanese resistance within the division zone of action was broken. During 9 and 10 March, there was no forward movement, and General Rockey's men, with extreme exertion, were able to extend the division left flank about 40 yards. At this point, the 28th Marines came under intensive fire from the high ground that extended southeast from Kitano Point. This fire brought the drive to the northeast to an abrupt halt in front of a long, low ridgeline overlooking a deep gorge. This canyon was to become the final enemy pocket of resistance on Iwo Jima, where General Kuribayashi and the remnants of his garrison would fight to the bitter end. In the northeastern portion of the island, between Tachiiwa Point and Minami, in the 4th Marine Division sector, a second pocket occupied mostly by naval personnel, would soon become depleted following a reckless *banzai* charge.

By noon of D plus 18, within sight of the sea to the north, General Rockey's Marines still faced an uphill battle in some of the worst ground on Iwo. There, the ridges and gorges were so steep as to be almost impassable even for men on foot. As in more accessible areas, caves and dugouts abounded. This phase of the fighting, in the face of undiminished enemy opposition, is referred to in the official records as "a battle of attrition".[55] For a number of days to come, the advance could be measured in feet instead of yards.

As on the previous day, another human drama, again involving the 27th Marines, was to be enacted in the front lines on 9 March. During the early afternoon, Lieutenant Colonel Duryea, commanding 1/27, and Major Antonelli, commanding the adjacent 2d Battalion, went forward to check their lines. They were headed back to the rear when:

> . . . Duryea called to his runner, who was sitting on a rock, and the youngster replied "I'm coming Colonel." He took one step and was blown to bits. He had set off the detonator of a 6-inch naval shell buried in the ground to catch a tank.
>
> A huge fragment of the shell tore off Duryea's left arm at the elbow and another smashed his left knee. Antonelli fell, blinded by sand. Duryea, still conscious, could not see his left leg, doubled under him and thought he had lost it. Thinking an attack was under way he shouted to the others, "Come here, come here. Don't go away." He tried to roll over to get the pistol under his right hip, but could not.
>
> A captain ran to get corpsmen, and they bundled Duryea and Tony Antonelli into stretchers. Duryea's left leg dangled off the side, and a bullet pierced it, breaking it.[56]

With the two battalion commanders out of commission, the executive officers of the two battalions, Major William H. Tumbelston and Major Gerald F. Russell, assumed command. The detonation had also wounded the company commander and another officer of Company E, as well as the intelligence officer of 2/27. Major Antonelli, despite his eye injuries and a broken eardrum, refused evacuation until he had issued orders for the resumption of the attack. Subsequently, the indomitable battalion

[55] *5th MarDiv AR*, p. 26.

[56] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, pp. 262–263.

commander walked out of the division hospital and returned to his unit until Colonel Wornham personally ordered him to return to the hospital. The following day, Antonelli was back at the battalion command post, where he remained during the daylight hours for another week until Colonel Wornham requested his evacuation from the island to prevent further injuries.[57]

Aside from routine operations on 9 March, two developments occurred. One was indicative of progress made in developing Iwo Jima as an air base. The other showed to what extent the combat units had been depleted. During the difficult fighting along the north coast, Army Air Forces P-51s went into action for the first time, strafing and bombing the enemy-held gorges in precision attacks that drew admiration from the Marines on the ground.[58] Nevertheless, this impressive air support failed to break enemy resistance or morale, and the results remained inconclusive.

At noon of 9 March, General Rockey decided to bolster the dwindling combat strength of his infantry units by sending personnel from the supporting arms to the front. On the morning of 10 March, 100 men of the 13th Marines joined 3/28 as riflemen. About the same number reinforced 3/26. The 11th Amphibian Tractor Battalion furnished 55 men for 3/27 and slightly more than 100 men from the 5th Motor Transport Battalion joined 1/28.

While the Marines were still able to reinforce their frontline units, such expedient was denied to General Kuribayashi. In the narrow strip of coast separating the 5th Division from the sea, the northern pocket had been compressed into an area less than one square mile in size. Caught in this pocket were General Kuribayashi and his division headquarters, elements of the *2d Battalion* of Colonel Ikeda's *145th Infantry Regiment,* remnants of the *Cd Battalion, 17th Independent Mixed Regiment* and a conglomeration of stragglers from other units. Altogether, Japanese Army and Navy strength in northern Iwo came to approximately 1,500 men.[59]

At 0800 on 10 March, the 5th Marine Division continued its attack against enemy opposition that was undiminished in ferocity. On the division left, the 28th Marines made an advance of 200 yards before it was stopped by fire from a ridge running generally southeastward from Kitano Point. The 26th Marines gained roughly 100 yards in almost impossible terrain. The 27th Marines destroyed numerous enemy caves and pillboxes in close-in fighting, but progress was minimal. By the end of D plus 19, after another day of heavy and costly fighting, the lines of the 27th Marines were substantially the same as they had been that morning.

Throughout the day, the 5th Marine Division attack was supported by shore-based and naval gunfire, as well as air

[57] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division,* p. 108.

[58] On 10 March, the VAC air officer reported: "The precision low altitude work of the P-51s was particularly pleasing to the ground troops." *VAC Air Rpt,* Encl A, p. 6.

[59] *Horie Rpt,* p. 10.

strikes. Once again, the effectiveness of this support could not be accurately gauged by the exhausted Marines on the ground. It was obvious by this time that it was becoming increasingly difficult to make effective use of these supporting arms because of the rapidly diminishing area held by the enemy. At the same time, the bombs and heavy gunfire directed in heavy concentrations against a shrinking pocket were bound to hurt the enemy. This is best confirmed by the messages emanating from General Kuribayashi's headquarters on the evening of 10 March. Beginning on a fairly confident note, the Japanese commander reported that, "even though American attacks against our northern districts are continuing day and night, our troops are still fighting bravely and holding their positions thoroughly."[60] Changing to a more plaintive note, General Kuribayashi continued:

> . . . 200 or 300 American infantrymen with several tanks attacked "Tenzan" (northern Iwo in the 5th Division sector) all day. The enemy's bombardments from one battleship (or cruiser), 11 destroyers and aircraft are very severe, especially the bombing and machine gun firing against Divisional Headquarters from 30 fighters and bombers are so fierce that I cannot express nor write here.
>
> Before American forces landed on Iwo Jima, there were many trees around my Headquarters, but now there are not even a grasp of grass remaining. The surface of the earth has changed completely and we can see numerous holes of bombardments.[61]

In its two-week drive up the coast of western Iwo Jima between 25 February and 10 March, General Rockey's division had covered about 3,000 yards from the vicinity of the Central Airfield to a line that ran from west to east across the base of the northern tip of the island. In the course of this advance the division had sustained more than 4,000 casualties.[62]

Indicative of the severity of enemy opposition is the minute number of prisoners taken by D plus 19. Altogetheer VAC had seized 111 prisoners since D-Day. Of this figure, only 67 were Japanese, the remainder consisting of Korean labor troops.[63] At the same time, 8,073 enemy dead had been counted in the 5th Marine Division sector.[64] On the evening of 10 March, no one could guess how much more blood would be shed before the battle for Iwo Jima was over.

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[60] *Ibid.*, 1930, 10Mar45.

[61] *Ibid.*

[62] These losses consisted of 830 killed in action, 2,974 wounded, 263 died of wounds, 5 missing in action, and 220 cases of combat fatigue, a total of 4,292 casualties.

[63] A breakdown of this total by divisions is as follows: the 3d Marine Division had captured 49; the 4th Marine Division 28, and the 5th Marine Division, 34. Bartley, *Iwo Monograph*, p. 148.

[64] 1/13 G-2 memo, dtd 11Mar45, in *1/13 UJnl.*

The 4th Marine Division Drive on the Right[1]

ADVANCE INTO THE MEAT GRINDER[2]

The first six days of the Iwo Jima operation had taken the 4th Marine Division to the eastern portion of the Central Airfield and Charlie-Dog Ridge, which had been secured at heavy cost on 24 February. As of D plus 6, it became the division's mission to seize and hold that part of Iwo that lay east of the Central Airfield and to the south of Hill 362C. The ruggedness of the terrain over which General Cates' Marines would have to advance equalled or outdid that encountered by the 3d and 5th Marine Divisions.

As might be expected, the enemy had made maximum use of the natural terrain features by digging caves, constructing blockhouses, and tunnelling between ridges until the entire area was honeycombed with defense installations rivaling every other sector on the island. Among a large number of nondescript ridges and canyon-like depressions, the following stood out and formed cornerstones of the main line of defense in the northeastern part of the

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from: *TF 51 AR; VAC AR; VAC G–2 Rpts; VAC C–3 Jnl; VAC C–3 Rpts; VAC NGF and Air Rpts; VAC Translations; 4th MarDiv D–2 PerRpts; 4th MarDiv OpRpt; 4th MarDiv D–3 Jnl; 4th MarDiv D–3 PerRpts; 4th MarDiv D–4 PerRpts; 4th MarDiv OpOs,* Iwo Jima, 24Feb-9Mar45; *4th MarDiv Translations;* 4th MarDiv Dispatch Summaries, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-15Mar45; 4th MarDiv Support Gp OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 28Dec-44-17Mar45, dtd 4Apr45, hereafter *4th MarDiv Support Gp OpRpt; 1st ProvFldArtyGp G–1 Jnl; 23d Mar OpRpt; 24th Mar OpRpt; 25th Mar UJnl*; *25th Mar OpRpt*; 25th Mar Strength and Casualty Rpt, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-26Mar45; 25th Mar R-2 PerRpts, Iwo Jima, 22Feb–16Mar45, hereafter *25th Mar R–2 PerRpts*; 14th Mar WarD, 28Dec44–5Apr45; *14th Mar OpRpt;* 14th Mar R–3 Rpts, 22Feb-14Mar45, hereafter *14th Mar R–3 Rpts; Iwo Comments*; Bartley, *Iwo Monograph*; Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign; Horie Rpt;* Morison, *Victory in the Pacific;* Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*; Newcomb, *Iwo Jima; Newcomb Notes;* Hayashi and Coox, *Kogun;* Henri *et al, Marines on Iwo Jima;* Proehl, *The Fourth Marine Division;* Leckie, *Strong Men Armed.*

[2] Additional material in this section is derived from: 2/14 OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 15Jan-13Mar45, n.d., hereafter *2/14 Op Rpt;* 4th TkBn OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-18Mar45, dtd 18Apr45, hereafter *4th TkBn OpRpt;* 1/23 OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 31Dec44-16Mar45, n.d., hereafter *1/23 OpRpt;* 2/23 OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 31Oct44-16Mar45, n.d., hereafter *2/23 OpRpt;* 3/23 OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 18Jan45-16Mar45, dtd 12Apr45, hereafter *3/23 OpRpt;* 1/24 OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 11Feb-18Mar45, dtd 20Apr45, hereafter *1/24 OpRpt;* 2/24 OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 27Oct44-18Mar45, dtd 10Apr45, hereafter *2/24 OpRpt;* 3/24 OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 1Jan45-17Mar45, dtd 20Apr45, hereafter *3/24 OpRpt;* 2/25 OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 13Jan-17Mar45, dtd 16Apr45, hereafter *2/25 OpRpt;* 3/25 OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 22Nov44-17Mar45, n.d., hereafter *3/25 OpRpt;* 2d ArmdPhibBn, Iwo Jima, 10Feb-13Mar45, n.d., hereafter *2d PhibBn OpRpt.*

island: Hill 382, just east of the Central Airfield (*Nidan Iwa* to the enemy), situated about 250 yards northeast of the east-west runway. About 600 yards south of Hill 382, just west of the remains of Minami Village, was an unsightly elevation which was to become known as "Turkey Knob." Even though its height was not impressive, it sheltered a large communications center made of reinforced concrete. The top of this hill afforded an unobstructed view of the entire southern portion of the island. To the southwest, the high ground gave way to a depression soon to become infamous as the "Amphitheater."

On the evening of D plus 5, units of the 4th Marine Division held a line, facing east, extending from the Central Airfield southward to the coast to the vicinity of the East Boat Basin. From their lines, the men could see Hill 382, the highest point in northern Iwo, second in size only to Mount Suribachi. The hill was readily identifiable from the remnants of a radar station, where the skeleton of a radio tower pointed starkly skyward. The Japanese had hollowed out a sizable portion of the hill, which was bristling with field pieces and antitank guns. The guns themselves were housed in concrete emplacements, often protected by as many as 10 supporting machine guns. Some of Colonel Nishi's tanks, mounting 47mm and 57mm guns, backed up these formidable defenses.

The concrete blockhouse on Turkey Knob was so soundly constructed as to make it virtually immune to bombing and naval gunfire. The Knob dominated a broad, rocky area of a deceptively innocent appearance, the Amphitheater. Prior to the naval bombardment, this area had been covered by heavy vegetation and resembled a slight depression in rolling terrain. The true extent and cohesiveness of this major enemy defensive area had not as yet revealed itself to the 4th Division Marines. To them, it looked just like a slight hollow in rolling terrain, though in reality "the Amphitheater was a veritable large scale booby trap, containing three tiers of deep prepared positions facing their advance."[3]

The failure of the advancing 4th Division units to be aware of what awaited them on the rocky, cave-studded terrain of northeastern Iwo Jima was not due entirely to a lack of intelligence. Observers had studied the terrain in the zone of advance of the division from battalion observation posts, from a vessel close to the shoreline, and from one of the reconnaissance planes of VMO-4. A detailed intelligence report compiled on the basis of such observation noted:

> The volcanic, crevice lined area is a tangled conglomeration of torn trees and blasted rocks. Ground observation is restricted to small areas. While there are sundry ridges, depressions, and irregularities, most of the crevices of any moment radiate from the direction of Hill 382 to fan out like spokes generally in a southeasterly direction providing a series of cross corridors to our advance and eminently suitable for the enemy's employment of mortars. The general debris caused by our supporting fires provides perfect concealment for snipers and mortar positions. From the air, caves and

[3] Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign*, p. 61.

> tracks are observed everywhere, but the enemy's camouflage discipline is flawless and it is the rarest occasion that an Aerial Observer can locate troops.[4]

The enemy force charged with the defense of the Meat Grinder, which consisted of Hill 382, Turkey Knob, and the Amphitheater combined, was the *2d Mixed Brigade* under Major General Sadasue Senda. This force consisted of five infantry battalions,[5] an artillery battalion, an engineer battalion, and a field hospital. Prior to D-Day, the *2d Mixed Brigade Engineers* had consolidated the three terrain features into a closely integrated defense system, complete with extensive communications and electric lights. Marines of the 4th Division, preparing to move into northeastern Iwo, faced the most extensive and powerful defenses on the island.

In the course of 25 February, General Cates' men prepared to advance into the eastern bulge of Iwo Jima. Early on D plus 6, the 21st Marines which had been attached to the 4th Division, reverted to General Erskine and the boundary between the 21st and 24th Marines became the left boundary of the 4th Division. At the same time, the 23d Marines reverted from VAC reserve to the 4th Division and prepared to attack after passing through the left of the 24th Marines. Plans for the assault on D plus 6 called for 3/23 to move out with 1/23 following 600 yards behind. The 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, was to remain in reserve. In the adjacent sector, the 24th Marines, with 2/25 attached, was to continue the advance with 3/24 on the left and 1/24 on the right. The 2d Battalion, 24th Marines, was to become regimental reserve as soon as it had been relieved by 3/23. The 25th Marines, less 2/25, was to remain in division reserve. The division main effort was to be made on the left, where the 23d Marines was to maintain contact with the adjacent 3d Marine Division.

The attack jumped off at 0930. (See Map VII, Map Section). Almost immediately, Colonel Wensinger's 23d Marines, advancing in a column of battalions, encountered heavy mortar and machine gun fire from pillboxes, bunkers, and caves. Progress was accordingly slow. Enemy antitank guns and mines, as well as unfavorable terrain, made it impossible to move armor to the front in the 4th Division zone of advance. The adjacent 3d Division was requested to permit tanks of the 4th Tank Battalion the use of an approach route leading through 3d Division terrain to the Central Airfield. Permission was granted shortly before 1300. Once the Shermans had taken up firing positions along the left boundary of the 23d Marines, they were able to lend effective support to the infantry, destroying antitank weapons, pillboxes, and enemy machine gun emplacements. Once these defenses had been eliminated, an armored bulldozer of the 4th Engineer Battalion was able to clear a route of advance for the tanks in the zone of action of the 23d Marines. Throughout the day, 3/23 continued to meet heavy resistance as it gained a

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[4] *4th MarDiv D-2 PerRpt* No. 62, dtd 5-Mar45.

[5] *309th, 310th, 311th, 312th,* and *314th Independent Infantry Battalions.*

foothold on the high ground at the northeastern edge of the Central Airfield and pushed eastward along Charlie-Dog Ridge. Heavy and accurate enemy mortar fire that blanketed the runways of the airfield made it extremely difficult for Colonel Wensinger's Marines to maintain contact with the adjacent 9th Marines.

The 24th Marines, with 2/25 attached, made only little progress on 25 February, slowed by difficult terrain, mortar fire, and interlocking bands of fire from automatic weapons in pillboxes, bunkers, and caves. Prior to the jumpoff, artillery, naval gunfire, and carrier aircraft attempted to soften up the Amphitheater and Minami Village. While the air strike was in progress, 81mm mortars fired 200 rounds into this area. Offshore, LVT(A)s of the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion attempted to support 1/24, but rough seas soon made their withdrawal necessary.

Enemy resistance in front of 3/24 came from the Amphitheater, while 1/24 found its advance contested by strong enemy defenses to its front. Five tanks of Lieutenant Colonel Richard K. Schmidt's 4th Tank Battalion eventually got into position to support the attack, but the rough terrain severely limited the movement of armor. Having gained roughly 100 yards, the two battalions were halted by heavy enemy fire that took a steady toll among officers and men. Among those mortally wounded in the course of the morning was the commander of Company A, 1/24. The battalion intelligence officer was wounded and evacuated.

For the remainder of the afternoon, neither regiment made any significant gains. An air strike against the high ground facing 3/24 in the early afternoon temporarily reduced the volume of the enemy mortar fire and enabled Major Stout's men to move forward a few additional yards. In midafternoon, 2/24, which had spent most of the day in regimental reserve, was ordered to relieve 1/24 on the regiment's right. This relief, ordered at short notice, was executed without casualties.

On the evening of D plus 6, the 4th Marine Division was poised for the attack into the enemy's strongest line of defenses in the division's zone of advance. At this stage, even before the division had launched a direct assault into what came to be called the Meat Grinder, its combat efficiency had already been reduced to an estimated 55 percent by casualties and battle fatigue.[6] Yet General Cates and the men under his command were unflagging in their determination to see the difficult job through. In commenting on the limited gains of 25 February, the division sized up the situation as follows:

> The combination of terrain skillfully employed to the best advantage by the enemy, terrain unsuited for tank employment, the locations of installations in areas which were defiladed from our artillery, and the stubborn fight to-the-death attitude of the defenders had temporarily limited the advance of this Division; but the Division prepared to continue the attack.[7]

At 2200 on D plus 6, the rear command post of the 4th Marine Division closed on the USS *Bayfield*. In the course of the evening, support ships fired night

[6] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, 25Feb45.
[7] *Ibid.*

missions. During the night, there was little activity in the 4th Marine Division sector. A small enemy patrol attempted to infiltrate into the 3/24 area, but all of the Japanese were either killed or dispersed. The enemy fired sporadically into the division sector with rockets, mortars, and artillery.

The 4th Division attack on the morning of 26 February was preceded by a coordinated preparation fired by the corps and division artillery and naval gunfire support ships. Following the shelling, the 4th Marine Division resumed the attack at 0800 with five battalions abreast. Once again, on the division left, Colonel Wensinger's 23d Marines attacked with 1/23 on the left and 3/23 on the right. On the division right, Colonel Lanigan's 25th Marines, which had relieved the 24th Marines earlier that morning, advanced at 0830 with all three battalions. The half hour delay in the jumpoff of the 25th Marines was caused by the necessity of returning 2/25 from 24th Marines' control and moving the battalion to the line of departure.

The division attack encountered the same difficulties that had stymied its progress on 25 February. Enemy resistance from well organized and mutually supporting positions continued undiminished. In front of the 23d Marines, the enemy occupied a maze of pillboxes, bunkers, and caves. All avenues of approach were protected by successive minefields, which made it almost impossible to commit armor in support of the infantry. On the other hand, enemy tanks dug in on the slopes of Hill 382 had a clear field of fire into the advancing Marines. One of the enemy medium tanks, armed with a 57mm gun, occupied a stationary position in a crevice, from where it could fire at will along the entire length of the main runway of the Central Airfield. Three 47mm antitanks guns were emplaced in the northern portion of Charlie-Dog Ridge, which also afforded an unimpeded field of fire at the same runway.

Despite bitter opposition, Colonel Wensinger's Marines continued to push the attack throughout the day. Elements of 1/23, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Louis B. Blissard, drew heavy and accurate fire not only from Hill 382, but also from the adjacent 3d Division zone, where the enemy still occupied strong positions to the north of the Central Airfield. To the right of 1/23, the 3d Battalion, commanded by Major James S. Scales, met equally heavy fire, but managed to fight its way forward, eliminating well-emplaced and dug-in pillboxes and blockhouses through the use of flamethrowers, rockets, and demolition teams.

By late afternoon, the 23d Marines had gained about 300 yards and seized the southwest slopes of Hill 382. This advance partially denied the use of this vital hill to the enemy. At 1700, the regiment was ordered to consolidate, but one hour later Major Scales' men were still engaged in close combat with the enemy and vicious fighting at close quarters continued until well into the evening. In addition to receiving fire from the front and flanks, the Marines occupying precarious positions on the slopes of Hill 382 also drew scattered sniper fire from the rear, which did little to ease the minds of the exposed Marines. When heavy enemy mortar

and rocket fire began to hit the southwestern slopes in the afternoon, it became necessary to withdraw all units to the foot of Hill 382.

The 25th Marines was to find the going equally rough on D plus 7. Following a rolling artillery barrage, Colonel Lanigan's regiment, with 3/24 attached, jumped off with 1/25, under Major Fenton J. Mee on the left, 2/25 under Lieutenant Colonel James Taul in the center, and 3/25 commanded by Captain James C. Headley, on the right.

Initially, the advance of 1/25 and 3/24 into the Amphitheater proceeded slowly but steadily against enemy small arms fire. After an advance of about 150 yards, the terrain became extremely difficult. At the same time, Japanese machine guns and mortars unleashed such a deluge of fire from well prepared and camouflaged positions near Minami Village that the men were effectively pinned down. Tanks of Company A, 4th Tank Battalion, attempted to reduce enemy pressure on the infantry but succeeded only in drawing additional artillery and mortar fire which resulted in the destruction of two Shermans just east of the airfield. In the jumbled terrain, artillery forward observers were unable to direct effective counterbattery fire against the enemy. Two spotter aircraft from VMO-4, which had just reached the island, made an attempt to spot the bothersome enemy mortar and artillery positions from the air, but this effort was also unsuccessful due to skillful enemy camouflage.

With the left and center of the 25th Marines pinned down, Company C of 1/25 made an attempt at 1400 to send a platoon, supported by three Shermans, around the right flank to envelop enemy defenses on Turkey Knob. This attempt ended in dismal failure when the Japanese became aware of the maneuver and shifted their mortar fire. The barrage caught the men out in the open and killed several, including the platoon leader. The survivors of this ill-fated platoon were able to withdraw only under cover of a smoke screen.

Along the division right flank, 3/25 made a slow but steady advance against heavy machine gun and rifle fire from the high ground on the left and caves and pillboxes to the front. As Company L slowly moved forward, Company I, supported by two medium tanks and by LVT(A)s offshore, was systematically mopping up near the East Boat Basin. In the wake of Company L's advance followed Company K, using demolition charges and flamethrowers on every position that might possibly shelter enemy troops that had been bypassed.

As D plus 7, 26 February, came to a close, the 4th Marine Division held a very irregular line somewhat resembling the wings of a seagull. On the left, the 23d Marines had gained roughly 200 yards. In the center of the division line, where 1/25 was directly in front of Turkey Knob and the Amphitheater, gains were at best 75 yards. The most progress for the day had been made by 3/25 on the right which by late afternoon had seized a line of cliffs east of the East Boat Basin for an overall gain of nearly 500 yards. One more accomplishment accrued to 3/25: in mopping up the area near the East Boat Basin, the battalion wiped out the last nest of snipers that had interfered with shore party activities on the beaches

below. Even though the unloading was still carried on under the muzzles of the enemy artillery and rockets from northern Iwo still were capable of hitting any point on the island, at least the bothersome sniper fire had been eliminated.

The 4th Marine Division intelligence report for D plus 7 outlined the severity of the resistance that the division had encountered, particularly in front of Hill 382 and Turkey Knob, and noted "that the enemy is now fighting to the death in pillboxes, foxholes, and trenches . . . and is not retreating as he apparently formerly had done."[8]

The enemy unit to which this report referred was the *309th Independent Infantry Battalion.* On D-Day, this battalion had been stationed near the Southern Airfield and since then it had fought a delaying action, gradually withdrawing northeastward under superior pressure. On D plus 7, the attack by the 23d Marines had severely mauled the battalion and pushed it southeastward, where it found itself in the path of the 25th Marines' advance. As a result, when the day ended, the battalion had been for all practical purposes annnihilated.

After a day of exhausting action, 4th Division Marines were in for a restless night. Enemy mortars and artillery kept both the division's front and rear areas under steady fire, paying special attention to the division artillery positions. Beyond any doubt, the accuracy of the enemy fire was aided by bright moonlight which emerged after an afternoon of intermittent rain. Less accurate, but equally disturbing to the peace of mind of 4th Division Marines, were the huge rockets wobbling over their positions and exploding far to their rear. In the midst of this bedlam, there was small arms fire from the enemy side.

Small groups of Japanese attempted to infiltrate all along the division perimeter. Around 0530, the sound of tank engines was heard in front of the 23d Marines and there were indications that the enemy was preparing to counterattack. An artillery preparation into the presumed enemy assembly area restored silence. Offshore, support ships furnished harassing fires and illumination. Aside from the enemy probes, no major attack developed and it was assumed that the artillery barrage had dispersed the possible counterattack. Indicative of the bitterness of the action that continued through the long night is the fact that in the area in front of 1/25 alone, 103 enemy dead were counted after daybreak.[9]

Dawn on 27 February, D plus 8, marked the beginning of the second day of the concerted 4th Division assault into the Meat Grinder. The lineup of units for the attack was substantially the same as on the previous day. From left to right, the five battalions committed were 1/23 and 3/23, and all three battalions of the 25th Marines. The 24th Marines, except for the 3d Battalion which was still attached to the 25th Marines, continued in regimental reserve.

The assault was preceded by a 45-minute preparation of the corps and division artillery. Even though, at this

[8] *4th MarDiv D-2 PerRpt,* 26Feb45.

[9] *25th Mar OpRpt,* p. 8.

particular time, the corps artillery was giving priority to supporting General Erskine's 3d Division, Colonel Letcher, commanding the 1st Provisional Field Artillery Group, ordered his 155mm howitzers to expend 300 rounds as part of the preparation. For the remainder of the day, the corps artillery was authorized to fire up to 25 percent of the general support missions for General Cates' division. The 4th Division objective for D plus 8 was capture of Hill 382 and advance to the 0-2 Line.

Following a thunderous artillery preparation, the 4th Division attacked at 0800. On the division left, the two battalions of the 23d Marines resumed the assault on Hill 382. While 1/23 attacked northeastward in order to envelop the hill from the north, the 3d Battalion resumed the assault up the southwestern slopes. Since the Japanese atop the hill enjoyed a perfect view of the American lines, smoke was employed to screen the reorganization and movement of frontline companies in the 3d Battalion area. The enemy was not deceived, however, and almost immediately, the advancing Marines came under such severe fire that forward movement was all but impossible. Nevertheless, throughout the morning, 3/23 launched repeated assaults up the southwestern slopes of the hill without making any substantial headway. Strong and determined enemy resistance from the high ground effectively pinned Major Scales' men down. Two of Colonel Nishi's tanks, emplaced in the recesses of Hill 382, further added to the volume of the enemy fire. A new technique resorted to by the Japanese at this time was firing rifle grenades in volleys, which took a further toll of casualties among the exposed Marines.

By noon, the Japanese were still fully in control of the hill. The 1st Battalion, 23d Marines. was slowly gaining ground to the northwest of Hill 382. Once he had bypassed the objective from the north, Lieutenant Colonel Blissard, the battalion commander, planned to attack up the reverse slope. Both battalions, but especially 3/23, had sustained losses that had reduced them to little more than company strength; some of the companies had shrunk to platoon size. Nevertheless, the assault continued. In order to assist 3/23 in its frontal assault, 2/14 fired a 30-minute preparation beginning at noon, against Hill 382. Following this barrage, the exhausted men of 3/23 jumped off. This time, some progress was made, as Marines threw grenades and satchel charges into the caves and other strongpoints still held by the obstinate defenders. Once the Marines had advanced within striking distance of the two tanks, they were able to finish them off with bazooka fire. Slowly and painfully, the assault force fought its way up the hill.

Additional support for Major Scales' men arrived in two forms. First, shortly after 1400, Lieutenant Colonel Blissard's battalion, having bypassed the hill, commenced an attack up the reverse slope. Secondly, almost at the same time, engineers with a tank dozer began to carve out a path over which some of the Shermans could come within striking distance. Once they had gone into position, the supporting tanks took the

Japanese on the higher reaches of Hill 382 under effective fire. This badly needed support, arriving at a crucial time, reversed the situation. The Japanese on the hill found themselves virtually cut off. The deadly fire of the Shermans forced them to stay under cover. As Major Scales' men approached the top of the hill, they discovered that the top had been hollowed out and that it contained a solid wall of artillery and antitank gun positions.

Here, among the ruins of the radar station, the men of 3/23 came to grips with the Japanese in vicious close combat in which no quarter was asked or given. Just when it appeared that the Japanese would be driven off, a heavy artillery and mortar barrage hit the advancing Marines. With darkness approaching, 3/23 still had not gained a solid foothold on top of Hill 382, and rather than risk an envelopment during the night, 3/23 was ordered to consolidate on ground that would permit solid contact with adjacent units to the left and the right. As a result, Major Scales' men withdrew from the hill and spent the night in practically the same positions from which they had launched their attack on the morning of D plus 8.

Progress on 27 February was little better to the right of the 23d Marines, where the 25th Marines, with 3/24 attached, jumped off at 0800. On the regimental left, the advance of 1/25 hinged on the progress made by 3/23. If the latter succeeded in seizing the crest of Hill 382, 1/25 was to advance north through part of the 3/23 zone of attack, then pivot southeastward to envelop Turkey Knob while 2/25 was to attempt an envelopment from the south. When it became evident by 1500 that the advance of 3/23 was progressing much more slowly than anticipated, Major Fenton J. Mee, commanding 1/25, ordered the battalion forward, even though Hill 382 still had not been taken. The attack, supported by tanks and preceded by a rocket barrage, initially gained 150 yards across open terrain but came to a halt before cover on the far side could be reached when heavy mortar and antitank fire, as well as intense machine gun fire, hit the assault force. In addition to inflicting heavy casualties on the infantrymen, the Japanese also succeeded in putting two of the three tanks supporting the attack out of action and damaging the third. Shortly after 1700, it had to be conceded that the commanding ground which formed the day's objective could not be reached before nightfall, and the battalion pulled back to its jumpoff positions.

In the regimental center and on the right, 2/25 and 3/25, attacking due east gained between 200 and 300 yards. After having reached ground that was favorable for night defense, both battalions were ordered at 1600 to halt for the day. Since it was still considered possible that the enemy might attempt a flanking attack from the sea, elements of 3/25 were held in reserve near the East Boat Basin with the specific mission of defending that area against any further attack from the ocean.

As D plus 8 ended, an analysis of the progress made that day showed clearly that the gains made were minimal. Summing up the situation at Hill 382, the 4th Division noted with some dis-

gust that "it was envisaged that the capture of this terrain freak would be a costly and a time-consuming job."[10]

THE BATTLE OF ATTRITION[11]

For 4th Division Marines, the night from 27-28 February proved to be a restless one. Throughout the darkness, both the front and rear areas came under heavy mortar fire. For a while it appeared that the enemy had singled out the division command post for special punishment, and no less than 15 heavy shells hit the CP prior to 2200.[12] At the same time, the enemy fired on the beach area with either 20mm or 40mm automatic weapons. Offshore, ships of Task Force 54 furnished normal harassing and illumination fires. The enemy probed various sectors in the 4th Marine Division lines, but no counterattack developed.

Shortly before 0100, the 23d Marines reported that enemy cargo parachutes were dropping into the enemy lines about 400 to 600 yards ahead of them. Strangely enough, none of the enemy planes had been picked up by the American radar on and around Iwo Jima. Nevertheless, the visual sightings were sufficient to spur American artillery into vigorous action. Concentrated artillery and naval gunfire into the drop zone, though unobserved, was expected to have resulted in the destruction of most of the supplies that had been airlifted to General Senda's *2d Mixed Brigade*, elements of which were still holding the crest of Hill 382. The cargo received by the Japanese that night consisted of medical supplies and ammunition, dropped with paper parachutes from planes based elsewhere in the Bonins. Some of these supplies, still attached to the flimsy parachutes, were recovered several days later when Marines entered the drop zone.

Objectives for the continuation of the attack on the last day of February, D plus 9, remained unchanged though some of the regimental boundaries within the 4th Division underwent a slight change. On the left, the 23d Marines was to continue the assault on Hill 382; in the center, 1/25 and 2/25 were to continue their envelopment of Turkey Knob, while 3/25 along the coast was to advance to the 0-2 Line.

At 0815, following a 45-minute artillery preparation, the assault battalions of the 4th Marine Division jumped off. On the left, the 23d Marines, reinforced with one company of the 24th Marines, resumed the attack with 1/23 on the left and 2/23 on the right after the latter battalion had relieved 3/23. The 2d Battalion, under Major Robert H. Davidson, attempted an advance into the area between Hill 382 and Turkey Knob, while 1/23 again assaulted the hill from the east. Following the jumpoff, 2/23 advanced about 200 yards before it came under increasingly heavy mortar and automatic weapons fire from concealed bunkers and pillboxes. The 1st Battalion likewise drew fire

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[10] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, p. 25.

[11] Additional material in this section is derived from: 1/14 OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 27Jan-15Mar45, dtd 27Mar45, hereafter *1/14 OpRpt;* 3/14 OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 13Jan-13Mar45, dtd 27Mar45, hereafter *3/14 OpRpt;* 1/25 OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 27Dec44-17Mar45, dtd 19Apr45, hereafter *1/25 OpRpt;* 1st JASCO OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 24Aug44-18Mar45, hereafter *1st JASCO OpRpt*.

[12] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, p. 26.

from automatic weapons and mortars, which brought its advance to a virtual standstill. The 3d Battalion spent most of the morning reorganizing and did not start its push up the southwestern slopes of Hill 382 until later in the afternoon.

As a result, the only battalion of the 23d Marines to make any appreciable gains in the course of the morning was 2/23. At 1300, following a 10-minute preparation, 1/23 launched a coordinated attack with the 21st Marines of the adjacent 3d Marine Division. This joint venture resulted in a 300-yard advance of 1/23 near the division boundary. Other elements of 1/23, attacking Hill 382 from the east, destroyed two of Colonel Nishi's dug-in tanks and continued the ascent to a point where they could take the enemy on top of the hill under fire. By midafternoon, Hill 382 was virtually surrounded; the noose around the Japanese was further tightened when two companies of 3/23 were committed to reinforce the lines of the two assault battalions.

Despite the punishment he was taking, the enemy atop Hill 382 continued to fight as if nothing out of the ordinary were happening around him. In addition to resistance coming from the hill itself, the Marines of the encircling force drew heavy mortar, rocket, and artillery fire from enemy positions hidden in the jumbled rocks to the east of the hill. Behind the American lines, the supporting weapons did all they could to support the attack of the infantry against Hill 382. In addition to firing preparations before the jumpoff, the 14th Marines shelled the area ahead of the infantry in an attempt to silence enemy small arms and automatic weapons. Corps and division observers teamed up in an effort to pinpoint as many as possible of the cleverly hidden enemy mortar, artillery, and rocket positions, a slow and time-consuming process that did not always produce immediate results.

The difficult terrain, combined with Japanese expertise in mining the approaches to the front lines and the excellent marksmanship of the enemy antitank gun crews, severely curtailed the use of tanks in close support of the infantry. Nevertheless, individual tanks were able to move forward to deliver overhead fire, which was helpful but still lacked the volume necessary to be really effective. Finally, it was decided that the 4.5-inch rockets of the 1st Provisional Rocket Detachment might provide the massed firepower needed. Initially, whenever the rocket trucks went into action, they invariably attracted immediate counterbattery fire from the enemy entrenched on the dominating heights blessed with the advantage of unlimited observation. In order to compete effectively at such a disadvantage, the rocket launcher crews employed hit-and-run tactics. Rocket trucks would whip into position, fire their launchers, and take off to predesignated assembly points in the rear with all possible speed. If a particularly intensive barrage was desired, six trucks and launchers would fire once, reload with rockets carried on the vehicles, fire a second salvo, and then head for the rear. In this way, a double ripple of 432 rounds could be delivered in somewhat less than five minutes.[13]

[13] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, Anx C, p. 27.

By late afternoon of 28 February, it became evident that despite the deteriorating situation of enemy troops on the crest of Hill 382, capture of this objective would not be completed in the remaining hours of daylight. As a result, the 23d Marines remained active well into the night in an attempt to consolidate its lines for night defense. The 1st Battalion, in particular, found it extremely difficult to close the gap on the left with the 21st Marines. This was finally accomplished under sniper fire from enemy pockets that has been bypassed in the adjacent 21st Marines' zone of advance during the day. Gains made by the 23d Marines on D plus 9 totalled about 300 yards on the left and 200 yards on the right.

As Colonel Wensinger's regiment vainly struggled to complete the capture of Hill 382 on D plus 9, the adjacent 25th Marines faced its own ordeal in its drive to seize Turkey Knob, the Amphitheater, and the area separating the Knob from the east coast. At 0815, the regiment, with 3/24 attached, jumped off in the same formation it had maintained on the previous day. Two companies of the 1st Battalion, plus one company of 3/24, were to attempt an envelopment of Turkey Knob from the north, while another company was to advance along the low ground southwest of the Knob and attack eastward around the Amphitheater until it could link up with the northern pincers.

Following the usual preparation, elements of the 1st Battalion moved into the wooded area just north of Turkey Knob and advanced some 50 yards. At this point, the enemy unleashed a tremendous mortar and artillery barrage; heavy machine gun fire from the front and the left flank began to rake the Marines. Prompt counterbattery fire called for by observers with the 1st Battalion failed to silence the enemy batteries. By noon, the situation of 1/25 in the woods had become critical and the battalion was suffering heavy casualties. Nevertheless, Major Mee, the battalion commander, ordered his men to hold the woods in order to enable the southern pincers to complete the envelopment of Turkey Knob. As Company B, which was to make the envelopment, started its encircling movement, supported by two Shermans, the enemy on the high ground east of the objective started to shower the force with hand grenades, at the same time raking them with accurate machine gun fire. One of the tanks soon hit a mine and was disabled; the other managed to pull back.

At the fury of the enemy fire increased and casualties mounted, the attack of Company B stalled. By 1645 it was readily apparent that continuation of the attack in the face of such heavy enemy resistance during the limited daylight remaining would serve no useful purpose, and both pincers of 1/25 pulled back to their respective starting positions. In the fading daylight, two tanks made their way forward to a point northwest of Turkey Knob and from this vantage point opened fire against the enemy communications center atop the hill. The 75mm shells, to all appearances, did little damage to the concrete structure and the shelling was ineffective.

To the right of 1/25, the 2d Battalion attempted to extend its left flank

to support the advance of the southern pincers of 1/25. To this end, it had to seize the high ground directly to its front. Enemy fire, most of it coming from pillboxes to the left of the battalion zone of advance, pinned down the infantry. The difficult terrain made it impossible for the Shermans and halftracks to give close support to the infantry. The attack soon stalled. At noon, the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Taul, decided to improvise in order to get the attack moving again. He requested and received permission to have a 75mm pack howitzer rushed forward, to be used as a direct assault weapon. A DUKW was used to transport the howitzer to a position just behind the front lines. There, the gun was dismantled and the various pieces were gingerly hand-carried into the zone of advance of 2/25, where the piece was carefully reassembled. Once this feat had been accomplished, the pack howitzer pumped 40 rounds at the concrete structure atop Turkey Knob. Most of the shells bounced harmlessly off the thick concrete walls and did little, if any, damage to the communications center. However, it was not altogether a wasted effort for the battalion reported that while "the direct result to the enemy was not readily apparent, the morale effect on the men of this battalion was of considerable value because after the howitzer was fired our lines advanced approximately 75 yards by 1900."[14] Two hours later, under cover of darkness, the pack howitzer was again disassembled and returned to its parent organization.

On the right of the 25th Marines' zone of advance, 3/25 jumped off on the morning of D plus 9 at the same time as the other battalions of the division. Moving eastward roughly parallel to the east coast, the battalion had gained about 100 yards by 1000. At that time, the advance of the adjacent 2d Battalion began to bog down, and 3/25, which was pacing itself by the progress of the unit on its left, also halted the attack. Since 2/25 on the left failed to make any further progress for the day, neither did 3/25. At 1800, units of the 25th Marines were ordered to consolidate for the night.

In summing up the results of the day's operations, the 4th Marine Division felt that, even though the enemy was still clinging to the crest of Hill 382 and Turkey Knob, the day's limited advance had outflanked these enemy strongpoints. The feeling was that 4th Division Marines could henceforth bypass the Amphitheater and continue the drive along the east coast of Iwo Jima. Despite the small gains made on D plus 9, the division intelligence officer felt that the central defensive core of resistance had been cracked. He affirmed the possibility of an enemy counterattack, but assumed that the Japanese would be least likely to mount any major counterattack in the zone of action of the 4th Division because of the difficult terrain.[15] Events were to prove this forecast only 50 percent correct.

Throughout 28 February, the assault battalions had received a variety of assistance from the supporting arms. Off-

[14] *2/25 OpRpt, p. 8.*

[15] *4th MarDiv D-2 PerRpt* No. 57, dtd 28-Feb45.

shore, gunfire support ships furnished call-fire missions, while smaller craft fired mortars in support of 2/25 and 3/25. During the afternoon a destroyer approached the east shore and began shelling enemy positions on the high ground in front of the 2/25 zone of advance. Air support extended to the entire 4th Division sector, though half of the napalm bombs dropped in front of the 25th Marines in the course of the morning failed to ignite. A second strike, this time in support of the 23d Marines, took unduly long to be executed. When the aircraft did arrive, they went into action against the wrong target area.[16]

The night from D plus 9 to D plus 10 turned out to be another restless one for Marines of the 4th Division. The enemy concentrated his artillery fire against rear installations of the 5th Marine Division and scored several lucky hits on the ammunition dumps of that division. The resulting explosions coming from the rear did little to reassure the men of any of the three divisions. Some enemy mortar and artillery fire also fell in the 4th Division area, causing further disruption of sleep. Alert Marines of 3/23 frustrated several enemy attempts to infiltrate their lines, and 29 enemy dead were found in front of the lines on the following morning. Around 2200, the 25th Marines noticed that the enemy in company strength was massing for a counter attack near the coast in the 3/25 area. Naval gunfire and shore-based artillery promptly fired on and dispersed this assembly.

[16] *4th MarDiv D-3 PerRpt* No. 55, dtd 28-Feb45.

Division orders for 1 March called for continuation of the attack against Hill 382 and Turkey Knob. Beginning at 0530, the 24th Marines was to relieve the depleted units of the 23d, with 2/24 relieving 1/23 and 1/24 taking over the 2/23 sector.[17] The relief was completed by 0630 without major incident and, following a 45-minute naval gunfire and corps artillery preparation, the attack against the key enemy defenses resumed. For 10 minutes prior to H-Hour, set for 0830, the division artillery blasted enemy positions in the division zone of advance.

On the division left, the 24th Marines jumped off, with the 2d Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Richard Rothwell on the left and 1/24, under Major Paul S. Treitel, on the right. Almost immediately, 2/24 was hit by heavy artillery and mortar fire. In order to keep his battalion from getting bogged down, Lieutenant Colonel Rothwell requested supporting fire. Shortly after 0930, carrier aircraft dropped napalm about 600 yards in front of 2/24. The aerial assault was followed within the hour by a fire concentration against the same area by the corps artillery; this fire was followed by naval gunfire. This counterfire had a salutory effect and enemy opposition diminished to the extent that elements of the battalion, in the course of the afernoon, were able to make gains of 150 yards.

While part of 2/24, notably Company F, was engaged in attacking northeastward along the boundary with the 3d Marine Division, at times even cross-

[17] 4th MarDiv OpO 10-45, dtd 28Feb45.

ing the boundary, the gains made by General Erskine's men on 1 March exceeded those of the 4th Division and, in consequence, a gap developed along the boundary. Colonel Walter I. Jordan, commanding the 24th Marines, at 1430 had to commit two companies of 3/24 into the gap in order to regain contact with the 3d Division along the left flank.

Somewhat farther to the south, the battle for Hill 382 continued with undiminished fury. The reduction of the battered strongpoint fell to Company G, 2/24, which assaulted the hill with flamethrowers, bazookas, grenades, and whatever else was at hand. Just as elements of the 23d Marines had previously fought their way to the top to engage in close combat with the defenders, only to be driven off, so it was with the determined Marines of Company G, 2/24. The viciousness of the fighting that ensued has been depicted in these words:

> At one time, Company G of 2/24 was astride the top, but still there was no quarter. The attackers fought with rifles and grenades, with flamethrowers and satchel charges. Still the defenders would not give up, even though their own fire fell on them from the ridges further east. These were the men from Kumamoto in Kyushu, a historic battlefield of the 1877 Civil War, and they would not give up. Not even when Major Kenro Anso died, burned from head to foot by a flamethrower. He led the 3d Battalion, 145th Regiment, in defense of the hill. So great was his inspiration that at his death he was promoted two full ranks to colonel.[18]

As the afternoon wore on, the battle for control of the hill continued without letup. While hand grenades flew back and forth, assault squads were blowing cave entrances, and flamethrowers were incinerating such Japanese as showed themselves. Lieutenant Colonel Rothwell, escorted by his company commanders, appeared on the scene in order to conduct a personal reconnaissance, select positions for the coming night, and make plans for the attack on D plus 11. Despite heavy fire that was coming from nearly every direction, the reconnaissance party completed its inspection and the battalion commander left the hill unscathed. As the day ended, the remnants of Major Anso's battalion clung to the crest of Hill 382, still full of fighting spirit despite the loss of their commander.

Along the southern slopes of the hill and near its base to the southeast, the fighting on D plus 10 waxed just as bitterly as it did at the top. Here, 1/24 was attempting an envelopment of Hill 382 from the south against heavy fire coming not only from the top of the hill but also from a patch of woods directly in front and the high ground beyond. As men of the 1st Battalion inched ahead, two tanks attached to Company C provided covering fire. Just before noon, the company commander was wounded and casualties mounted to a point where smoke had to be employed to screen evacuation of the wounded.

Following a heavy artillery and mortar concentration, and led by a new commander, Company C resumed the attack at 1300. Within minutes, the new commander was wounded and had to be replaced. Despite all enemy opposition, the company continued its dogged advance and by 1700, when it began to

[18] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 212.

consolidate its positions, it had seized some of the high ground to the southeast of Hill 382.

The biggest gains for the 24th Marines on D plus 10 were to accrue along the 4th Division boundary, where 2/24 made an advance of 400 yards to the east. To the right, the dogged attack of 1/24 to the high ground southeast of Hill 382 culminated in a gain of 200 yards. This forward movement, flanking Hill 382 from two sides, all but surrounded the enemy atop the hill, though this made little, if any, difference to Japanese determined to die there. Of added importance to the further advance of the 24th Marines was the fact that from the high ground southeast of Hill 382, Company C was able to look down on the ruins of Minami Village. Thus it appeared that the day's advance had served not only to outflank most of Hill 382, but a portion of Turkey Knob and the Amphitheater as well.

To the south, the 25th Marines, attacking in the same formation employed in previous days, also was in for a hard day's work. The regiment's plan was ambitious: to execute a double envelopment of Turkey Knob, supported by two companies of 3/23 which relieved elements of 3/24 that had been attached to 1/25 for the past two days. As the 1st Battalion moved out, supported by the companies of 3/23, it crossed an open area prior to entering the woods to its front. Upon reaching the edge of the woods around 1000, 1/25 encountered the same conditions that had halted the advance on the previous day. Once again, Major Mee's men were hit by heavy mortar, artillery, and machine gun fire, which caused the advance to bog down. Despite counterbattery fire and aerial spotting, it proved impossible to put the enemy mortars out of action, nor were the aerial observers able to spot to the cleverly concealed enemy artillery positions.

Fighting for the woods raged throughout 1 March, as Marines of 1/25 pressed the attack. It was an unequal contest with the enemy possessing the advantage of cover, concealment, commanding terrain, and superior fire power. In the end, the assault units of 1/25 had to pull back to their jump-off positions. As the tired men began their withdrawal the enemy, in a final gesture of defiance, subjected them to a heavy mortar and rocket barrage, which caused additional casualties. The withdrawal was accomplished with the help of a smoke screen, which also made it possible to evacuate the casualties. Shortly after 1600, the Japanese added insult to injury by subjecting Colonel Lanigan's command post to a severe shelling.

Since the remaining two battalions of the 25th Marines were pacing themselves in relation to gains to be made by the 1st Battalion, they remained more or less in place when it became apparent that the attack of 1/25 had bogged down. Nevertheless, 2/25 did succeed in gaining 100 yards along its left. For the most of the day, the division reconnaissance company was attached to 2/25 in order to mop up the rear area. From the 3/25 area, a tank was able to destroy two enemy machine guns, but no additional ground

was taken. Indicative of the artillery support furnished to the 25th Marines by 1/14 on D plus 10 are the following figures. The battalion fired 4,640 rounds for 135 missions, of which 94 were harassing, 31 were aimed at targets of opportunity, 6 were for preparation, and 4 were fired at miscellaneous targets.[19] The figures listed above do not include the defensive fires, which 1/14 started at 1640, and harassing fires which continued throughout the night.

As D plus 10 came to a close, the 4th Marine Division could book only very limited gains for itself. After five days of continuous assault into the Meat Grinder, all three of the mutually supporting cornerstones of the enemy defense system, Hill 382, Turkey Knob, and the Amphitheater were still in enemy hands, and, with the exception of Hill 382, firmly so. With the heaviest assaults still ahead, the combat efficiency of the 4th Division on the evening of 1 March remained at 55 percent.[20]

The night from 1-2 March passed with few untoward incidents, except in front of 2/24, where small groups of the enemy made various attempts at infiltration, keeping the battalion in a general state of unrest. All of the 4th Division units came under sporadic enemy mortar and artillery fire that hit the lines and rear area in a seemingly haphazard fashion. By way of response, the corps and division artillery replied to each enemy salvo with immediate counterbattery fire, the results of which could not be readily determined.

[19] *1/14 OpRpt*, p. 16, dtd 1Mar45.
[20] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, p. 30.

Early on 2 March, General Cates' division again resumed the battle of attrition in the Meat Grinder. Though none of the weary 4th Division Marines was aware of it that morning, the final battle for the Meat Grinder was about to begin. The main effort was to be made by the 24th Marines against Hill 382, while farther south the 23d and 25th Marines were to assault the Amphitheater and Turkey Knob from the north and south. If the heavy enemy fire against Hill 382 from these two staunch bastions of the enemy defense system could be eliminated, the hill itself could be taken.

Following a 25-minute artillery preparation fired by the corps artillery from H-Hour minus 30 to minus 15, and again from minus 10 to H-Hour, the assault resumed. On the morning of D plus 11, there was one change in the preparatory fires. Precisely at H-Hour, 0800, the division artillery unleashed an intensive preparation, followed by a rolling barrage.

On the division left, the 24th Marines with 3/24 on the right, 2/24 in the center, and 1/24 on the left moved out for the attack. The 3d Battalion, commanded by Major Doyle A. Stout, advanced eastward along the division boundary northeast of Hill 382 and, while keeping contact with 3d Division elements on its left, advanced about 300 yards. As the battalion fought its way forward, enemy opposition stiffened until all further movement became impossible.

It was in the regiment's center and on its right that the most desperate fighting for the day was to occur. It

fell to 2/24 to launch an assault against Hill 382 from the northeast, while 1/24 enveloped the hill from the south. At the time they jumped off, the men of 2/24 had spent an even more restless night than had other units in the division. The front lines on Hill 382 had been active throughout the night. Hand grenade duels and hand-to-hand fighting frequently erupted with small groups of the enemy that filtered out of recesses in the hill in front of the Marine positions, between them, and even to the rear. In fact, two Marines had received saber cuts during the nocturnal fighting.[21] Nevertheless, the battalion attacked Hill 382 with vigor, even though it was immediately subjected to heavy machine gun, rifle, mortar, and artillery fire. Since Lieutenant Colonel Rothwell's men constituted the main effort, four Shermans and a section of the 1st Provisional Rocket Detachment furnished support, in addition to the division artillery. As the tanks and rocket launchers blasted the area ahead of 2/24 with shells and flame, they were spotted by the enemy and taken under such heavy fire that the armor had to pull back. The rocket launchers were able to fire three missions before they, too, had to be withdrawn.

By 1100, the frontal assault on Hill 382 was beginning to bog down in the face of interlocking enemy machine gun fire, as well as heavy mortar fire. The importance that the Japanese attached to the defense of the hill was underscored not only by the severity of the mortar fire but also by the unusually large caliber of mortar shells employed. As elsewhere on Iwo Jima, the artillery and naval gunfire furnished in support of the attack was of little benefit to the infantrymen slowly inching their way up the reverse slope of Hill 382, exposed to everything the enemy was capable of throwing at them with little else but their own organic weapons to answer.

As the attack was on the verge of bogging down, Lieutenant Colonel Rothwell assembled his company commanders a short distance behind the lines and decided that one platoon of Company E, accompanied by two tanks, was to make an attempt to outflank the stubborn enemy defenders from the right. At this time, a platoon of Company E, commanded by 2d Lieutenant Richard Reich, had already reached the top of the hill and was locked in close combat with the enemy underneath the radar antenna at the same spot which already had seen vicious close fighting when the 23d Marines was attempting to seize the hill. As Major Roland Carey, commanding Company E, attempted to relay the orders for the flanking movement to his men, he was hit by machine gun fire and had to be evacuated. The executive officer, Captain Pat Donlan, took over and prepared to see that his predecessor's orders were carried out.

Just as Captain Donlan was in the process of orienting his platoon leaders and issuing orders for the flanking movement at the battalion command post, he was hit by a fragment of a mortar shell exploding nearby. As one of the platoon leaders, 1st Lieutenant Stanley Osborne, prepared to relieve

[21] *2/24 AR*, p. 16.

him, another large mortar shell scored a square hit on the command post with devastating results:

> Osborne was killed instantly, Donlan's right leg was blown off below the knee, and two other officers were wounded, one mortally. Reich, still holding under the radar screen, was in command. He was the only officer left in Company E.[22]

Despite the loss of five of its officers, Company E continued the assault on Hill 382. When elements of Company F, commanded by Captain Walter Ridlon, joined forces on the hill with Company E, the doom of the defenders was sealed. By 1530, 2/24 reported the objective secured.[23] Colonel Jordan, the regimental commander, had by this time apparently grown somewhat leery of optimistic reports concerning the capture of this particular objective, and in consequence, in describing the action of 2 March, the 24th Marines reported only "that small gains were made throughout the day all along the line except in the vicinity of Hill 382 where the bitter opposition continued."[24] The regiment did not officially record the capture of Hill 382 until the following day.

There was some truth to the comment that enemy opposition at Hill 382 continued, even though the Marines were now in possesssion of the crest. In the words of one account of the action on 2 March, "the hill was overrun, but it was not subdued."[25] A clue to this seeming contradiction may be found in a 4th Division report for D plus 11, which introduces a new element in assessing the progress made by 2/24 on 2 March by pointing out:

> It appears that there are underground passageways leading into the defenses on Hill 382 and when one occupant of a pillbox is killed another one comes up to take his place. This is rather a lengthy process.[26]

And that is precisely the way it turned out. For the remainder of D plus 11, 2/24 mopped up the objective and consolidated its positions atop the hill. Because of the underground tunnels linking various pillboxes and strongpoints on the slopes of Hill 382, "the mopup proved to be an almost interminable process."[27] In fact, sealing the caves around Hill 382 and the elimination of isolated enemy holdouts would require several additional days. But for all practical purposes, one of the three strongpoints of the enemy defense system in the 4th Division zone of advance had been eliminated, which left the remaining two, Turkey Knob and the Amphitheater, somewhat more vulnerable to attack.

Operations on D plus 11 to the south of Hill 382 also differed from those of preceding days. While the enemy atop Hill 382 was treated to an exceptionally heavy preparation on that day, precisely the opposite was the case in the 25th Marines zone of advance. There, Colonel Lanigan decided to employ the element of surprise and launch an attack at 0630 without the benefit of any artillery preparation. During the early stages of the action, while the

[22] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 215.
[23] *2/24 OpRpt*, p. 188.
[24] *24th Mar OpRpt, p. 15.*
[25] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 216.
[26] *4th MarDiv D-3 PerRpt* No. 57 dtd 2Mar45.
[27] Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign*, p. 66.

enemy was still off guard, 1/25 was to infiltrate and seize the high ground north of Turkey Knob. Elements of 1/25 and 3/23, the latter having been attached to the 25th Marines, were to execute an envelopment from the northwest and the south.

The infiltration got under way at 0630 and proceeded on schedule for about 20 minutes. However, the Japanese soon recognized the multiple threat facing them and at 0650 unleashed a devastating rocket and mortar barrage against the assault forces. As Marines hit the ground to escape the lethal shell fragments, enemy machine guns opened up at close range and raked the area in which the assault force was pinned down. All need for further secrecy having disappeared, Marine artillery and mortars retaliated, and eight Shermans moved forward in support of the attack. Once again, the large blockhouse atop Turkey Knob drew most of the supporting fire. A large number of 75mm shells and no less than 1,000 gallons of flamethrower fuel were hurled against this impressive obstacle, but no immediate effects of this fire became apparent. The blockhouse appeared to be unoccupied after the tank attack, but it was assumed that the enemy would feed replacements into it through tunnels as soon as the fury of the American assault diminished.

Under cover of the heavy supporting fire, the envelopment of Turkey Knob continued, though progress was slow. By 1430, the two pincers of the double envelopment were only 65 yards from each other, and for a while it appeared that the movement might still succeed. However, as soon as the enemy became aware of this latest development, he threw a tremendous barrage against Company B, 1/25, which had been inching its way north to the high ground from positions south of the Amphitheater. This murderous rocket and mortar fire, interlaced with a heavy volume of small arms fire, inflicted over 30 casualties on the company and forced its withdrawal.[28]

In the center of the 25th Marines line, 2/25 was to extend its left flank to assist 1/25, and for this purpose one company of 3/23 was attached to the battalion. Since no appreciable gains were made by 1/25 during the day, the 2d Battalion remained in place and spent the day in mopping up enemy stragglers and reducing such fortifications in its zone as the enemy still occupied or had reoccupied. Similarly, 3/25, nearest the coast, remained in position during the early part of the day. Enemy mortar fire into these positions caused several casualties, leading Captain James C. Headley, the battalion commander, to make this comment:

> Throughout this period of time we were suffering casualties from enemy mortar fire and our failure to advance while suffering casualties had a depressing effect upon the morale of the troops.[29]

During the late afternoon of 2 March, elements on the right of 2/25 and the 3d Battalion finally were given permission to advance to the high ground directly to their front. Surprisingly enough, the enemy did not contest this advance, and the 25th Marines gained

[28] *25th Mar OpRpt*, p. 12.
[29] *3/24 OpRpt, p. 11.*

300 yards, enabling the regiment to consolidate on the freshly taken high ground.

By evening of D plus 11, the 4th Division line protruded both in the north and in the south, hanging back only in the center where the Amphitheater and Turkey Knob remained to be taken. Overall, important progress had been made during the day with the seizure of Hill 382 and the unexpectedly easy advance near the coast during the latter part of the day. The fighting for Hill 382 had been costly for 2/24, in particular, which summed up the day's fighting as follows:

> Today's fighting more intense than any other day up until now. Enemy resistance very heavy. Many pillboxes and strong emplacements to the direct front. Many officers, NCO's and experienced personnel were casualties. Leadership now an acute problem. Enemy installations knocked out during the day's advance: 8 machine guns; 15 cave entrances, from which fire was being received, were sealed; one 47mm gun in bunker knocked out. No count of enemy dead, estimated to be over 100.[30]

Throughout 2 March, Marines on the ground had received excellent support from the sea as well as from the air. Two battleships and one cruiser furnished general support, while destroyers and gunboats deployed near the eastern bulge of the island to shell the rocky draws leading down to the sea. Carrier-based aircraft carried out six strikes against enemy positions in front of the 4th Division. The pilots and observers of VMO-4 flew five missions, including a rather unorthodox one in which a division public relations photographer took pictures from an altitude of 1,000 feet. This improvisation became necessary because "the sustained bombardment of Iwo Jima had so torn the face of the land that pre-D-Day maps were by now of little use in terrain appreciation.[31]

The night from 2–3 March passed without major incidents. It almost appeared as if the Japanese were beginning to feel the results of the prolonged battle of attrition. Along the 4th Marine Division lines, the only action occurred in front of 2/24, where the enemy attempted an infiltration. Once the presence of the intruders had been discovered, a lively firefight ensued. It ended when the enemy withdrew, leaving behind 20 dead. Four Marines of 2/24 were killed in this action.[32]

For the continuation of the assault on 3 March, General Cates made certain changes in the disposition of his forces. At 0500, the 23d Marines relieved the 25th and just before H-Hour, set for 0630, 1/23 passed through 1/25. The 2d and 3d Battalions, 25th Marines, were attached to the 23d and retained their positions in the center and on the right. There were no changes in the 24th Marines' sector, where Colonel Jordan's men were preparing to continue the attack, except that Company L, 3/24, suffered 22 casualties while relieving elements of the 9th Marines near the division boundary.[33]

In an attempt to use the element of surprise, the 4th Marine Division attack

[30] *2/24 OpRpt*, p. 189.

[31] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, Sec IV, p. 32.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *24th Mar OpRpt*, p. 16.

was not preceded by any preparatory fire. On the division left, the 24th Marines jumped off against formidable new defenses in its zone of advance, the bulk of which appeared to be concentrated on the high ground to the northeast of Hill 382, and in the vicinity of Minami Village. Initial resistance was heavy, and mortar, artillery, machine gun, and rifle fire hit the assault companies as soon as they began to move out. Directly in front of 2/24 were pillboxes and reinforced concrete emplacements, including one emplacement containing a high velocity gun.

Immediately following the jump-off, corps and division artillery began to pound these defenses with some effect. The regiment, with 3/24, 2/24, and 1/24 from left to right, slowly advanced against the enemy positions to its front. Some progress was made until the lines advanced to a point close enough to work on enemy emplacements with demolitions and flamethrowers. Once this close-in fighting got under way, fierce action ensued and the assault slowed to a crawl. The terrain consisted of numerous hillocks, mounds, and shallow cross-corridors with vertical sides. Covered reinforced concrete and sand-covered log machine gun and rifle emplacements with firing ports covering the front and both flanks blocked the advance. It soon became apparent that the line of defense to the north and east of Hill 382 had a depth of over 300 yards.

The difficulties accompanying an advance into prepared positions of this type were only too apparent. Due to the character of the terrain, these defenses were well protected from the supporting artillery fire. Tanks and flamethrower tanks, in particular, encountered major problems in getting into position. Once there, their fields of fire were limited so that they could effectively concentrate only on a few emplacements. As the infantry approached the enemy positions, the very close support needed could be furnished only by 60mm and 81mm mortars emplaced within 50 yards of the front lines. A shortage of ammunition limited the employment of the 81mm mortars, so that these weapons were fired only periodically and when dire necessity made their close supporting fires indispensable.

As usual, the infantry bore the brunt of the fighting. Marines, equipped with demolitions, portable flamethrowers, a variety of small arms, bazookas, and smoke and fragmentation grenades, maneuvered into position in small groups and attempted to neutralize the enemy positions one by one. It was a slow, tedious, and costly process calling for able leadership on the part of squad and fire team leaders, a number of whom were killed or wounded and had to be evacuated.

By late afternoon, the center of the 24th Marines had advanced 350 yards, with smaller gains along the northern and southern flanks. Throughout the day, the Shermans of Company B, 4th Tank Battalion, gave as much support to the regiment as the difficult terrain allowed. Rocket launchers employed their now customary hit and run tactics to escape counterbattery fire from the enemy mortars and artillery.

When Colonel Jordan's regiment consolidated on D plus 12, the 3d Battalion on the left had tied in with elements of the 9th Marines, while 1/24 on the right held a narrow front with only Company B in the line. After another day of fatiguing combat, the men were even more exhausted than on the previous day. Their condition was graphically outlined in a 2/24 report for the day:

> Men very tired and listless, lack leaders. Close support by effective close support weapons, such as tanks and 37mm weapons not possible except in rare instances, due to terrain limiting fields of fire. Tank support is seldom sufficient to warrant the casualties resulting from the counter-mortar fire.[34]

Bitter fighting also marked the day's operations to the south of the 24th Marines, where the enemy still retained a strong hold both on the Amphitheater and Turkey Knob. There, 1/23 was to make the main attack southeastward above the Amphitheater and link up with units on the left of 2/25. If completed, this envelopment would result in reduction of Turkey Knob and encirclement of the well-dug-in enemy troops in the Amphitheater. In order to support the attack, Company C, 4th Tank Battalion and a platoon of the 4th Engineer Battalion were attached to 1/23.

Following the artillery preparation which came after the jump-off, the enemy initially appeared stunned and, in the words of the regimental report, "the initial phase of the attack progressed favorably."[35] However, progress on the regiment's right soon lagged when Marines drew fire from the concrete blockhouse atop Turkey Knob. In addition, the enemy had mined the routes of approach. Any attempt to remove these antipersonnel mines was frustrated by deadly accurate sniper fire. Nevertheless, by 1400 the attached engineer platoon had cleared a path over which flame tanks and infantry demolition teams were able to get within effective range of the blockhouse. As a result of the combined teamwork of these arms, the blockhouse atop Turkey Knob was partially reduced in a slow and costly assault that continued during the latter part of the afternoon. By evening of 3 March, however, when units consolidated for the night, the Japanese were still firmly in control of Turkey Knob.

While 1/23 was battling for possession of the Knob, the remaining two battalions of the 23d Marines remained in position, except for Company K, 3/23, which, supported by tanks and 75mm halftracks, assaulted stubborn enemy defenses along the southwestern portion of the Amphitheater. Towards the end of the day, Company I was moved into a gap south of the Amphitheater between 1/23 and 2/25. The 2d Battalion of the 23d Marines remained in corps reserve for the day; it occupied an assembly area between the Southern and Central Airfields and could be moved anywhere within the Corps zone of action as required. For the remainder of D plus 12, 2/25 and 3/25 remained in their respective positions on the division's right, while 1/25 in division reserve underwent reorganization and

[34] *2/24 OpRpt*, p. 191.
[35] *23d Mar OpRpt*, p. 14.

rehabilitation, and got some badly needed rest.

Throughout the day, the slight but nevertheless important gains made by the 4th Marine Division had been achieved with the help of the supporting arms. Within the division, 2/14 had furnished direct support to the 23d Marines, while 1/14 had reinforced the fires of 2/14. The 24th Marines had been directly supported by 3/14, while 4/14 was in general support. The 4th Tank Battalion had furnished such assistance as the difficult terrain permitted. By the end of 3 March, 36 tanks were operational, 12 had been destroyed, and 8 had been damaged.[36] Ships of TF 54 continued to provide supporting fire, but the use of such support was restricted because of safety factors dictated by the location of the front lines.

At the end of D plus 12, the combat efficiency of the 4th Marine Division was estimated to be 50 percent. All units were ordered to consolidate at 1700, prepared to continue the attack on the following day. With the capture of Hill 382, one of the main props of the enemy's defensive system in the 4th Division sector had been knocked out, and despite heavy losses, it could be assumed "that the Division was now fighting in the rear of the highly prepared defensive area in which the operations for the past three days had been conducted."[37]

The night from 3–4 March passed without major incident in the 4th Marine Division zone of operations, except for the sector occupied by the 24th Marines. There, small groups of the enemy attempted unsuccessfully to infiltrate the lines of 3/24. The enemy placed heavy artillery and mortar fire into the 24th Marines area throughout the night, causing moderate casualties. Four destroyers provided illumination during the night.

At 0730, 4 March, the 4th Marine Division continued its attack with no change in its formation or direction of advance. Prior to the jumpoff, the corps and division artillery fired a half-hour preparation, which was further supplemented by naval gunfire. In contrast to the preceding days, the weather on D plus 13 was overcast and showers began to fall in the morning. Because of the leaden skies and the limited visibility, all air strikes had to be cancelled. It also was a very poor day for aerial observation.

On the ground, the battle of attrition continued. On the division left, the 24th Marines attacked in a generally southeasterly direction. The direction of advance was to be parallel to the corridors. Once again, the assault turned into a step-by-step affair, as usual combined with heavy casualties and little gain. Such progress as could be made was achieved with the assistance of the Shermans, which were employed with good effect against the numerous pillboxes and caves. Good results were also obtained from the flamethrower tank which scorched the enemy defenses. Even though the regiment advanced only about 100 yards, the steady destruction of the formidable enemy defenses sooner or later was bound to have a concrete effect. Indicative of the regiment's effort is the fact that 2,200

[36] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, p. 34.
[37] *Ibid.*

pounds of explosives were employed on D plus 13 to blow cave entrances and exits.[38]

On the division right, the 23d Marines, with 2/25 and 3/25 still attached, 1/23 in line, and 2/23 in corps and 3/23 in division reserve, made small gains in the 1/23 zone of advance. The two attached battalions of the 25th Marines on the regiment's right had to sit it out in their positions, much against their will. As the division was to report the day's activities:

> BLT's 2/25 and 3/25 could have advanced within their zones, but such an advance was not deemed advisable because it would have overextended the lines. The terrain in front of this RCT was the most difficult yet encountered; observation was limited to only a few feet, and it was impossible to support the attack with anything heavier than normal infantry weapons.[39]

By evening of 4 March, the combat efficiency of the 4th Marine Division had dropped to 45 percent, the lowest yet since the Marines had gone ashore on Iwo Jima. The enemy was still offering stubborn resistance from closely integrated positions, and General Cates' men were more exhausted than ever. This circumstance, combined with the murky skies, the discomfort created by the rain, and the ever present enemy snipers in front of, behind, and between the lines should, by all normal yardsticks, have reduced the morale of the wet and tired Marines to a new low.

Yet, strangely enough, this was not the case. There was no definite indication that the enemy's morale was sagging, and in his battered positions in the Amphitheater, he was clinging to every foot of ground as resolutely as ever. Nevertheless, there was a quiet feeling of optimism that perhaps, after all, the enemy might be beginning to crack. Perhaps it was brought about by the decrease in the accuracy of the enemy artillery and mortar fire resulting from the accurate counterbattery fire furnished by the corps artillery. It was also possible that the loss of Hill 382 and the severe mauling that Turkey Knob had taken by this time had deprived the enemy's artillery observers of their choice observation sites.

The battle of attrition being waged all over northern Iwo Jima was beginning to affect the enemy's power to resist, even though his spirit was as high as ever. In recognition of the bitter struggle waged by General Kuribayashi against overwhelmingly superior American forces, his superiors in Tokyo sent a message addressed both to him and Admiral Ichimaru, expressing Japan's admiration for the battle they were waging. Ichimaru replied: "The enemy is hitting us hard, but we will hit back."[40] For his part, General Kuribayashi had earlier stated defiantly "I am not afraid of the fighting power of only three American divisions, if only there were no bombardments from aircraft and warships. This is the only reason why we have to see such miserable situations."[41]

Looking at the overall situation on Iwo and the decimated remnants of his garrison, consisting of only 3,500 ef-

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[39] *Ibid.*

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 225.
[41] *Horie Rpt.*, p. 9.

fectives, General Kuribayashi saw clearly that his time was running short. In desperation, he signalled Tokyo for help on the evening of 4 March, calling for air and naval support. "Send me these things, and I will hold this island", he said. "Without them I cannot hold."[42] But there was no response from the Japanese mainland, which itself was reeling underneath the intensified American bombing attacks. In view of total American air superiority in the Bonins and a mighty American fleet patrolling the surrounding waters, Iwo Jima was, indeed, isolated. The defenders of Iwo Jima had the full sympathy of almost the entire population of Japan, whose attention was riveted on the fierce battle in progress there. On its part:

> . . . the Army High Command had meanwhile been conducting earnest investigations into the possibility of mounting an effective attack against the U. S. naval forces which were swarming around Iwo Jima. Air power on hand was small, however, while overwater flight training was inadequate; hence a massive effort could not be staged.[43]

As for the Japanese Navy contingent on Iwo Jima, Admiral Ichimaru did not even bother to radio for help. Admiral Toyoda, Commander in Chief of the Imperial Navy, had sent word that the Navy would be ready for the next expected American thrust by the end of April, but that all plans depended on the outcome at Iwo. The message ended with these words: "I regret that except for full submarine support and some air support, we cannot send reinforcements to Iwo. However, in view of overall requirements, I earnestly hope you will maintain calm and fight staunchly by any means."[44]

The meaning of this was clear and Admiral Ichimaru, who had never expected reinforcements in the first place, accepted the inevitable. Clearly, the Iwo garrison was on its own, and its prolonged death throes would, in any case, be a lonely business.

REORGANIZATION AND CONTINUATION OF THE ATTACK[45]

In accordance with General Schmidt's order that 5 March was to be a day of rest and rehabilitation for all VAC units, no offensive action was planned in the 4th Division sector on D plus 14. Instead, the division was to reorganize so that by noon it would have one regiment, less one battalion, available to continue the attack on a limited front on the following day. The general direction of the attack on 6 March was to be eastward. (See Map VIII, Map Section).

The regiment which General Cates selected for the main effort was Colonel Wensinger's 23d Marines. In order to relieve this regiment from its other duties, the area on the division's right reverted to the 25th Marines. The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 25th Marines, hitherto attached to the 23d, reverted to

[42] Quoted in Leckie, *Strong Men Armed*, p. 456.

[43] Hayashi and Coox, *Kogun*, p. 138.

[44] Quoted in Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 207.

[45] Additional material in this section is derived from: 4th SerBn OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 27Dec44-19Mar45, dtd 2Apr45, hereafter *4th SerBn OpRpt;* 4th MedBn OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 19Feb-15Mar45, n. d., hereafter *4th MedBn OpRpt.*

the parent regiment. The 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, relieved 1/23 in almost identical positions held by 1/25 on 2 March. Since 3/23 was still heavily committed along the southern fringes of the Amphitheater, where it was mopping up previously bypassed enemy defenses and overcoming other stubborn pockets of resistance, Colonel Lanigan combined the division reconnaissance company, which had been attached to his regiment as of 0700 on 5 March, with Company L, 3/25, into a provisional battalion, commanded by Major Edward L. Asbill, executive officer of 1/25. In the northern portion of the division sector, three companies of the 24th Marines were pulled out of the line and stationed in the regimental rear area, where they were to form a strong regimental reserve. In order to further bolster the 25th Marines, Company B of the 2d Armored Amphibian Tractor Battalion was attached to the regiment. This company was to patrol the beach areas north of the 3/25 sector and fire on targets along the beach.

The reorganization within the 4th Division area of responsibility was completed by noon of 5 March, as scheduled. During the entire period of reorganization, beginning on the evening of 4 March, the enemy did not initiate any offensive action, though his supporting arms remained active. During the night from 4–5 March, only sporadic fire hit the 4th Division zone, with the exception of the 24th Marines' area. There, heavy mortar and artillery fire was received almost incessantly during the hours of darkness. Throughout D plus 14, the 14th Marines continued to fire on targets of opportunity and executed harassing fires. A total of 17 missions employed air observation. VMO–4 flew 10 tactical observation missions. One pilot was wounded and evacuated. By late afternoon of 5 March, the squadron had four aircraft that were still operational. In addition to the artillery fire provided by the 14th Marines on D plus 14, elements of TF 54 fired call fire missions throughout the day.[46]

It had, for all practical purposes, been a quiet day on Iwo Jima. There had been no gains since there had been no offensive action. Yet, as this day of rest ended, "there had been more than 400 casualties on the line where there was no fighting. The men got ready for the next big push."[47]

Following the day of rest, the VAC offensive resumed on the morning of 6 March. In order to obtain the maximum results from extensive massed preparations, General Schmidt had ordered his divisions to attack in echelon. Each attack was to be preceded by an intensive artillery and naval gunfire preparation, in which the corps and division artillery, as well as the medium and heavy guns of the fire support ships, were to join.[48] Altogether, not including the naval gunfire, 12 artillery battalions would unleash a devastating curtain of fire against the enemy garrison that still blocked the path of the VAC advance. They would first fire for approximately 30 minutes at the western portion of the front, then shift the preparation for a little over half an

[46] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, p. 39.
[47] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 244.
[48] VAC OpO 13–45, dtd 5Mar45.

hour to the eastern half. Within the overall assault, the 4th Marine Division was to jump off at 0900, H plus 60 minutes, with the main effort on its left in conjunction with the adjacent 9th Marines of the 3d Marine Division.

At 0845, the coordinated fire of the 132 guns and the naval gunfire shifted to support the second phase of the VAC attack along the eastern portion of the front. The shore-based artillery alone had expended 22,500 shells ranging from 75mm to 155mm in a little over an hour. In the zone of action of General Cates' division, the full force of the barrage was brought to bear on the left in the zone of action of the 23d Marines. There, prior to 0600, the 23d Marines, less 1/23, had moved into position. In preparation for the assault, 2/23 had relieved 3/24 without enemy interference. The weather promised to be fair with good visibility; only a slight haze obscured observation in the early dawn.

Following the earth-shaking artillery preparation, which gave way to a rolling barrage, 2/23 jumped off at H-Hour, followed by the 3d Battalion at a 400-yard interval. As the assault battalion advanced eastward towards the high ground to its front, it became apparent that the heavy volume of artillery fire had not incapacitated the Japanese who emerged from their dugouts little the worse for wear and, in the extremely rugged terrain, put up a spirited fight for every yard of the way and defended each cave, pillbox, and emplacement with the greatest tenacity.

As the advance gained momentum, in the face of accurate fire from rifles and automatic weapons to the front, the assault companies moved forward about 50 yards. On the left, where the terrain favored the employment of armor, Company G, 2/23, supported by four tanks, gained 300 yards. As the company prepared to move into a gap that had arisen between it and Company F, the enemy caught Company G in a murderous mortar barrage that caused numerous casualties and wounded the company commander. Fierce fighting continued throughout the day. At 1800, when 2/23 dug in for the night, Company G on the left still was 350 yards in front of the line of departure; the remainder of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 23d Marines, had gained approximately 100 yards during the day.

To the right of the 23d Marines, 2/24 and 1/24 jumped off abreast at H-Hour. Almost immediately, Colonel Jordan's Marines found themselves in the same type of terrain that had impeded the movements of the 23d Marines to the north. The ground was characterized by a series of jagged ridges and heavy undergrowth, both favoring the defending force. Despite support from gunfire ships and three heavy air strikes, enemy resistance continued undiminished. After a day of exhausting and costly fighting, the regiment gained 150 yards on the left and even less on the right.

Since the Amphitheater and Turkey Knob had, for all practical purposes, already been bypassed prior to D plus 15, no frontal assault was launched against these positions, which still formed a deep salient in the 4th Division lines. Because of these protruding enemy positions, the 23d and 24th Marines north of this salient attacked in an east-south-

easterly direction, while the 25th Marines to the south were attacking generally to the northeast. As a result, it appeared that all the 4th Division thrusts on 6 March were directed generally towards the remnants of Higashi Village.

For the three battalions of the 25th Marines, it was another day of waiting for the left wing of the division to move forward. Since no decisive gains were made by the 24th Marines, 2/25 and 3/25 stayed in position and conducted mop-up operations within their respective areas. The only forward movement took place in the 1/25 sector, where Marines continued chipping away at enemy fortifications to the east of Turkey Knob near Minami Village, supported by flame and medium tanks and 75mm half-tracks. Once the armor had completed its mission, the tanks were pulled back in order to prevent their exposure to the expected enemy counterbattery fire.

By evening of 6 March, it was evident that the momentous artillery preparation which had so promisingly ushered in the resumed offensive had failed utterly in crushing the enemy's will or capacity to resist. At the time it consolidated for the night, the 4th Marine Division held a line extending for roughly 2,470 yards. A gap of 400 yards still separated the division's left flank from the right of the adjacent 3d Division.

Once again, despite meager gains, the division's losses on D plus 15 had been heavy. The division D-3 report for the day estimated combat efficiency at 40 percent and added that "the result of fatigue and lack of experienced leaders is very evident in the manner in which the units fight."[49] Conversely, the enemy seemed to adapt himself readily to the changing conditions on Iwo Jima by making widespread use of American equipment. Thus it was discovered during the day that five enemy bodies in front of the 4th Division lines were fully dressed in Marine uniforms. One Japanese who decided to give American food a try was to record in his diary: "I tasted Roosevelt's rations for the first time, and they were very good." No doubt, the frequently maligned originator of the American combat rations would have been pleased with this compliment.

The night of 6–7 March turned into a veritable hell for many 4th Division Marines. The continuous and exhausting action in preceding days had been enough to wear down many of them, both physically and mentally. Instead of the rest which they so badly needed and desired, the men were kept in a state of upheaval all night by Japanese activity which, according to the official report, was "sporadic but costly".[50]

At 2130, several enemy mortar shells fell in the lines of 2/23, wounding approximately 30 men. While confusion engulfed this hard-hit battalion, the action shifted to the right flank of the 4th Division. There, shortly after 2200, enemy were reported moving in front of 3/25. Immediate artillery fire was brought to bear on the enemy assembly, which was dispersed. Up to this time,

[49] *4th MarDiv D-3 PerRpt* No. 61, dtd 6Mar45.

[50] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, p. 40.

all had remained quiet in front of 1/25, but as the night continued, an estimated 40–50 Japanese infiltrated the battalion sector and sneaked into the foxholes occupied by Major Mee's men. An occasional bursting hand grenade punctured the quietness of the night—a solitary rifle shot, a deep grunt or groan, and then stillness again. It was not until morning that an accurate tally of the 1st Battalion's losses was possible. Then it became evident that 1/25 had lost one officer and 12 men killed; the enemy had lost an estimated 50 men.[51] Conversely, 1/24 reported that this had been the quietest night in its sector.

Just as it appeared that this long night was nearing its end, disaster struck once more, this time in the 2/23 area. Shortly after 0500, one of the big, inaccurate enemy rockets wobbled its way into the 2/23 command post with devastating results. The battalion commander, Major Robert H. Davidson, was badly shaken up by the blast and suffered a severe concussion; the communications chief was killed, and the battalion executive officer, the operations officer, the adjutant, and two clerks were wounded. With practically all the headquarters staff officers out of action, a skeleton staff was quickly formed at regimental headquarters under Lieutenant Colonel Edward J. Dillon, the regimental executive officer, who proceeded to 2/23 around dawn and took over the battalion.

H-Hour for D plus 16 had been set for 0730. The 4th Division was to continue the assault in the same direction and with the same lineup of units as on the preceding day. There was to be no preliminary artillery or naval gunfire preparation, though neutralization fire against known enemy mortar and artillery positions was scheduled between 0800 and 0830. Because of the disruption caused by the enemy rocket hit on the command post of 2/23, H-Hour was postponed for an additional half hour.

Promptly at 0800 the 4th Division attack resumed, with the battered 23d Marines, less 1/23, in the main effort. The supporting neutralization fire appeared to be having a salutary effect, since there was little response from the enemy supporting arms. As a result, 2/23, attacking along the 4th Divison boundary, was able to make slow gains in the course of the morning, particularly along the regimental left. In the center and on the right, on the other hand, enemy resistance was as bitter as ever, and there the advance quickly ground to a halt. By shifting the focal point of the assault quickly between companies, comparable to a boxer who hits his opponent with a low blow and then follows with a haymaker to the uncovered chin, the 2d Battalion was able to catch the Japanese off balance long enough to make a gain of 150 yards within an hour after jumpoff. Following this limited success, strong enemy positions were encountered all along the battalion front and for the remainder of the day progress was minimal. Enemy resistance on 7 March consisted primarily of heavy machine gun fire and extremely accurate rifle fire from concealed positions in the rocky ridge for-

[51] *Ibid.*

mations and draws along the front. The virtual absence of enemy artillery fire at the 23d Marines' front was noticeable, though the regiment still drew intermittent fire from enemy mortars.

The 24th Marines resumed the attack with 2/24 and 1/24 on the line and almost immediately encountered heavy opposition, particularly on the right where intense machine gun and mortar fire halted the advance of the 1st Battalion before it really got moving. For the remainder of the morning, the regimental advance could be measured in yards as small demolition teams blasted and burned the enemy out of his well concealed and strongly-held positions. At 1245, the 14th Marines fired a five-minute preparation which signalled a renewal of the attack. Employing the same tactics used during the morning, and with considerable air support, the regiment scored a gain of 50 yards before 1700, when the lines were consolidated for the day.

On the division right, Colonel Lanigan's 25th Marines continued mopping up the numerous stragglers in its rear area. On the regiment's left, the 1st Battalion, supported by regular and flame tanks, destroyed enemy emplacements to its front, while the Provisional Battalion continued the systematic reduction of stubborn enemy defenses in the bypassed Amphitheater and Turkey Knob. Even though the 25th Marines did not seize any new ground on D plus 16, its strategic location along the division right would shortly change its mission into a defensive one. As the 23d and 24th Marines very slowly and inexorably continued their east-southeastward advance towards Tachiiwa Point on the east coast, they threatened to envelop Captain Inouye's forces, which would be compressed in an area bounded by the sea in the east and the 25th Marines to the south. For all practical purposes, the northern wing of the 4th Division formed a hammer while the stationary 25th Marines would serve as the anvil. In all respects, this type of maneuver closely resembled the large-scale German antipartisan operations in Russia where precisely such tactics often led to success.[52]

In anticipation of increased pressure once this pocket was compressed, Colonel Lanigan took preparatory measures to enable his regiment to cope with any threat posed by the Japanese whose encirclement was imminent. Engineers attached to the regiment laid antipersonnel mines across the front. Barbed wire was strung out along the line. The men sited machine guns, 37mm cannon, and 60mm mortars, waiting for the Japanese to be driven against the regimental line. For the time being, the mission of the 25th Marines would be a defensive one.

Activity during the night from 7–8 March was not comparable to that of the preceding night and along the 4th Division lines consisted mainly of mortar and small arms fire. Some of the enemy mortar shells fell into the positions of 1/24 and in front of the 25th

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[52] For further information on this subject, see Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20–244, Edgar M. Howell, *The Soviet Partisan Movement* (Washington: Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, Aug 1956).

Marines. At 0300, 3/24 returned to the parent regiment and two hours later relieved 2/24 in the line.

On D plus 17, the division main effort changed from the left to the center, and the direction of the attack shifted to the southeast. Within the shrinking area left to the Japanese on Iwo Jima, the designation of phase or objective lines had become superfluous, and General Schmidt's operations order for 8 March was essentially "to capture the remainder of the island."[53] No one familiar with the yard-by-yard struggle expected enemy resistance to cease on this day, or for a number of days to come, but the tenor of the order gave a vague assurance that there was to be an end to the bloodletting. Facing the Marines of all three divisions were only the jumbles of rock and the sea, and a dwindling number of highly motivated Japanese determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible.

H-Hour on 8 March had been set for 0750. However, in accordance with corps orders, the 4th Marine Division jumped off at 0620, 90 minutes ahead of the 3d and 5th Divisions. The jump-off was carried out without any artillery preparation, though for half an hour following it the 14th Marines and the corps artillery fired successive concentrations in support of the attack. In the zone of advance of the 23d Marines, there was initially only light resistance, the enemy apparently being confused by the early morning attack. Even though opposition stiffened in time, gains were made in the center of the regimental zone of advance, as 2/23 drove southeastward in the general direction of Tachiiwa Point.

The 24th Marines, with 3/24 on the left and 1/24 on the right, jumped off on schedule, but encountered far stronger resistance than the 23d Marines to the north, mostly from enemy units concealed in perfectly fortified positions. Enemy opposition was characterized by extremely heavy fire from small arms, knee mortars, and mortars of larger calibers. Gains made during the day were negligible, though at the end of the day the regiment was tied in with the 23d Marines on the left and the 25th Marines on the right. Throughout the day, 2/24 remained in division reserve.

On the right flank of the division, the three battalions of the 25th Marines remained in position and continued to strengthen the regimental lines in the event that the enemy decided to counterattack as he was driven into a corner. Behind the lines, various elements of the regiment and the division reconnaissance company continued to mop up; enemy stragglers were also rounded up in the vicinity of Minami Village.

In the course of D plus 17, Shermans of the 4th Tank Battalion gave such support as was feasible to the regiments of the 4th Division, though the movement of armor was restricted largely to the few existing trails, most of them in the 23d Marines' area. There, several tanks ran into a minefield and three were destroyed. During the time required to clear the minefield, the remaining tanks remained in place. In the course of an air strike, an auxiliary gas tank filled with napalm was dropped erroneously into the friendly lines. It

[53] VAC OpO No. 15–45, dtd 7Mar45.

landed directly behind one of the Shermans, and napalm splashed all over the tank. Even though the outer surfaces of the Sherman caught fire, the crew was able to evacuate the vehicle and put out the blaze with a portable fire extinguisher. There were no casualties and the mishap failed to put the Sherman, at this point somewhat the worse for wear, out of action.[54]

When the regiments of the 4th Division secured for the night around dusk of 8 March, the combat efficiency of the division was still clinging to a precarious 40 percent, but even this figure fails to convey the excessive number of key personnel, the driving force of any unit, that had been sent out of the lines suffering from wounds or battle fatigue. The weather had turned cloudy and cold, and the men of General Cates' division shivered in their foxholes while attempting to rest their weary bodies for the continuation of the struggle that would await them in the morning.

THE ENEMY STRIKES BACK[55]

In the gathering dusk and during the early evening of 8 March, something was beginning to stir in front of the 23d and 24th Marines. At first, there was only the blur of muted voices and movement, nothing definite that would indicate anything out of the ordinary was brewing. But then the intensity of the enemy mortar, artillery, and rocket fire against the two Marine regiments increased, followed at 2300 by large-scale infiltration of the 2/23 and 3/24 sectors.

Had the Marines compressing the Japanese naval force into the pocket near Tachiiwa Point been able to look into the enemy lines, and had they been able to gauge the background and volatile temperament of the Japanese Navy captain commanding the 1,000-odd men about to be trapped, certain inevitable conclusions would have become apparent almost at once. Captain Samaji Inouye, commanding the *Naval Guard Force* on Iwo Jima, was a *Samurai*, a noisy, swashbuckling extrovert, a champion swordsman, who was prone to boast of his prowess as a fighter, lover, and drinker in front of his subordinates.[56]

It was totally incompatible with Inouye's character that he would sit back in his dugout and idly watch his force being encircled. Also, he had felt deeply emotional about the loss of Mount Suribachi and, in his grief at the American capture of this landmark, he had nearly decapitated the hapless survivors of the force that had straggled into his lines following the fall of the mountain. For the Japanese, ever since the attack on Pearl Harbor, the eighth day of each month had a special significance, and Inouye was only too well aware that 8 March would be his last. He planned to make it a memorable one for all concerned.

Late in the evening, at 2200, he gathered the remainder of his troops, a mixture of survivors from many Navy

[54] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, p. 43.

[55] Additional material in this section is derived from: 4th EngBn OpRpt, Iwo Jima, 18Feb-19Mar45, n.d., hereafter *4th EngBn OpRpt*.

[56] A fascinating account of Inouye's background and mentality is contained in a letter from Fred Saito to Richard F. Newcomb, dtd 5Feb64, in *Newcomb Notes*.

units on Iwo Jima. It was anything but a uniformly equipped force:

> . . . many men had only bamboo spears, but some had hand grenades and rifles. There were a few machine guns, and some men strapped land mines across their chests, determined to blow up some Marines with themselves.[57]

What Captain Inouye had in mind was, of course, an all-out charge against the American lines. But, short of killing Americans, there had to be a definite purpose to the assault. Still preoccupied with the loss of Mount Suribachi, where the Stars and Stripes fluttering on the summit had kindled his anger anew every day, the Captain announced to his assembled force the objective of the imminent assault was Suribachi itself. En route, after breaking through the American lines, the men were to blow up as many American planes as they could on the airfields.

Judged by the standards employed earlier in the war on islands like Guadalcanal, and particularly when compared to the desperate Japanese all-out charge on the Garapan Plain at Saipan, what Inouye had planned could best be described as a mini-*banzai*. His objective was unrealistic, the Marines to his front were too alert, and above all, he lacked the approval of his superiors for the action he was about to take. As the attack got under way, the following situation developed:

> The band started south, not in a wild charge, but crawling slowly and quietly. One group got within 10 yards of 2/23's command post, where Lieutenant Colonel Dillon was still in command, before the alarm was given. Then the sailors lobbed grenades and charged, shrieking "Banzai!" In a moment there was chaos. The Marines threw up flares and star shells lighted the sky. Machinegun fire, rifles, and mortars began to cut into them, but still the Japanese came on. Some of them carried stretchers and shouted "Corpsman, corpsman" in fair English. Finally the hordes faltered and broke, and no one knew where Captain Inouye was. He had last been seen running and shouting, his sword waving in the air.[58]

According to an account of Inouye's orderly, who became separated from the captain in the melee, Inouye charged ahead with loud shouts, followed by his men. As accurate Marine fire raked the ranks of the charging Japanese, Inouye shouted "*Banzai, Banzai,*" at the top of his voice, and that was the last heard of him. As one of the Japanese was to comment regretfully later: "It's a pity he could not reach the American position for a full display of his final swordsmanship."[59]

As the Japanese charged the boundary between the 23d and 24th Marines, it was inevitable that some of them would get through the Marine lines. There was vicious fighting throughout the hours of darkness. Some of the action eventually extended to the 24th Marines and, on a smaller scale, to the 25th. Company E, 2/23, continued to bear the brunt of the counterattack, expending 20 cases of hand grenades, 200 rounds of 60mm illumination shells, and an unknown quantity of machine gun, BAR, and rifle ammunition.[60] Company E faced a critical situation around 0100, when ammunition began to run out. Finally, additional loads

[57] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, pp. 257–258.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 258.

[59] Saito ltr to Newcomb, 5Feb64, in *Newcomb Notes*.

[60] *2/23 OpRpt*, p. 33.

were sent forward in a jeep and trailer, which brought the badly needed supplies forward over an enemy infested road, with the aid of 60mm illumination. The jeep drew several rounds of enemy small arms fire but was able to deliver its badly needed cargo. Fire support ships expended 193 star shells during the night, thus lessening some of the confusion that accompanied the action. In the flickering light the chewed-up volcanic ground became visible, filled with wriggling forms. Artillery fire soon blanketed the area and many of the would-be infiltrators halted in their tracks.

But many of the attackers did get into the Marine lines and, in the words of one account:

> The night became alive with the noise and lights of a determined fire fight. Red tracer bullets shot across the flats. Jap rockets hurtled through the air, leaving a quarter-mile trail of golden sparks. Star shells of yellow and green hung in the sky.
>
> The battle kept up all night. Individual men in foxholes didn't know what was happening. They waited for Japs to appear and killed them as fast as they came. Men with telephones whispered into their instruments and tried to discover how strong the enemy attack actually was. Machine guns chattered incessantly. Grenades popped.[61]

As day dawned over Iwo Jima on 9 March, the area in and around the 2/23 positions, and to a lesser extent in front of the 24th Marines, showed the signs of horrible carnage. Mopping up continued until noon. A body count of enemy dead revealed approximately 650 at the focal point of the attack, while another 150 were discovered in the adjacent sectors. Among those who perished in the counterattack was Captain Inouye, who died as he had wished to die. The counterattack cost the Marines 90 men killed and 257 wounded, a large number of men to lose in one night's bitter fighting; yet beyond any doubt the cost would have been higher had it been necessary to ferret the enemy out of his dugouts one by one.

To the Japanese survivors of the slaughter, the arrival of daylight brought little comfort. Stripped both of the protective cover of darkness and leadership on which all of them so much depended, the 200 sailors that had survived the abortive *banzai* huddled in small groups, wondering what to do next. It was apparent to all that getting to Mount Suribachi or any of the airfields was far beyond their capabilities. A lieutenant finally gathered them together and those who could crawled away from the place of carnage, constantly harassed by the Marines hunting for them. As to their further operations:

> Their fighting was over. Each night the lieutenant sent out patrols of three to five men. They never returned. Others went into caves, and some died of wounds, of sickness, or of thirst. Some drank urine and died.
>
> The lieutenant lasted until April 29, the Emperor's birthday, when he told the others, "We will steal a B-29 and fly to the homeland. You others do as you please after we're gone." He left, accompanied by the chief Navy medical officer, an ensign, and a petty officer.[62]

There was to be one more sequel to Captain Inouye's counterattack: Obviously aware of General Kuribayashi's

[61] Henri *et al*, *Marines on Iwo Jima*, p. 291.

[62] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 259.

orders to stay in place and fight as long as possible, he had neglected to inform his superior, Admiral Ichimaru, of his intentions. As a result:

> . . . on the night of Inouye's last charge, Admiral Toyoda again messaged Admiral Ichimaru, praising the brave acts of the Navy men and again begging them to hold out as long as possible. Ichimaru did not know that Inouye had already sacrificed the last of the Japanese Navy force on Iwo Jima.[63]

For the men of the 4th Marine Division, Captain Inouye's abortive counterattack at one stroke eliminated a large segment of the enemy force holding the eastern part of the island. With just about all of this force out of the way, there no longer was any central direction of Japanese forces in the east. Major General Senda, with a force of undetermined strength, was still assumed to be blocking the 4th Division's path between Higashi Village and the coast. Enemy remnants were still in control of Turkey Knob, and a few other pockets of resistance still existed, but by this time the enemy's capability to resist was drastically reduced.

Even though the mopup of survivors of the counterattack continued throughout the morning of 9 March, the 4th Division continued its attack in accordance with previously laid plans. At 0700, following a 10-minute preparation, the 4th Division jumped off. Once again, the division employed the same scheme of maneuver it had used in previous days, with the 23d Marines on the left, the 24th Marines in the center, and the 25th Marines on the right. The 23d Marines, with 2/23 in the assault, was able to advance in the center and to its right against resistance that lacked the bite of the preceding days. However, the left of the regiment drew heavy fire from a ridge near the division boundary about 500 yards north of Higashi. By 0900, the ridge had been seized in direct assault, and the battalion slowly but persistently forced its way forward. At 1500, 1/23 reverted to the regiment. Ordered to consolidate at 1700, Colonel Wensinger's men continued the attack to improve their positions and did not halt until half an hour later. Gains for the day were a respectable 300 yards. As the regiment dug in, it maintained contact with the 3d Marine Division on the left and the 24th Marines on the right.

In the remaining division sectors, enemy opposition was as strong as ever, and, in consequence, no additional ground was seized in the center and on the right of the division. To some extent, lack of progress in the center was due to depletion of manpower, which made it necessary to shuffle companies from one battalion to another in order to bring the assault battalion up to effective strength. As part of the reorganization of 1/24, Lieutenant Colonel Austin R. Brunelli, the regimental executive officer, assumed command of 1/24, relieving Major Treitel. Because of the heavy resistance on its left flank, the 25th Marines, less 3/25 but with 2/24 attached, remained in position.

During the night from 9-10 March, there was a relative lack of enemy activity. A small amount of light and medium mortar fire at infrequent intervals harassed the 4th Division lines during the night, and infiltration at-

[63] *Ibid.*, pp. 259–260.

tempts remained on a large scale. In order to counter the threat still posed by groups of the enemy operating in the division rear, the Provisional Battalion, which had been mopping up in the Amphitheater and around Turkey Knob, was disbanded and its mission taken over by 2/25. At the same time, a 4th Provisional Battalion, consisting of 37 officers and 498 enlisted men, was organized from units of the Division Support Group. This unit, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Melvin L. Krulewitch, had special responsibility for mopping up behind the division lines and retained this mission until 12 March, when it was disbanded.[64]

At 0800 on D plus 19, the 4th Marine Division continued its attack after a coordinated corps and division artillery preparation, which changed into a rolling barrage as the men moved out. On this day, which was to be full of significant developments for General Cates' men, the assault was made essentially by the 23d and 25th Marines. The 24th Marines reverted to division reserve. The 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, was pulled out of the line and replaced by 3/25. The 3d Battalion, 24th Marines, remained in its previous zone of action but was attached to the 23d Marines, while 2/24 remained attached to the 25th Marines.

The 23d Marines, with 2/23 on the left and 3/24 on the right launched a vigorous attack that encountered only light opposition on the right. The enemy, entrenched in the rocky ridges along the left boundary of the division, replied with accurate and effective mortar and small arms fire which reduced gains of 2/23 in this sector. Throughout the regimental zone of advance, small but determined groups of the enemy tried to impede the advance. Since the Japanese no longer held a solid line on commanding ground, the Marine assault elements were able to bypass such nests of resistance, leaving their annihilation to teams of engineers, tanks, and infantry, which blasted and scorched such obstacles with demolitions and flamethrowers.

As the regimental attack gained momentum, an enormous amount of ground was taken by Iwo standards. By 1500, Colonel Wensinger's men had advanced no less than 700 yards and were within 500 yards of the east coast. Having reached commanding ground in this area, the regiment halted in mid-afternoon. Patrols from 2/23, dispatched during the remainder of the afternoon, reached the coast near Tachiiwa Point without encountering any enemy opposition. A short distance to the south, elements of 3/24 reconnoitered to within 100 yards of the coast without making contact with the enemy.

On the division right, the 25th Marines, with 2/24 and the Reconnaissance Company attached, completed the relief of 1/24 by 0600. Following this relief, 3/25 took over the sector of 1/24. In order to complete the encirclement of those enemy remnants still holding out in the Amphitheater and on Turkey Knob, 3/25 was shifted to the north of the enemy salient, where, together with 1/25, it would attack to the southeast parallel to the axis of advance of the 23d Marines. Along the southern per-

[64] *4th MarDiv Support Gp OpRpt*, pp. 17–18.

imeter of the salient, 2/25 and 2/24 were to advance generally to the northeast or east respectively, which would enable 2/25 to effect a linkup with those units of the regiment attacking towards the coast from the northwest.

Jumping off at H-Hour on 10 March, 3/25 and 1/25 attacked towards the high ground to their front from where the enemy still offered moderate to heavy opposition. It soon became apparent that the 3d Battalion would be able to move faster than 1/25 and, in consequence, 3/25 was ordered to continue regardless of its flanks. As the attacks of 3/25 and 2/25 converged, the distance separating the two units dwindled until, shortly after noon, the two battalions linked up. Overall gains for the 25th Marines on D plus 19 were 600 yards. More important than the yardage gained was the fact that Turkey Knob was at last completely surrounded and all resistance remaining could now be eliminated. As the 25th Marines consolidated for the night, its left flank was tied to the 23d Marines about 800 yards from the coast while the stationary right flank was still anchored on the beach to the south.

The significance of the 4th Division's movements and gains on 10 March was summed up in one historical narrative in these words:

> It was now evident that the Japanese counterattack had marked the turning point in the battle. Although bitter and costly fighting continued for six more days, particularly in the 25th Regiment's zone, organized resistance was now dying out in the 4th Division area.
>
> During the 14-day period covered in this chapter, the 4th Division, in constant head-on assault, fought its bloody way from Charlie-Dog Ridge past Hill 382, the Amphitheater, Turkey Knob, through Minami and formidable defenses northeast of 382, almost to the coast. The slow but relentless movement of this division front can be compared to the closing of a giant door. The right flank, which advanced less than 1,000 yards, acted as a hinge while the rest of the division (the door) turned upon it and attacked northeast, east, and southeast to close and sweep trapped enemy toward the sea.[65]

The 4th Division assault on eastern Iwo Jima thus had broken the back of enemy resistance by 10 March. In the wake of the division's advance, there remained a staggering number of casualties, whose bodies and minds bore ample witness to the ferocity of the fighting. Between 25 February, when General Cates' men first attacked the Meat Grinder and 10 March, when they were within a stone's throw of the coast, the division had sustained 4,075 casualties. A total of 847 Marines had been killed or were dead of wounds; 2,836 had been wounded; 1 was missing, and 391 were suffering from combat fatigue.[66]

As the three Marine divisions slowly approached the coastline in their respective zones of advance, it became apparent to all on the island that time for General Kuribayashi and his garrison was running out. In Japan, anxious eyes were watching the contest of wills being waged for possession of Iwo Jima. To the military observers, the outcome was a foregone conclusion. But the nation's morale was precariously

[65] Bartley, *Iwo Monograph*, p. 176.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

perched on the faint hope that General Kuribayashi's masterful defense of the island would give the business-minded Americans food for thought about the cost of a full-scale invasion of the home islands. Thus, in Japanese eyes, the prolonged defense of Iwo Jima pursued not only the immediate tactical objective, but a vastly more far-reaching strategic one.

Few of the surviving members of that garrison had any illusions left about the outcome of the war. One Japanese captured in the 4th Division area late on 9 March was better qualified than most others to comment on the overall situation. A peacetime editor and publisher of one of the large metropolitan newspapers of Japan, he remarked that "this is not a winning war for Japan—she cannot win, but she is trying her darndest to lessen her defeat."[67]

That time was running out on the mainland as well was strongly reemphasized on the evening of 9 March, when more than 300 B-29s mounted one of the biggest air raids of the war against Tokyo. This attack severely devastated the enemy capital, serving notice to all Japanese that they were now open to American attack both from sea and air; that henceforth the citizens of Tokyo were as exposed to American explosives as General Kuribayashi's diminishing garrison on Iwo Jima.

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[67] Interrogation of Leading Private Yutaka Oyanagi, 10Mar45, by 1stLt G. A. Hoeck, 4th MarDiv Preliminary POW Interrogation Rpt #15, 10Mar45, in *4th MarDiv Translations.*

Final Operations on Iwo Jima[1]

ELIMINATION OF THE POCKETS—3D MARINE DIVISION AREA[2]

On 11 March 1945, operations on Iwo Jima entered their final phase. No longer under any central direction, three more or less clearly defined enemy pockets fought a battle to the death in the zone of advance of each of the three Marine divisions. As the pockets became more constricted, the nature of the fighting changed, mostly because the terrain no longer permitted the employment of naval gunfire, air support, and in the end even artillery. Eventually, as Japanese resistance neared the end, tanks and half-tracks furnished the heavy supporting fire needed to root out the last of the obstinate enemy defenders.

On D plus 20, the only major opposition in the zone of advance of the 3d Marine Division extended along the division's rough boundary, where enemy remnants still occupied a ridgeline paralleling the coast to the east of Kitano Point. (See Map IX, Map Section). A second center of resistance farther south, to the east of Motoyama Village, southeast of the Northern Airfield, and southwest of Hill 362C was a pocket which had already been under attack for several days prior to 11 March. Named after the commander of 2/9, Lieutenant Colonel Cushman, this pocket was honeycombed with caves and emplacements cut into sandstone. The pocket itself was ringed by antitank guns and Colonel Nishi's dug-in light and medium tanks, equipped with 37mm and 47mm guns. The most prominent occupant of the pocket was Colonel Nishi, who had thus far survived the ferocious fighting on the island.

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from: *TF 51 AR; VAC SAR; VAC G-2 Rpts; VAC C-3 Jnl; VAC Translations; 3d MarDiv AR; 3d MarDiv D-2 Jnl; 3d MarDiv G-2 PerRpts; 3d MarDiv G-3 PerRpts; 4th MarDiv OpRpt; 4th MarDiv D-3 Jnl; 4th MarDiv D-3 PerRpts; 4th MarDiv Translations; 5th MarDiv AR; 5th MarDiv D-1 Jnl; 5th MarDiv D-2 Jnl; 5th MarDiv D-2 PerRpts; 5th MarDiv D-3 Jnl; 5th MarDiv Casualty Rpts; Horie Rpt;* Bartley, *Iwo Monograph; Iwo Comments;* Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign;* Newcomb, *Iwo Jima; Newcomb Notes;* Morison, *Victory in the Pacific;* Henri et al, *Marines on Iwo Jima*; Isely and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious War;* Leckie, *Strong Men Armed*; Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass;* Aurthur and Cohlmia, *The Third Marine Division;* Proehl, *The Fourth Marine Division;* Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division;* Hayashi and Coox, *Kogun.*

[2] Additional material in this section is derived from: *9th Mar URpts; 9th Mar UJnl; 9th Mar AR*; 21st Mar AR, Iwo Jima, 23Jan-16Mar45, dtd 10Apr45, hereafter *21st Mar AR; 21st Mar UJnl; 21st Mar URpts; 1/9 AR; 2/9 AR; 3/9 AR;* 1/21 AR, Iwo Jima, 29Jan-26Mar45, dtd 6Apr45, hereafter *1/21 AR;* 2/21 AR, Iwo Jima, 30Jan-24Mar45, dtd 12Apr45, hereafter *2/21 AR;* 3/21 AR, Iwo Jima, 15Jan-16Mar45, dtd 11Apr45, hereafter *3/21 AR; 1/23 OpRpt; 3d TkBn AR.*

On 11 March, 1/9 and 3/9 were to execute a converging attack from the high ground near the east coast into the northeastern fringes of the pocket. Once the two battalions had linked up, they were to launch a concerted drive into the pocket from the east. In the course of the morning, the 1st Battalion assaulted a ridge overlooking the pocket and blasted its way to the top, demolishing caves and other positions as it went along. The advance was supported by Shermans from the 3d Tank Battalion, whose fire either destroyed such enemy defenses as could be spotted or at least kept the occupants of strongpoints underground to permit the approach of demolition teams. The 3d Battalion was forced to assault similar terrain during the morning without tank support, which did not arrive until an armored bulldozer had carved out a road for the Shermans during the early afternoon. In mid-afternoon, shortly after 1500, the two battalions linked up. For the remainder of the day, elements of both battalions mopped up along the east coast, outposted the beach, and established defensive positions on the high ground east of Hill 362C.

Even though no solid line of containment surrounded the pocket from the west or southwest, there was no activity on the part of the Japanese trapped within, aimed at either evading the encirclement or launching a direct assault against the Marines approaching them. Instead, the enemy followed the orders issued by General Kuribayashi to the letter. Remaining within their relatively secure pillboxes, dugouts, caves, and stationary tanks, the Japanese contested every foot of ground, continuing to make the Marines pay an exorbitant price for every yard gained.

In order to support the advance of 3/21, a 7.2-inch rocket launcher, mounted on a sled, was attached to the battalion. This improvisation was the idea of the VAC ordnance officer, who had four of the rocket launchers mounted on sleds when it was found that these weapons did not fit the M4A3 tank with which VAC was then equipped. The sled mount appeared to be the answer to the problem of getting this powerful supporting weapon into terrain which was impassable for tanks. Each rocket launcher, equipped with 20 tubes, was capable of delivering 640 pounds of TNT in a salvo. Effective range of the launcher was 250 yards. A volley of rockets, exploding within a narrow area, could be expected to have a gruesome and highly demoralizing effect upon the enemy.

As 3/21 approached the confines of the pocket, meeting very heavy resistance all the way, a rocket launcher was towed into action by a tank of Company C, 3d Tank Battalion. Altogether, 10 volleys were fired into the pocket with undetermined results. Only too soon did it become apparent that the efficiency of the launchers did not match the visual effect created by the exploding rockets. When the dust settled, the enemy still sat securely in his defenses, little the worse for wear. An official report of this action was to note with discouragement: "Nearly 200 of the 7.2-inch rockets were thrown into this pocket and

still our infantry was unable to go in and occupy the ground."[3]

Elsewhere in the 3d Division zone of advance, General Erskine was able to pull 2/21 out of the line for a much needed rest after elements of the 27th Marines of the 5th Division had moved behind the left flank of that battalion. To fill the gap thus created, 1/21 extended its lines northward and tied in with the adjacent 5th Division. At the same time that 1/9 and 3/9 were converging on Cushman's Pocket from the northeast, 3/21, then attached to the 9th Marines, was approaching the pocket from the southwest.

For the remainder of 11 March, 3d Division engineers and riflemen blasted caves and dugouts. Because of the proximity of the battle lines, General Erskine's division did not receive any artillery support that day, though 1/12 stood by for call fires if needed. Similarly, there was no air support for the same reasons, except that aerial observation was used to report the movements of 3d Division units. After nightfall the Japanese, employing hit-and-run tactics, emerged from their hideouts and stealthily approaching the Marine positions, hurled a few hand grenades, and then attempted to disappear as quietly as they had come. Such tactics succeeded only infrequently, and many of the infiltrators did not survive to tell of their exploits.

On the evening of 11 March, 3/21 was facing eastward with a frontage of 200-300 yards, while 1/9 and 3/9 were facing westward with a frontage of about 600 yards. A distance of 500-600 yards separated 3/21 from the two battalions of the 9th Marines. The 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, was in division reserve just east of Motoyama Village, where it was engaged in mopping up the enemy units on the southern fringe of the pocket. At the same time, the battalion formed a line some 400 yards long which acted as a stop-gap for any enemy troops seeking to escape westward from the encirclement.

Early on 12 March, compression of Cushman's Pocket continued, with 1/9 and 3/9 again hammering from the east while 3/21 formed the anvil along the western fringes. Lieutenant Colonel Boehm's 3d Battalion, advancing westward, apparently hit one of the developing weak spots in the enemy lines and made fair progress. The 1st Battalion to the south, on the other hand, ran into heavy resistance and was unable to keep pace with 3/9. Finally, an armored bulldozer carved out a path over which the Shermans could move to the front lines. Once the tanks had arrived there, eager infantrymen accurately pinpointed the enemy position for the tankers, and, in the words of the official report, "successful work in eliminating these positions was done by the tanks."[4]

In the zone of advance of the 1st and 3d Battalions, 9th Marines, extreme difficulty was encountered with the terrain which alternately featured steep banks and gulches filled with soft volcanic ash. The tankers constantly had to be on the alert for Japanese in the vicinity who were only too eager to seek death if there was a chance of

[3] *3d TkBn, AR,* 11Mar45.

[4] *Ibid.,* 12Mar45.

blowing up an American tank along with themselves. Tanks bogged down in the difficult terrain proved irresistible objectives for suicidal Japanese, not to mention their attractiveness as stationary targets of opportunity for the remaining enemy antitank guns. In addition to the above, the tankers found it very difficult to maintain direction since their movements were directed over the radio through remote control. Many of the enemy positions were so carefully camouflaged that as often as not Marines were almost on top of them before they were spotted. Once again, flamethrowers and demolitions proved their worth in this type of fighting. Progress was made on D plus 21, but in the rear of Cushman's Pocket, specifically along the crest of the ridge overlooking the east coast of Iwo Jima, resistance remained stubborn.

On the following day, 13 March, the pocket was further compressed when 1/9 and 3/9 continued their drive. Once again, the progress of the attack was impeded by caves, pillboxes, emplaced tanks, stone walls, and trenches. So masterfully had these defenses been camouflaged that "only those immediately in front of the troops could be located. . . . Out of about 150 of these positions (by later count), we knew roughly twenty or thirty of them."[5] Nevertheless, despite the initial advantage accruing to the defenders, the Marine incursion into the pocket could not be stopped. Sherman tanks, particularly those equipped with flamethrowers, lent the necessary emphasis to the advance of the two battalions. The flame tanks proved most effective in reducing a number of troublesome concrete emplacements. Still operating in very rough terrain, the Shermans moved only short distances at a time, and then only with the aid of an armored bulldozer.

As far as the 9th Marines was concerned, the performance of the Shermans was of crucial importance. The regimental commander, Colonel Kenyon, considered them "to be the most formidable supporting weapon at our disposal . . . tank support was the deciding factor in this action."[6]

By the end of D plus 22, Cushman's Pocket had shrunk to a mere 250 yards. The diminishing size of the pocket enabled the withdrawal of two units from the encircling force. On the morning of 13 March, 1/21 relieved those elements of 3/21 that were engaged on the line, and the latter battalion reverted to its parent regiment. Having cleared its zone of action by evening of the same day, 3/9 was pulled out of this area early on 14 March and shifted to the vicinity of Hill 362, where it commenced a systematic mop-up.

The morning of 14 March marked the beginning of the final drive aimed at eliminating Cushman's Pocket. The main burden of the attack now rested on 1/9, which pressed forward throughout the morning and by midafternoon had gained about 100 yards. Once again, the use of armor proved decisive in eliminating the stubborn enemy defenses. A flame tank belonging to Company B, 3d Tank Battalion, was hit

[5] Aurthur and Cohlmia, *The Third Marine Division*, pp. 246–247.

[6] *9th Mar AR*, p. 6.

by a rifle grenade which caused a small explosion inside the vehicle, wounding the driver and assistant driver.

At 1530, 2/9 reverted from division reserve to regimental control. Shortly before 1800, the battalion passed through 1/9 and launched an attack into the enemy position which by this time had already shrunk to about 150 square yards. Shermans of the 3d Tank Battalion played a dominant role in reducing whatever stubborn resistance remained, but a flame tank borrowed from the 5th Marine Division outdid all others. This tank was able to shoot a flame about 125 yards and, according to the official report, it "proved to be the weapon that worked when all others failed. Its long flame range and the area covered by one burst were the contributing factors to its remarkable success."[7] By the time the Shermans and flame tanks had roamed through the pocket, blasting and burning everything in their path, enemy resistance became sporadic and gradually began to flicker out. The stage was now set for the infantry to move in and finish the job.

What might have turned into a routine chore of mopping up turned instead into a rather protracted operation requiring all the skill the attacking force could muster. The action that 2/9 saw for the remainder of 14 March was subsequently described with the statement: "Inconclusive hand to hand fighting ensued until dark."[8] Hidden within this sentence, however, was a factor which was to be brought out elsewhere, namely the combination of physical and mental exhaustion that was taking its toll among Marines on Iwo Jima at this phase of operations as surely as had shells and bullets of the enemy. Few Marines who had made the initial landing were left during the final phase of the fighting. Their places had been taken by willing though inexperienced replacements, whose performance in combat left much to be desired. As one Marine historian was to put it:

> By this stage in the operation a large percentage of infantry troops were replacements who lacked the combat training and experience that prepared and conditioned men for closing with the enemy. Therefore, the skill and efficiency of assault Marines showed marked deterioration after three weeks of personnel attrition of original D-Day troop strength. During the final days of 3d Division efforts to smash remaining pockets, armor support made success possible. Gun tanks, armored bulldozers, and flame-throwing Shermans combined their operations to give the exhausted infantry a very effective and much needed assist.[9]

In dealing with the same subject matter, the battalion report was to state succinctly: "Almost all of the infantry were replacements. They lacked entirely the will to close with the enemy."[10] Needless to say, this statement was not intended as an indictment of the men involved, but of the replacement system which forced men to join strange squads and platoons whose teamwork was dissipated by heavy casualties. For the individual Japanese, who fought to the end among friends,

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[8] *2/9 AR*, p. 3.
[9] Bartley, *Iwo Monograph*, p. 181.
[10] *2/9 AR*, p. 3.

death was an infinitely less lonely and impersonal affair than for the average Marine replacement.

While bitter fighting continued in Cushman's Pocket, where one enemy position after the other was eliminated, a different type of action took place just to the east of the pocket on one of the ridges overlooking the east coast. Initially, this ridge had been seized on D plus 16 in the conventional manner —direct attack with flamethrowers, small arms, and demolitions—by 3d Division Marines, who blasted this objective like hundreds of others and then moved on, leaving behind blackened and battlescarred cave entrances that looked sinister even in broad daylight. Several days passed and the front lines had moved on to the north when this desolate ridge came to life again.

The first indication that something was going awry in this so-called rear area came when a heavy Japanese machine gun, hidden somewhere in the previously cleared ridge, opened up on an unsuspecting Marine carrying ammunition and killed him. Other Marines near the ridge soon became startled victims of the enemy fire from the ridge which grew in intensity as small arms joined the machine gun. The next victims were stretcher bearers and their wounded burden. Eventually, tanks and demolitions men arrived and the dangerous, time-consuming job of clearing the ridge had to be repeated. To quote one report:

> Despite their preponderance of weapons the Marines found that there were too many holes. They would attack one only to be shot at from another one half a dozen feet away. Moreover, the ridge was not a straight wall but, in many places, curved like an S. Entranceways protected each other, so that Marines would be hit in the back from holes guarding the one they were assaulting. The inter-connecting tunnels inside the ridge also allowed the Japs to play deadly tag with the Marines. They would shoot out of one hole. By the time Marines got close enough to that hole, the Japs had left it and were shooting from another one twenty yards away and higher up in the wall. The Marines had to post guards at every hole they could see in order to attack any one of them. The tunnels also curved and twisted inside the ridge. The Japs could escape the straight trajectory weapons and grenades thrown into the cave entrances, merely by running back into the interior.[11]

Finally, flamethrowers squirted their lethal liquid into the caves, which became boiling infernos. A number of the Japanese who had reoccupied the ridge were incinerated. Others, their clothing and bodies aflame, tried to escape, only to fall prey to accurate Marine bullets. In desperation, some of the enemy trapped inside the ridge blew themselves up with hand grenades. Before long:

> . . . the scene became wild and terrible. More Japs rushed screaming from the caves. They tumbled over the rocks, their clothes and bodies burning fiercely. Soon the flamethrowers paused. A Marine lifted himself cautiously into view. There were no shots from the caves. A Jap with his clothes in rags hunched himself out of one hole, his arms upraised. The Marines stood up behind the rocks and waved to him to come out. The Jap indicated that there were more who would like to surrender. The Marines motioned him to tell them to come out.[12]

In all, 40 men emerged from the ridge, many of them Koreans. Marines

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[11] Henri *et al*, *Marines on Iwo Jima*, p. 231.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 232.

shouldered their weapons as the prisoners were marched to the rear. The tanks left the erstwhile battlefield and quiet descended over the area. Yet this peaceful interlude was soon to be shattered again a few hours later when the Japanese, moving through underground tunnels, reoccupied the ridge. One of the first victims proved to be Sergeant Reid Chamberlain, a Marine with an unusual background. As a member of the U.S. Army, he had witnessed the fall of Bataan and Corregidor, but instead of surrendering to the enemy, he had turned his activities towards the organization and training of Filipino guerrillas. He received a commission in the U.S. Army and returned to the United States, where he promptly resigned his commission and enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps.

En route to the forward positions of the 21st Marines, Sergeant Chamberlain was walking past the long, rocky ridge, unaware that there were any enemy in the vicinity. Suddenly, there were several shots, one of which hit the sergeant in the head. This incident took place in front of several Marine news correspondents, some of whom also drew enemy fire. When help arrived for the sergeant, it was too late. As one of the correspondents present was to put it later, speaking of the enemy:

> In an instant they had claimed one of our best men. Chamberlain's wonderful war record had ended abruptly. After so many heroic deeds, it seemed an added tragedy that he was killed while doing nothing but walking. There was nothing anybody could do about it.[13]

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 250–251.

Efforts to employ flamethrowers against the ridge during the fading hours of daylight proved unavailing, since all of these weapons were committed in the front lines. At dusk, elements of the 9th Marines bivouacked on the ridge, which had become dormant again. Apprised of the situation, the commanding officer posted sentries behind the rocks facing the ridge, ready to fire on anything that moved.

Hardly had dusk settled over the area, when there was stealthy movement on the slopes of the ridge as individual Japanese emerged from previously undetected cracks and holes. Marines opened fire on these blurred silhouettes. The results of this fire became quickly evident as some of the Japanese who had been hit groaned with pain, others jerked spasmodically and then lay silent while the remainder, realizing that they were trapped, attempted to burrow their way back into the ground. A few who managed to get back under cover committed suicide.

Shortly before midnight there was a tremendous blast which hurled huge pieces of rock through the air and shook the entire area. Some of the Marines were buried in volcanic ash and debris up to their necks and had to be dug out. Others were hit by chunks of concrete that rained down throughout the area. The ridge itself became a mass of fire and disintegrating matter. While the Marines were still engaged in assessing what had happened and trying to aid each other as best they could, Japanese began to emerge from their holes on the ridge, some of them dazed, others carrying antipersonnel mines tied around their waists. A group

of five Japanese, running along the wall of the ridge, was spotted by the light of the flames and all were instantly killed.

At dawn it became apparent that, despite the explosion and subsequent bitter fighting, the Marines had suffered only one serious casualty. There might have been more if men, who found themselves buried in debris and volcanic ash, had not been rescued by fellow Marines before they were smothered. It was subsequently discovered that the enemy had used land mines and aerial bombs to blow up the ridge.

On 15 March organized resistance in the 3d Division sector had just about ended. General Erskine's division was ordered to relieve elements of the 5th Marine Division on the right of that division and attack to the northwest.[14] Early on 16 March, D plus 25, the 21st Marines took over an 800-yard sector on the right of General Rockey's division. The boundary between the two divisions now extended from a point 400 yards east of Hill 362B to the northern tip of Iwo Jima near Kitano Point.

Following the relief of 3/27 and 2/26 by the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 21st Marines, that regiment prepared to attack to the north in conjunction with elements of the 5th Marine Division. A 20-minute preparation by the 3d and 5th Division artillery, as well as the 155s of the corps artillery, preceded the jumpoff, which was scheduled for 0815, and continued for 10 minutes following H-Hour. The rolling barrage, which marked the final phase of the preparatory fire moved only 50 yards ahead of the assault units and then moved forward at 100-yard intervals in conjunction with the advance. In addition to the shore-based artillery, a destroyer offshore shelled northern Iwo for nearly an hour and then stood by to deliver call fires. Fighters stationed on the Southern Airfield were available for air support, but the restricted area in which the final operations on Iwo Jima took place precluded their employment.

The attack of 1/21 made good headway against only light resistance. On the other hand, 2/21 encountered heavy small arms fire and extremely difficult terrain, both of which combined to retard its advance. Japanese, fighting from caves and spider trap positions, offered their customary obstinate resistance. Some of them, obviously bent on suicide, charged tanks or groups of Marines with grenades and demolition charges. For the most part, such sorties were marked more by fierce fanaticism than cool logic, and most of them failed before the human bomb could inflict much damage on the Marines or their armor. During the early afternoon both battalions reached the coast near Kitano Point. From that point, it became a matter of mopping up such enemy as remained in caves and other shelters.

By the end of 16 March, General Erskine's men had completed the elimination of Cushman's Pocket and, at the same time, had completed their mission in helping out the 5th Marine Division. This action, for all practical purposes, ended combat operations of the 3d Marine Division on Iwo Jima. Late on D plus 25, General Erskine announced

[14] VAC OpO No. 23-45 with changes, dtd 15Mar45.

that all enemy resistance in the zone of action of his division had ceased.[15]

In fact, even though Cushman's Pocket had been overrun, Colonel Nishi, commanding the *26th Tank Regiment*, was still inside with about 450 men, all that had remained of his command. Of these, 300 were wounded and few of them were able to move on their own. From their underground hideout, the Japanese could hear their erstwhile comrades, now prisoners of war and working for the Americans, calling on Colonel Nishi to surrender. But such appeals fell on deaf ears. Early on 19 March, with only two days' food supply remaining, Colonel Nishi ordered his men to make a final charge against the Americans. Only 60 were able to heed his call. Sometime between 19 and 22 March, Colonel Nishi died. Whether he was felled by an American bullet or by his own hand has never been clearly determined though his widow finds solace in the thought "that he died at the foot of the northern cliffs, and that ocean waves have scattered his remains."[16]

4TH MARINE DIVISION MOPUP[17]

Following its impressive gains on 10 March, which had taken some of its assault units to the vicinity of the east coast, the 4th Marine Division continued the attack on the following morning. Jumping off with the 23d and 25th Marines at 0730, the division continued its advance to the coast. (See Map X, Map Section). On the left the 23d Marines reached its objective rapidly, overrunning such enemy resistance as flared up in its path. In the wake of the regiment's advance, engineers sealed caves and constructed a road. In late afternoon, 1/23 relieved 2/23 and pulled back to the same positions held during the preceding night. Combat patrols were dispatched into the beach areas to search out enemy stragglers or holdouts.

The advance of the 25th Marines did not progress as smoothly as that of the 23d. Almost immediately after the jumpoff, Colonel Lanigan's regiment ran into heavy fire from rockets, mortars, and small arms. As a result, little ground was gained. An explanation of the stubborn resistance came during the afternoon when the interrogation of a captured Japanese revealed that about 300 of the enemy were holed up in caves and tunnels directly in front of the regiment. The prisoner further volunteered that a Japanese brigadier general was trapped inside the pocket.[18]

In describing the area of the pocket, 4th Division records had this to say:

> It was at once apparent that this area was the final defensive position of the enemy in this zone. The terrain in this area was not normal in any respect; it could be classified only as a terrain freak of nature. However, it was well suited for the construction of cave positions, and the Japanese had utilized this advantage to

[15] *3d MarDiv G-3 PerRpt* No. 31, dtd 16-Mar45.

[16] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 267.

[17] Additional material in this section is derived from: *23d Mar OpRpt; 24th Mar OpRpt; 25th Mar UJnl; 25th Mar OpRpt; 14th Mar OpRpt; 1/23 OpRpt; 2/23 OpRpt; 2/24 OpRpt; 1/25 OpRpt; 2/25 OpRpt; 3/25 OpRpt.*

[18] *4th MarDiv D-2 PerRpt* No. 68, dtd 11-Mar45.

> the fullest extent. Their scheme of maneuver was to hold up the advance as long as it was possible, and to inflict as many casualties as they could before they were forced to adopt their usual suicidal tactics.[19]

The terrain itself consisted of a series of deep crevices and steep ridges that extended generally to the southeast towards the coast. Smaller gullies cutting through the area created a maze of compartments and cross compartments. The rough rocky outcroppings and scrubby vegetation that had survived the extensive shelling provided the Japanese with excellent cover and concealment.

That the elimination of this small but tough pocket of resistance would be a difficult and time-consuming operation had already become apparent to 4th Division Marines by the end of 11 March. The presence of one of the big fish in the pocket, General Senda, commander of the *2d Mixed Brigade*, made it virtually certain that the remnants of that unit would fight to the bitter end with undiminished fanaticism.[20]

Even though there was only a marginal possibility that General Senda might be persuaded to surrender, intelligence personnel of the 4th Marine Division decided on 12 March that such an attempt was worth the effort. A prisoner of war volunteered to lead a detail of Marines to the vicinity of General Senda's presumed hideout during the early morning of D plus 21. Under sniper fire, which eventually caused a casualty, Marines set up an amplifier-speaker system over which an appeal to surrender was to be broadcast. For more than two hours the psychological warfare team failed in its efforts to start a power generator which would have provided the electricity needed to drive the amplifier. A second motor-driven power plant failed to start and due to this technical breakdown the entire operation had to be called off. Whether General Senda might have heeded the appeal promising and guaranteeing him and his men the best of treatment, remains doubtful. Certainly none of the other Japanese commanders approached in this fashion on Iwo Jima proved responsive.

Following the two-hour delay engendered by the abortive surrender appeal, Marines of the 4th Division launched their attack into the pocket at 0900 with 2/25, 3/25, and 2/24. The scheme of maneuver called for 2/25 to attack down the draws toward the coast while 3/25 and 2/24 were to support the attack with heavy weapons fire. This fire, furnished by bazookas, antitank grenades, and 60mm mortars, had to substitute for artillery support. As of 12 March, the limited area occupied by the enemy in the 4th Division zone no longer constituted a practicable target area, and orders had been issued to secure all 4th Division artillery.

The Japanese, firmly entrenched in ravines, caves, and pillboxes, resisted in their customary tenacious fashion, with the result that only minimal progress was made. The character of the terrain precluded the employment of tanks,

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[19] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, p. 50.

[20] For a detailed breakdown of General Senda's military career, see *Japanese Defense Agency Comment.*

forcing Marines to flush the enemy out of his emplacements one or two at a time. In addition to the slow progress, this type of fighting was, as usual, expensive for the attacking force. By evening of 12 March, the combat efficiency of General Cates' division had dropped to a new low of 36 percent.[21].

The drive to eliminate General Senda's pocket continued on 13 and 14 March along the same lines as on the 12th. Progress throughout remained agonizingly slow, due to the depletion of personnel as much as enemy resistance. While the pocket was being reduced, the 23d Marines began a systematic mopping up of its area from the beach towards the regimental rear. At the same time, the regiment took care of other urgent business, notably the evacuation of the friendly dead, the burial of enemy dead, and the general policing of the area.

By 15 March, the slow and deliberate advance of the 25th Marines was beginning to bear dividends. Even though the enemy continued to offer desperate resistance, there were signs that his power to resist had been considerably reduced. Since 2/25 had become so depleted in strength that it required relief, 2/24 was ordered into the line. A provisional company composed of headquarters personnel and members of the 81mm mortar platoon of 1/25 was organized to take over the area previously held by 2/24. Colonel Lanigan ordered his men to press the attack into the pocket regardless of contact. At the same time, flame tanks stationed on the road paralleling the east coast of Iwo fired northwestward into the inaccessible draws with good effect.

This drive on D plus 24 resulted in a net gain of 200 yards. More important, it scored a deep penetration of the left flank of the pocket, where General Senda had established his strongest positions. In the midst of this bitter fighting, repeated attempts were made to induce the surrender of the Japanese, but none of them fell on fertile soil. The destruction of one cave after another, together with their occupants, continued.

Increased evidence that the pocket could not hold out much longer was received during the night of 15-16 March, when a group of 50-60 Japanese attempted to break out of the encirclement. Six of the enemy were killed and the remainder were driven back into the caves from which they had emerged. When the 25th Marines resumed the attack at 0630 on 16 March, the Marines drew rifle and machine gun fire, and hand grenades exploded all around them. Nevertheless, the Japanese now fought without any real organization and such resistance as was offered came from small, isolated groups. By midmorning, the assault battalions had fought their way through to the beach road and Colonel Lanigan declared all organized resistance in his zone of action ended as of 1030.[22]

General Senda's body was never found; prisoners volunteered that he had committed suicide on 15 March. As the din of battle receded, all that remained in the hotly contested area were the torn and battered terrain, large

[21] *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, p. 53.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

numbers of enemy dead, and the scarred and blackened cave entrances. In six days of bitter fighting, General Senda's pocket had finally been reduced. The Japanese had fought practically to extinction. The 4th Marine Division had paid for the ground with 833 casualties.

5TH MARINE DIVISION DRIVE TO KITANO POINT[23]

Elimination of the enemy centers of resistance in eastern Iwo Jima left only one area in the hands of the Japanese. This was to be the final enemy pocket of resistance in the very northern part of the island, where General Kuribayashi with about 1,500 men was preparing to make his final stand. The Japanese pocket, squarely in the path of the 5th Marine Division's advance, occupied approximately one square mile between Kita Village and Kitano Point on the northwest coast. Not by coincidence, it also comprised the worst ground on the island.

The badlands of northern Iwo, as this area may well be called, consisted of thousands of soft sandstone outcroppings. Here, the Japanese had dug in with their customary efficiency. Each underground position had been provided with multiple entrances and exits to protect the defenders against fire and to permit their escape if one or more of the entrances were sealed. These defenses had been dug to such a depth that flamethrowers could neither burn out their occupants nor exhaust the supply of oxygen available within this defensive system.

In addition to the excellent cover, the Japanese also had the advantage of effective concealment. Their uniforms blended closely with the color of the sandstone. They were familiar with the maze of tunnels that criss-crossed the entire area and could find their way around in the darkness as well as in the daytime. Fighting this type of defensive action, General Kuribayashi could continue to hang on with the austere means at hand. He had no logistics problem, for anything that had to be moved, be it men or supplies, travelled underground. Such vital supplies as ammunition, food, water and medicine all had been stockpiled underground long before the first Marines began to approach the northern portion of the island. In addition to his extensive preparations for combat, General Kuribayashi had seen to it that the knowledge of the entire defense layout was limited to very few of his men, most of whom were told only enough to be familiar with the immediate defenses in their vicinity. As a result, few of the enemy knew anything about the command setup of their own forces and most of them did not know the precise location of Kuribayashi's command post.

For General Rockey's men, the battle for northwestern Iwo meant a continuation of previous difficulties aggravated by worsening terrain. Once again, they would have to seize the forward face of a ridge, fight their way across the crest, then continue to fight their way down the reverse slope, all the while drawing fire from the front, the flanks, from the

[23] Additional material in this section is derived from: *TF 56 OpRpt; 26th Mar AR; 27th Mar UJnl; 27th Mar AR; 28th Mar R-2 Jnl; 28th Mar AR; 13th Mar AR; 1/26 AR; 2/26 AR; 3/26 UJnl; 3/26 AR; 3/27 UJnl; 3/27 AR.*

ENEMY POSITIONS *near Nishi Village under fire. Note burning M-4 tank at left. (USMC 142316)*

PRISONER *captured by 5th Marine Division near Hill 165 is escorted to the rear for interrogation. (USMC 114881)*

rear, and, in some instances, even from below. The latter circumstance was perhaps the most demoralizing, as pointed out by one participant in the fighting:

> Perhaps worst of all, every Marine commander fighting through this sandstone jungle knew that underneath him were healthy Japanese who would be out that night to harass his rear, steal his supplies, either recover or booby-trap their own dead, and booby-trap his dead if he couldn't get them out first.
>
> And so the battle for Iwo Jima was ending as it had begun, at close quarters with Marine forces stripped of the advantages of their fire power, fighting an enemy who had been indoctrinated since childhood that the greatest honor he would ever know was to die for his Emperor. He could not be threatened out of his position by encirclement or by superior force; he could not be induced to surrender because of his hopeless position—tactically or strategically, he had to be killed.[24]

The 5th Marine Division drive into the biggest enemy pocket remaining on the island got under way on 11 March. The attack was preceded by a 10-minute preparation, which continued until 20 minutes after the jumpoff. The half-hour barrage, fired by the 12th, 13th, and 14th Marines, as well as the corps artillery, provided an impressive spectacle but once again, in accordance with previous experience, was generally ineffective against enemy personnel who huddled in well-protected cave positions.

As the division attacked, with the 27th Marines on the right and the 28th on the left, the men faced a double foe: the Japanese and the terrain, each being equally formidable. The 27th Marines, with 1/26 attached, was able to carve out limited gains of 200 yards and to continue the systematic destruction of enemy cave positions. This was the job of small infantry-demolition teams, which operated more or less on their own, blasting their way forward as they went along. Operating on the division left, the 28th Marines encountered similar difficulties as Marines assaulted individual strongpoints guarding a rocky gorge to the front. The significance of this gorge, which was approximately 200 yards wide and 700 yards long, was not yet apparent to Colonel Liversedge's Marines. However, it was clear that the Japanese had taken great precautions to effectively cover all approaches leading into the gorge with rifle and machine gun fire.

While the enemy generally remained underground and invisible throughout the day, the entire division front erupted into action shortly after nightfall and remained that way throughout the night. Small groups of Japanese continuously attempted to infiltrate the Marine lines. A few were successful in reaching the 81mm mortar positions of 3/27. Seven of the infiltrators were killed in this attempt, one of them wearing a Marine uniform and equipped with an M-1 rifle.[25] Around 2100, an enemy concentration opposite the 28th Marines was broken up by an artillery and mortar barrage which killed 26 of the enemy. Sporadic rifle fire and grenade duels continued for the remainder of the night.

The arrival of daylight on D plus 21 returned the initiative to the Marines, who, once again, carried the battle to the enemy. On this occasion, the day

[24] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, p. 107.

[25] *5th MarDiv AR*, p. 26.

started off with several air strikes against enemy positions just south of Kitano Point. One of the 500-pound bombs aimed at a blockhouse missed its target, only to fall into the mouth of a cave, where a tremendous explosion caused not only this entrance, but various others connected to this cave system, to belch fire and smoke. A similar incident occurred during the early afternoon, when a 500-pound bomb hit a cave entrance and created a violent explosion with smoke observed coming out of caves 200-300 yards away.

For the remainder of the day, the course of the fighting mirrored that of D plus 20. The enemy continued to resist from caves, emplacements, and spider foxholes, frequently holding his fire until Marines had approached to within a few feet of his positions. With the support tanks, the 27th Marines made slow progress against a network of pillboxes and prepared positions. In the course of this advance, between 15 and 18 pillboxes were destroyed, but overall progress still had to be measured in a few yards. The Japanese also had learned a few tricks in recent operations and, in order to escape American air strikes and artillery fire, attempted to hug the Marine lines. Backbone of the Japanese defense were his machine guns, rifles, and knee mortars, all of which continued to exact a continuous toll in Marine lives for each foot of the advance.

During the afternoon of 12 March, Company B of the Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion scouted Kama and Kangoku Rocks, situated close to the northwestern shore of Iwo Jima. Intermittently throughout the campaign, Marines advancing up the west coast had been harassed from suspected Japanese positions on these two islands. There was no doubt that even if the enemy had not permanently stationed artillery there, they harbored keen-eyed observers who had helped to harass shipping approaching the western beaches during the early phase of the operation. As the Marines neared the two islands on 12 vehicles furnished by the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion, they were greeted by silence. It was decided that a landing on the island would be made at 0900 on the following morning.

These landings, carried out by 6 officers and 94 men, proceeded without incident. The Marines went ashore first on Kama Rock and subsequently on Kangoku, the larger island. On the latter, there was evidence of previous enemy occupancy in the form of several caves and stone emplacements, but no Japanese were present to offer any resistance. Having completed its mission, the reconnaissance company withdrew from the islands.

In a report issued on 12 March, the 5th Marine Division intelligence officer estimated that at least 1,000 Japanese were still defending the northern end of Iwo Jima and concluded: ". . . there is no shortage of manpower, weapons, or ammunition in the area the Japanese have left to defend."[26] Actually, the battle was beginning to reach General Kuribayashi's very doorstep. As one account was to relate it:

> On March 13, a patrol from the 26th Regiment came very near to Kuribayashi, peering into the cave in which he sat, near

[26] *5th MarDiv D-2 PerRpt* No. 22, dtd 12-Mar45.

> the eastern end of the Gorge. The General's orderly quickly blew out the candles and wrapped the General in a blanket. "Thank you," Kuribayashi said, and walked deeper into the cave. The Marines, one carrying a flamethrower walked a little way into the cave then turned and went out. The orderly sighed.[27]

While the Japanese on northern Iwo Jima had been suffering badly in the battle of attrition that was now reaching its climax, the Marines of all three divisions had hardly fared any better. As assault troops of General Rockey's division were beginning to close in on the final enemy pocket, the men wearily attacking the ridges above the gorge were tired to the point of exhaustion and many of them found it difficult to remain on their feet. Few veterans of the early battles were left, and death had reaped a grim harvest among the men who had gone ashore on the island 22 days before. Companies were now reduced to platoon size. Most of the aggressive and experienced small unit leaders had long since become casualties. Gaps in the decimated ranks had been filled with replacements who lacked combat experience that would enable them to fight and survive.

On 14 March it became apparent that the slow, step-by-step advance of the 27th Marines finally had cracked the strong enemy positions along the northeastern coast of Iwo Jima. Since the main ridge lines in this area ran from the center of the island to the sea on the west coast, General Rockey decided that the most practical direction of attack henceforth would be from east to west. As a result, the 28th Marines was ordered to hold its present line while the 27th Marines was to shift its direction of attack westward. In the center of the division line the 26th Marines took over a two-battalion front and was ordered to attack northward with 3/26 on the left and 2/26 on the right.

Enemy resistance was less obstinate on D plus 23 than it had been during the preceding days and the 27th Marines, with 2/26 attached, gained up to 600 yards. The attack was supported by tanks which were able to assist the infantry after armored tankdozers had carved routes of approach to the front lines for them. The official report, speaking of the flame tanks, pointed out:

> . . . this was the one weapon that caused the Japs to leave their caves and rock crevices and run. On many occasions the Japs attempted to charge our flame tanks with shaped charges and other explosives. Few of these attempts were successful.[28]

Other developments on Iwo Jima on 14 March gave clear evidence that the end of the long battle was approaching. In mid-morning, five Army Air Forces planes bombed and strafed Japanese positions in front of 3/27 for what proved to be the last air support mission over Iwo Jima. The diminishing size of General Kuribayashi's pocket rendered all further air support impractical. Limited support until the end of the operation would continue to be furnished by artillery and destroyers, and even these supporting arms soon found it difficult to furnish fire in the small area still remaining under enemy control.

While compression of the northern pocket was under way, a ceremony was

[27] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, pp. 270–271.

[28] *5th MarDiv AR*, p. 27.

taking place at 0930 on 14 March at General Schmidt's headquarters. It was not an elaborate proceeding; in fact, its stark simplicity underscored the significance of the long awaited event. In the presence of flag and general officers of the fleet and landing force, assembled around a flagpole erected in these stark surroundings, the official flag raising on Iwo Jima was held. Among those present were General Holland Smith, Admirals Turner and Hill, and Generals Schmidt, Erskine, Cates, Rockey, and Major General Chaney, representing the Army Garrison Force.[29] After the reading of an official proclamation in which the United States officially suspended the powers of government of the Japanese Empire and took over the occupation of the island, the flag was raised at the same time that the one on top of Mount Suribachi was taken down. Upon completion of the ceremony, General Holland Smith and his staff departed from the island by air.[30]

The night from 14-15 March was marked by continuous enemy activity directed against the 5th Division lines. Around 0200, close to 100 Japanese attempted to infiltrate the positions of 3/27. In the ensuing firefight, 15 of the enemy were killed, most of them by mortar fire.[31] Around the same time, a small number of Japanese approached the lines of 2/26 and started tossing hand grenades. At dawn, the action shifted to 3/26, where 30 of the enemy were discovered attempting to enter caves southwest of Kitano Point. Half of this group were killed, the remainder committed suicide.[32]

The 5th Division attack continued on 15 March. On the right, the 27th Marines advanced 400 yards and reduced enemy resistance in this sector to sporadic small arms fire. In the center, the 26th Marines made smaller but equally significant gains, carving out an advance of 200 yards. On the division left, in front of the 28th Marines, enemy reaction remained determined and formidable. At this time, enemy resistance was still centered in two areas: the steep draw that extended northwest to the sea across the front of the 28th Marines and the strong core of resistance in front of the 26th Marines, just east of the draw.

Within the diminishing pocket, General Kuribayashi and the surviving members of his staff were still in radio contact with the Japanese on Chichi Jima. They were also able to listen to the "Song of Iwo Jima," especially broadcast from Tokyo for the Iwo Jima garrison. Already on the morning of 15 March, General Kuribayashi had announced that the situation was very dangerous and that his strength was down to 900 men.[33] By the evening of the following day, his strength had been reduced to 500. Clearly, the end was

[29] The VAC chief of staff recalled that "while the ceremony of raising the flag was in progress near VAC headquarters, the ground was shaking around us from the bombardment of the unsecured area by nearby Corps artillery." *Rogers ltr.*

[30] *TF 56 OpRpt*, pp. 10–11.

[31] *5th MarDiv AR*, p. 27.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Horie Rpt*, p. 10.

drawing near. General Kuribayashi summoned the commander of the *145th Infantry Regiment,* Colonel Ikeda, to see how much longer resistance could continue. When the regimental commander informed him that it would all be over in another day or so, General Kuribayashi admonished him to be certain that the regimental colors were burned lest they fall into American hands.

Behind the Marine lines, additional signs of progress were becoming evident as the naval construction engineers put the final touches on the restoration of the Central Airfield. Even though the runways remained unpaved, they were usable and the field was about to become operational. Additional gasoline storage facilities had been completed, and the carpenters of the 5th Division were already busily engaged in building crates in which the division's equipment would be shipped. At the southern end of Iwo Jima, a dirt road leading to the top of Mount Suribachi had been completed and it was now possible to make the trip up by jeep or bulldozer.

Reduction of the northern pocket continued on 16 March. During this final phase of the operation, General Rockey's division was supported by elements of the 3d Marine Division, which passed through the 27th Marines and took over a sector on the right of the 5th Division. Attacking to the north, General Erskine's men reached the north coast shortly before 1400.

The 26th Marines, with 3/28 attached, attacked with three battalions abreast. The advance progressed slowly against heavy rifle fire, as it proceeded over rugged and rocky ground, where all movement was extremely difficult. However, it was a sign of the progress that had already been made that the volume of enemy machine gun fire had greatly diminished, as had the number of caves that were encountered. Nevertheless, there was still an abundance of spider foxholes and positions in the rocky outcrops which permitted the enemy to inflict a deadly fire from close range. In the course of the day, the 26th Marines advanced 200 yards. The 28th Marines remained in position along the southern rim of the rocky gorge and continued the reduction of enemy defenses to its immediate front and flanks. Losses of the 5th Marine Division at this time consisted of 89 officers and 1,993 men killed, 249 officers and 5,710 enlisted men wounded, and 3 officers and 128 men missing. Combat efficiency was estimated at 30 percent.[34] The division had sustained a total of 8,162 casualties in 25 days of fighting.

At 1800 on 16 March, Iwo Jima was officially declared secured. Three hours earlier, the 13th Marines had fired its last rounds, since the regiment's guns could no longer furnish supporting fires in the limited area comprising the remaining pockets of resistance. It now became incumbent on the mixed 3d and 5th Division assault forces to complete the occupation of the island with all possible dispatch, a task easier contemplated than accomplished.

Following its relief by the 21st Marines on 16 March, the 27th Marines re-

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[34] *5th MarDiv AR,* p. 28.

organized its badly depleted units into three battalions, each consisting of two rifle companies and a headquarters company. A composite battalion, consisting of a headquarters company and four rifle companies, was formed under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Donn J. Robertson. A small remainder of the 27th Marines stayed in division reserve until the end of the operation. The unit mopped up in the rear area and prepared to leave the island. The composite battalion, numbering 460 men, subsequently was to be attached to the 26th Marines, where it would participate in eliminating the final enemy positions on northern Iwo Jima.

All of the records dealing with this final phase of the operation emphasize the state of exhaustion in which the men found themselves. According to one account:

> That the Division still moved forward at all was a credit to the men and their leaders, but the fearful strain of days in the line was showing up in every unit. Men were getting careless, exposing themselves to fire when they were tired. Too, many of the men now were replacements, men who fought gallantly and brought credit to themselves and the Division, but who were not, nevertheless, as highly trained as the Division's original men had been and for that reason probably took slightly heavier losses.[35]

A sustained effort was made on the part of General Rockey's division to keep up morale. Baked goods and fruit juice were sent to the units in the line; the wounded were evacuated and the dead buried with all possible dispatch. A division newspaper was circulated among the frontline units, and such articles of clothing and toilet articles as were available were sent up to the lines. Some of the more lucky Marines even enjoyed the luxury of hot showers. But, despite such amenities, the report concludes "Iwo Jima remained an unclean, evil little island, an island that these men would never forget, however much they would have liked to."[36]

Despite their ebbing strength and often only through the application of sheer will power, those men of the 3d and 5th Marine Divisions still able to move on their feet and carry a weapon now entered the final phase of the battle for Iwo Jima. Fought in a narrow corner of the island, the final struggle would prove every bit as difficult as the early phase of the operation: death came no easier now than in the beginning.

With the end clearly approaching and under steadily increasing pressure from the advancing Marines, General Kuribayashi on 16 or 17 March left his headquarters, housed in a large dome-shaped concrete structure, and moved to a cave occupied by Colonel Ikeda and Admiral Ichimaru, the remaining senior officers of the Iwo Jima garrison following the death of Major General Senda and Captain Inouye in the 4th Division sector. From this cave, situated near the southeastern end of the gorge, the Japanese officers could do little but exhort their men to continue resistance to the last. This cave was still linked to Chichi Jima by radio, and thus the final days of Japanese resistance on Iwo Jima have become a matter of record.

[35] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, p. 113.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

BATTLE FOR THE GORGE AND FINAL OPERATIONS[37]

The final battle for Iwo Jima began on 17 March, D plus 26, when 1/26 reached the north coast and pivoted to the southwest towards the gorge which had already been blocked by the 28th Marines for the past few days. (See Map XI, Map Section), It was here that General Kuribayashi had determined to make his final stand, and he had chosen his final position with great care. The gorge, 700 yards long and 200-500 yards wide, would have been difficult to approach even under normal conditions. Outcrops of rocks subdivided the ravine into minor draws that greatly impeded all movement. The Japanese commander had taken care to insure that all routes of approach leading into the gorge were covered by machine gun and rifle fire from positions that were all but invisible to the approaching Marines.

Units of the 5th Marine Division preparing to offer the coup de grace to the final enemy position on the island would have to use their last strength in attaining this objective. A brief breakdown of casualties in this connection speaks for itself:

> Our own losses at this time had been extremely heavy. The average battalion which landed with 36 officers and 885 enlisted, now had about 16 officers and 300 enlisted from the original battalion. Most of the company commanders, platoon leaders, and squad leaders had become casualties and many platoons were commanded by Corporals or PFC's. Assault squads were depleted.[38]

Plans for reducing the final pocket called for the 28th Marines, with elements of the 5th Pioneer Battalion and the division reconnaissance company attached, to occupy a blocking position along the southern rim of the pocket while the 26th Marines, in conjunction with 3/28 and 3/27, was to advance into the gorge from the north and east. Because of the depleted strength of the units and the condition of the men, assigned zones of action were relatively narrow. In their drive against the pocket on 17 March, 3/26 and 3/28 made slight gains in the northeastern perimeter of the pocket, but once again their progress could be measured in yards.

A drama of a different sort was enacted on the island on D plus 26. On the preceding day, prisoners captured by General Erskine's men had conveyed to their captors the whereabouts of General Kuribayashi and his staff, and, acting upon this information, General Erskine decided to make an attempt to induce these officers to surrender. Realizing that a direct appeal to General Kuribayashi would be fruitless, General Erskine instead dispatched a message to Colonel Ikeda, commanding the *145th Infantry Regiment.* The message was handed to two prisoners of war who, carrying cigarettes and rations, proceeded into the gorge, fully aware of the importance of their mission. As they trudged off on this unusual errand, the pair was handed a walkie-talkie over

[37] Additional material in this section is derived from: *1/28 AR; 2/28 AR; 3/28 AR;* 5th Pioneeer Bn UJnl, 7–23Mar45; U. S. Army Forces in the Pacific Ocean Areas Rpt, Iwo Jima, Feb-Mar45, dtd 4Feb46; *VAC Shore Party AR;* Clive Howard and Joe Whitley, *One Damned Island After Another* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 1946.

[38] *5th MarDiv AR,* p. 29.

which they were to maintain contact with the 3d Division Language Section.

As they slowly continued on their journey, the two emissaries crossed lines and soon made contact with groups of Japanese, apparently without arousing anyone's suspicion. Several radio messages were received by 3d Division personnel indicating that the prisoners were getting close to their objective. At this point, the couriers stopped all further transmissions. One of them, who had incurred a leg wound, dropped out, but the other continued and six hours after embarking on his bizarre mission, reached the headquarters cave. There, he turned the message over to one of the sentries who passed it on to the regimental commander. Upon learning that Ikeda had taken the message in to General Kuribayashi, the prisoner lost his nerve and beat a hasty retreat.

As soon as he had rejoined his fellow courier, the radio trasmissions to the 3d Division resumed and the Marines were informed that the two were on their way back. Upon reaching the Marine lines at the rim of the gorge, the prisoners thought themselves safe and were more than slightly disturbed at the rude reception accorded to them by 5th Division Marines, who were unaware of General Erskine's psychological warfare effort. The situation was finally straightened out before the two messengers came to any harm, though it took some convincing of the skeptical 5th Division Marines that the two Japanese were indeed working for General Erskine.

The practical results of this surrender attempt, as in previous instances, were nil. None of the high-ranking Japanese officers on Iwo Jima surrendered, and the battle of attrition continued to take its slow and agonizing course. Even though nearly all of the Japanese on Iwo Jima, under General Kuribayashi's dynamic leadership, would fight to the end, there were some who heeded the repeated appeals to surrender. American planes dropped propaganda leaflets, and the artillery fired shells filled with surrender leaflets and passes. For the Japanese soldier on Iwo Jima, surrender was not an easy matter. He could count on being executed by his own people if caught with American propaganda on his person. Surrender might mean that he could never again return to his homeland and face his compatriots. And, last but not least, he had no guarantee that the Marines would honor their promise of fair treatment once he turned himself in to them. No wonder that the Japanese were hesitant to take the final and irreversible step in view of the uncertainty surrounding it. A sampling of 65 prisoners of war showed that 53 had been influenced in their decision to give up by some contact with American propaganda. The remaining 12 had been deterred by fear of their officers and distrust of the Marines and were captured under different circumstances.[39]

Meanwhile, the Marines continued to close in on General Kuribayashi's pocket. With the end in sight, the Japanese garrison commander addressed this order to his men on 17 March:

> 1. The battle situation came to the last moment.

[39] *VAC G-2 Rpts*, pp. 19, 20.

2. I want my surviving officers and men to go out and attack the enemy tonight.

3. Each troop! Go out simultaneously at midnight and attack the enemy until the last. You all have devoted yourself to His Majesty, the Emperor. Don't think of yourself.

4. I am always at the head of you all.[40]

Strangely enough, there was no unusual activity during the night from 17-18 March, and nothing even resembling a *banzai* charge occurred. From this point onward, the information concerning the last days of the enemy's battle for Iwo Jima becomes increasingly hazy. Most of what has remained passed through the hands of the Chichi Jima garrison, which continued to receive radio messages from Iwo that were filed and subsequently turned over to the Americans. Thus, early on 17 March, Chichi Jima was notified that "the *145th Infantry Regiment* fought bravely near 'Hyoriuboku' holding their regimental flag in the center." Later in the day, Colonel Ikeda sent this cryptic message: "Here we burnt our brilliant Regimental Flag completely. Good bye."[41]

Iwo Jima became the scene of a wild celebration on the evening of 18 March. It had nothing to do with the fact that the enemy was finally cornered in the northwestern portion of the island and his elimination now was but a matter of days. Instead, someone had leaked word that Germany had surrendered, and this item of news, entirely unfounded and nearly two months premature, spread all over Iwo Jima like wildfire. As a result:

> . . . for about an hour the island was the happiest spot on earth. Antiaircraft and other units in rear areas opened up a jubilant barrage with machine guns, antiaircraft guns, carbines, rifles, and pistols.[42]

Before it was over, units all over the island and the ships offshore had the news. An end to the celebration came only when Condition Red was declared, a warning that enemy planes were in the area. As one account has it, "The Fifth Division hospital treated three casualties from 'the German war' and there were certainly others."[43] Following the excitement, Marines on Iwo Jima returned to the more normal routine of routing individual Japanese and thwarting the enemy's infiltration attempts.

As the advance continued on 19 March, enemy resistance became centered around General Kuribayashi's erstwhile headquarters. The structure proved completely impervious to the 75mm tank shells and likewise defied all attempts to demolish it with 40-pound shaped charges. It would take the assaulting Marines two days to destroy the surrounding positions and then commence a direct assault on the command center. Engineers with bulldozers sealed an entrance on the north side of the structure and several air vents. Finally, four tons of explosives, divided into five charges, proved sufficient to destroy this stubborn center of resistance. Just who and how many among the Japanese perished within has never become known. However, the garrison commander and the high-ranking officers were safely tucked away in Colonel Ikeda's cave, and reports continued to reach Chichi Jima, though

[40] *Horie Rpt*, p. 11.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] Conner, *The Fifth Marine Division*, p. 117.

[43] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 281.

communications daily became more sporadic.

Around 17–18 March, General Kuribayashi sent his final message to Imperial General Headquarters, in which he apologized to the Emperor for his failure to hold the island. The message was accompanied by a poem in which the garrison commander promised:

> My body shall not decay in the field
> Unless we are avenged;
> I will be born seven more times again
> To take up arms against the foe.
> My only concern is
> Our country in the future
> When weeds cover here.[44]

About the same time, but in a less poetic and more down-to-earth fashion, Admiral Ichimaru penned a rather vituperative letter to none other than President Roosevelt, charging the latter with a lack of understanding for Japan's problems and accusing the white race, and the Anglo-Saxons in particular, "of monopolizing the fruits of the world, at the sacrifice of the colored races."[45]

Meanwhile, reduction of the pocket continued unabated. Tanks moved up to the front lines over paths cleared by the tank dozers which themselves frequently came under attack by individuals or small groups of Japanese bent on suicide. The slow but steady Marine advance into the gorge was carried out under the command of the assistant division commander, General Hermle, whom General Rockey had entrusted with operational control of all units engaged in the final mop-up at the gorge. From an observation post affording a clear view of the gorge, General Hermle directed the operation that would bring organized enemy resistance in this sector to an end.

On Chichi Jima, Major Horie learned with astonishment on 21 March that General Kuribayashi and his men were still fighting. The durable garrison commander reported that his cave was under direct attack by tanks and demolition teams. Of American attempts to induce his surrender he mentioned disdainfully that "they advised us to surrender by a loud-speaker, but we only laughed at this childish trick and did not set ourselves against them."[46] Major Horie radioed to Iwo Jima the information that, effective 17 March, the Imperial government had promoted Kuribayashi to the rank of full general, Ichimaru to vice admiral, Inouye to rear admiral, and Nishi to full colonel. The two latter promotions were made posthumously, though most likely all of them were intended that way.

On D plus 30, 21 March, the 26th Marines, with 3/27 and 3/28 attached, continued the assault as 1/26 and 3/27 advanced into the gorge. At the rim, 3/28 held its positions. Fighting on this day, as on the preceding ones, was exceedingly bitter. The Japanese refused to yield; in fact, there no longer was any place for them to go but stand their ground and die. Thus, the Marines had to eliminate them one by one. As on an earlier occasion, it was noticed that many of the enemy were wearing Ma-

[44] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 272.

[45] Admiral Ichimaru ltr to President Roosevelt, n.d., in Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign*, pp. 172–173. This letter was found by Marines in a cave in the northern part of Iwo Jima; the original reposes in the museum of the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.

[46] *Horie Rpt*, p. 11.

rine uniforms and firing M-1 rifles. In the course of the day's advance, elements of 1/26 made gains of 200 yards down the gorge, but beyond that point required the support of flame tanks. It developed that the terrain did not permit their employment, so that portable flamethrowers were used until the Japanese shot the liquid out of the tanks. When his equipment was hit, one of the operators became a human torch and burned to death; another was just barely saved from suffering the same fate.

As D plus 30 ended, 1/28 had gained 400 yards at the edge of the cliff, while 2/28, after one of its patrols had eliminated 20 of the enemy, moved forward 100 yards to the very edge of the cliff. On this day, Major Horie received a message from Iwo Jima, informing him: "We have not eaten nor drunk for five days. But our fighting spirit is still running high."[47] The end was now very near, yet the battle for Death Valley, a name Marines had given to the gorge, continued. In a situation where the orthodox arms and tactics of warfare proved unavailing, other means had to be improvised. In the words of one account:

> The Marines tried everything in the book, and a good many things that weren't, to clean the Japs out of the gorge. Explosives were lowered over cliffs by rope to blast the Japs from their caves. Drums of gasoline were emptied into canyons and set afire. Over-sized rockets were hauled up to the front on bulldozers and used to blow the Japs off hillsides. Aerial observers dropped grenades on enemy positions from their low-flying grasshoppers.
>
> For four days men of the 5th Division tried to take Death Valley by direct assault. They failed, because any man who set foot in the gorge was dead.[48]

Still, some progress was apparent as one enemy defensive position after another was whittled away. On 22 March, 3/27, supported by tanks, tank dozers, and flame tanks, gained another 300 yards. On the following day, D plus 32, Major Horie received one final message from Iwo Jima which said: "All officers and men of Chichi Jima, good-bye."[49] For three more days, Horie tried to communicate with Iwo Jima, but there was no answer and it was assumed that all resistance on the island had ended. This fact had already been mournfully announced over Tokyo Radio by the Japanese Prime Minister, who bemoaned the fall of the island as "the most unfortunate thing in the whole war situation."[50]

By 24 March, the backbone of enemy resistance in Death Valley had been broken, and the size of the pocket was down to a square of 50 by 50 yards. On the following day, D plus 32, exhausted Marines of 3/26 and 3/28 moved down into Death Valley and completed the task of mopping up, sealing caves and squeezing the enemy into an area that was no longer defensible. Still, individual Japanese held out until 25 March, when death-tired remnants of the 26th, 27th, and 28th Marines staggered into the gorge and silenced what remained of enemy resistance. At

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[48] Henri *et al*, *Marines on Iwo Jima*, p. 303.

[49] *Horie Rpt*, p. 12.

[50] Radio address by Premier Kuniaki Koiso, 17Mar45, as cited in Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 274.

1045 on D plus 34, the gorge was declared secured and fighting on northern Iwo officially came to an end.

Withdrawal of Marine units from Iwo Jima got under way on 17 March, when the VAC artillery completed embarkation. Artillery of the three divisions reembarked on subsequent days, except for 4/12, which stood by for several days, prepared to deliver fire on request. On 18 March, the 3d Marine Division relieved the 4th and General Cates closed his CP on Iwo Jima. On the same day, men of this division embarked. Two days later, the ships carrying the division departed from the island en route to their rehabilitation area in Hawaii. The arrival of the 147th Infantry Regiment on 20 March brought Army troops into the picture. The regiment was attached to General Erskine's division for operational control. As early as 7 March, General Chaney had assumed responsibility for base development and antiaircraft defense of all Iwo ground installations. He had delegated the air defense of Iwo Jima to General Moore effective that date. At 0800 on 26 March, General Chaney took over as Iwo Jima garrison commander, in effect assuming operational control of all units stationed on the island. General Moore continued as Air Defense Commander.

Just as it appeared that Iwo Jima was about to become a garrison, rather than a fiercely contested battlefield, the Japanese decided to strike a last blow against the invaders who by this time had victory all but within their grasp. Mopping up operations up to this time had continued daily in northern and central Iwo, and day and night individual Japanese had either been killed or captured. As a precautionary measure, a LCI(G) patrolled off the northwest beaches to prevent the escape of any of the enemy by water during the hours of darkness.

Early on 26 March, a force of between 200 and 300 Japanese moved down from the area near the Northern Airfield over a trail skirting the western coast of the island and launched a full-scale attack against Marine and Army units encamped near the western beaches. Far from executing a howling *banzai* charge, the Japanese launched a well-organized attack which was carried out in echelon from three directions. Carefully calculated to achieve the maximum confusion and destruction, the Japanese set about to do their deadly work in silence. Beginning at 0515, and for more than three hours, the enemy ranged through the Marine and Army bivouacs, slashing tents, knifing sleeping airmen, and throwing grenades at random.

The units engaged and partly overrun were the 5th Pioneer Battalion, elements of the 8th Field Depot, comprising the VAC Shore Party, the 98th Naval Construction Battalion, elements of the 21st Fighter Group, the 465th Aviation Squadron, and the 506th Antiaircraft Artillery Gun Battalion. In the darkness, the fighting was confused and terrible. The chief difficulty, that of distinguishing between friend and enemy, was compounded by the fact that many of the attackers were armed with BARs, M-1 rifles, .45 caliber pistols, and one even with a bazooka. Other Japanese charged with their swords, a sure indication that a sizable part of the assault force consisted of officers.

OFFICER BIVOUAC AREA *of the 21st Fighter Group following the Japanese attack of March 1945. Note bullet-marked tents. (USAF 47590 AC)*

GENERAL VIEW *of parking area on Motoyama Airfield No. 1 after its restoration. (USAF 57620 AC)*

At the height of the attack, the Japanese penetrated to the Army 38th Field Hospital, where they tore out the telephone lines, slashed tents, and machine-gunned ambulances. In the midst of the prevailing turmoil, officers of the 5th Pioneer Battalion organized the first resistance, and there were instances of great personal heroism and sacrifice. Initially, a firing line was established in some foxholes. Subsequently, as the din of battle increased, other Marines arrived on the scene and Army flame tanks began to go into action. The 5th Pioneers organized a skirmish line and, for the first time, the enemy was forced to give ground. Joining in the action was anyone who had a weapon, including airmen, Seabees, Army medical personnel, and members of the Corps Shore Party. In fact, the performance of the latter Marines earned them a special commendation from their commanding officer who stated:

> The Corps Shore Party Commander is highly gratified with the performance of these colored troops, whose normal function is that of labor troops, while in direct action against the enemy for the first time. Proper security prevented their being taken unawares, and they conducted themselves with marked coolness and courage. Careful investigation shows that they displayed modesty in reporting their own part in the action.[51]

When it was all over, 196 Japanese littered the area of the 5th Pioneer Battalion alone; 66 of the raiders were killed in the adjacent areas and a total of 18 were captured. Rumor had it that General Kuribayashi had led the attack, and the efficiency with which it was carried out would lend some substance to the report. The 40 swords gathered up on the field of battle after the action gave evidence of the high percentage of officers and senior noncommissioned officers that participated. Years after the war, a Japanese who had been taken prisoner during this final attack and who had been subsequently repatriated, was to claim that one-legged Admiral Ichimaru had taken part in the charge. But a body count following the battle and examination of the bodies failed to identify either Kuribayashi, Ichimaru, or Ikeda, and their exact fate has never been determined.

The final Japanese attack also proved costly to the Americans in terms of casualties. The 5th Pioneers lost 9 killed and 31 wounded in this action; units of the VII Fighter Command had 44 killed and 88 wounded.[52] At just about the time that the last of the enemy raiders were being killed off on western Iwo, the capture and occupation phase of the Iwo Jima operation was announced completed. As of 0800, 26 March, the Commander Forward Area, Central Pacific, Vice Admiral John H. Hoover, assumed responsibility for the defense and development of the island. General Schmidt closed his CP and departed from Iwo Jima by air shortly after noon. The remainder of his headquarters embarked on the USS *President Monroe.*

Embarkation of the remaining Marine units followed a schedule long

[51] Shore Party AR, dtd 30Apr45, in *VAC AR*, App 10, Anx C, p. 13.

[52] *VAC G-3 PerRpt* No. 35 dtd 26Mar45; *5th Pioneer Bn AR*, Iwo Jima, 27Mar45, p. 2.

worked out in advance. Thus, elements of the 3d Marine Division began to embark on 27 March, when the 21st Marines and the division CP went aboard ship. The remainder of General Erskine's men departed on the return run of ships carrying garrison forces to Iwo. On 4 April, the Army's 147th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Colonel Robert F. Johnson, assumed full responsibility for the ground defense of the island and the 9th Marines prepared to embark. The last unit of General Erskine's division left Iwo on 12 April and arrived on Guam six days later. During the final phase of the operation between 11 and 26 March, the Marines had sustained a total of 3,885 casualties.[53] Total Marine casualties for the Iwo Jima operation came to 25,851.[54]

The total number of Japanese who died in the defense of Iwo Jima has never been definitely established, but nearly the entire garrison went down fighting. As of 26 March, the Marines had taken only 216 prisoners,[55] a large number of whom were Korean laborers. Nor did the fighting and dying on the island end with the departure of the VAC Landing Force. Aggressive patrols and ambuscades by the 147th Infantry Regiment continued throughout April and into May, resulting in additional Japanese killed and captured. Isolated enemy strongpoints continued to hold out and had to be reduced, some of them more than once.

During the first week of April, in an incident reminiscent of the unexpected enemy attack of 26 March, about 200 Japanese materialized just above the East Boat Basin, where they attempted to rush an infantry command post. This battle continued all night and all of the attackers were killed, but not before they had succeeded in exploding 6,000 cases of dynamite, which rocked the island and caused a number of casualties.[56] Nor was this the end. Also during the month of April, Army troops stumbled upon the field hospital of the *2d Mixed Brigade*, located 100 feet underground on eastern Iwo Jima. The surrender of the hospital proved to be somewhat complex, as outlined by this account:

> A language officer appealed to the Japanese to come out. After a long discussion, the senior medical officer, Major Masaru Inoaka, called for a vote. The ballot turned out sixty-nine for surrender, 3 opposed. Of the three nays, Corporal Kyutaro Kojima immediately committed suicide. The others came out, including two more medical officers, Captain Iwao Noguchi and Lieutenant Hideo Ota. Captain Noguchi, beset by remorse that he had lived while so many died, later emigrated to Brazil, unable to accept life in Japan.[57]

For the remainder of April and May, members of the 147th Infantry Regi-

[53] Broken down by divisions, these casualties were as follows: 3d Marine Division: 147 killed, 60 died of wounds, 505 wounded, and 53 combat fatigue; 4th Marine Division: 139 killed, 87 dead of wounds, 442 wounded, and 52 combat fatigue; 5th Marine Division: 467 killed, 168 died of wounds, 1,640 wounded, 3 missing, and 122 combat fatigue. Above figures derived from HQMC postwar statistics.

[54] A detailed breakdown of Marine casualties by unit is shown in Appendix H.

[55] *VAC G–2 PerRpt* No. 35, dtd 9Apr45.

[56] Headquarters, Army Garrison Force G–2 Weekly Rpt No. 2, dtd 8Apr45, as cited in Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*, pp. 69–70.

[57] Newcomb, *Iwo Jima*, p. 287.

ment accounted for 1,602 Japanese killed and 867 captured.[58] As the fighting and dying gradually subsided, the utilization of the island as a forward base went into high gear. But even as bulldozers tore across ground that had previously been so bitterly contested and aviation gas was beginning to reach Iwo in large quantities, three large Marine Corps cemeteries remained to offer a mute eulogy to the men who had fought and died there. Arriving on Iwo Jima on 20 April 1945, one eminent Navy historian counted 5,330 graves in the Marine Corps cemeteries, but, in his own words:

> . . . there were about 31,000 soldiers, Air Force ground crews and Seabees on the island, very much alive, healthy and in high spirits. Army officers said they wouldn't trade Iwo for any South Pacific island.[59]

[58] Headquarters, 147th Infantry Regiment, Report of Operations Against the Enemy, Iwo Jima, dtd 11Jun45, as cited in Bartley, *Iwo Monograph*, p. 193.

[59] Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*, p. 70.

There were many who would pay tribute to the heroism of the Marines who captured this key bastion of the Japanese inner defense ring, bristling with the most powerful defenses a clever and crafty enemy could devise. None of them put it better than Admiral Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas, who made this comment:

> The battle of Iwo Island has been won. The United States Marines by their individual and collective courage have conquered a base which is as necessary to us in our continuing forward movement toward final victory as it was vital to the enemy in staving off ultimate defeat.
>
> By their victory the Third, Fourth and Fifth Marine Divisions and other units of the Fifth Amphibious Corps have made an accounting to their country which only history will be able to value fully. Among the Americans who served on Iwo Island uncommon valor was a common virtue.[60]

[60] Pacific Fleet Communique No. 300, dtd 17Mar45.

Summary[1]

The battle of Iwo Jima requires a detailed analysis because it was unique in certain respects. First, it featured the employment of three Marine divisions (less one regiment) under a single tactical Marine command, the largest body of Marines committed to combat in one operation during World War II. Secondly, enemy resistance under General Kuribayashi was such that American casualties sustained in this operation exceeded those of the Japanese. Out of the savage struggle for eight square miles of inhospitable island emerged convincing re-affirmation of the fact that once air and naval superiority had been gained over and around an objective, Marines could make a landing, gain a foothold, and extend it until the enemy was driven into a severely restricted area. There, he could be annihilated, regardless of the size and number of his guns or the quality of his defense. The then Secretary of the Navy, James V. Forrestal, gave voice to his "tremendous admiration and reverence for the guy who walks up beaches and takes enemy positions with a rifle and grenades or his bare hands."[2] Yet it would be folly to assume that sheer courage alone, even when coupled with material superiority, was the decisive factor that led to certain, if bloody, victory. Even Admiral Spruance's statement, that "in view of the character of the defenses and the stubborn resistance encountered, it is fortunate that less seasoned or less resolute troops were not committed,"[3] only touches on one important facet within the overall picture.

The reason Marines were able to prevail against a firmly entrenched enemy, who knew in advance of the impending attack, can be found in detailed and meticulous planning. The plans for the Iwo Jima operation possibly were the most far-reaching for any operation in the Pacific area up to this time in World War II. Preparations extended not only to American bases in the Marianas, the Marshalls, and the Hawaiian Islands but all the way back to the mainland of the United States, "from whence came hundreds of new ships to transport the troops to the

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in this chapter is derived from: *Fifth Fleet OpRpt; TF 51 AR; TF 52 AR; TF 53 OpRpt; TG 53.2 AR; TF 56 AR; VAC AR; VAC NGF Rpt; 3d MarDiv AR; 4th MarDiv OpRpt; 5th MarDiv AR; 1st Prov FdArty Gp AR;* Shaw, Nalty, and Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive;* Bartley, *Iwo Monograph; Iwo Comments;* Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign;* Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*; Forrestel, *Admiral Spruance;* Morison, *Victory in the Pacific;* Isely and Crowl, *U S. Marines and Amphibious War*; Sherrod, *Marine Corps Aviation in World War II*; Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea.*

[2] Quoted in *The New York Times,* dtd 26-Feb45, p. 1, col 6, as cited in Bartley, *Iwo Monograph,* p. 210.

[3] *Fifth Flt OpRpt,* p. 3.

objective. Most of these ships were under construction less than six months before the target day, and some of the smaller ones existed at that time only in blueprint form."[4] In fact, with one exception, the transports carrying the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions to the objective were either under construction or being commissioned as late as 31 October 1944.[5] It is typical of the long-range planning preceding Operation DETACHMENT that many of the participating vessels had to be transferred from the European Theater to the Pacific prior to the invasion.

At Iwo Jima, as in similar operations, two command ships were employed so that, in the event one command ship became a casualty, the commander aboard the other could take over. In this case Admiral Turner, as Expeditionary Force Commander, was embarked in a command ship with General Holland Smith as Expeditionary Troops Commander, while Admiral Harry Hill, as Attack Force Commander and General Schmidt, as Landing Force Commander, were embarked in the other command ship. The VAC chief of staff was to comment on the command relationships at Iwo Jima in these terms:

> The Navy was of course in command afloat. The Landing Force Commander assumed command ashore after setting up a command post there. General Holland Smith could have assumed command ashore by setting up a headquarters ashore. He did not do so, nor to the best of my knowledge did he ever issue any command to the troops ashore. In fact, he had only a skeleton staff, and as he remarked to General Schmidt the only reason he went on the expedition was in case something happened to General Schmidt.[6]

When Admiral Nimitz coined his phrase about the uncommon valor displayed by Americans who served on Iwo Jima, he was referring not only to the Marines who did the lion's share of the fighting, but also to personnel of the U. S. Army and Navy, on the ground, at sea, and in the air, who supported them. According to one historical evaluation:

> Without supplies and medical care the assault would have ground to a halt, and without close air, naval gunfire, and artillery support, there would have been no neutralization to permit the tank-infantry demolition teams to advance.[7]

Based on sound doctrine, training, and experience, the participating services and arms developed excellent teamwork that could not have been surpassed. In view of the depth and extent of the Japanese defenses, naval gunfire had only a limited effect. Long and medium range bombardment accomplished little, and even area fire failed to do much damage to underground enemy defenses. Following the operation, Admiral Blandy was to make this comment in dealing with the preliminary bombardment:

> It was not until fire support ships, their spotting planes, and the support aircraft had worked at the objective for two days, had become familiar with the location and appearance of the defenses, and had accurately attacked them with close-range gunfire and low-altitude air strikes, that substantial results were achieved.[8]

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[4] Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign*, p. 93.

[5] *TG 53.2 AR*, p. 2.

[6] *Rogers ltr.*

[7] Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*, p. 501.

[8] *TF 52 AR*, p. 10.

This statement leads directly into the only deep-seated controversy to develop from the Iwo Jima operation, that of the duration of the naval gunfire support.[9] This dispute still simmers more than 25 years after the event, and it appears doubtful that it will ever be completely resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned. The issues in this case are clear:

> Previous amphibious assaults had amply demonstrated that against such defenses only deliberate, short-range destructive fire would be effective. And both Marine and Navy commanders knew that even under the most favorable conditions this method of bombardment was extremely time consuming.[10]

Then, as now, the lines in the naval gunfire controversy were clearly drawn, and little room remained for compromise. Most of the Marines who fought on Iwo Jima give credit to the high degree of precision which naval gunfire had reached since the early operations of World War II, but at the same time firmly agree with one former Marine participant who commented that "undoubtedly, longer bombardment before D-Day would have materially shortened the battle and saved many lives."[11]

It would serve no useful purpose at this time to rekindle the barely submerged passions that have occasionally popped to the surface regarding this subject. Even minute inspection of all available data does not lead to concrete and infallible conclusions that would stand up to prolonged investigation. Thus the controversy simply becomes one of the vantage point occupied by each of the participants at the time of the operation. To a Marine who went ashore on D-Day or later and saw the carnage wrought by the Japanese shore guns among his comrades, it becomes inconceivable that, regardless of time limits and restrictions on ammunition expenditure, more was not done to assure that enemy shore defenses were knocked out prior to the landings. This feeling is born of a mixture of anger and frustration, known only to those who have been exposed to superior enemy firepower for any length of time, bereft of the possibility to reply at once and in kind. Little has yet been devised to relieve the initial feeling of helplessness experienced by the rifleman who hits a hostile beach under the muzzle of still functioning enemy guns.

From the Navy's vantage point, the situation was slightly different. In the first place, the Iwo Jima operation had been tightly wedged in a time frame between the invasion of Luzon and the coming assault on Okinawa. Under such pressure, perhaps the best that could be achieved was neutralization, not destruction of the enemy artillery as

[9] In his version of the Iwo operation, Samuel Eliot Morison mentions an attack on Navy strategy and Marine Corps tactics launched by a segment of the American press, accusing both of being wasteful of American lives in paying an exorbitant price for the seizure of heavily defended objectives of limited usefulness. Deplorable as was the loss of lives at Iwo Jima, the American public then, as now, came to realize that the cost of victory is high. Despite expressions of public anguish at the losses sustained at Iwo Jima, the value of the objective for continued operations never was in doubt, nor did the issue, for lack of an alternate solution, ever assume the dimensions of a public controversy.

[10] Bartley, *Iwo Monograph*, p. 202.

[11] Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, p. 484.

desired by the Marines. The naval viewpoint is summed up in this statement:

> There is no reason to believe that ten or even thirty days of naval and air pounding would have had much more effect on the defenses than the bombardment that was delivered. The defenses were such, by and large, that the only way they could be taken out was the way they were taken out, by Marine Corps infantry and demolitions. . . . Aerial bombardment and naval gunfire simply could not reach underground into the maze of caves and tunnels, yet these had to be cleared or sealed shut before the island could be secured as an air base on the Bonins' road to Tokyo.[12]

This line of reasoning carries little weight with Marines who faced the maze of virtually untouched pillboxes and covered emplacements between the Southern and Central Airfields and those to the east and west of the latter. These defenses were situated in more or less open terrain that was largely accessible to direct fire at relatively short ranges from vessels standing offshore. It required the herculean efforts of men in eight days of costly fighting to reduce these fortifications. In the words of General Harry Schmidt: "With additional time available for pre-D-Day firing naval guns might have accomplished much in this area to facilitate its capture."[13] The Navy has contended that:

> . . . heavy ammunition replenishment at sea had not been service tested and the bombarding ships were far from a supply base and could not carry enough ammunition for the prolonged bombardment desired by the Marines.[14]

Neither the validity of this contention nor the flow of time itself have done much to cool the passions of Marines who underwent the trial by "fire and steel" on Iwo Jima. There simply appears to be no way to equate the feelings of men who have watched their comrades and friends torn apart by enemy weapons with the cold realities of logistics, statistics, and strategy. Thus, for the purposes of this history, the controversy must remain unsolved.

Let it be said for the record that, once the Marines had gone ashore, naval gunfire was furnished to the satisfaction of the landing force. In this connection, the positive must be accentuated. One account summed up the quality of naval gunfire support in these words:

> The cooperation of these vessels, from the largest battleship to the small, specialized gunboats, was excellent. The nature of the terrain continued to limit their effectiveness, however, and in most instances only neutralization was obtained. Supporting ships and craft were quick to observe enemy activity and take it under fire after first checking with units ashore to determine that the shelling would not endanger friendly troops.[15]

General Kuribayashi himself unwittingly paid tribute to the accuracy of American naval gunfire support when he passed word to his superiors that the power of bombardment from ships required reevaluation:

> The beach positions we made on this island by using many materials, days and great efforts, were destroyed within three days so that they were nearly unable to be used again. . . .
>
> Power of the American warships and aircraft makes every landing operation possible to whatever beachhead they like,

[12] Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*, p. 73.
[13] *VAC NGF Rpt*, pp. 21–22.
[14] Forrestel, *Admiral Spruance*, p. 168.
[15] Bartley, *Iwo Monograph*, p. 203.

and preventing them from landing means nothing but great damages.[16]

The same factors that limited the success of naval gunfire also proved a hindrance to the effectiveness of the preinvasion air bombardment. The bombing of Iwo Jima and adjacent islands over a period of several months by high-altitude B-24 bombers based in the Marianas had prevented the Japanese from enjoying the unrestricted use of the two airfields on Iwo Jima. On the other hand, the increasingly heavy air raids did much to drive the enemy underground. In evaluating the results of this extensive bombing, Air Force historians themselves conclude that, despite "the heavy going over the island had received, weather conditions and the topography of Iwo Jima had rendered the results much less decisive than had been expected."[17]

While bombers of the Seventh Air Force had concentrated mostly on the destruction or neutralization of the operational airfields in the Bonins, Admiral Durgin's carrier pilots assaulted those defenses that would interfere with the amphibious assault and the subsequent push inland. Deficiencies in the armament of the support aircraft and the small size of the bombs they carried severely limited the effectiveness of these attacks. Even when a target had been pinpointed, the bombs proved too small to smash buried blockhouses. The use of napalm, which was badly needed to strip enemy positions on Iwo Jima of their natural cover, also proved disappointing when, in numerous instances, the liquid failed to ignite.

[16] *Horie Rpt*, p. 13.

[17] Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, p. 584.

On D minus 1, as the weather cleared and the carrier pilots had become familiar with the terrain and the targets on the island, more was accomplished than during the two preceding days. Japanese defenses on the slopes of Mount Suribachi and emplacements above the East Boat Basin proved to be particularly attractive targets for the Navy flyers, who not only bombed these targets but also strafed them with 5-inch rockets. The latter were effective due to their accuracy but lacked the destructive power required against the formidable enemy fortifications. In evaluating the effectiveness of these air strikes, the advance commander of the air support control units only allowed that they "conceivably weakened the areas commanding the landing beaches."[18]

Greatly contrasting with the inconclusive results obtained from the above air strikes was the support furnished by the pilots of Task Force 58 on D-Day. The Marine and Navy flyers, whose heroic efforts were clearly visible to Navy personnel and Marines about to hit the Iwo Jima beaches, drew vociferous praise. As long as Vice Admiral Mitscher's carriers remained at Iwo, the carrier squadrons were able to furnish all the ground support requested, but on D plus 4, when the large carriers departed, a shortage of aircraft quickly developed. Planes needed for ground support had to be diverted to such other duties as antisubmarine patrols, strikes against other islands in the Bonins, and sea rescue operations.

As a rule, response of aviation to requests from ground units was quick,

[18] *TF 52 AR*, Encl D, p. 4.

though on many occasions more than an hour elapsed before the supporting aircraft appeared on the scene. Even then, the normally overcrowded Support Air Request Net proved to be the weak link in obtaining air strikes without undue loss of time. It is ironic that Iwo Jima Marines were denied the close support that was to become the trademark of Marine aviation, while Army troops in the Philippines at this time were reaping the benefits from exactly that type of support furnished by Marine dive bombers.[19] As in other campaigns, each echelon intervening between the ground unit requesting air strikes and the pilots furnishing the support resulted in loss of time and attendant confusion. Once again, the crux of the matter was control of support aircraft by the ground units, something that higher headquarters were still most reluctant to grant. At the conclusion of operations in the Marshalls and the Marianas:

> Marine commanders pressed hard for increased use of Marine air in close support. They wanted pilots, planes, and a control system oriented to ground needs and quickly responsive to strike requests. The winds of change were in the air in the summer of 1944 and refinements in close support techniques were coming. Operations later in the year saw planes bombing and strafing closer to frontline positions and evidenced a steady increase in the employment of Marine squadrons in this task as well as in air-to-air operations.[20]

In the case of Iwo Jima, it is significant that all three participating Marine divisions unanimously recommended that in future operations, the air liaison parties be given more direct control over aircraft during close support missions.[21] The start made in this direction during 1944 proved to be only the first step in an uphill and time-consuming struggle, some of which still had not been resolved at the time of the Korean War.

Throughout the Iwo operation, air observers played an important role. Fighter-type aircraft, flown by especially trained pilots of VOC-1, augmented the float planes normally used to spot naval gunfire. On an improvised basis, Marine artillery and tactical observers operated from carrier-based torpedo bombers until the small observation planes of the VMO squadrons had gone ashore. In spite of the difficulties, the latter held their own. One historical account was to sum up their performance this way:

> Like other Marines on Iwo, the VMO squadrons had to prove they could take it. The little planes and their pilots and ground crews were subjected to everything from *kamikazes* to artillery fire to faulty launching gear, and all of these took their toll.[22]

Aside from difficulties encountered with the overcrowded Support Air Request Net, communications on and around Iwo Jima functioned exceedingly well. The multiplicity of wire and radio nets complicated the situation, and there were instances of enemy jamming and interference between sets. The performance of communications personnel

[19] For the role played by Marine aviation during operations in the Philippines, see Part IV of this volume.

[20] Shaw, Nalty, and Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive*, p. 584.

[21] *3d MarDiv AR*, Anx G, App. 1, p. 3; *4th MarDiv OpRpt*, Anx C, pp. 6–7; *5th MarDiv AR*, Anx G, App. 1, p. 3.

[22] Sherrod, *Marine Corps Aviation in World War II*, p. 348.

was rated as excellent. Wire was widely used and with good effect. Radio bridged the gap where wire could not be employed. It was a far cry from the unsatisfactory radio equipment that had been employed in the early operations in the Pacific, notably at Tarawa. The short distances involved at Iwo Jima, as well as the very slow rate of advance, eased the burden of maintaining and expanding communications: there never was any serious breakdown. As in previous operations, the Navajo talkers performed an outstanding service, and their employment contributed materially to the effective and speedy transmittal of urgent classified radio traffic without danger of enemy interception.[23]

Contributing to the overall success of the Iwo Jima operation was close coordination between the supporting arms. The systems of coordination used at the headquarters of the three divisions were similar, though General Erskine's division maintained an installation known as the "supporting arms tent,'" whose organization and functions have been described in these words:

> The basic method of coordination between supporting arms was to achieve close personal liaison on all levels. Targets were freely interchanged according to the method of attack best suited, and, whenever operations were in progress or prospect, the artillery, naval gunfire, and air officers were together or readily accessible to each other by wire. Plans for scheduled fires or pre-King-Hour preparations were habitually prepared jointly, and so presented to the G–3, Chief of Staff, and the Commanding General. Much of the success achieved may be traced to the separate maintenance of a "supporting arms tent," so-called, adjacent to the G–3 Section. In this center, wire communications converged from the division switchboard, from the similar 5th Amphibious Corps establishment, from the division artillery fire direction center, and from the naval gunfire and air radio centrals. It was thus possible to establish any sort of communications necessary, and to plan without interruption, while being within a few steps of the G-3 Section.[24]

Throughout the operation, close liaison was maintained between the corps artillery, air, and naval gunfire officers and the Commander, Landing Force Air Support Control Unit, in the Joint Operations Rooms on board the USS *Auburn* and subsequently through facilities of the supporting arms tent at VAC headquarters ashore.[25]

The performance of the shore based artillery at Iwo Jima deserves special mention. Standard tactics, vindicated in previous operations, were employed. It quickly became evident, though, that the 75mm and the 105mm howitzers of the division artillery battalions were far from adequate for the destruction of the type of emplacements encountered on the island. In fact, the 155mm guns and howitzers of the corps artillery frequently had to score up to a dozen hits in one place before they caused major damage to some of the strongest enemy installations.[26] In performing its mission, artillery was further handicapped by limited observation, which often prevented forward observers from seeing more than 200 yards ahead. As a result, great dependence was placed on aerial spotting, particularly for counter-bat-

[23] *VAC Sig Bn Rpt*, p. 5.

[24] *3d MarDiv AR*, p. 53.

[25] *VAC NGF Rpt*, p. 38.

[26] *VAC Arty Rpt*, p. 29.

tery and destruction fire. Despite such limitations, officers and men of the corps and division artillery carried out their mission in an exemplary fashion.

From 23 February to 1 March, the VAC artillery fired its maximum number of missions, most of them counterbattery. During the first four days in March, normal missions were fired, but the amount of ammunition expended had to be reduced since expenditure exceeded the inflow. After a breather on 5 March, when no preparations were fired, both the corps and division artillery made a maximum effort on the following day. On 6 March, a heavy time-on-target preparation was fired in which 11 division and corps artillery battalions participated. Despite the higher expenditure of ammunition, amounting to 2,500 rounds for the corps and 20,000 rounds of 75mm and 105mm for the division artillery, this massive concentration had no decisive effect.

In discussing the performance of the artillery during the Iwo Jima operation, General Schmidt underscored another aspect:

> A feature of the employment of artillery in the Iwo Jima operation not noted in the report was that the bulk of the artillery ashore was sited around Airfield No. 1. During the greater portion of the time artillery was firing continuously (approximately 450,000 rounds fired during operation) at the same time Airfield No. 1 was being used for aircraft operation to capacity. This was also true even after Airfield No. 2 began operating. It is considered remarkable that no friendly planes were hit and that aircraft operations were not impeded by our artillery or vice versa. The method of control employed for the protection of planes taking off or landing was simply to have an individual of the firing unit placed to observe whether any aircraft were in the line of fire and to give warning if that were the case.[27]

Engineer support to VAC during Operation DETACHMENT was generally excellent. The task of constructing and maintaining roads in the VAC area was assigned to the 2d Separate Engineer Battalion, which also accomplished the preliminary work in restoring the Southern Airfield. It was the work carried out by this unit that enabled small observation aircraft to operate from this airfield by D plus 7. The further completion of additional strips on this airfield was the shared accomplishment of these Marine engineers and the 62d Naval Construction Battalion.

In addition to executing their important task of constructing roads, operating water points, and erecting various buildings and supply dumps, Marine engineers also had a combat mission to perform. The latter was the responsibility of the division engineers who cleared mines, dozed trails that enabled tanks to approach the front lines, and performed such other jobs as were designed to help the infantry advance over treacherous terrain. Much of this work was carried out under direct enemy observation and fire. Engineers, individually or in small groups, joined the infantry in demolishing the numerous enemy caves and strongpoints. For the hard-toiling engineers, there were only two bright sides to the operation: the sand-clay fill obtained from quarries on the island made excellent road

[27] *1st Prov Fd Arty Gp AR*, 1st Endorsement.

construction material; and "engineer operations were further facilitated in that no bridges were required."[28]

The employment of amphibious vehicles on Iwo Jima featured a greater variety than had been previously used, including armored amphibian tractors, amphibian trucks, and sea-going jeeps. First to hit the beach were the LVT(A)s of the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion, equipped with one 75mm howitzer, one .50 caliber machine gun mounted in the turret ring, one .30 caliber machine gun mounted in front of the assistant driver, and one .30 caliber machine gun mounted in front of the howitzer loader. Once within effective range of the beaches, the LVT(A)s were to open fire with all weapons. After going ashore, these vehicles were to move about 50 yards inland and protect the following assault waves by firing on targets to their front and flanks.

Almost immediately, the steep terraces and the composition of the beaches caused the vehicles to bog down. A few made it across the first terrace only to become stalled on the second. While neither the LVT(A)s nor the following LVTs containing the assault troops drew voluminous enemy fire, progress of the LVTs upon reaching the beaches also was stymied by the loose volcanic ash and the steep terraces. Since in many instances the beach was very narrow and the surf broke very close to the steep ledge, many LVTs swamped. Some of the vehicles were thrown broadside on the beach where sand and salt water filled them.

[28] Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign*, p. 144.

It soon became apparent that the volcanic cinders and sand would not support wheeled vehicles. Only the LVTs, caterpillar tractors, and other tracked vehicles had a chance of making it inland across this treacherous ground. As emphasized in one report: "Supplies and equipment were hauled from ships directly to the front lines, and had it not been for LVTs the troops ashore could not have been supplied during the early stages of the landing."[29] Because of their importance to the logistics effort, it became necessary to use these vehicles around the clock during the early phase of the operation.

One of the new types of equipment to be used by all three Marine divisions during the Iwo operation was the 3½-ton Clever-Brooks trailer, employed to haul cargo and medical supplies. Major difficulty was encountered in launching these amphibious trailers in the rough seas and getting them across the steep terraces. LVTs were generally able to bring the trailers ashore, but attempts to have the DUKWs perform this service resulted in the loss of both the trailer and DUKW. While comments on both the LVT and DUKWs were generally favorable, VAC concluded: "The amphibian trailers did not prove to be of any particular or specific help during the operation."[30]

The amphibian truck, the DUKW, had the primary mission of bringing the division artillery ashore on D-Day. Personnel to operate these vehicles was furnished both by the Marine Corps and the U.S. Army. The difficulty in land-

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

[30] *VAC AR*, Anx B, App. 4, G–4 Rpt.

ing the artillery resulted from the high surf and the tactical situation ashore. While some of the DUKWs landed without difficulty, others were swamped after exhausting their limited fuel supply or developing mechanical problems. Others that were overloaded, sank almost immediately after disembarking from the LSTs. Many of the DUKWs ran afoul of the steep beaches and broached when the front wheels dug down into the sand or volcanic ash and could not get sufficient traction to pull the vehicles forward. Following the initial landings, DUKWs hauled supplies, especially ammunition, evacuated the wounded, and performed mail and messenger runs.

Another amphibious vehicle that proved its worth during the Iwo operation was a light cargo carrier, dubbed the "Weasel." This tracked carrier had been issued to the three Marine divisions participating in DETACHMENT in November 1944. At Iwo Jima, the Weasels hauled light supplies, evacuated the wounded, and were used to string telephone lines. Their versatility in overcoming loose sand and the steep terrain made them the ideal all-purpose vehicle, and they were soon pressed into service as messenger or command cars or for the purpose of hauling trailers and small artillery pieces over terrain that wheeled vehicles could not negotiate. In addition to their versatility, the Weasels offered a poor target for the enemy because of their speed and low silhouette. The only difficulty encountered with these vehicles was at sea, where the high swells occasionally proved more than they could handle. It is interesting to note that a total of 133 DUKWs were destroyed during the Iwo Jima operation, amounting to 53 percent of those employed; only 9 Weasels were lost in combat, accounting for 13 percent of the number that were disembarked. The remaining 61 vehicles remained in operating condition until the Marines left Iwo Jima.[31]

One of the most successfully handled, yet difficult aspects of the Iwo Jima operation pertained to the treatment and evacuation of the wounded. The bitterness of the fighting, from the first to the last day of battle, coupled with the large number of men simultaneously locked in combat, placed an extremely heavy burden on the medical units, both ashore and afloat. During the initial days of the operation, doctors and corpsmen alike occupied a precarious foothold on beaches that were exposed to enemy fire of all calibers. As often as not, the medical personnel ashore became casualties themselves, especially the corpsmen attached to the combat units or the beach evacuation stations. It was not a rare occurrence for corpsmen to be hit as they carried litters with wounded to the rear or cared for the wounded at the evacuation stations. Casualties among medical officers and corpsmen were correspondingly high: 738, among them 197 killed.[32]

In order to take care of the Iwo Jima casualties, medical plans had been drawn up well in advance of the operation. As a result, during the first nine days of the battle, once a casualty had arrived

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[31] *VAC AR*, Anx B.

[32] U. S. Navy Bureau of Medicine, Statistics Division, World War II Casualties, dtd 1Aug-52, as cited in Bartley, *Iwo Monograph*, p. 195.

at one of the evacuation stations, he could expect prompt evacuation to one of the hospital LSTs that were lying 2,000 yards offshore. These LSTs acted as collection centers from which the casualties were forwarded to APAs and hospital ships. Initially, the transport of casualties from the beaches to the hospital LSTs was handled by landing craft, LVTs, and DUKWs. However, increasingly rough surf eventually prevented the use of small landing craft, and amphibious vehicles were employed exclusively. The DUKWs, in particular, proved useful because they handled well in the surf and alongside the big ships, and patients were more comfortable inside the DUKWs than inside the wet, bouncing LVTs.[33]

In addition to the hospital ships *Bountiful*, *Samaritan*, and *Solace*, and the hospital transport *Pinkney*, the LSV *Ozark* was pressed into service as an auxiliary hospital ship. Together with transports that were leaving the combat area, these ships evacuated 13,737 casualties.[34] An additional 2,449 men were airlifted to the Marianas.

Because of the small size of Iwo Jima, distances from the front lines to battalion aid stations were invariably short. Nevertheless, the difficult terrain and constant exposure to enemy fire made even such short distances extremely hazardous both for corpsmen and patients alike. At first, LVTs and Weasels were widely used in order to bring casualties to the beaches; during the latter phase of the operation when roads had been constructed that were passable for wheeled vehicles, jeeps oftentimes carried casualties to the rear.

The availability of whole blood to treat the victims of extensive loss of blood and shock undoubtedly saved many lives. Such transfusions of whole blood had not been used in any previous Central Pacific campaigns. Landing force medical facilities alone used more than 5,000 pints. By D plus 25, 12,600 pints had been used, nearly one pint for every patient evacuated.[35] Once the situation on the beaches had stabilized, hospital tents went up wherever a place for them could be found, and as electric power became available, the shore based hospitals were able to operate around the clock. In evaluating the efficiency of the medical care provided at Iwo Jima, VAC was to report:

> The medical service for the Iwo Jima operation approached nearer the ideal than during any previous operations in the Central Pacific Area, and it is firmly believed that the casualties received the maximum medical care possible commensurate with the military situation.[36]

One of the most difficult problems that had to be overcome during Operation DETACHMENT was that of supplying the landing force. Heavy surf, the deep volcanic ash, the enemy's complete coverage of the beaches with artillery, mortars, and small arms fire, and congestion at the beaches all combined to increase the complexity of logistics. Only the abandonment of carefully laid plans and timely improvisation saved the day, making possible an uninterrupted flow of supplies to the frontline units that kept the operation going.

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[33] *TF 56 MedRpt*, pp. 8–9.
[34] *TF 53 OpRpt*, Part VI, pp. 5, 12.
[35] *VAC MedRpt*, p. 12; *TF 56 MedRpt*, p. 19.
[36] *VAC AR*, Anx B.

Iwo Jima provided a testing ground for the vehicles that shuttled back and forth through the heavy surf in an attempt to land badly needed cargo when and where required. Beyond that, it became a proving ground for men of the beach and shore parties, the frequently unpublicized and unsung heroes of the battle of logistics. Previously, little had been done to provide these parties with proper training, experience, and continuity of function. The force that went ashore on Iwo Jima included beefed-up pioneer battalions, which were further reinforced with men from the replacement drafts and division headquarters personnel, as well as U. S. Army port troops.

Taken as a whole, this conglomeration of units performed well in a situation which was considerably more complex than had been envisioned in the planning for the invasion. It had not been intended to bring any of these men, except for advance elements, ashore until the beaches were reasonably secure. Yet circumstances dictated a departure from previous plans and more than 10,000 of these service troops were landed on D-Day. Once ashore, under the most difficult circumstances, these men performed splendidly, though their presence added to the congestion and increased the number of casualties.

As it turned out, between 60 and 70 percent of the supplies unceremoniously dumped on the beaches were salvaged and either moved inland or incorporated into the hastily established beach dumps set up by forward elements of the division shore parties which went ashore with the fifth and sixth assault waves. These advance elements carried out their mission in an exemplary fashion despite the most adverse conditions imposed by the terrain and the heavy enemy fire. The casualties among these units were correspondingly heavy, some of them being reduced to half strength.

In order to keep the logistics effort from foundering in the deep volcanic ash, Marston matting and armored bulldozers had to be pressed into service. Once again, the American penchant for improvisation proved to be a decisive factor in getting troops and supplies off the crowded beaches. Marston matting was of tremendous value in serving as the only usable roadways over which vehicles could move inland during the initial phase of the assault. The armored bulldozer was employed on the beaches to level sand terraces and cut routes inland. Their steel plates protected both driver and engine from enemy fire. On northern Iwo, these machines and their drivers performed an equally important service in clearing roads into previously impassable terrain under fire.

The movement of supplies across the beaches was in no small way facilitated by the presence of Navy cranes, as well as other equipment designed to expedite the unloading of the cargo vessels. In this connection, the expertise of TF 53 and its commander proved invaluable. In line with his extensive logistical experience, Admiral Hill was keenly aware of the requirements that had to be met and had at an early time recommended that ample cargo handling equipment be available for Operation DETACHMENT.[37] Despite all preparations, the

[37] BGen Leland S. Swindler ltr to CMC, dtd 14May53, in *Iwo Comments.*

tactical situation prevailing on Iwo Jima on D-Day caused the beaches to become so congested that on the following day underwater demolition teams had to be employed to assist in clearing lanes through the wreckage for incoming vessels.

It needs to be emphasized that, all difficulties to the contrary, no acute supply shortages developed for the assault troops, though in the days following the landings units were living from hand to mouth. Such shortages as did develop involved 60mm mortar illumination shells, grenades, cylinders for charging flamethrowers, and ordnance spare parts. As an expedient, these items were flown to Iwo Jima from Saipan, the first extensive use of air supply by the Marines.[38]

The timing of the logistics support at Iwo Jima, an extremely important factor in an amphibious operation, proved to be well conceived and executed. Liaison teams from the 8th Field Depot, which constituted the VAC shore party, accompanied the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions ashore. As of 22 February, units of the field depot came ashore and rendered valuable service in assisting the divisional shore parties. Two days later, when VAC assumed control ashore, the field depot took over and the unloading continued without interruption. At this time, the beaches were still under enemy fire, which caused temporary work stoppages but proved unable to interfere seriously with the unloading. On D plus 6, 25 February, general unloading got under way. The opening of the western beaches to small landing craft on 2 March removed the entire unloading operation from the threat posed by variable weather conditions. Henceforth, the menace of heavy surf pounding the eastern side of the island could be overcome by switching shipping to the western beaches.

In evaluating the overall success of the logistics effort at Iwo Jima, it appears appropriate to comment:

> . . . the wonder is not that things were confused but that the vast quantities of supplies actually crossed the beaches so quickly. Expertly handled ship-to-shore communications and a high degree of coordination between Navy and Marine logistical control personnel afloat and ashore did much to overcome the difficulties inherent in the situation.[39]

The official VAC report dealing with Operation DETACHMENT echoes this sentiment and, speaking of the adversities facing the Marines that went ashore on Iwo Jima, concludes:

> The fact that these factors failed to impose any limitations on the conduct of operations reflects the highest credit on all concerned. Without the tireless support through unprecedented difficulties rendered by the expeditionary force and the supply agencies of the landing force, the sustained assault of the Corps would have been impossible.[40]

Finally, a word about the tactics employed on Iwo Jima both by the assault force and the defending Japanese. The small size of the island permitted little or no maneuverability to either force, and once the first Marines had

[38] *VAC Logistics Rpt*, pp. 12, 16.

[39] Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*, pp. 519–520.

[40] *TF 56 AR*, Encl B, Comments and Recommendations, p. 4.

gone ashore, the fighting that was to typify the entire operation was dictated by General Kuribayashi, whose defensive organization "was the most intelligent and complete one yet encountered."[41] Basically, the Japanese conducted a position defense which was effective, intense, and notable for its economy of forces. There was no employment of mobile reserves, nor was there a withdrawal through a series of defensive lines. All precautions had been taken to assure that enemy troops were not exposed to the American supporting arms. General Kuribayashi's defense was simple; it was this very simplicity that made it so effective.

The enemy plan was based on the concept that a maximum number of weapons of all calibers were to fire more or less continuously from well-concealed and -protected positions until they were destroyed. Almost from the beginning of the operation the American supporting arms were handicapped by the geographical limitations of the island, the character of the terrain, and the strength of the enemy defenses. The heavier Japanese installations, in particular, often proved impervious to field artillery of light and medium calibers and required the destructive power of main battery naval gunfire. During the latter phase of the fighting, the proximity of the Marines to enemy positions frequently denied them the benefit of adequate heavy fires or bombardment.

Even though few underwater obstacles interfered with the Iwo Jima landings, the minefields ashore were the strongest yet encountered in the Pacific Theater, indicative of the progress made by the Japanese in this sphere of defensive warfare. The operation also saw the first use of antipersonnel mines by the Japanese in the Central Pacific.[42]

The Japanese made more widespread use of rockets than in earlier operations, though on Iwo Jima their effect was limited. Some of the rocket launchers were installed in locations from where they could be fired at certain areas. Movable rocket launchers were kept in caves, moved outside and fired, then pulled back into the caves. During the early phase of the Iwo Jima operation, the Japanese fired large rockets towards the northern slope of Mount Suribachi. However, due to the inaccuracy of this fire, the missiles went beyond the mountain and finally fell into the sea. If anything, these large weapons were well adapted for harassing fire, but their accuracy was doubtful.

In contrast to the relative inefficiency of the enemy rockets, the Japanese artillery performed better than had been anticipated by the invasion force. Coordination, volume, and accuracy of the enemy artillery fire, especially during the days immediately following the invasion, initially made it appear as if the Japanese were massing their fire, thus taking a page out of the book dealing with American artillery doctrine. It was subsequently determined that prior to the American landings, the enemy had

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[42] Detailed information on this subject can be found in Military Intelligence, War Department, *Minefield Patterns in the Defense of Iwo Jima*, Intelligence Bulletin (Washington, D.C., June 1945), pp. 15–19.

registered his artillery on critical terrain features against which he massed his fire, rather than relying on current observation.

General Kuribayashi's use of mortars was exceptionally skillful and very effective. In fact, it was this weapon, and the large number used, that inflicted more casualties on the Marines than any other support weapon. During the latter part of the campaign, the Japanese apparently suffered a shortage of mortar ammunition which restricted their choice of targets to Marine weapons, vehicles, and large groups of personnel. As with rocket launchers, the Japanese skillfully hid their mortars, either emplacing them on reverse slopes or moving them out of caves to fire, and quickly moving them back under cover.

Among the weapons Marines encountered on Iwo Jima for the first time were the 320mm spigot type mortar, new types of mobile rocket launchers and rockets, and 90mm and 120mm howitzers.

The landing force also made use of several innovations, sometimes on an experimental basis. Thus the rolling barrage, dating back to World War I, found renewed use during the operation. Generally, this type of artillery support proved successful, though the troops often did not advance as rapidly as expected. This required continuous modification of the barrage schedule resulting in repeating fires in certain blocks and delaying the lifting of fires from others.[43] With respect to the utilization of mortars, in accordance with recommendations following operations in the Marianas, an effort was made to develop a craft mounting the 4.2-inch chemical mortar. As a result, three 4.2s were mounted on an LCI and successfully employed on D-Day and thereafter.

The effectiveness of the enemy mortar fire gave rise to the recommendation that a larger mortar be adopted, and that possibly a 120mm mortar battalion be added to each division. Marines who had been on the receiving end of enemy 47mm gunfire felt that a 57mm gun should be substituted for their own 37mm piece. Similarly, a tank with thicker armor and heavier armament than the Sherman would have facilitated operations on Iwo Jima. A great majority of the Shermans were equipped with small flamethrowers that proved their worth by squirting fire through one or two of their machine gun ports, but a tank capable of shooting a flame for about 100 yards from a turret-mounted tube proved the most efficient. In order to deceive the Japanese, who tended to concentrate their fire against any type of flamethrower, these tubes outwardly were exact replicas of the 75mm gun.

In his letter to President Roosevelt, Rear Admiral Ichimaru somewhat contemptuously referred to American material superiority as opposed to Japanese fighting spirit.[44] While there can be no doubt that such material superiority did in fact exist, it is equally

[43] *TF 51 AR*, Pt V, Sec C, p. 3.

[44] RAdm Ichimaru ltr to President Roosevelt, n.d., as cited in Morehouse, *Iwo Jima Campaign*, App. E, p. 172E.

clear that other important factors were at work which the Japanese admiral pointedly ignored. Not least among these were the outstanding leadership and discipline of the men who came to take Iwo Jima or die in the attempt; the physical stamina and mental power of endurance of these men, both tempered in months or years of thorough training; and the intangible, indefinable something known as esprit de corps or morale, that induces men to give their last in a common cause.

Without all of the above qualities, the individual Marine could not have gone on to victory on Iwo Jima, a battle that has been linked to "throwing human flesh against reinforced concrete."[45] For the men of the landing force that assaulted and captured one of the strongest enemy bastions in the Pacific, the operation was the supreme test. Judging by the performance of these men and the results attained, the inevitable conclusion can be drawn that a heavily defended objective can be seized by such a force regardless of its size, the difficulty of its terrain, and the degree of man-made defensive perfection. An amphibious assault against such an objective will be successful if it can be isolated by surface and air superiority and prepared by naval bombardment and bombing.

[45] Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*, p. 475.

Conclusions

The ground operations discussed in this volume, notably Peleliu and Iwo Jima, span the period of seven months from September 1944 to the end of March 1945. Within the overall context of World War II, this time span was most significant. In Europe, this period saw the advance of Soviet forces into Germany proper, the collapse of the German allies in Scandinavia and the Balkans, and the slow but steadily accelerating drive of the Western Allies into western Germany.

An ingenious offensive in the Ardennes and the introduction of new types of rockets failed to halt the steamroller that was beginning to engulf the *Reich* from the west, east, and the south. Dissent within the ranks of the Germans themselves had been all but snuffed out following the abortive attempt on Hitler's life in late July. The harsh measures that followed in the wake of the Generals' Plot all but silenced those who might have raised their voices against the continuation of a war that the overwhelming majority of the military, as well as the civilian population, already had to consider lost. The heavy Allied air raids, carried out in such force that entire cities were literally obliterated from the face of the earth only underscored the fact that time was on the side of the Allies. Despite reports of the miraculous effect of those wonder weapons already existing and those yet to come, both pessimism and fear were dominant: pessimism as to what would happen to the country and its people once the Allies had won; fear of death from the air for the civilian populace; fear of death or capture on the part of the military, particularly those facing a merciless enemy on the Eastern front; fear of the numerous foreign workers who, in many cases forcibly conscripted and not always well-treated, posed an increasing threat to internal security as the ring closed around Germany.

Finally, there was fear of the ruling police and semi-military organizations whose measures against military personnel and civilians alike became ever more menacing as the strategic situation deteriorated. During the late fall and throughout the winter of 1944–1945, the German war machine still functioned efficiently despite heavy losses in personnel and materiel, devastation from the air, increasing shortages in raw materials, and covert popular discontent. The German offensive in the Ardennes, the last of the great German offensives of World War II, represented but the final gasp of a machine that had waged almost unlimited *blitzkrieg* during the initial years of the war. When this offensive fell short of its goals and could not be sustained, the end of the war in Europe became a visible goal,

at the most only months away. As one history of that war was to sum it up:

> . . . the roads back over the Eifel led straight to the decimation and collapse of the German armies on the banks of the Oder River, along the Danube, in the Ruhr pocket, and, at last, to the bunkers of Berlin.[1]

In comparison with operations in Europe, the war in the Pacific Theater during the latter part of 1944 and through the early months of 1945 showed certain similarities as well as marked differences. The vital gains in territory and raw materials made by the Japanese during the early months of the war had realized for them most of the tactical and strategic objectives they had embarked on. Beginning with the American landings in the Solomons, prolonged operations in New Guinea, and the American recapture of islands in the Aleutians, the Japanese situation had very gradually deteriorated, though such setbacks were in no way overly worrisome to the Japanese leaders who continued to maintain an optimistic outlook as to the eventual outcome of the war. They hoped that, in time, a negotiated peace would permit Japan to retain at least some of the vital areas from which she drew her raw materials.

The heavy American losses at Tarawa only strengthened the Japanese belief that the United States would not be willing to continue paying such a heavy price for each island that would have to be seized before the war was carried into the Home Islands. Meanwhile, despite increasingly heavy interference by American submarines with Japanese shipping, raw materials continued to flow to Japan from the conquered territories: urgently needed rubber arrived from Burma, Malaya, and Indochina; vital food products and petroleum made their way north from the Philippines and from the former Dutch East Indies; and war plants in Manchuria and Korea were producing at full capacity. The vast pool of Japanese manpower had been barely touched by combat losses, though the caliber of the aviators was diminishing.

Both the Japanese military and the civilian population stood solidly behind the government, at whose apex was the Emperor against whom no voice of dissent could be raised. The entire population was in some way involved in the war effort. There was absolute confidence in the leadership and the foreign policy pursued by the country. The borders of Japan were secure. There were still the numerous island outposts to the south and west; much of the Chinese mainland, especially the vital coastal areas, was under Japanese control and the possibility of Russia's entry into the war against Japan on the side of the Allies appeared remote. Within the Home Islands, the entire nation was functioning as a military-civilian team under quasi-military rule. There were few foreigners in the Home Islands, aside from closely guarded Allied prisoners of war and civilian internees, including missionaries, all of whom represented an infinitesimally small number that posed no threat to the Japanese war effort. Their presence

[1] Hugh M. Cole, *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge—The U. S. Army in World War II* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1955), p. 673.

in the country was not a factor in maintaining the agriculture or industry of Japan.

The spring and summer of 1944 saw a rapid acceleration of Allied operations in the Central Pacific, primarily an American effort. Based on the bitter lessons of Tarawa, U. S. Marines had perfected their planning and refined their techniques until their drive into the Marianas "saw the flowering of a vital skill, logistics planning, whose incredible complexity met the need to sustain massive assaults and at the same time provide a continuous flow of men, supplies, and equipment for a host of existing and future requirements."[2]

Noting the change in the strategic situation in the Pacific brought about by American seizure of the Gilberts and Marshals, one postwar survey has noted that:

> The United States position was firm indeed in early March 1944. The initiative had been won, adequate forces were in sight, and it was possible to plan in orderly fashion for future operations. Japan, on the other hand, was faced with the most urgent need for devising means to counter the unpredictable but obviously intended blows at her inner perimeter, with forces so limited that opposition with the slightest chance of a favorable outcome could only be offered under ideal conditions.[3]

The stage was now set for an American advance into the inner perimeter of Japan's defense. The possibility of an American invasion of the Marianas in the spring and summer of 1944 hardly came as a surprise for the Japanese, who nearly a year earlier had already designated these islands as an "absolute strategic area within the absolute zone of national defense."[4] What did cause great surprise and consternation were the might of the American naval bombardment, notably at Saipan, the great speed of the landing operations, and the overwhelming superiority of the Americans in the air, which underscored the loss of the well-trained and seasoned aviators that Japan had possessed at the beginning of the war.

The success of the American landings on Saipan only nine days after the Normandy invasion, coupled with the subsequent operations against Tinian and Guam, struck the Japanese with the same impact that the Allied invasion of Europe had on the Germans. In either case it was less the initial success of the landings that confounded the defenders than the fact that the invasion force could not be confined to the beaches or driven back into the sea. There were several fringe benefits for the Americans inherent in the Saipan operation. First, the fact that "it lured the Japanese carriers to defeat might alone be enough to call it the decisive operation of the Central Pacific Campaign."[5] The capture of Saipan provided the Americans with a base from which giant B–29s would soon be able to launch a devastating air offensive against the Home Islands. The sea battle in the Marianas resulted in the loss of most of the carriers and air strength of the *Combined Fleet*, which gave American aircraft full control of the air while the U. S. Navy dominated the Central

[2] Shaw, Nalty, and Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive*, p. 583.

[3] USSBS, *Pacific Campaigns*, p. 204.

[4] Hayashi and Coox, *Kogun*, p. 109.

[5] Shaw, Nalty, and Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive*, p. 583.

Pacific. Without support from sea or air, Tinian and Guam were for all practical purposes isolated plums ripe for the picking. Since the loss of 300 naval aircraft had all but wiped out naval strength in the Marianas and the Japanese Army had only few planes with sufficient range to fly from bases on Iwo Jima to Saipan, there was no hope that Japan would regain command of the air over the Marianas. With this realization went any Japanese hopes of recapturing either Saipan, Guam, or Tinian.

Beyond this, from the Japanese point of view:

> . . . there appeared a wide gap in the absolute zone of national defense in the Central Pacific region. The advance of the U. S. Navy toward Japanese waters was facilitated by this breach, which threatened the very security of the homeland. Even more painful for Japan, the American Air Force began to bomb the main islands from bases on Saipan and Guam —raids which began on September 24.[6]

Following the successful Allied invasion of Normandy, and in the weeks that followed, it is interesting to note that a group of German general officers, many of them members of the General Staff, concluded that the war could no longer be won and set about to remove Hitler before attempting to reach a negotiated peace with the Allies. In Japan, at approximately the same time, the situation was directly reversed. It was recognized that, with the loss of Saipan, the war situation had reached a critical phase. However, while the Emperor and the senior statesman "grew anxious and perturbed,"[7] the military radiated an air of optimism, which went so far as highly placed officers making profuse assurances "that our fleet had emerged victorious from the engagement (in the Philippine Sea). They even drank hilariously to the spectacular victory."[8]

In Germany the question of continuing the war or finding a way to the peace-table resulted in an ever widening chasm between the Armed Forces and the Nazi Party, with the former favoring an end to the war. In Japan, the military closed ranks in favor of fighting to the last man, woman, and child, if necessary, though major differences as to the further prosecution of the war remained between the Army and Navy. The dismissal of Tojo as Premier on 18 July preceded the assassination attempt against Hitler by two days. Whereas the abortive General's Plot resulted in a major upheaval in the German ranks with numerous courts martials and summary executions in its wake, the transition from the Tojo Government to a new cabinet took place in an orderly fashion, though it was far from routine. Never having been questioned, the stature and authority of the Emperor remained unchanged. In order to put and end to Army-Navy antagonism, both the War Minister and the Chief of Staff made efforts aimed at resolving the long-standing rivalries between the two Services, though the time was late.

While the drive across the Central Pacific was aimed directly at the Japanese Home Islands, General Douglas MacArthur was embarked on the road to Tokyo over a more circuitous south-

[6] Hayashi and Coox, *Kogun*, p. 109.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

erly route which would take him from New Guinea to the Philippines. As compared to the European Theater, this drive might be likened to the Allied invasion of North Africa and the subsequent moves to Sicily and Italy. Where the seizure of North Africa and Italy had been intended to open a door into Europe through the supposedly "soft belly" in the south, MacArthur's strategy of isolating Japan from her sources of supply in the Philippines and freeing the inhabitants of these islands from Japanese oppression, as he had promised, was to serve as a stepping stone towards the invasion of the Home Islands. Both in southern Europe, as in the southern Pacific, the respective campaigns proved costly, arduous, and time-consuming. Neither the recapture of the Philippines nor the plodding advance up the Appenine Peninsula yielded quick results that would have brought the war to a rapid end in either theater; nor was there any clear agreement in early 1944 where MacArthur would go once the liberation of the Philippines had been accomplished.

It is in the light of this overall situation that the seizure of the southern Palaus, Operation STALEMATE, must be viewed. During the early part of 1944, the Palaus represented one of the key strongholds in Japan's second line of defense. Once New Guinea and the Marshall Islands had been seized by the Americans, the Central Carolines had been bypassed, and the Marianas had fallen, the Palaus moved into the first line of defense for Japan. They became the most powerful and strategic enemy outposts halfway between the Central Pacific drive in the northeast and MacArthur's drive from the south. Since the Palaus were situated only 500 miles east of the Philippine island of Mindanao, their permanent neutralization from sea or air was impractical; as result, the southernmost of these islands became the target of invasion.

At the time Admiral Nimitz, General MacArthur, as well as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were in general agreement as to the necessity of securing the southern Palaus, notably Peleliu and Angaur, as well as islands closest to Guam, notably Yap and Ulithi in the Northern Carolines. Possession of the smaller islands to the northeast and south of Babelthuap, the largest and most heavily-defended island in the Palaus, would permit the neutralization of that stronghold. At the same time that a joint force of Marines and Army troops assaulted Peleliu and Angaur respectively, MacArthur's forces prepared to assault Morotai, located about halfway between the western tip of New Guinea and Celebes, 480 miles southwest of Peleliu. Seizure of Peleliu and Angaur to the north (with Morotai as a stepping stone in the south) would effectively screen General MacArthur's drive into the Philippines, at the same time providing vital airstrips to the Americans from which aircraft could neutralize enemy forces and such air power as remained to the Japanese on adjacent islands.

The overall situation that had developed by mid-summer made it possible to scrap the planned operation against Yap Island in the northern Carolines. The invasions of Peleliu and Morotai took place on 15 September, followed two days later by the assault on Angaur. Fighting on Peleliu, in particular,

proved long, bitter, and costly, so much so that at the conclusion of the operation doubts arose as to whether results had been worth the effort, particularly in view of the fact that last-minute changes in plans for subsequent operations, specifically the invasion of the Philippines, "made it all but impossible to fit the Palaus into the operational role originally planned for them."[9] The capture of Angaur also failed to provide immediate support to MacArthur's forces. Terrain difficulties and inadequate gasoline storage facilities prevented the operation of bombers from Angaur until 21 October, the day after American forces had landed on Leyte in the central Philippines.[10] Even then, it was not until 17 November that the first bomber mission was flown against the Philippines from a field in the Palaus. In time, Angaur became an important base for heavy bombers and an aircraft staging point, from which operations on Luzon could be supported. Aircraft based on Morotai did not fly sorties against Leyte, but flew many missions over Mindanao and other islands in the southern Philippines. After 7 October, fighters based on Morotai flew cover for Allied bombers en route to Mindanao and the Visayan Islands.

An unexpected dividend accruing to American forces from the seizure of the Palaus was the capture of Ulithi Atoll by Army troops. Seized in an unopposed operation from 22–24 September, this atoll became an extremely valuable base for the U. S. Pacific Fleet. As the war progressed, it became an important staging area for the fleet and amphibious forces taking part in the invasion of Okinawa. Generally speaking, seizure of some islands in the western Carolines, including Peleliu, gained for the Allies valuable bases, though the accelerating drive towards Japan made it necessary to convert these newly seized bases to uses other than those originally anticipated.

For the men of the 1st Marine Division who assaulted Peleliu, the seizure of the island meant a hard and bloody campaign. Of particular interest is the ratio of forces employed by both opponents. At Attu in the Aleutians, the American forces had enjoyed a numerical superiority of 5:1. The ratio was 2.5:1 in favor of the attacking force at Saipan, and at Guam it amounted to 2:1.[11] In the Palaus, the defending Japanese were considerably superior in number to the invasion force. Yet the latter was able to bring its full striking power to bear against the objective, while the main Japanese garrison on adjacent Babelthuap was effectively blocked by the U. S. Navy from giving any relief to its hard-pressed comrades in arms on Peleliu.

Completion of the operation in the Western Carolines placed the United States in a favorable position for carrying the war to the enemy at an accelerated pace. Since early summer of 1944, the Japanese situation had deteriorated alarmingly. Even while Japan attempted to bolster her sagging line of defense, the Japanese air garrison in the Philippines had suffered staggering losses, as had Japanese ship-

[9] Smith, *Approach to the Philippines*, p. 572.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 573.
[11] Hayashi and Coox, *Kogun*, pp. 110–111.

ping, both through U.S. submarine action and later through carrier and shore-based air strikes.

The arrival of 1945 saw an almost complete reversal of the still fairly stable position of Japan just one year earlier. The final months of 1944 had faced the Japanese with almost unimaginable reverses that the nation could no longer compensate for. Loss of the Philippines to General MacArthur's forces was not only a very sore blow to Japanese pride, but more practically:

> The Southern Resources Area, the prize for which the war had been fought, was gone and American fleets sailed with impunity to the shores of eastern Asia. All hope of future resistance had depended upon oil and now the tankers were sunk and the oil cut off. The surface fleet was gone, and so were 7,000 aircraft, expended in four months defense of the last supply line. Suicide attack, bleeding tactics, were now the last hope of this shrunken empire, and even these economical methods of defense suffered from the blockade.[12]

From the Marine Corps point of view, the tactical development of close air support had been one of the most distinguishing features of the Peleliu operation. The remarkable performance of Marine aviators during the capture of Ngesebus Island had been but a forerunner of what Marine air was shortly to accomplish in the Philippines in support of Army troops. This development had been slow in coming, the inevitable result of the early wartime naval training of Marine pilots, which devoted little serious attention to closely coordinated air attacks in support of ground units. By late 1944 the winds of change had begun to blow at a stiffer pace, and the employment of Marine air for close support missions became a distinct possibility. In anticipation of such a development, MAG–24, then stationed at Bougainville, began the crash training of Marine pilots for close support. A radical departure from orthodox methods was the adoption of direct communications between pilots and ground-based air liaison parties. The performance of Marine aviators on Luzon Island and in the Southern Philippines was to become an outstanding chapter in a long history of excellent achievements, combining raw courage with skill and flexibility. The activities of Marine air in the Philippines constituted one of the few opportunities that Marine air groups had to show their skill in close air support. Except for a brief period of employment during the early days of the Iwo Jima operation, there would be little occasion for the Marine flyers to give any further demonstration of their close support prowess. Only later, on Okinawa, would Marine pilots have a final opportunity to perfect their close support tactics.[13]

The early days of 1945 were bleak ones for Germans and Japanese alike. In the case of the former, the Ardennes offensive had failed and only further weakened the depleted divisions of the *Reich*, which was now under aerial attack around the clock, while invading armies were striking at her interior from three directions. For the Japanese, the fortunes of war had come full

[12] USSBS, *Pacific Campaigns*, p. 289.

[13] For a detailed account of Marine Corps operations on Okinawa, see Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, Pt. II.

circle. The spirit of optimism that had still filled the people of Japan with hope during the summer of 1944 had now vanished. The news from the battlefronts was all bad, and it could no longer be kept from the populace. The thought of rebellion against the Emperor was still unacceptable to the Japanese, but there were some effects, notably to morale: "At home the bad news began to be known and mutterings of negotiated conditional peace arose even in the armed forces. Japan was defeated: it remained only necessary to persuade her of the fact."[14]

As the war situation deteriorated for the Axis, the peoples of Germany and Japan realized that nothing short of a miracle could still save their situation. In Germany, the die-hard optimists looked for a reversal of imminent defeat through the V-Weapons, whose development assumed ever grander proportions, though reality lagged far behind wishful thinking. As early as 1943, the Japanese received word that Germany was working on atomic weapons, but nuclear physicists maintained that such weapons were not far enough advanced for use in World War II. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to employ science in a bid to solve the numerous military problems.

During 1944, an increasing number of scientists and technical experts were pressed into service in order to test a number of unorthodox devices that were to be employed in the decisive battle. Thus, the Japanese Army experimented with a thermal ray and bombs that would be guided to their targets by sources of heat, notably American troopships. Actual experiments had been carried out during the summer of 1944, but the onrush of events overtook the slow experimentation before a multitude of technical problems could be eliminated. In the end, the "weapons of science" could not be put to any practical use, and "weapons for decisive combat thus came to mean suicidal expedients," such as the *kamikaze*.[15] The only practical Japanese secret weapon ever to be used against the United States was a balloon bomb, which for about six months after 1 November 1944, was released daily from Japan. Purpose of the bomb was a psychological one: "Americans were to be made to feel uneasy because of surprise explosions scattered throughout the United States." While a number of these balloons actually reached the Continental United States, their effectiveness was practically nil; only a few grass fires resulted from 9,000 incendiary balloons launched.

The invasion of Iwo Jima must be viewed in the light of what the loss of the island would do to Japanese civilian morale, coupled with the benefits the use of the island's three airfields would provide to the Allied air effort against Japan. Because of the serious losses incurred in the Philippines and other campaigns, together with a breakdown in the pilot replacement program and a critical shortage of fuel, the Japanese Army and Navy Air Forces were no longer effective deterrents to American incursions at sea or in the air. On the other hand, the American potential for waging war was at its height. The Amer-

[14] USSBS, *Pacific Campaigns*, p. 290.

[15] Hayashi and Coox, *Kogun*, p. 118.

icans were stronger in numbers, better trained, and moving forward with an overwhelming offensive power. "United States domination of the Pacific Ocean Area was complete and the time was at hand to strike in earnest toward the heart of the Japanese Empire."[16]

The Iwo Jima operation was wedged in time into a very narrow period, barely preceded by the American landings on Luzon and shortly followed by the invasion of Okinawa. The ambitious plans for this decisive period almost exceeded the capabilities of a fully mobilized United States, particularly when the Tokyo carrier strikes were included. As a result, the landings at Iwo Jima took place under the shadow of the major invasion of Luzon in the south, the imminent assault against the Ryukyus, and a carrier-based aerial assault against the Home Islands. This accelerated schedule of events contributed to the reduction in the number of days available for the prelanding bombardment of Iwo Jima. That the island could be taken at all in view of the strength of its defenses and the casualties incurred by the attacking Marines is proof of the latters' courage, highly advanced state of training, and the soundness of amphibious doctrine that had become an integral part of Marine Corps tactics.

Control of Iwo Jima provided the Americans with airfields 600 miles closer to the Home Islands, opening the doors wide to a full-scale aerial assault on Japan. The early months of 1945 thus saw a further extension of American power towards the inner defenses of Japan. Even as bitter fighting raged on Iwo Jima, a huge American invasion armada was already en route to Okinawa, which was ultimately to turn into "the most difficult operation undertaken in the Pacific by United States forces,"[17] though from the point of view of the Marine Corps, the Iwo Jima campaign remains aptly designated as "The Supreme Test."[18] A comparison of the Iwo Jima and Okinawa operations does not fall within the purview of this volume; the latter operation has been most aptly described elsewhere in this series.[19]

The seizure of Iwo Jima eliminated a strong Japanese bastion of defense near the Home Islands; it provided the Americans with forward airfields; and the U. S. presence on Iwo Jima was decisive in neutralizing other fortified enemy islands in the Bonins. As the war in Europe thundered to its conclusion, the inevitability of defeat following the fall of Iwo Jima was impressed on all Japanese. As the shadow of American airpower and the specter of an all-out assault against the Home Islands themselves became a distinct possibility, Japanese diplomats began delicate maneuvers behind the scenes to save what could be salvaged from a misguided and misconceived war. Japanese defeats in the Pacific also were beginning to have international repercussions, notably with regard to the Soviet Union, which was beginning to waver in its neutrality towards Japan. The horror of atomic warfare was yet unheard of dur-

[16] USSBS, *Pacific Campaigns*, p. 320.

[17] USSBS, *Pacific Campaigns*, p. 324.

[18] Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*, ch 10.

[19] See Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, Pt II.

ing these early months of 1945. But each succeeding American assault across the Central Pacific had driven the nails of defeat deeper into the coffin that bore the remains of Japanese dreams, and it was on islands such as Peleliu and Iwo Jima that these dreams were finally laid to rest.

Bibliographical Notes

This history is predominantly based on official Marine Corps records comprising the diaries, reports, plans, journals, and orders of the commands and units that participated in the operations covered by this volume. Such records of the other Services as were pertinent to the subject matter have been consulted and used. Activities on high strategic levels have been reconstructed with the help of the records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or official publications that derived a considerable portion of their basic data from JCS records.

Since this volume deals with a number of seemingly unrelated topics, ranging from an administrative history of the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, to major operations in the Western Pacific, not to mention aviation activities in widely separated areas, a large number of sources had to be consulted. Some of these were pertinent to only one area or period of time while others offered detailed information on a scope encompassing the entire volume. Unless otherwise noted, all of the official records cited are on file with or obtainable through the Library and Documentation Sections, Reference Branch, Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps.

A number of published works of general interest have been consulted frequently during the preparation of this volume. The more important of these are listed below.

In order to bridge the inevitable gaps and inadequacies that occur in the sources consulted, extensive use was made of the knowledge of key participants in the actions described. These men, representing all Services, generously offered time and effort in replying to specific questions, making themselves available for interviews, and furnishing critical comments on draft manuscrips of this volume and preliminary monographs. The historical offices of the Army, Navy, and Air Force have conducted a detailed review of draft chapters and furnished much material of value to this history. The War History Office of the Defense Agency of Japan has read and commented on the passages dealing with Japanese operations on Peleliu, Iwo Jima, and in the Philippines, providing valuable information that has been incorporated into the narrative.

Books

Wesley Frank Craven and James Lee Cate, eds. *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944 to August 1945—The Army Air Forces in World War II*, v. 5. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953. The Air Force official history covering the final year of World War II with particular emphasis on the development and employment of the B-29 bomber and operations in the Western and Southwestern Pacific. This well documented book is a reliable source for the operations of Army Air Forces units in the Pacific and their vital part in the defeat of Japan.

Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl. *The U. S. Marines and Amphibious War.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951. An outstanding source of information dealing with the adoption, development, and perfection of amphibious warfare and application of these techniques during various phases of World War II. The authors' critical comments on each major operation and their conclusions are invaluable for a clear perspective of warfare in the Pacific Theater.

VAdm E. P. Forrestel. *Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, USN—A Study in Command.* Washington: Department of the Navy, 1966. Record of a naval leader's service to his country in war and peace. This well documented and illustrated biography not only tells the story of a man and his brilliant career in the Pacific during World War II but also outlines some of the major naval operations of World War II.

FAdm William F. Halsey and LCdr J. Bryan

III. *Admiral Halsey's Story.* New York: Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, Inc., 1947. The life and service of one of the most prominent American naval commanders in World War II. In addition to gaining a close look at the human side of this great naval leader, the reader is also presented with the background and development of some of the great naval actions in the Western Pacific during World War II.

FAdm Ernest H. King and Cdr Walter M. Whitehill. *Fleet Admiral King: A Naval Record.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1952. An autobiography covering the entire span of service of this great naval leader, highlighting his part in the formulation of American strategy within the high-level command structure employed in World War II.

FAdm William D. Leahy. *I Was There.* New York: Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1950. The autobiography of another high-ranking naval officer who served as Chief of Staff under Presidents Roosevelt and Truman. In addition to highly relevant comments on top-level Allied conferences which the author attended, a sizable portion of the book deals with his most delicate prewar appointment as American Minister to the Vichy Government and his official and personal relations with prominent Vichy persons.

Samuel Eliot Morison. *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II,* v. XII, XIII, XIV. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958, 1959, 1960. These three volumes by Rear Admiral Morison, *Leyte, June 1944-January 1945, The Liberation of the Philippines, 1944–1945,* and *Victory in the Pacific, 1945* give an excellent account of Navy operations in the Southwestern and Western Pacific. Though prepared with Navy collaboration and support, these volumes nevertheless bear the personal imprint of the author, whose masterful description of the naval operations of this period is without equal.

Robert Sherrod. *History of Marine Corps Aviation in World War II.* Washington: Combat Forces Press, 1952. An unofficial history, but prepared with substantial research support from the Marine Corps, this work contains information on Marine aviation units not to be found elsewhere. It represents the most comprehensive source in its field published to date.

Robert Ross Smith. *The Approach to the Philippines—The War in the Pacific—United States Army in World War II.* Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953. An excellent account of the strategy and tactics that were employed in laying the basis for the recapture of the Philippines, specifically during amphibious and ground operations in New Guinea and the southern Palau Islands.

United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific), Naval Analysis Division. *The Campaigns of the Pacific War,* 1 vol. and *Interrogations of Japanese Officials,* 2 vols. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946. The three volumes give an interesting account of World War II as seen through Japanese eyes. Prepared shortly after the end of hostilities, this series is deficient in accuracy and perspective. Yet the information and viewpoints provide an insight into Japanese military thinking, both through translation of pertinent documents and through interviews.

The War Reports of General of the Army George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, General of the Army H. H. Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces; Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations. Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1947. Collection of the official reports of the chiefs of the armed services, issued during World War II and the immediate postwar period. Excellent material for reviewing the big picture of World War II operations.

PART I

INTRODUCTION

Official Documents

The operational span of ground operations in this volume covers the invasion of the southern Palaus as a preliminary step in the reconquest of the Philippines and the subsequent decision to seize Iwo Jima in the Volcano-Bonins as an advanced base in the direction of the Home Islands. For the strategy and tactics employed by the United States during this crucial period of the war in the South-

western and Western Pacific during the latter part of 1944 and early 1945, a variety of sources were required. These ranged from records of the Joint and Combined Chiefs of Staff as cited in previously published official histories to the minutes of CominCh-CinCPac Conferences conducted during the summer of 1944. In some instances, copies of reports and minutes portraying the evolution of Anglo-American strategy can be found in the files of the World War II Division, Federal Records Center, The National Archives which has recently relocated to Suitland, Maryland.

Information on the status of Marine Corps units and personnel during the period covered has been derived from such tables of organization station lists and status sheets for air and ground units as were readily available in the archives of the Historical Division. Additional sources of information were the monthly FMF air and ground status reports prepared within the Division of Plans and Policies and the Division of Aviation, HQMC, and the Annual Reports of the Commandant of the Marine Corps to the Secretary of the Navy.

Japanese Sources

In appraising the strategic and tactical situation from the Japanese side, our view is necessarily limited by the factors of time, distance, availability of enemy persons and records, and linguistics. A full exploitation of official Japanese wartime records on a scale even remotely resembling that of captured German military records by the Allies proved impossible. On the tactical level, few of the Japanese garrison commanders and their staffs survived the fighting; as a result, such information as was obtainable had to be gleaned from American intelligence surveys prepared by higher headquarters, mostly based on the interrogation of the few prisoners that were taken or such Japanese military records, mostly of a tactical nature, that fell into American hands.

Fortunately for the historian and researcher, during the immediate postwar period while the occupation of Japan was in full swing, General MacArthur's headquarters utilized its available resources to initiate a study program with the help of former Japanese officials. This program culminated in the preparation of a series of monographs detailing Japanese activities in widespread areas of the Pacific and Asia. These early studies which varied greatly in scope, quality, and accuracy underwent a further process of refinement in the mid-1950s, at which time they were published in the form of monographs under the auspices of the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army. A complete listing of these monographs is contained in *Guide to Japanese Monographs and Japanese Studies on Manchuria 1945–1960* (Washington, 1961) prepared by OCMH, which also exercises custody over this collection.

Of primary interest for the purposes of this volume were those monographs dealing with Japanese preparations for the defense of the Philippines during the summer of 1944. Monograph No. 45 comprising the *History of the Army Section, Imperial General Headquarters*, gives an insight into the prosecution of the war as seen through eyes of Japanese on the elevated level of command in an exhaustive study of 382 pages. Monograph No. 48, *Central Pacific Operations Record*, Volume I, (December 1941-August 1945) furnished considerable information on the defense of Iwo Jima, while No. 49, Volume II of the same title, was useful in providing a general outline of the Japanese situation in the Pacific for most of 1944.

Books and Periodicals

The first three volumes of this series, *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal, Isolation of Rabaul*, and *Central Pacific Drive*, as well as the last, *Victory and Occupation*, have served as a useful basis for the background information that had to be incorporated into the fourth, particularly with respect to the development and employment of amphibious doctrine. An appropriate setting was arrived at with the help of the following:

Ray S. Cline. *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division—The War Department—United States Army in World War II.* Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1951. An official Army history outlining high-level planning in the Operations Division of the War Department during World War II. An

excellent source based on important primary data.

John Miller, Jr. "The Casablanca Conference and Pacific Strategy," *Military Affairs*, v. 13, no. 4 (Winter 49). A concise account of this high-level conference and its results.

Walter Millis, ed. *The Forrestal Diaries*. New York: The Viking Press, 1951. The personal files and papers of the former Secretary of the Navy and later Secretary of Defense dealing with top level planning, decisions, and conferences during the later phase of World War II. An important source for evaluating the Administration's plans in the realm of international affairs, the conclusion of the war in the Pacific, and the formulation of plans for the postwar period.

Louis Morton. "American and Allied Strategy in the Far East," *Military Review*, v. 29, no. 9 (Dec49). This article deals with planning for the eventual drive across the Pacific towards the Japanese Home Islands.

Adm Raymond A. Spruance. "The Victory in the Pacific," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, v. 91, no. 564 (Nov46). A brief but well prepared look at World War II operations in the Pacific Theater stressing planning and strategy.

United States Army, War Department. *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*. TM-E 30–480. Washington, 1Oct44. A basic source on the organization and equipment of Japanese land forces with useful detail on weapons characteristics and textbook tactics.

PART II

FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC

Official Documents

The evolution of amphibious doctrine from the mid-1930s to the end of World War II directly reflects on the size and shape of the organization employed to implement this doctrine. In tracing the origin and development of the Fleet Marine Force, pertinent information was obtained from the official files at Headquarters, Marine Corps.. The material found fruitful for this purpose included the Annual Reports of the Commandant of the Marine Corps which, for the years under consideration, faithfully mirrored the increasing size and complexity of the organization. The evolution of amphibious doctrine is further reflected in Marine Corps and Navy manuals dealing with landing operations, issued between the two world wars, again notably during the 1930s. Information on the development of landing craft and amphibious vehicles was obtained from Headquarters Marine Corps files and those of the Department of the Navy Bureau of Ships. For a look at Fleet Marine Force organization and plans shortly before the United States entered the war, the "Report of the General Board on Expansion of the U. S. Marine Corps," of 7 May 1941, in the custody of the Operational Archives Branch, Naval History Division, proved of great value.

Additional information was obtained from Volume I in this series, Part I, "Introduction to the Marine Corps," which thoroughly discusses this subject matter and the resulting Marine Corps posture on the eve of World War II.

In connection with the parallel growth of Marine aviation several sources proved important. Among these, the Marine Corps Aviation Status Sheets, prepared by the Division of Aviation; an *Administrative History of Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific*; the *War Diary, Marine Aircraft Wings, Pacific*, and the *War Diary of Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force Pacific* made a major contribution in following the expansion of Marine Corps aviation in World War II.

Unofficial Sources

The official material enumerated above was further supplemented with letters of comment on draft manuscripts obtained mostly from retired officers connected with the Fleet Marine Force following its establishment and those who played a part in it during the succeeding phases of its evolution. Many of the men who occupied leading positions during the two decades covered are no longer among the living. Nevertheless, their views, as expressed in statements, directives, and other correspondence have trickled down to us and have been carefully considered in the development of conclusions. An unpublished

draft entitled "FMFPac Administrative History—The Development of FMFPac" in the custody of the Documentation Section, Reference Branch of the Historical Division served as a valuable guide in the reconstruction of the organizational development.

Books and Periodicals

Robert D. Heinl, Jr. *Soldiers of the Sea—The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962.* Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1962. An outstanding labor of love by an author who combines great writing skill with his intricate knowledge of the Marine Corps scene both in peace and war. Not always with the greatest objectivity, the narrative provides comprehensive coverage of the organization and operations of the Marine Corps including its struggles afar and at home.

Once again, Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War* provided valuable information on early amphibious doctrine and the evolution of the Fleet Marine Force.

Clyde H. Metcalf. *A History of the United States Marine Corps.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1939. A valuable historical work showing the triumphs and tribulations of the Marine Corps in time of war and peace. Of special interest in this context for its coverage of the lean years following World War I to the beginning buildup in the late 1930s that foreshadowed World War II.

John H. Russell, Jr., "Birth of the Fleet Marine Force," *U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings,* v. 72, no. 515 (Jan/46). An authoritative contribution by a former Assistant Commandant and later Commandan who was closely involved with the Fleet Marine Force in its early years.

General Holland M. Smith, "Development of Amphibious Tactics in the U. S. Navy," *Marine Corps Gazette,* v. 38, nos. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 (Jun–Oct48). A five-part article written by the man who made a major contribution to implementation of amphibious doctrine and the development of the Fleet Marine Force.

Holland M. Smith and Percy Finch, *Coral and Brass.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949. An autobiography in which the author discussses his noteworthy military career with valuable comments on the military operations of World War II and his part in the development of the FMFPac.

PART III

THE PALAUS: GATEWAY TO THE PHILIPPINES

Official Documents

The seizure of the southern Palaus as finally executed in Operation STALEMATE II resulted in the neutralization of the entire island group. The high level planning that preceded this operation, one of the most vicious and costly to be fought in the Pacific, spanned the period of nearly six months, during which time the progress of the war in the Pacific forced several revisions in the basic operation plan. The planning and execution of STALEMATE II resulted in a wealth of documentation ranging from minutes of the CCS and JCS to detailed plans on the corps and division level. On the tactical level, considerable information was available in the form of war diaries, appendices, and annexes including reports of general and special staff officers and sections, unit journals, and after action reports. While these vary greatly in scope and content, they nevertheless provide a comprehensive basis for an operational narrative, since all fields ranging from personnel, intelligence, and operations to logistics have been covered. If anything, the sheer quantity of material available from official sources, extending from the corps down to battalion level often made the selection of pertinent data a difficult undertaking. In those instances where a conflict existed between accounts on different reporting levels, the version of the unit most closely concerned with the action described has been utilized.

Unofficial Documents

In addition to the voluminous official sources, a number of unofficial documents were available in the form of letters that passed between various high-level participants in Operation STALEMATE II, particularly in the correspondence between Generals Geiger and Rupertus, and General Vandegrift, then Commandant of the Marine Corps. These letters are part of a personal correspondence file which the Commandant maintained with general and

flag officers, and which ultimately came to be placed in the custody of the Archives of the Historical Division.

During the preparation of the historical monograph, *The Assault on Peleliu*, the author, Major Frank O. Hough, prepared numerous notes in the form of a card file. These cards, though no longer complete, contain substantial information on all phases of STALEMATE II and may be examined through the Documentation Section, Reference Branch, of the Historical Division.

MajGen Oliver P. Smith. "Personal Narrative." The personal journal of the Assistant Division Commander of the 1st Marine Division covering the period from 28 January-1 November 1944, including very perceptive comments on the Peleliu campaign.

After the draft chapters of the above monograph had been completed, they were circulated among the higher ranking participants in the operation for critique and comment. The replies received brought to light much additional information of varying quality, ranging from outstanding to average, which were assembled in a folder designated as the Peleliu Comment File. To these comments, dating back to the early 1950s, must be added a similar critique of the chapters in this volume. Both comment files are in the custody of the Historical Division, which will make them available to the serious researcher.

Japanese Sources

Compared to the wealth of official records available from American sources, those from the Japanese side are at best sparse. Among a large cache of documents captured on Saipan a number dealt with Japanese defensive preparations in the Palaus. These were exploited, translated in the rough, and made available to the assault units prior to the invasion. The interrogations of the relatively few prisoners of war taken on Peleliu also provide a source of information, though intelligence obtained in this way is of a conflicting nature, since prisoners frequently made their disclosures with a view towards pleasing their captors, so that material thus obtained must be viewed with a grain of salt.

On a more professional level, the U.S. Army monograph series prepared in Japan in the postwar period offcers a wide range of material not to be found elsewhere, particularly Monograph No. 48, *Central Pacific Operations Record*, v. II. A recently published official Japanese History of World War II numbering several volumes undoubtedly contains much information that could fill existing gaps in the narrative of this volume. Unfortunately, publishing deadlines and lack of resources for the translation and exploitation of this material prevented its utilization.

In the years since the end of World War II, a number of books dealing with operations in the Central and Western Pacific have been published in Japan. Some of these, of varying degrees of quality, have been translated into English and are listed below.

Books and Periodicals

Once again Craven and Cate, *Matterhorn to Nagasaki*; Isely and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*; Sherrod, *History of Marine Corps Aviation*, and Smith, *Approach to the Philippines* constitute invaluable sources. Other works which shed considerable light on the Peleliu operation are:

LtCol Kimber H. Boyer. "The 3d Armored Amphibian Battalion—Palau Operation, 15 September-20 October 1944." Quantico: Marine Corps Schools, Amphibious Warfare School, Senior Course, 1948-49. A brief historical tactical study of the Peleliu operation on the battalion level.

RAdm Worrall R. Carter. *Beans, Bullets, and Black Oil.* Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953. Official history of Navy logistics in the Pacific during World War II.

Burke Davis. *Marine!—The Life of Lieutenant General Lewis B. (Chesty) Puller.* Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1962. The story of one of the great fighting men of the Corps and the experiences of the 1st Marines, which he commanded, in the Peleliu assault.

Saburo Hayashi and Alvin D. Coox. *Kogun.* Quantico: Marine Corps Association, 1959. Translated from the Japanese, this account of the plans and activities of the Japanese Army High Command during World War II was prepared by a former staff officer in the *Imperial General Headquarters.*

Maj Frank O. Hough. *The Assault on Peleliu.* Washington: Historical Division,

HQMC, 1950. This official monograph contains a detailed account of Operation STALEMATE including interesting appendices on Japanese cave positions and the role of Marine Corps aviation on Peleliu.

George P. Hunt. *Coral Comes High.* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946. An account of Pacific operations including Peleliu from the company commander's point of view. More human interest than history, but nevertheless important in portraying the feelings of men in battle.

George McMillan. *The Old Breed: A History of the First Marine Division in World War II.* Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1949. A unit history describing the performance of the units and men of the 1st Division, without which the complete story of the Peleliu operation could not be told.

MajGen Paul J. Mueller (USA), Chairman, 81st Wildcat Division Historical Committee, *et al. The 81st Infantry Wildcat Division in World War II.* Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948. A detailed account of the 81st Division's operation on Angaur Island and the subsequent employment of its regiments on Peleliu.

Jeremiah A. O'Leary. "Hell in the Umurbrogol," *True Magazine*, v. 17, no. 101 (Oct45). Human interest story of the ferocious fighting that took place on Peleliu.

PART IV

MARINES IN THE PHILIPPINES

Official Documents

Beyond the employment of the V Amphibious Corps Artillery on Leyte, the story of Marines in the Philippines is primarily one of Marine aviation in support of U.S. Army units. A variety of sources were consulted in order to obtain a balanced product. On the strategic level, heavy reliance was placed on minutes and records of the Combined and Joint Chiefs of Staff, reports, plans, and official correspondence on the CinCPac level. On the tactical level, records of the U. S. Sixth Army proved valuable for the Leyte and Luzon Campaigns, while Eighth Army records were consulted for a reconstruction of operations in the Southern Philippines. The bulk of this material, including war diaries and journals and after action reports of the U. S. Army corps and divisions involved are in the custoday of the World War II Records Division, NARS, Suitland, Maryland.

Records of the Marine Corps consulted are predominantly those of aviation units on the aircraft group and squadron level. There is great variance in the coverage of events as to depth and scope between units, which resulted in gaps that had to be bridged through the use of both official and unofficial published works.

Unofficial Documents

Upon completion of a historical monograph on Marine Aviation in the Philippines, the draft manuscript was circulated for comment and critique to interested parties who had taken part in the operation. Many of these individuals responded and their comments have been cited throughout this section. Similarly, the draft chapters of this volume were sent to key participants and to the historical agencies of the other services, and the replies received have been used as applicable in revising the narrative. All such comments are retained in the files of the Documentation Section, Reference Branch of the Historical Division.

By no means all of the material uncovered by draft comments has been used in this book or in the historical monograph that preceded it. The files contain much unpublished information that may be of value to the future researcher or student of this phase of Marine aviation activities, particularly with regard to the doctrine of Marine close air support that evolved from childhood to adolescence during this phase of the war.

Japanese Sources

Once again, the number of official Japanese sources is quite limited when compared to the U. S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps records available dealing with this subject matter. Nevertheless, the OCMH monograph series does provide information in its *Philippines Operations Record*, Phases II and III, that bridges the gap to some extent. Additional information is available from *35th Army Operations, 1944-45* and the interrogation of senior Japanese commanders in the postwar

era. On the higher level of command, Monograph No. 45, *History of the Army Section, Imperial General Staff, 1941-45* provides valuable clues in portraying the strategy employed by the Japanese High Command during this period of the war.

Books and Periodicals

In addition to the overall sources, particularly the previously cited Morison volumes on *Leyte* and *The Liberation of the Philippines*, Craven and Cate, *The Pacific—Matterhorn to Nagasaki*, and Sherrod, *History of Marine Corps Aviation in World War II*, the following were extensively consulted:

Maj Charles W. Boggs, Jr. *Marine Aviation in the Philippines*. Washington: Historical Division, HQMC, 1951. An official monograph depicting Marine close support of Army units in the Philippines, outlining in detail the development of the Marine doctrine of close air suport. The narrative covers the entire period of liberation of the Philippines from the Leyte landings to the end of the war.

John A. DeChant. *Devilbirds: The Story of United States Marine Corps Aviation in World War II*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947. Relatively brief but good description of Marine dive bomber operations on Luzon.

M. Hamlin Cannon. *Leyte: The Return to the Philippines—The War in the Pacific—United States Army in World War II*. Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953. Excellent account and official Army history of the recapture of Leyte, the first island to be liberated in the Philippines. Useful as a background for the movements and operations of the VAC artillery on Leyte.

General Robert L. Eichelberger and Milton Mackaye. *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo*. New York: The Viking Press, 1950. The march across the Southwest Pacific as seen through the eyes of the Commanding General of I Corps and subsequently of the Eighth Army. Based on an earlier series in the *Saturday Evening Post*, the volume furnishes interesting details on Eighth Army operations in the Philippines.

Frank O. Hough. *The Island War: The United States Marine Corps in the Pacific*. Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1947. Relatively brief description of Marine aviation activities in the Philippines is of primary importance in this context.

General George C. Kenney. *General Kenney Reports*. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1949. The personal history of the Commander of the Allied Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific. A sizable portion of this book deals with the Philippines and thus serves as valuable background material for this section.

Capt Samuel H. McAloney, "Is Air Support Effective?" *Marine Corps Gazette*, v. 29, No. 11 (Nov45). One of the members of an air liaison party discusses his experiences in obtaining close air support for Army troops on Luzon.

Robert Ross Smith. *Triumph in the Philippines—The War in the Pacific—United States Army in World War II*. Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963. The official Army history dealing with the liberation of the Central and Southern Philippines was of great value for providing the setting in which Marine aviation operated during the final phase of World War II.

Maj Bertram C. Wright, USA. *The First Cavalry Division In World War II*. Tokyo: Toppan Printing Company, Ltd., 1947. This division history furnishes an excellent account of the drive that culminated in the liberation of Manila and the support given to the division by Marine aviators.

PART V

MARINE AVIATION IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC

Official Documents

The discussion of Marine aviation activities in the Western Pacific is largely based on the records of the units concerned. Included in the documents are special action reports, war diaries, and informal combat reports on the wing, aircraft group, and squadron level. It should be remembered that the type of information contained in the official documents is but a reflection of the mission entrusted

to Marine aviation in the Central and Western Pacific, which in 1944 and almost to the end of the war consisted primarily of neutralizing Japanese bases and involved little of the close air support envisioned by Marine planners and subsequently used in the Philippines in support of Army units. There is also a wide variance in quality and detail of coverage, depending on the skill of the personnel assigned to the task and the value placed by the command on the importance of maintaining official records. Nevertheless, despite occasional gaps, the overall coverage is adequate to permit a comprehensive view of the part played by Marine aviation in the trek of the American forces across the Pacific. All of the official records used are in the custody of the World War II Records Division, National Archives and Records Service, Suitland, Maryland and may be obtained from that agency, or through the Historical Division, HQMC.

Unofficial Documents

There is no body of letters and interviews in the Marine Corps Historical Division archives relating to air operations against the bypassed islands in the Central and Western Pacific as there is in the case of other campaigns which have been covered in historical monographs. A few pertinent letters among the papers acquired from the Sherrod aviation history project are of limited value to a history of a wide scope.

During the preparation of this volume, the two chapters comprising this section were sent out to a number of individuals who had participated in the operations covered therein. In response, numerous written comments were received to round out the strategical and tactical picture. Certain key individuals in their comments helped to clarify command problems that were encountered during this phase of the war in the area involved. Generally, as seen from the vantage point of time and experience, the comments received proved an invaluable source of information to supplement the material found in official sources.

Japanese Sources

Japanese records used in this account consisted primarily of monographs touching upon enemy air operations and defensive preparations in the Marshalls, Marianas, and Palaus. Once again, an English translation of the official Japanese Army history of World War II would have been invaluable, since official World War II records dealing with this subject matter were not available. Much of the information from the Japanese side was obtained from postwar interrogations of Japanese officials contained in the USSBS *Interrogations*, and the postwar writings of Japanese who had participated in these operations.

Books and Periodicals

Valuable background material for this section was obtained from the previously cited Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War;* King and Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King;* Sherrod, *Marine Corps Aviation in World War II*; Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*; and Morison, *Victory in the Pacific.* In addition to these, the following proved valuable in the preparation of this section:

Major Carl W. Hoffman. *Saipan—The Beginning of the End.* Washington: Historical Division, HQMC, 1950. A detailed historical monograph dealing with the Saipan operation, of value as background material for the establishment of an airfield that was to become of vital importance in the conduct of air operations in the Pacific.

Major Carl W. Hoffman. *The Seizure of Tinian.* Washington: Historical Division, HQMC, 1951. Excellent account of the Tinian operation, which furnishes valuable background material for the subsequent use of the island as a base from which the major attacks against the Home Islands were launched that brought an end to the war.

Major Orlan R. Lodge. *The Recapture of Guam.* Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, HQMC, 1954. The official Marine Corps monograph concerning the Guam operation, furnishing valuable background material for an appreciation of the air situation in the Central Pacific during the final phase of World War II.

Masatake Okumiya, Jiro Horikoshi, and Martin Caidin. *Zero!* New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1956. The title of this

well-researched and written work is misleading, in that its scope goes far beyond a discussion of the well known Mitsubishi fighter, its development, and its employment. The book dwells on Japanese air operations in the Pacific throughout the war and provides a valuable insight into Japanese internal and foreign policy during the war years.

PART VI

IWO JIMA

Official Documents

Operation DETACHMENT probably received closer study in its inception and planning, more detailed analysis by the numerous staff sections of headquarters of varying levels for historical purposes, and extensive coverage by the news and information media than any of the Pacific amphibious assaults previously executed in World War II. Since this was an all-Marine operation involving three divisions at the very threshold of Japan, in fact against a target administratively a part of the Home Islands, the importance attached to DETACHMENT is reflected both in the volume and quality of the available material. Where gaps are readily apparent in other operations, none appear in this instance; to the contrary, the data available for research on Iwo Jima tends to be overwhelming. Instead of being compelled to bridge gaps, the researcher is nearly overwhelmed with a profusion of action reports, unit diaries and journals, operation plans and orders, dispatches, letters, and preoperation studies by units that took part in the campaign. Mindful of criticism voiced as to excessive casualties after Tarawa, every precaution was taken at Iwo Jima to avoid any gap in the planning of the operation. This care is reflected in every facet of the planning phase, from the amount of intelligence collected to the evacuation of the wounded and burial of the dead.

In order to avoid repetition and to obtain a balanced account of the operation, the reports of the higher echelons were used to reconstruct the "big picture," while on the lower level the records of the unit most directly involved in the action were utilized. In addition to the voluminous records dealing with Operation DETACHMENT, the very length and difficulty of the campaign gave rise to much soul-searching on the division and corps level, which is reflected in very detailed reports on the performance of men and equipment under the conditions peculiar to the operation, as well as on organizational problems encountered. All of the official documents pertaining to Operation DETACHMENT are in the custody of the World War II Records Division, National Archives and Records Service, Suitland, Maryland.

Unofficial Documents

The vast lode of official material is supplemented by a large quantity of information from unofficial sources. Thus, in the course of preparing the official monograph *Iwo Jima—Amphibious Epic*, its author, Lieutenant Colonel Whitman S. Bartley, requested comments from individuals who had taken part in the campaign. In response, approximately 175 participants in the operation contributed to the finished product through written comments or personal interviews. The information thus obtained was used to supplement or corroborate the hundreds of documents consulted during the preparation of the monograph. In the same way, valuable information was received that had never found its way into the official records, though time and space did not permit all of the personal recollections and anecdotes to be incorporated into the narrative.

Similarly, comments from participants in the operation were solicited upon completion of the draft chapters of this work. The passage of time had taken its toll among the survivors of the operation, but nevertheless much additional information was obtained in this fashion which otherwise might never have found its way into these pages. All of the comments, both for the historical monograph and for this volume repose in the files of the Documentation Section, Reference Branch of the Historical Division.

Japanese Sources

There is some variety in the Japanese sources available for Operation DETACHMENT. First, a number of enemy documents,

diaries, and letters were seized in the course of the campaign, which were translated, for the most part on the division level, and either filed with VAC or forwarded to higher headquarters. Additional information on the defense of Iwo Jima was obtained through the interrogation of prisoners of war. For the most part, little information beyond that of a limited tactical nature could be thus obtained with the exception that one of the publishers of one of Japan's major dailies was, for reasons unknown, serving on Iwo Jima in an enlisted status. He was well versed in the realm of the big picture of the Japanese war effort and civilian morale in the Home Islands, and from this vantage point was able to contribute much to an overall appraisal of conditions in Japan during this phase of the war.

Time and resources did not permit the translation and use of the recently published official Japanese History of World War II, which, beyond doubt, would have contributed much to balancing the narrative from the enemy side of the hill. Comments by the War History Office of the Defense Agency of Japan also provided worthwhile information that was incorporated into the narrative.

Help in bringing to life the major Japanese participants in the Iwo Jima campaign arrived from a totally unexpected source, and it is in this respect that the Iwo Jima chapters differ from others in this volume. In writing an excellent book on the Iwo operation, which will be cited below, Richard F. Newcomb had numerous interviews conducted in Japan with members of the families of the long-deceased Japanese commanders, veterans of the campaign in Japan, and others who in some way were either connected with these individuals or the planning for the defense of the island. In making this voluminous file available to the Historical Division for use in this volume, Mr. Newcomb made a major contribution to removing the shadow of anonymity that cloaks these men who fought hard and gave all for their country. This material has been alternately referred to in the narrative as the *Newcomb File* or *Newcomb Notes*; a photostatic copy of it reposes in the archives of the Historical Division.

Books and Periodicals

The scope, size, and public awareness of the Iwo Jima operation have resulted in much published material on this campaign. As a result, only those sources consulted on a large scale are listed below. Valuable background material was contained in the previously cited Craven and Cate, The Pacific—*Matterhorn to Nagasaki*; Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*; Hayashi and Coox, *Kogun*; Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*; Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*; Mills, *The Forrestal Diaries*; and Morison, *Victory in the Pacific.*

Robert A. Aurthur and Kenneth Cohlmia. *The Third Marine Division.* Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948. One of the division histories published in the wake of World War II. Of primary interest in this context because of coverage of the Iwo Jima operation and the division's part in it.

Howard M. Conner. *The Spearhead—The World War II History of the 5th Marine Division.* Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1950. An excellent account of the first major operation in which the division took part. Since this was the only campaign for the division, the author was able to devote more detail to this narrative than is the case with the histories of the other two divisions on Iwo. He has put this advantage to good use.

T. Grady Gallant. *The Friendly Dead.* New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964. A participant's account of the horrors of the battle that saw heroism, gallantry, and brutal death on an unprecedented scale.

Col Robert D. Heinl, Jr. "Target Iwo," *U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, v. 89, no. 7 (Jul 1963). Well written account of the factors affecting the preliminary bombardment of the objective, prepared by one who was intimately involved in this aspect of the operation.

Capt Raymond Henri. *Iwo Jima—Springboard to Final Victory.* New York: U. S. Camera Publishing Corporation, 1945. Pictorial account with brief narrative of the Iwo campaign, outstanding for its pictorial coverage.

Capt Raymond Henri *et al. The U. S. Marines on Iwo Jima.* Washington: The Infantry Journal, 1945. The operation as seen through the eyes of five official Marine combat corre-

spondents. An interesting human drama account of one of history's large, impersonal battles. Also contains numerous interesting photographs of the action.

Clive Howard and Joe Whitley. *One Damned Island After Another.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1946. The history of the U. S. Army Seventh Air Force, written mostly from a public relations point of view. Nevertheless of value to this narrative because of its account of pre-invasion bombings of Iwo Jima.

Robert Leckie. *Strong Men Armed.* New York: Random House, 1962. Well illustrated human interest account of the Marines in World War II; its coverage of Iwo Jima added considerable flavor to the narrative.

Capt Clifford P. Morehouse. *The Iwo Jima Operation.* Washington: Historical Division, HQMC, 1946. Detailed historical monograph on the Iwo Jima operation containing some information on units and casualties not covered elsewhere.

Richard F. Newcomb. *Iwo Jima.* New York, Chicago, and San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965. An outstanding reconstruction of the battle as seen from both sides, covering both the operational aspects and the human side. This book and the author's notes made a major contribution to the writing of this volume.

Carl W. Proehl. *The Fourth Marine Division in World War II.* Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1946. Well written and illustrated account of the division's exploits in World War II, with good coverage of the Iwo Jima campaign. The color photography is outstanding and the map work superior.

Saburo Sakai, Martin Caidin, and Fred Saito. *Samurai!* New York: Ballantine Books, 1957. An account by one of Japan's air aces of his experiences on Iwo prior to the invasion. A much needed bit of writing that helped to balance the account of the action.

Col Donald M. Weller. "Salvo—Splash!—The Development of NGF Support in World War II." *U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings,* pt 1, v. 80, no. 8 (Aug/54). Valuable account of the experiences of a Marine officer who played a leading part in this aspect of Operation DETACHMENT.

CONCLUSIONS

Official Documents

The period covered by the ground operations in this volume extends from mid-September 1944 to the end of March 1945. The Peleliu and Iwo Jima campaigns which fall within this time frame were not isolated operations; momentous events were under way in other theaters of operations that eventually paved the way for final victory. The road to Peleliu and Iwo Jima had begun as a tortuous path that led from Guadalcanal to Tarawa. The lessons learned on each island and paid for with the blood of countless Americans paved the way for the seizure of the Marshalls and Marianas, which in turn served as springboards for the continued advance into the western Pacific.

In itself, this volume shows neither the beginning of the war nor its conclusion. The bloody battles fought in two major operations were but signposts pointing the way to the heart of the enemy's defenses. With the introduction of new defensive tactics by the Japanese and progress made in the art and science of amphibious warfare by the Marines, Peleliu was to become a struggle of endurance, Iwo Jima a contest of the will. Beyond the immediate tactical results of these operations, there were political overtones, both in Japan, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Progress of the war in the Pacific influenced Allied operations in Europe, where events, in turn, had a measurable effect on Allied resources in the Pacific.

Since the concluding part of this volume was designed to bring the two major operations described into balance with the big picture of the war, the sources, of necessity, had to be obtained from the policy-making level. These include the records of the Combined and Joint Chiefs of Staff as cited in previously published official histories, as well as the minutes of such high-level and far-reaching conferences as those held at Teheran in November 1943 and Quebec in September 1944, not to mention the important Roosevelt-Nimitz-MacArthur meeting in Hawaii in late July of the same year. The Iwo Jima campaign nearly coincided with the Yalta Conference, which

set the tone for the overall strategic concept of the war, including that phase beyond the unconditional surrender of Germany to the ultimate surrender of Japan to be brought about in cooperation with other Pacific powers and the Soviet Union.

Unofficial Documents

The brevity of this part of the volume did not permit the discussion of foreign policy and the political overtones dictating strategy during the phase of the war to be covered in more than very general terms. The unofficial documents pertinent in this context are the numerous comments received on the draft chapters of this volume, as well as some of those submitted on Volume III of this series, *Central Pacific Drive* and Volume V, *Victory and Occupation.* All of these comments are filed in the archives of the Historical Division.

Books and Periodicals

Among the books most widely used in the preparation of this section were the previously cited Cline, *Washington Command Post;* Craven and Cate, *The Pacific—Matterhorn to Nagasaki*; Halsey and Bryan, *Admiral Halsey's Story*; Isely and Crowl, *U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*; Hayashi and Coox, *Kogun*; Leahy, *I Was There*, and Morison, *Victory in the Pacific.* In addition, the following contributed substantially to this section.

Hugh M. Cole. *The Ardennes: The Battle of the Bulge—The U. S. Army in World War II.* Washington: Office of the Chief of the Military History, Department of the Army, 1965. An excellent account of the last major German counteroffensive of the war with resulting implications for the defeat of Germany.

Benis M. Frank and Henry I. Shaw, Jr. *Victory and Occupation—History of U. S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, v. V. Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, HQMC, 1968. The official Marine Corps history of the Okinawa campaign and the occupation of Japan and North China.

Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Bernard C. Nalty, and Edwin T. Turnbladh. *Central Pacific Drive—History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, v. III. Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, HQMC, 1966. The official Marine Corps history of the campaigns in the Gilberts, Marshalls, and Mariannas, which formed the basis for continued operations in the Western Pacific.

Guide to Abbreviations

A-1 (etc)	Corps Artillery Staff Officer, Personnel (See G-1)
A-20	Army twin-engine attack plane, the Douglas Havoc
AA	Antiaircraft
AAA	Antiaircraft Artillery
AAF	Army Air Forces
AAR	After Action Report
AcftCarrs	Aircraft Carriers
ACofS	Assistant Chief of Staff
ADC	Air Defense Command; Assistant Division Commander
Adm	Admiral
Admin	Administrative
Adv	Advance
AF	Air Force
AFB	Air Force Base
AFPOA	Army Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas
AirDel	Air Delivery
AirFMFPac	Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific
AK	Cargo vessel
AKA	Cargo ship, attack
Alex	Alexandria
ALP	Air Liaison Party
Ammo	Ammunition
Amphib	Amphibian; Amphibious
Amtrac	Amphibian tractor
AN/VRC	Army-Navy Vehicle, Radio Communication
Anx	Annex
AP	Armor-piercing
APA	Attack transport
APD	High-speed transport
App	Appendix
Ar	Army
AR	Action Report
ArmdAmph	Armored Amphibian
Arty	Artillery
Asslt	Assault
Asst	Assistant
AT	Antitank
ATC	Air Transport Command (Army)
Avn	Aviation
AWS	Air Warning Squadron
B-17	Army four-engine bomber, the Boeing Flying Fortress
B-24	Army four-engine bomber, the Consolidated Liberator
B-25	Army twin-engine bomber, the North American Mitchell
B-26	Army twin-engine bomber, the Martin Marauder
B-29	Army four-engine bomber, the Boeing Super-Fortress
BAR	Browning Automatic Rifle
Btry	Battery
BB	Battleship
"Betty"	Japanese two-engine Mitsubishi bomber
BGen	Brigadier General
BLT	Battalion Landing Team
Bn	Battalion
Bomb	Bombardment
Br	Branch
Brig	Brigade
Bu	Bureau
Bul	Bulletin
BuMed	Bureau of Medicine and Surgery
BuPers	Bureau of Naval Personnel
C-1 (etc)	Corps Staff Officer, Personnel (See G-1)
C-47	Army twin-engine transport, the Douglas Skytrain
C-54	Army four-engine transport, the Douglas Skymaster
Cal	Caliber
CAP	Combat Air Patrol
Capt	Captain
CAS	Close Air Support

CASCU	Commander, Air Support Control Unit
"Catalina"	PBY patrol bomber made by Consolidated-Vultee
Cav	Cavalry
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
Cdr	Commander
CEC	Civil Engineer Corps
CenPac	Central Pacific
CG	Commanding General
Chap	Chapter
CinCAFPac	Commander in Chief, Army Forces in the Pacific
CinCPac	Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet
CinCPOA	Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas
CinCUS	Commander in Chief, United States Fleet
Cm	centimeter
CMC	Commandant of the Marine Corps
CMCS	Commandant, Marine Corps Schools
Cmt	Comment
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
CO	Commanding Officer
Co	Company
CofS	Chief of Staff
Col	Colonel
Com	Commander (Units)
ComCenPacFor	Commander, Central Pacific Forces
Comd	Command
CominCh	Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet
Conf	Confidential
Const	Construction
CP	Command Post
Cpl	Corporal
CT	Combat Team
CTF	Commander Task Force
CTG	Commander Task Group
CV	Aircraft carrier
CVE	Escort carrier
CWO	Chief Warrant Officer
D	Diary
D-1 (etc)	Division staff officer, Personnel (See G-1)
DA	Department of the Army
"Dauntless"	SBD, scout-bomber made by Douglas
DDT	Insecticide made of dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane
DE	Destroyer Escort
Def	Defense
Dep	Depot
Det	Detachment
DETACHMENT	Iwo Jima Operation
"Devastator"	TBD, torpedo-bomber made by Douglas
Dir	Director
Disp	Dispatch
Div	Division
DOW	Died of Wounds
Dtd	Dated
DUKW	Amphibian truck
Ech	Echelon
Ed	Editor; edited
Encl	Enclosure
Engr	Engineer
Enl	Enlisted
Evac	Evacuation
Ex	Executive
ExO	Executive Officer
ExTrps	Expeditionary Troops
F-1	Force staff officer, Personnel (See G-1)
F2A	Marine single-engine fighter, the Brewster "Buffalo"
F4F	Navy-Marine single-engine fighter, the Grumman Wildcat
F4U	Navy-Marine single-engine fighter, the Chance-Vought Corsair
F5A	Army photo plane version of the P-38
F6F	Navy-Marine single-engine fighter, the Grumman Hellcat
FAdm	Fleet Admiral
FAirWest	Fleet Air, West Coast
FAirWing	Fleet Air Wing
FDC	Fire direction center
FEAF	Far East Air Forces
FEC	Far East Command
Fld	Field
FLINTLOCK	Marshall Islands Operation
Flot	Flotilla
Flt	Fleet
FMF	Fleet Marine Force
FO	Field order; forward observer

FRC	Federal Records Center
FSCC	Fire Support Coordination Center
Fwd	Forward
G-1	Division (or larger unit) Personnel Office(r)
G-2	Division (or larger unit) Intelligence Office(r)
G-3	Division (or larger unit) Operations and Training Office(r)
G-4	Division (or larger unit) Logistics Office(r)
GarFor	Garrison Forces
G.B.	General Board
Gd	Guard
Gen	General
GHQ	General Headquarters
GO	General Order
GPO	Government Printing Office
Gnd	Ground
GroPac	Group Pacific
Gru	Group
GSA	General Services Administration
"Hamp"	Japanese Mitsubishi fighter, identical to "Zero"
Hd	Head
HE	High Explosive
HF	High Frequency
H&I	Harassing and Interdiction
Hist	History; historical
HistDiv	Historical Division
HMS	His Majesty's Ship
Hosp	Hospital
How	Howitzer
Hq	Headquarters
HQMC	Headquarters, United States Marine Corps
HRS	Historical Reference Section
H&S	Headquarters and Service
IGHQ	Imperial General Headquarters
IIIAC	III Amphibious Corps
IJA	Imperial Japanese Army
IJN	Imperial Japanese Navy
IMAC	I Marine Amphibious Corps
IMB	Independent Mixed Brigade
IMR	Independent Mixed Regiment
In	Inch(es)
Incl	Including; Inclosure (Army)
Inf	Infantry
Info	Information
Intel	Intelligence
Inter	Interrogation
Intvw	Interview
IsCom	Island Command
J2F	Navy-Marine Corps single-engine amphibian, the Grumman Duck
JANAC	Joint Army-Navy Assessment Committee
JANIS	Joint Army-Navy Intelligence Study
JASCO	Joint Assault Signal Company
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JICPOA	Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Areas
Jnl	Journal
"Judy"	Japanese single-engine Aichi bomber
JWPC	Joint War Plans Committee
"Kate"	Japanese single-engine attack aircraft
KIA	Killed in Action
Lb.	pound
LCC	Landing Craft, Control
LCI	Landing Craft, Infantry
LCI(G)	Landing Craft, Infantry (Gunboat)
LCM	Landing Craft, Mechanized or Medium
LCS	Landing Craft, Support
LCT	Landing Craft, Tank
LCVP	Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel
LD	Line of Departure
LFASCU	Landing Force Air Support Control Unit
LMG	Light Machine Gun
Loc	Located; location
Log	Logistics; logistical
LSD	Landing Ship, Dock
LSM	Landing Ship, Medium
LST	Landing Ship, Tank
LST(H)	Landing Ship, Tank (Hospital)
LSV	Landing Ship, Vehicle
Lt	Lieutenant
LtCol	Lieutenant Colonel
LtGen	Lieutenant General

Ltr	Letter
LVT	Landing Vehicle, Tracked
LVT(A)	Landing Vehicle, Tracked (Armored)
M-1	Standard issue rifle, U. S., World War II
M-4	Medium Tank, U. S.
M-5	Light Tank, U. S.
MAG	Marine Aircraft Group
MAGsZam	Marine Aircraft Groups, Zamboanga
MAHA	Marine Aircraft, Hawaiian Area
Maj	Major
MajGen	Major General
Mar	Marine(s)
MarFAirWest	Marine Fleet Air, West Coast
MASG	Marine Air Support Group
MAW	Marine Aircraft Wing
MAWG	Marine Air Warning Group
MAWPac	Marine Aircraft Wings, Pacific
MBDAG	Marine Base Defense Aircraft Group
MBDAW	Marine Base Defense Aircraft Wing
MC	Medical Corps (Navy)
MCAS	Marine Corps Air Station
Med	Medical
Memo	Memorandum
MGCIS	Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron
MIA	Missing in Action
MIAPD	Missing in Action, Presumed Dead
MID	Military Intelligence Division
MIS	Military Intelligence Section
Misc	Miscellaneous
MLR	Main Line of Resistance
Mm	Millimeter
Mov	Movement
MP	Military Police
Mph	Miles per hour
MS	Manuscript
Msg	Message
MT	Motor Transport
NARS	National Archives and Records Service
Nav	Navy; naval
NCB	Naval Construction Battalion
NCO	Noncommissioned officer
N.d.	No date
ND	Navy Department
NGF	Naval Gunfire
NHD	Naval History Division
No.	Number
NorSols	Northern Solomons
O	Officer; order
O-1	Phase line designation
OB	Order of Battle
Obj	Objective
OCMH	Office of the Chief of Military History
Ofc	Office
OIC	Officer in Charge
Op	Operation
OP	Observation Post
OPlan	Operation Plan
Ord	Ordnance
Org	Organization(al)
OS2U	Navy single-engine float plane, the Chance-Vought Kingfisher
OY	Navy-Marine single-engine observation plane, the Consolidated-Vultee Sentinel
P., pp.	Page; pages
P-38	Army twin-engine fighter, the Lockheed Lightning
P-39	Army single-engine fighter, the Bell Aircobra
P-40	Army single-engine fighter, the Curtiss Warhawk
P-47	Army single-engine fighter, the Republic Thunderbolt
P-51	Army single-engine fighter, the North American Mustang
P-61	Army twin-engine night fighter, the Northrop Black Widow
Pac	Pacific
PackHow	Pack Howitzer
PB	Patrol Boat
PBJ	Navy-Marine twin-engine bomber, the North American Mitchell
PBM	Navy twin-engine seaplane, the Martin Mariner
PBO	Navy twin-engine bomber, the Lockheed Hudson

PB2Y	Navy twin-engine seaplane, the Consolidated Coronado
PB4Y	Navy-Marine four-engine bomber, the Consolidated Liberator
PBY-5A	Navy-Marine two-engine patrol bomber with amphibian boat hull, the Consolidated Catalina
Per	Personnel; Periodic
PFC	Private First Class
Phib	Amphibious; Amphibious Forces
PhibsPac	Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet
Pion	Pioneer
Plt	Platoon
POA	Pacific Ocean Areas
POW	Prisoner of War
Prelim	Preliminary
Prov	Provisional
Pt	Parts(s)
Pub	Public
Pvt	Private
R-1 (etc)	Regimental Staff Officer (See G-1)
R4D	Navy-Marine twin-engine transport, the Douglas Skytrain
R5D	Navy-Marine four-engine transport, the Douglas Skymaster
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RB	Reference Branch
Rec	Reception
Recon	Reconnaissance
Recs	Records
Regt	Regiment
Reinf	Reinforced
Rev	Revised
RJ	Road Junction
RLT	Regimental Landing Team
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
Rpt	Report
S-1 (etc)	Battalion (or regimental) Staff Officer, Personnel (See G-1)
SAR	Special Action Report
SBD	Navy-Marine single-engine dive bomber, the Douglas Dauntless
SB-24	Army night bombing version of the B-24
SB2C	Navy-Marine single-engine dive bomber, the Curtiss-Wright Helldiver
SB2U	Navy-Marine single engine dive bomber, the Vought-Sikorsky Vindicator
SCAP	Supreme Commander Allied Powers
SCAT	South Pacific Combat Air Transport Command
SCR	Signal Corps Radio
Sct	Scout
Sec	Section
SecNav	Secretary of the Navy
Sep	Separate
Ser	Serial
Serv	Service
Sgt	Sergeant
SgtMaj	Sergeant Major
Sig	Signal
Sit	Situation
SMS	Marine Service Squadron
SNLF	Special Naval Landing Force
SoPac	South Pacific
Spec	Special
Spt	Support
Sqd	Squad
Sqdn	Squadron
S.S.	U. S. Merchant Ship
STALEMATE	Palaus Operation
Strat	Strategic
Subj	Subject
Sum	Summary
Sup	Support; Supply
Suppl	Supplement
Svc	Service
SWPA	Southwest Pacific Area
T/A	Table of Allowances
Tac	Tactical
TAF	Tactical Air Force
TAGO	The Adjutant General's Office
TBF	Navy-Marine single-engine torpedo bomber, the Grumman Avenger
TBM	Navy-Marine single-engine torpedo bomber, the General Motors Avenger
TBS	Talk Between Ships Radio
TBX	Medium-powered field radio

TBY	Portable low-power field radio
TCS	Vehicle mounted, high frequency radio
T/E	Table of Equipment
TF	Task Force
TG	Task Group
T.H.	Territory of Hawaii
TIO	Target Information Officer
Tk	Tank
TM	Technical Manual
TNT	Trinitro-toluol, a high explosive
T/O	Table of Organization
TO	Theater of Operations
TOT	Time on Target
TQM	Transport Quartermaster
Trac	Tractor
Trans	Transport
TransDiv	Transport Division
Trk	Truck
Trng	Training
Trps	Troops
U	Unit
UDT	Underwater Demolitions Team
USA	United States Army
USAF	United States Air Force
USAFCP	United States Army Forces, Central Pacific Area
USAFPOA	United States Army Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
USNI	United States Naval Institute
USNR	United States Naval Reserve
USS	United States Ship
USSBS	United States Strategic Bombing Survey
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
V	Volume
VAC	V Amphibious Corps
VAdm	Vice Admiral
VB	Navy Dive Bomber Squadron
Veh	Vehicle
VF	Navy Fighter Squadron
VHF	Very High Frequency
Vic	Vicinity
"Vindicator"	Scout bomber, the Vought-Sikorsky SB2U
VLR	Very Long Range
VMB	Marine Bomber Squadron
VMD	Marine Photographic Squadron
VMF	Marine Fighter Squadron
VMF(N)	Marine Night Fighter Squadron
VMJ	Marine Utility Squadron
VMO	Marine Observation Squadron
VMR	Marine Transport Squadron
VMSB	Marine Scout Bomber Squadron
VMTB	Marine Torpedo Bomber Squadron
VP	Navy Patrol Squadron
VS	Navy Scouting Squadron
W-1 (etc)	Wing Staff Officer, Personnel (See G-1)
WarD	War Diary
WD	War Department
Wes	West
WesLandFor	Western Landing Force
WIA	Wounded in Action
"Wildcat"	Navy-Marine single-engine fighter made by Grumman
WO	Warrant Officer
WP	White Phosphorus
Wpns	Weapons
WW	World War
"Zeke"	Japanese single-engine Mitsubishi fighter, also known as Zero.
"Zero"	Same as above
ZofA	Zone of Action

Military Map Symbols

UNIT SIZE

I	Company
II	Battalion
III	Regiment
X	Brigade
XX	Division
XXX	Corps

UNIT SYMBOLS

	LVT
RCN	Reconnaissance
SVC	Service
	Tank

UNIT SYMBOLS

	Basic Unit
USMC	USMC Unit (When units of other services shown)
	Enemy Unit
	Cavalry
	Artillery
	Engineer / Pioneer
	Infantry
	Enemy Tank

EXAMPLES

WPN 7	Weapons Company, 7th Marines
3 26	3d Company, 26th Tank Regiment (Japanese)
B I PION(+)	B Company, Ist Pioneer Battalion (Reinforced)
III 3 321	3d Battalion, 321st Infantry Regiment
XX I	Ist Cavalry Division
XX I	Ist Marine Division

K.W. White

Chronology

The following listing of events is limited to those coming within the scope of this book, and those forecasting events to be treated in the volume to follow.

1935

5 Jun ..... Aviation Section of the Headquarters staff is taken from the Division of Operations and Training and established as an independent section in the Office of the Commandant.

9 Jul ..... Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, Virginia, publishes the Tentative Landing Operations Manual.

1 Sep ..... Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force, is transferred from Quantico, Virginia, to San Diego, California.

1936

1 Apr ..... Division of Aviation established at Headquarters Marine Corps.

1937

27 Jan ..... The 1st and 2d Marine Brigades, the U. S. Army 1st Expeditionary Brigade, and the 1st and 2d Marine Aircraft Groups conduct Fleet Exercise No. 3 near San Diego, California.

1938

1 Jul ..... Marine Corps Reserve reconstituted to consist of a Fleet Marine Corps Reserve, an Organized Marine Corps Reserve, and a Volunteer Marine Corps Reserve.

1939

1 Sep ..... World War II breaks out in Europe.

8 Sep ..... The President proclaims a "limited national emergency". Marine Corps strength increased to 25,000 men.

1940

Jun ..... Congress authorizes the Navy to begin a 10,000-plane construction program, with 1,167 aircraft allocated for Marine aviation. Marine Corps plans to organize 4 groups of 11 squadrons each.

5Oct ..... Secretary of the Navy puts all organized Marine reserve ground units and aviation squadrons on short notice for call to active duty.

1941

15Mar ..... The Fleet Marine Force is divided, with the 1st Marine Division at Quantico, Virginia, becoming part of the Atlantic Fleet and the 2d Marine Division at San Diego, California, becoming part of the Pacific Fleet.

Jun ..... First Joint Training Force (JTF-1), consisting of the 1st Marine Division, the 1st Marine Aircraft Group, and the U. S. Army 1st Infantry Division organized at Quantico, Virginia, under the command of Major General Holland M. Smith.

1Nov ..... Second Joint Training Force (JTF-2), composed of the 2d Marine Division, the U.S. Army 3d Infantry Di-

vision, and the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing organized at Camp Elliott, San Diego, California, to become a part of the Pacific Fleet.

7Dec ..... Japanese attack Pearl Harbor.

1942

9Apr ..... End of American resistance on Bataan.

6May ..... Japanese capture Corregidor.

23May ..... Training Center, Fleet Marine Force, organized at Marine Barracks, New River, North Carolina, to include all Fleet Marine Force units and replacements except the 1st Marine Division.

7Aug ..... 1st Marine Division lands on Guadalcanal.

15Aug ..... Marine Aircraft Wings, Pacific, established at San Diego, California, under Major General Ross E. Rowell.

1943

14-23Jan ..... Casablanca Conference. Agreement reached to advance toward Philippines through Central and Southwest Pacific, and to terminate hostilities only upon unconditional surrender of Japan.

21Jan ..... Marine Fleet Air, West Coast (MarFAirWest) organized under Colonel Lewie G. Merritt at San Diego, California.

26Jan ..... Headquarters of the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing established at Efate, New Hebrides.

9Feb ..... End of organized Japanese resistance on Guadalcanal.

12-25May ..... Trident Conference in Washington gives general approval to plan for a drive on Japan through the Central Pacific.

14-24Aug ..... Quadrant Conference at Quebec. CCS decide to attack Japan along both Central and Southwest Pacific routes.

4Sep ..... V Amphibious Corps organized under Maj-Gen Holland M. Smith to train and control troops for amphibious landings in the Central Pacific.

20Nov ..... Marines land on Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands.

21Dec ..... Dive bombers of the 4th Base Defense Aircraft Wing carry out an attack against Jaluit Atoll, the first such target in the Marshall Islands.

30Dec ..... Advance Headquarters of the 4th Marine Base Defense Aircraft Wing established on Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands.

1944

31Jan-7Feb .... U. S. forces invade and capture Majuro and Kwajalein Atolls in the Marshall Islands.

4Feb ..... Marine aircraft carry out first photographic reconnaissance of the Japanese base at Truk in the Carolines.

17Feb ..... Combined Marine-Army force lands on Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshalls.

12Mar ..... JCS direct seizure of Southern Marianas, target date 15 Jun 1944.

28Apr ..... The 1st Marine Division (Rein), commanded by Major General William H. Rupertus, is relieved on New Britain and prepares to move to Pavuvu in the Russell Islands.

15Jun ..... The Marine V Amphibious Corps under Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith lands on Saipan in the Ma-

riana Islands. U. S. Navy carrier task force strikes Volcano-Bonin Islands in first raid on these groups. First B-29 strikes launched from China bases against mainland of Japan. FEAF established under Lieutenant General George C. Kenney. AirNorSols formed under Major General Ralph J. Mitchell.

19-20Jun ..... Battle of the Philippine Sea. Carrier aircraft of TF 58 engage planes from enemy carriers and inflict crippling losses.

24Jun ..... U. S. Navy carrier task force again hits Volcano-Bonin Islands, including Iwo Jima.

4Jul ..... Renewed carrier attacks against Volcano-Bonins.

14Jul ..... Joint Staff Study for Operation STALEMATE (invasion of the Palaus) issued.

21Jul ..... III Amphibious Corps lands on Guam in the Marianas.

24Jul ..... 4th Marine Division lands on Tinian in the Marianas.

1Aug ..... End of organized enemy resistance on Tinian.

10Aug ..... End of organized Japanese resistance on Guam.

15Aug ..... III Amphibious Corps, upon completing its operation in the Mariannas, is committed to invasion of the Palaus.

15Sep ..... The 1st Marine Division, under Major General Rupertus, lands on the southwestern shore of Peleliu Island. U. S. Army troops land on Morotai, Netherlands East Indies, and capture airfield on that island. JCS decide to invade Central rather than Southern Philippines and advance target date for invasion of Leyte from 20 December to 20 October 1944.

17Sep ..... 81st Infantry Division, as part of III Amphibious Corps, lands on Angaur.

23Sep ..... U. S. Army troops seize Ulithi as advance naval base.

28Sep ..... The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines (Rein), under Major John H. Gustafson, lands on Ngesebus and Kongauru Islands in the Palaus, supported by VMF-114.

30Sep ..... Peleliu, Angaur, Ngesebus, and Kongauru declared occupied.

3Oct ..... JCS directive orders occupation of one or more islands in the Volcano-Bonins.

9Oct ..... Admiral Nimitz informs General Smith that Iwo Jima is to be the objective in the Volcano-Bonins.

12Oct ..... Peleliu becomes a Marine island command similar to Guam and Tinian.

14Oct ..... V Amphibious Corps directed to prepare plans for the Iwo Jima operation.

18Oct ..... Landing on Homonhon Island.

20Oct ..... U. S. Army troops invade Leyte. The 1st Marine Division (Rein) on Peleliu is relieved by the U. S. Army 81st Infantry Division.

21Oct ..... Marine Carrier Groups, Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, established at Santa Barbara, California, under Colonel Albert D. Cooley. Marine 5th and 11th 155mm Artillery Battalions as part of XXIV Corps Artillery in general support of the U. S. Army 7th Infantry Division on Leyte.

23-26Oct ..... Battle of Leyte Gulf which ends in U. S. naval victory.

4Nov ..... VMF-122, commanded by Major Joseph H. Reinburg, supports U. S. Army landing on Pulo Anna Island south of the Palaus.

5Nov ..... Marine Corsair fighter-bombers based in the Marshalls hit Nauru Island in the Gilberts, setting a distance record for Corsairs with full bomb loads.

11-12Nov ..... U. S. Navy surface forces rock Iwo Jima with heavy bombardment.

16Nov ..... Marine Corsairs from Peleliu and Avengers from Ulithi launch a coordinated attack against Yap Island, west of Ulithi.

25Nov ..... CinCPOA issues operation plan for invasion of Iwo Jima. Tentative date 3 February 1945.

3Dec ..... VMF(N)-541 and VMF-115, -211, -218, and -313 of MAG-12 arrive at Tacloban, Leyte, to provide air defense.

7Dec ..... MAG-12 aircraft, under Colonel William A. Willis, support U. S. Army landings at Ormoc, Leyte.

8Dec ..... U. S. Navy surface units shell Iwo Jima.

11Dec ..... Major Marine air attack on Japanese convoy, Ormoc Bay.

15Dec ..... MAG-12 aircraft support landing of U. S. Army on Mindoro in the Philippines.

24-27Dec ..... U. S. Navy surface units bombard Volcano-Bonin Islands including Iwo Jima.

25Dec ..... Leyte declared secured. Eighth Army relieves Sixth Army.

1945

2-12Jan ..... MAG-14 with VMO-251 and VMF-212, -222, and -223 land at Guiuan, Samar.

5Jan ..... U. S. Navy vessels shell Iwo Jima.

9Jan ..... U. S. Sixth Army invades Luzon.

24Jan ..... U. S. naval surface force shells Iwo Jima.

25Jan ..... First Marine dive bombers. arrive on Luzon.

27Jan ..... Marine dive bombers fly their first mission in the Philippines.

1Feb ..... Aircraft of Saipan-based Marine Bombing Squadron 612 begin nightly rocket attacks against enemy shipping and installations in the Volcano Islands.

1-4Feb ..... Marine dive bombers of MAG-24 and MAG-32 protect the left flank of the 1st Cavalry Division during its drive to Manila.

13Feb ..... Final rehearsals for Iwo Jima operation concluded off coast of Tinian.

15-16Feb ..... V Amphibious Corps Land-Force departs Marianas after final rehearsals for assault on Iwo Jima.

16Feb ..... TF 58 under Admiral Mitscher launches two day air strike against the Japanese mainland to divert attention from the imminent Iwo Jima operation.

16-18Feb ..... Amphibious Support Force (TF 52) bombs and shells Iwo Jima in the course of the preparatory bombardment.

19Feb ..... The 4th and 5th Marine Division seize foothold on Iwo Jima.

21Feb ..... 21st Marines of the 3d Marine Division committed in zone of action of the 4th Division. Enemy executes *kamikaze* attack on support ships off Iwo Jima.

23Feb ..... Combat patrol of the 28th Marines raises Old Glory

on Mount Suribachi.
Manila falls to U. S. Army troops.

25Feb ..... 3d Marine Division committed on Iwo Jima. General unloading of cargo gets under way. Elements of MAG-32 arrive on Mindoro, Philippines, to support U. S. Army troops.

26Feb ..... Two Marine artillery spotter planes from the USS *Wake Island* land on Iwo Jima and become the first American planes to land on the island.

1945

27Feb ..... 3d Marine Division captures the Central Airfield on Iwo Jima and seizes Hills Peter and Oboe.

28Feb ..... U. S. Army troops invade Palawan in the Philippines.

2Mar ..... 5th Marine Division captures Hill 362A on Iwo Jima.

3Mar ..... Elements of MAG-12, MAG-24, and MAG-32 support U.S. Army landings on Masbate, Burias, and Ticao Islands in the Philippines.
3d Marine Division clears Northern Airfield on Iwo Jima.

4Mar ..... First B-29 bomber lands on Iwo Jima after being damaged over Japan.

6Mar ..... U. S. Army Air Forces 15th Fighter Group arrives on Iwo Jima with P-51s and P-61s.

7Mar ..... Major General James E. Chaney (USA), Island Commander, assumes responsibility for Iwo Jima base development, air defense, and airfield operation.
3d Marine Division launches predawn attack against Hill 362C and captures this objective later in the day.

8Mar ..... 4th Marine Division repels counterattack during the night 8-9 March.

9Mar ..... General Holland M. Smith transfers his command post from the *Eldorado* to the *Auburn*. Admiral Turner and his staff on board *Eldorado* depart for Guam.
Real Admiral Harry W. Hill assumes duties of Senior Officer Present Afloat, Iwo Jima.

10Mar ..... MAG-12 and MAG-32 aircraft support U. S. Army landings on Zamboanga in the Philippines. American troops land on Mindanao in the Philippines.

11Mar ..... Iwo-based Army Air Forces fighters assume responsibility for providing air defense and ground support missions when last Navy escort carriers leave.

14Mar ..... Official flag raising ceremony marks proclamation of U. S. Naval Military Government in the Volcano Islands. Commander, Expeditionary Troops, departs for Guam.

15Mar ..... Corsairs of MAG-12 arrive on Zamboanga. Close support of the U. S. Army 41st Infantry Division gets under way.

16Mar ..... Cushman's Pocket on Iwo Jima eliminated. End of organized resistance in zone of action of the 3d Marine Division.
Last enemy pocket in 4th Division zone wiped out.
Iwo Jima declared secured at 1800.

18Mar ..... U. S. Army troops invade Panay in the Philippines.

20Mar ..... U. S. Army 147th Infantry Regiment arrives on Iwo Jima for garrison duty.

23Mar ..... Dive bombers of MAG-32 move from Luzon to Zamboanga.

25Mar ..... 5th Marine Division eliminates final enemy pocket of resistance on Iwo Jima.

26Mar ..... Japanese launch early morning attack against Marine and U. S. Army bivouac areas on Iwo Jima. Capture and occupation phase announced completed as of 0800.

Commander, Forward Area, Central Pacific, assumes responsibility for defense and development of Iwo Jima.

Major General Chaney assumes operational control of all units on Iwo Jima.

V Amphibious Corps command post on Iwo Jima closed. Major General Schmidt departs Iwo Jima by air.

U. S. Army troops invade Cebu in the Philippines, supported by aircraft of MAG-12.

1Apr ..... Invasion of Okinawa gets under way.

U. S. Army troops land in the Sulu Archipelago and on Jolo Island in the Philippines.

14Apr ..... MAG-24 dive bombers fly last Marine aviation mission on Luzon.

17Apr ..... MAG-12, MAG-14, and MAG-32 support U. S. Army landings on Mindanao in the Philippines.

18Apr ..... Last Marines depart from Iwo Jima.

20Apr ..... Dive bombers of MAG-24 move from Luzon to Malabang.

22Apr ..... MAG-24 dive bombers begin operations from Malabang.

7May ..... End of war in European Theater.

25May ..... JCS direct invasion of Japan, scheduled for 1 November 1945.

21Jun ..... End of organized resistance on Okinawa.

6Aug ..... Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

9Aug ..... Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki.

Russia invades Manchuria.

2Sep ..... Japanese sign instrument of surrender in Tokyo Bay.

Fleet Marine Force Status—31 August 1944[1]

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
Outside U.S.A.				
Hawaiian Area				
Oahu				
Headquarters and Service Battalion, FMFPac	228	1,378	14	12
Transient Center, FMFPac	334	5,599	43	313
3d Base Headquarters Battalion, FMFPac	23	205	38	9
13th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, FMFPac	40	1,125	3	30
Headquarters Company, Supply Service, FMFPac	74	257	1	5
6th Base Depot, Supply Service, FMFPac	169	4,211	8	41
8th Field Depot, Supply Service, FMFPac	24	424	1	13
Headquarters and Service Battalion, VAC	82	601	8	22
Signal Battalion, VAC	42	534	9	8
Corps Transport Company, VAC	4	115	0	0
Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion, VAC	20	288	0	12
Air Delivery Section, VAC	3	91	0	0
Headquarters, 2d Laundry Company VAC	1	24	0	0
4th Platoon, 2d Laundry Company, VAC	1	61	0	0
Headquarters Squadron, Marine Aircraft Wings, Pacific	46	110	2	0
Marine Bomber Squadron 611, 2d MAW	69	467	1	8
Marine Bomber Squadron 612, 2d MAW	68	477	1	8
Headquarters Squadron 3, 3d MAW	68	519	11	18
Marine Observation Squadron 5, 3d MAW	9	28	0	0
Air Warning Squadron 4, 3d MAW	14	233	0	5
Marine Airborne Aircraft Warning Squadron 5, 3d MAW	13	168	0	4
Service Squadron 15, 3d MAW	8	229	0	0
Marine Fighter Squadon 321, 3d MAW	48	248	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 343, 3d MAW	48	292	1	8
Marine Transport Squadron 953, 3d MAW	86	369	0	0
Headquarters Squadron, MAG-32	47	350	9	13
Service Squadron 32, MAG-32	11	242	0	0
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 142, MAG-32	49	296	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 313, MAG-13	47	245	1	8

See footnote at end of table.

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
Marine Fighter Squadron 322, MAG–13	47	247	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 323, MAG–13	50	249	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 332, MAG–13	48	294	1	8
Area Sub-Total	1,821	19,976	156	577
Hawaii				
2d Provisional Marine Detachment, FMFPac	13	296	1	7
1st Service and Supply Battalion, FMFPac	22	477	0	4
Headquarters Battery, VAC Artillery	27	155	3	9
2d 155mm Howitzer Battalion, VAC Artillery	34	591	1	9
5th 155mm Howitzer Battalion, VAC Artillery	35	711	1	12
10th 155mm Gun Battalion, VAC Artillery	33	724	1	12
11th 155mm Gun Battalion, VAC Artillery	54	847	4	21
12th 155mm Gun Battalion, VAC Artillery	1	150	0	0
26th Marines (Reinforced)	188	4,188	18	224
27th Marines (Reinforced)	199	4,461	19	219
Special and Service Troops, 5th Marine Division	137	1,213	8	24
Area Sub-Total	743	13,813	56	541
Kaui				
1st Provisional Marine Detachment, FMFPac	18	288	2	0
8th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, FMFPac	51	1,029	4	27
3d Service and Supply Battalion, Supply Service, FMFPac	11	278	0	2
3d Platoon, 2d Laundry Company, VAC	1	61	0	0
2d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, VAC Artillery	49	1,227	4	32
5th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, VAC Artillery	63	1,230	3	32
7th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, VAC Artillery	63	1,214	4	32
16th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, VAC Artillery	56	1,219	4	29
Area Sub-Total	312	6,546	21	154
Maui				
3d Provisional Marine Detachment, FMFPac	16	347	1	3
2d Service and Supply Battalion, Supply Service, FMFPac	6	268	0	0
Medical Battalion, VAC	1	90	28	218
1st Platoon, 2d Laundry Company, VAC	1	61	0	0

See footnote at end of table.

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion (less Company A), VAC	20	319	1	9
11th Amphibian Tractor Battalion (plus Companies D and E, less Companies A and C), VAC	21	523	2	9
Company C, 11th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, VAC	6	133	0	0
1st Joint Assault Signal Company, VAC	32	252	14	0
4th 155mm Howitzer Battalion	28	568	1	11
4th Marine Division	757	13,133	123	969
Area Sub-Total	888	15,694	170	1,219
Midway				
6th Defense Battalion	69	1,492	5	22
Headquarters Squadron 23, MAG-23	25	337	6	16
Service Squadron 23, MAG-23	11	255	0	0
Marine Fighter Squadron 314, MAG-23	61	249	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 333, MAG-23	50	298	1	8
Area Sub-Total	216	2,631	13	54
Southwest Pacific				
Auckland, New Zealand				
3d Field Depot, Supply Service, FMFPac	15	106	2	8
Russell Islands				
4th Base Depot, Supply Service, FMFPac	94	2,613	7	26
30th, 31st and 32d Depot Companies, Supply Service, FMFPac	12	479	0	0
2d Platoon, 1st Laundry Company, IIIAC	1	61	0	0
3d Armored Amphibian Battalion (Prov), IIIAC	32	767	1	9
1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, IIIAC	29	473	1	10
6th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, IIIAC	24	462	1	9
4th and 5th Marine War Dog Platoons, IIIAC	3	191	0	0
5th Separate Wire Platoon, IIIAC	1	43	0	0
6th Separate Wire Platoon, IIIAC	1	44	0	0
12th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion,, IIIAC Artillery	60	1,321	4	31
1st Marine Division	897	16,822	130	968
Marine Observation Squadron 3, MAWPac	9	28	0	0
Area Sub-Total	1,163	23,304	144	1,053

See footnote at end of table.

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
Emirau				
Headquarters Squadron 12, MAG–12	39	311	6	27
Service Squadron 12, MAG–12	17	265	1	0
Marine Fighter Squadron 115, MAG–12	47	238	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 215, MAG–12	45	222	1	1
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 243, MAG–12	46	273	1	9
Headquarters Squadron 61, MAG–61	36	386	7	16
Service Squadron 61, MAG–61	10	249	0	0
Marine Photographic Squadron 254, MAG–61	53	470	2	8
Marine Bombing Squadron 433, MAG–61	67	411	1	8
Marine Bombing Squadron 443, MAG–61	69	410	0	0
Marine Transport Squadron 952, 2d MAW	66	375	1	8
Area Sub-Total	495	3,610	21	85
Green Island				
Headquarters Squadron 14, MAG–14	39	364	7	22
Service Squadron 14, MAG–14	14	266	1	0
Marine Fighter Squadron 218, MAG–14	45	227	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 235, MAG–14	57	280	2	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 341, MAG–14	46	263	0	0
Marine Bombing Squadron 423, MAG–14	62	398	1	8
Area Sub-Total	263	1,798	12	46
Guadalcanal				
16th Field Depot, Supply Service, FMFPac	43	1,204	3	16
29th Depot Company, Supply Service, FMFPac	4	148	0	0
9th Ammunition Company, Supply Service, FMFPac	7	248	0	0
1st Battalion, 29th Marines (Reinf)	34	817	2	39
Headquarters, 1st Laundry Company, IIIAC	1	24	0	0
1st Platoon, 1st Laundry Company, IIIAC	1	61	0	0
3d Platoon, 1st Laundry Company, IIIAC	1	61	0	0
4th Platoon, 1st Laundry Company, IIIAC	1	61	0	0
8th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, IIIAC	26	499	1	9
4th Joint Assault Signal Company, IIIAC	35	343	9	115
3d Separate Wire Platoon, IIIAC	1	32	0	0
3d 155mm Howitzer Battalion, Corps Artillery, IIIAC	34	678	3	9
8th 155mm Gun Battalion, Corps Artillery, IIIAC	39	730	2	12
9th 155mm Gun Battalion, Corps Artillery, IIIAC	34	642	2	12
3d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, Corps Artillery, IIIAC	60	1,279	5	31

See footnote at end of table.

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
4th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, Corps Artillery, IIIAC	61	1,243	5	34
11th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, Corps Artillery, IIIAC	57	1,283	4	30
29th Marines (Reinf)	198	3,886	18	205
54th Replacement Battalion	9	612	1	9
Marine Observation Squadron 1, MAWPac	9	28	0	0
Area Sub-Total	655	13,879	55	521
Ellice Islands				
51st Defense Battalion	54	1,326	6	32
Munda, New Georgia				
Marine Air Base Squadron 1, 1st MAW	15	380	4	10
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 241, 1st MAW	26	255	1	8
Marine Bombing Squadron 413, 1st MAW	57	401	2	9
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 244, MAG-14	29	262	1	8
Area Sub-Total	127	1,298	8	35
Torokina, Bougainville				
Headquarters Squadron 1, 1st MAW	67	531	8	11
Marine Fighter Squadron 222, 1st MAW	32	221	1	6
Headquarters Squadron 24, MAG-24	30	365	7	23
Service Squadron 24, MAG-24	13	304	0	0
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 133, MAG-24	47	286	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 212, MAG-24	14	235	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 223, MAG-24	44	238	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 236, MAG-24	31	258	1	9
Marine Observation Squadron 251, MAG-24	50	239	1	8
Marine Transport Squadron 152, MAG-25	68	385	0	0
Marine Transport Squadron 153, MAG-25	62	353	1	8
Area Sub-Total	458	3,415	22	89
Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides				
Marine Air Defense Squadron 1, 1st MAW	21	358	4	7
Headquarters Squadron 2, 2d MAW	66	422	7	28
Air Warning Squadron 3, 2d MAW	18	248	0	6
Marine Torpedo Bomber Squadron 232, 2d MAW	41	295	1	15

See footnote at end of table.

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
Marine Fighter Squadron 312, 2d MAW	47	249	1	8
Headquarters Squadron 11, MAG-11	23	59	8	15
Service Squadron 11, MAG-11	36	578	0	6
Marine Fighter Squadron 114, MAG-11	48	250	0	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 121, MAG-11	47	249	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 122, MAG-11	47	249	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 134, MAG-11	47	312	1	8
Marine Night Fighter Squadron 541, MAG-11	29	308	1	8
Area Sub-Total	470	3,577	25	125
Noumea and Tontouta, New Caledonia				
Transient Center, Forward Echelon, FMFPac	17	408	3	5
Headquarters (SoPac-Admin), Supply Service, FMFPac	3	10	0	0
1st Field Depot, Supply Service, FMFPac	38	664	3	13
Headquarters Squadron 25, MAG-25	33	334	9	231
Service Squadron 25, MAG-25	15	348	0	0
Area Sub-Total	106	1,764	15	249
Central Pacific				
Engebi				
Headquarters Squadron 22, MAG-22	39	365	7	22
Service Squadron 22, MAG-22	12	248	0	0
Air Warning Squadron 1, MAG-22	12	201	2	6
Marine Fighter Squadron 113, MAG-22	48	238	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 151, MAG-22	51	311	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 422, MAG-22	49	229	1	8
Area Sub-Total	211	1,592	12	52
Eniwetok				
10th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion (Reinf), VAC Artillery	65	1,403	4	29
Marine Night Fighter Squadron 533, MAG-22	36	308	1	8
Area Sub-Total	101	1,711	5	37

See footnote at end of table.

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
Guam				
1st Base Headquarters Battalion, FMFPac	52	379	33	123
5th Field Depot	64	1,447	4	16
Company A, 10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, VAC	3	138	0	0
Company A, 11th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, VAC	5	130	0	0
Headquarters and Service Battalion, IIIAC	171	1,261	17	81
Signal Battalion, IIIAC	60	1,109	2	11
Motor Transport Battalion, IIIAC	32	609	2	11
Medical Battalion, IIIAC	1	151	35	312
Air Delivery Section, IIIAC	3	164	0	2
1st Armored Amphibian Battalion, IIIAC	35	644	2	10
3d Amphibian Tractor Battalion, IIIAC	36	777	2	12
4th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, IIIAC	27	541	2	8
2d Separate Engineer Battalion, IIIAC	35	721	3	20
1st Marine War Dog Platoon, IIIAC	0	32	0	0
2d and 3d Marine War Dog Platoons, IIIAC	2	98	0	0
3d Joint Assault Signal Company, IIIAC	35	340	9	0
1st Separate Wire Platoon, IIIAC	1	41	0	0
Headquarters Battery, Corps Artillery, IIIAC	26	159	0	0
1st 155mm Howitzer Battalion, IIIAC Artillery	34	631	2	16
7th 155mm Gun Battalion, IIIAC Artillery	37	664	2	12
9th Defense Battalion, IIIAC Artillery	67	1,388	4	31
14th Defense Battalion, IIIAC Artillery	71	1,488	4	25
3d Marine Division	872	16,057	139	988
1st Provisional Marine Brigade	445	9,012	46	433
1st Replacement Draft	86	1,462	60	415
Marine Fighter Squadron 211, MAG-12	48	235	1	8
Marine Transport Squadron 253, MAG-15	67	333	0	0
Headquarters Squadron 21, MAG-21	38	322	8	19
Service Squadron 21, MAG-21	14	277	0	0
Air Warning Squadron 2, MAG-21	10	161	0	3
Marine Scout Bomber Squadron 131, MAG-21	47	328	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 216, MAG-21	46	234	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 217, MAG-21	47	229	1	7
Marine Fighter Squadron 225, MAG-21	45	239	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 242, MAG-21	47	328	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 321, MAG-21	48	230	1	7
Marine Night Fighter Squadron 534, MAG-21	37	310	1	8
Area Sub-Total	2,694	42,669	384	2,610

See footnote at end of table.

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
Kwajalein				
Headquarters Squadron 15, MAG–15	42	351	6	21
Marine Transport Squadron 252, MAG–15	59	322	1	10
Marine Transport Squadron 353, MAG–15	93	413	1	8
Area Sub-Total	194	1,086	8	39
Majuro				
1st Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion (Reinf), VAC Artillery	28	573	3	14
Headquarters Squadron 4, 4th MBDAW	90	635	11	20
Headquarters Squadron 13, MAG–13	31	351	7	22
Service Squadron 13, MAG–13	15	288	0	0
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 231, MAG–13	51	299	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 331, MAG–13	49	295	1	8
Marine Observation Squadron 155, MAG–31	44	248	1	8
Area Sub-Total	308	2,689	24	80
Makin				
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 245, MAG-13	51	285	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 111, MAG-31	53	347	1	8
Area Sub-Total	104	632	2	16
Roi-Namur				
15th Depot Company, Supply Service, FMFPac	5	197	0	0
15th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion (Reinf), VAC Artillery	48	1,164	4	21
Headquarters Squadron 31, MAG-31	34	407	8	18
Service Squadron 31, MAG-31	12	308	0	0
Marine Fighter Squadron 224, MAG-31	84	283	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 311, MAG-31	48	258	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 441, MAG-31	49	309	1	8
Area Sub-Total	280	2,926	15	63
Saipan				
7th Field Depot, Supply Service, FMFPac	90	1,780	5	34
2d Platoon, 2d Laundry Company, VAC	1	61	0	0
2d Armored Amphibian Battalion, VAC	33	771	2	14

See footnote at end of table.

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
2d Amphibian Tractor Battalion, VAC	27	584	1	13
5th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, VAC	23	562	1	9
1st Amphibian Truck Company, VAC	6	174	0	0
2d Amphibian Truck Company, VAC	9	185	0	0
2d Joint Assault Signal Company, VAC	35	391	10	0
1st Provisional Rocket Detachment, VAC	3	54	0	0
2d Provisional Rocket Detachment, VAC	3	54	0	0
17th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, VAC Artillery	49	1,215	4	23
18th Antiaircaft Artillery Battalion, VAC Artillery	66	1,412	4	22
2d Marine Division	924	17,412	131	965
3d Replacement Draft	130	2,629	15	30
4th Separate Wire Platoon, IIIAC	1	43	0	0
Marine Observation Squadron 2, 3d MAW	9	28	0	0
Marine Observation Squadron 4, 3d MAW	9	29	0	0
Marine Night Fighter Squadron 532, MAG-31	33	249	1	8
Area Sub-Total	1,451	27,633	174	1,118
Tinian				
2d Base Headquarters Battalion, FMFPac	46	359	45	105
1st Separate Engineer Battalion, IIIAC	33	727	4	17
2d Separate Wire Platoon, IIIAC	1	41	0	0
Area Sub-Total	80	1,127	49	122
Miscellaneous				
Aviation personnel attached to Marine divisions, amphibious corps, and JASCOs	78	227	0	0
West Coast, U.S.A.				
San Diego				
Headquarters Company, Marine Training and Replacement Command, San Diego Area	41	145	2	5
Headquarters Squadron, Marine Fleet Air, West Coast	56	332	3	1
Area Sub-Total	97	477	5	6
Camp Elliott				
Base Depot, Fleet Marine Force, San Diego	91	760	2	20

See footnote at end of table.

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
Camp Gillespie				
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 141, MBDAG-41	48	302	1	8
Camp Pendleton				
Headquarters Battalion, Marine Training Command, SDA	172	1,847	45	256
Schools Regiment, Marine Training Command, SDA	178	2,573	9	0
Specialist Training Regiment, Marine Training Command, SDA	170	2,162	46	866
Infantry Training Regiment (10 battalions), Marine Training Command, SDA	129	9,868	1	0
9th Amphibian Tractor Battalion	26	510	0	0
5th Marine Division (less RCT 26 and RCT 27)	374	7,000	73	525
5th Joint Assault Signal Company	35	365	0	0
7th Replacement Draft	14	536	12	100
8th Replacement Draft	44	1,107	1	0
9th Replacement Draft	64	1,251	10	5
10th Replacement Draft	63	4,685	1	170
52d Defense Battalion	55	1,278	7	32
8th Field Depot (Rear Echelon)	46	770	0	0
Sound Ranging Sections (3-4-5)	3	66	0	0
Marine Fighter Squadron 471, MBDAG-43	49	277	1	8
Area Sub-Total	1,422	34,295	206	1,962
Corvallis				
Headquarters Squadron 35, MAG–35	185	857	8	30
Service Squadron 35, MAG-35	22	302	0	0
Area Sub-Total	207	1,159	8	30
Camp Kearney				
Marine Photographic Squadron 154, Marine Fleet Air, West Coast	59	427	2	8
El Centro				
Headquarters Squadron 43, MBDAG-43	64	804	7	27
Service Squadron 43, MBDAG-43	8	319	0	0
Marine Fighter Squadron 461, MBDAG-43	47	252	1	3
Marine Fighter Squadron 462, MBDAG-43	52	257	1	2
Marine Fighter Squadron 472, MBDAG-43	48	254	1	0
Area Sub-Total	219	1,886	10	32

See footnote at end of table.

	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
El Toro				
Headquarters Squadron 41, MBDAG-41	42	378	7	30
Service Squadron 41, MBDAG-41	16	277	0	0
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 132, MBDAG-41	47	307	1	5
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 144, MBDAG-41	48	313	1	2
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 234, MBDAG-41	46	307	1	2
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 454, MBDAG-41	46	324	1	3
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 464, MBDAG-41	31	316	1	2
Headquarters Squadron 46, MBDAG-46	72	341	6	17
Service Squadron 46, MBDAG-46	15	324	0	0
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 474, MBDAG-46	30	348	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 481, MBDAG-46	151	328	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 482, MBDAG-46	155	350	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 484, MBDAG-46	30	364	1	8
Area Sub-Total	729	4,277	22	93
Miramar				
Supply Squadron 5, Marine Fleet Air, West Coast	16	299	0	0
Headquarters and Service Squadron 2, 2d AWG	12	105	0	0
Air Warning Squadron 6, 2d AWG	14	259	0	6
Air Warning Squadron 7, 2d AWG	13	251	0	6
Air Warning Squadron 8, 2d AWG	15	258	0	6
Air Warning Squadron 9, 2d AWG	16	255	0	6
Marine Airborne Air Warning Squadron 10, 2d AWG	14	166	0	4
Air Warning Squadron 11, 2d AWG	16	255	0	6
Air Warning Squadron 12, 2d AWG	18	261	0	6
Marine Airborne Air Warning Squadron 15, 2d AWG	13	167	0	4
Marine Airborne Air Warning Squadron 20, 2d AWG	14	167	0	4
Headquarters Squadron, Personnel Group	270	215	28	0
Marine Wing Service Squadron 1, Personnel Group	12	1,124	0	6
Marine Wing Service Squadron 2, Personnel Group	5	1,167	0	160
Marine Wing Service Squadron 3, Personnel Group	6	958	0	10
Marine Wing Service Squadron 4, Personnel Group	4	1,716	0	0
Headquarters Squadron 33, MAG-33	30	362	7	16
Service Squadron 33, MAG-33	11	258	7	16
Area Sub-Total	499	8,243	42	256
Oxnard				
Marine Fighter Squadron 214, MBDAG-42	48	274	1	8

See footnote at end of table.

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
Mojave				
Headquarters Squadron 44, MBDAG-44	32	458	8	16
Service Squadron 44, MBDAG-44	10	396	0	0
Marine Fighter Squadron 124, MBDAG-44	49	246	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 213, MBDAG-44	49	252	1	7
Marine Fighter Squadron 451, MBDAG-44	47	243	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 452, MBDAG-44	48	252	1	8
Headquarters Squadron 51, MAG-51	38	309	9	19
Marine Observation Squadron 351, MAG-51	47	249	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 511, MAG-51	46	242	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 512, MAG-51	45	233	1	8
Area Sub-Total	411	2,880	24	90
Santa Barbara				
Headquarters Squadron 42, MBDAG-42	44	478	5	18
Service Squadron 42, MBDAG-42	17	338	0	0
Marine Fighter Squadron 112, MBDAG-42	47	241	2	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 123, MBDAG-42	49	249	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 221, MBDAG-42	45	242	1	8
Headquarters Squadron 45, MBDAG-45	43	392	7	18
Service Squadron 45, MBDAG-45	17	248	0	0
Marine Night Fighter Squadron 542, MBDAG-45	31	303	1	8
Headquarters Squadron 48, MBDAG-48 (Org 3Aug44)	0	0	0	0
Service Squadron 48, MBDAG-48 (Org 3Aug44)	0	0	0	0
Marine Torpedo-Bomber Squadron 143, MBDAG-48	46	239	1	8
Marine Torpedo-Bomber Squadron 233, MBDAG-48	45	303	2	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 943, MBDAG-48	33	223	0	0
Area Sub-Total	417	3,256	20	84
East Coast, U.S.A.				
Camp Lejeune				
Headquarters Battalion, Marine Training Command	28	811	0	0
Range Battalion, Marine Training Command	9	242	0	0
Coast Guard Detachment, Marine Training Command	0	0	39	1,409
Quartermaster Battalion, Marine Training Command	57	750	0	0
Schools Regiment, Marine Training Command	153	1,250	0	0
Specialist Training Regiment, Marine Training Command	397	6,870	0	0
Infantry Training Regiment (7 battalions), Marine				

See footnote at end of table.

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
Training Command	157	7,402	0	11
Corps Evacuation Hospitals (I, II, III)	0	0	79	604
10th Ammunition Company	7	279	0	0
11th Ammunition Company	3	294	0	0
7th Separate Infantry Battalion	18	677	2	21
Area Sub-Total	829	18,575	120	2,045
Norfolk				
Marine Base Depot, FMF	20	426	0	8
Quantico				
Infantry Training Battalion, MCS	36	993	2	38
Field Artillery Training Battalion, MCS	22	582	0	0
Area Sub-Total	58	1,575	2	38
Bogue				
Air Warning Squadron 16, 1st AWG	15	260	0	6
Headquarters Squadron 93, MAG-93	25	330	6	18
Service Squadron 93, MAG-93	10	190	0	0
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 934, MAG-93	34	188	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 941, MAG-93	35	188	1	7
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 942, MAG-93	6	81	0	0
Area Sub-Total	125	1,237	8	39
Cherry Point				
Headquarters Squadron 9, 9th MAW	63	429	7	13
Marine Wing Service Squadron 9, 9th MAW	15	183	0	0
Marine Transport Squadron 352, 9th MAW	127	434	1	8
Marine Photographic Squadron 354, 9th MAW	59	449	1	8
Marine Night Fighter Squadron 531, 9th MAW	17	166	1	4
Headquarters and Service Squadron 1, 1st AWG	91	900	3	8
Air Warning Squadron 17, 1st AWG	11	245	0	6
Air Warning Squadron 18, 1st AWG	10	164	0	6
Headquarters Squadron 53, MAG-53	45	290	5	19
Service Squadron 53, MAG-53	7	264	0	0
Marine Night Fighter Squadron 543, MAG-53	29	307	1	8
Marine Night Fighter Squadron 544, MAG-53	32	279	0	6

See footnote at end of table.

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
Headquarters Squadron 62, MAG-62	58	686	6	6
Service Squadron 62, MAG-62	19	424	0	0
Marine Bombing Squadron 453, MAG-62	15	157	0	0
Marine Bombing Squadron 463, MAG-62	11	73	0	0
Marine Bombing Squadron 473, MAG-62	10	45	0	0
Marine Bombing Squadron 483, MAG-62	4	3	0	0
Marine Bombing Squadron 621, MAG-62	78	402	1	8
Marine Bombing Squadron 622, MAG-62	60	325	1	8
Marine Bombing Squadron 623, MAG-62	46	314	1	8
Marine Bombing Squadron 624, MAG-62	30	236	0	8
Headquarters Squadron 92, MAG-92	18	154	1	4
Marine Fighter Squadron 921, MAG-92	40	61	0	2
Marine Fighter Squadron 922, MAG-92	38	60	0	2
Marine Fighter Squadron 924, MAG-92	106	351	1	8
Headquarters Squadron 94, MAG-94	15	107	2	15
Service Squadron 94, MAG-94	3	43	0	0
Area Sub-Total	1,057	7,551	32	155
Congaree				
Headquarters Squadron 52, MAG-52	17	45	7	19
Service Squadron 52, MAG-52	13	669	0	0
Marine Fighter Squadron 521, MAG-52	48	158	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 522, MAG-52	45	156	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 523, MAG-52	48	161	0	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 524, MAG-52	50	155	0	8
Area Sub-Total	221	1,344	9	51
Eagle Mountain Lake				
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 931, MAG-93	47	268	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 932, MAG-93	50	274	1	6
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 933, MAG-93	30	268	1	5
Area Sub-Total	127	810	3	19
Greenville				
Marine Fighter Squadron 913, MAG-91	42	177	1	8

Units and Locations	Strength			
	USMC		USN	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
Kinston				
Headquarters Squadron 91, MAG-91	16	190	5	19
Service Squadron 91, MAG-91	8	169	0	0
Marine Fighter Squadron 911, MAG-91	44	183	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 912, MAG-91	44	180	0	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 914, MAG-91	39	145	0	0
Area Sub-Total	151	867	6	35
Newport				
Headquarters Squadron 34, MAG-34	26	487	6	22
Service Squadron 34, MAG-34	10	265	0	0
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 334, MAG-34	49	279	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 342, MAG-34	49	295	1	8
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 344, MAG-34	49	295	2	8
Marine Bombing Squadron 613, MAG-62	65	418	1	8
Marine Bombing Squadron 614, MAG-62	66	423	1	8
Area Sub-Total	314	2,462	12	62
New River				
Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 944, MAG-94	61	393	1	8
Oak Grove				
Air Warning Squadron 14, 1st AWG	16	248	0	6
Service Squadron 51, MAG-92	11	271	0	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 513, MAG-92	47	229	1	8
Marine Fighter Squadron 514, MAG-92	48	218	1	8
Area Sub-Total	122	966	2	30
Vero Beach				
Air Warning Squadron 13, 1st AWG	18	256	0	6
Total FMF (Ground) Overseas	8,810	163,333	1,191	7,855
Total FMF (Air) Overseas	4,477	31,696	208	1,070
Total FMF (Ground) in U.S.A.	2,412	55,499	331	4,070
Total FMF (Air) in U.S.A.	4,980	39,376	208	1,031
Total FMF Overseas	13,287	195,029	1,399	8,925
Total FMF in U.S.A	7,392	94,875	539	5,101
Total FMF	20,679	289,904	1,938	14,026

[1] Strength figures and unit designations were abstracted from the FMF Status Reports, Ground and Air, for August 1944 held in the Archives of the Historical Division, Headquarters Marine Corps. Units en route or ordered to the indicated area are listed under those areas regardless of their temporary locations.

Table of Organization F—100—Marine Division

5 May 1944 [1]

Unit	USMC		USN		Totals	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
Division Headquarters	(66)	(186)	(4)	(1)	(70)	(187)
Headquarters Battalion	101	883	7	13	108	896
Headquarters Company	(73)	(394)	(7)	(9)	(80)	(403)
Signal Company	(17)	(275)			(17)	(275)
Military Police Company	(6)	(96)			(6)	(96)
Reconnaissance Company	(5)	(118)		(4)	(5)	(122)
Tank Battalion	35	585	1	9	36	594
Headquarters & Service Company	(14)	(99)	(1)	(9)	(15)	(108)
3 Tank Companies (each)	(7)	(162)			(7)	(162)
Service Troops	58	1,343	66	422	124	1,765
Service Battalion	(29)	(702)	(2)	(18)	(31)	(720)
Headquarters Company	(9)	(48)	(2)	(9)	(11)	(57)
Service & Supply Company	(13)	(483)		(9)	(13)	(492)
Ordnance Company	(7)	(171)			(7)	(171)
Motor Transport Battalion	(28)	(501)	(1)	(9)	(29)	(510)
Headquarters & Service Company	(13)	(171)	(1)	(9)	(14)	(180)
3 Transport Companies (each)	(5)	(110)			(5)	(110)
Medical Battalion	(1)	(140)	(63)	(395)	(64)	(535)
Headquarters & Service Company	(1)	(15)	(28)	(45)	(29)	(60)
5 Medical Companies (each)		(25)	(7)	(70)	(7)	(95)
Engineer Battalion	41	842	1	20	42	862
Headquarters & Service Company	(23)	(263)	(1)	(20)	(24)	(283)
3 Engineer Companies (each)	(6)	(193)			(6)	(193)
Pioneer Battalion	38	672	3	32	41	704
Headquarters & Service Company	(11)	(81)	(3)	(32)	(14)	(113)
3 Pioneer Companies (each)	(9)	(197)			(9)	(197)
Artillery Regiment	159	2,415	8	57	167	2,472
Headquarters & Service Battery	(23)	(193)	(4)	(9)	(27)	(202)
2 105mm Howitzer Battalions (each)	(33)	(556)	(1)	(12)	(34)	(568)
Headquarters & Service Battery	(15)	(133)	(1)	(12)	(16)	(145)
3 Howitzer Batteries (each)	(6)	(141)			(6)	(141)
2 75mm Pack Howitzer Battalions (each)	(35)	(555)	(1)	(12)	(36)	(567)
Headquarters & Service Battery	(14)	(132)	(1)	(12)	(15)	(144)
3 Pack Howitzer Batteries (each)	(7)	(141)			(7)	(141)
3 Infantry Regiments (each)	137	2,936	11	134	148	3,070
Headquarters & Service Company	(24)	(218)	(5)	(14)	(29)	(232)
Weapons Company	(8)	(195)			(8)	(195)
3 Infantry Battalions (each)	(35)	(841)	(2)	(40)	(37)	(881)
Headquarters Company	(14)	(157)	(2)	(40)	(16)	(197)
3 Rifle Companies (each)	(7)	(228)			(7)	(228)
Division Totals	843	15,548	119	955	962	16,503

[1] All unit strength figures enclosed in parentheses are included in strength totals of parent units.

MAJOR WEAPONS AND TRANSPORTATION—MARINE DIVISION

Weapons	Number	Transportation	Number
Carbine, .30 cal., M–1	10,953	Ambulance:	
Flamethrower, portable, M2–2	243	¼-ton, 4 x 4	52
Flamethrower, mechanized, E4–5	24	½-ton, 4 x 4	12
Gun:		Car, 5-passenger	3
37mm, M3, antitank	36	Station wagon, 4 x 4	3
75mm, motor carriage, M–3, w/armament, radio-equipped (TCS)	12	Tractor:	
Gun, Machine:		miscellaneous	71
.30 cal., M1919A4	302	Trailer:	
.30 cal., M1917A1	162	¼-ton, cargo	135
.50 cal., M2	161	½-ton, dump	19
Gun, submachine, .45 cal.	49	1-ton, cargo	155
Howitzer:		1-ton, water	74
75mm pack	24	miscellaneous	110
105mm	24	Truck:	
Launcher, rocket, antitank, M1A1	172	¼-ton, 4 x 4	323
Mortar:		¼-ton, 4 x 4, with radio	85
60mm	117	1-ton, 4 x 4, cargo	224
81mm	36	1-ton, 4 x 4, reconnaissance	11
Pistol, .45 cal.	399	2½-ton, 6 x 6, cargo	150
Rifle, .30 cal., M–1	5,436	2½-ton, 6 x 6, dump	53
Rifle, Browning, automatic	853	miscellaneous	68
Shotgun, 12 gauge	306		
Tank, Army medium, with armament	46		
Vehicle, recovery, M32B2	3		

Marine Task Organization and Command List[1]

MARINE GROUND UNITS

A. PELELIU (6 September–14 October 1944)

Expeditionary Troops

CG ..... MajGen Julian C. Smith
CofS ..... Col Dudley S. Brown
F-1 ..... Col Harry E. Dunkelberger
F-2 ..... LtCol Edmund J. Buckley
F-3 ..... Col Robert O. Bare
F-4 ..... LtCol Jesse S. Cook, Jr.

III Amphibious Corps

(15Sep–14Oct))

CG ..... MajGen Roy S. Geiger
CofS ..... Col Merwin H. Silverthorn
C-1 ..... LtCol Peter A. McDonald
C-2 ..... Col William F. Coleman
C-3 ..... Col Walter A. Wachtler
C-4 ..... Col Francis B. Loomis, Jr.

III Amphibious Corps Headquarters and Service Battalion

(15Sept–14Oct44)

CO ..... LtCol Floyd A. Stephenson

III Amphibious Corps Troops

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... Col Max D. Smith

3d Base Headquarters Battalion

(22Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... LtCol William O. Smith

1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... Maj Albert F. Reutlinger (to 21-Sep44)
Capt Arthur J. Noonan (from 22Sep44 to 10Oct44)
LtCol Maynard M. Nohrden (from 11Oct44)

3d Armored Amphibian Battalion

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... LtCol Kimber H. Boyer

3d 155mm Howitzer Battalion

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... LtCol Richard A. Evans

6th Amphibian Tractor Battalion

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... Capt John I. Fitzgerald, Jr.

7th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion

(6Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... LtCol Henry R. Paige

8th Amphibian Tractor Battalion

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... LtCol Charles B. Nerren

8th 155mm Howitzer Battalion

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... Maj George V. Hanna, Jr.

12th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... LtCol Merlyn D. Holmes

16th Field Depot

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... LtCol Harlan C. Cooper

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, names, positions held, organization titles, and periods of service were taken from the muster rolls of the units concerned, held in the Diary Unit, Files Section, Records Branch, Personnel Department, Headquarters Marine Corps. Units are listed only for those periods, indicated by the dates below parent unit designation, for which they are entitled to campaign participation credit. This information is derived from muster rolls and the U. S. Bureau of Naval Personnel, *Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual*—NAVPERS 15,790 (Rev. 1953) with changes (Washington, 1953–1958). The muster rolls have been the final authority when there is a conflict of unit entitlement within the overall campaign period as cited by the *Awards Manual*. In the case of Marine air units, many of which participated in the campaigns as flight or advance echelons only, the unit commander who was actually in the combat area is shown where muster rolls reveal this information. In order to conserve space, only units of battalion and squadron size, or larger, and sizable separate detachments are listed for each operation, although smaller organizations may have participated also.

Headquarters, 1st Marine Division

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CG ..... MajGen William H. Rupertus
ADC ..... BGen Oliver P. Smith
CofS ..... Col John T. Selden
D-1 ..... Maj William E. Benedict (to 23-Sep44)
LtCol Harold O. Deakin (from 24Sep44)
D-2 ..... LtCol John W. Scott, Jr.
D-3 ..... LtCol Lewis J. Fields
D-4 ..... LtCol Harvey C. Tschirgi

Division Headquarters and Service Battalion

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... Col Joseph F. Hankins (KIA 3-Oct44)
LtCol Austin C. Shofner (from 3Oct44)

1st Engineer Battalion

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... LtCol Levi W. Smith, Jr.

1st Medical Battalion

(15Sep–2Oct44)

CO ..... Cdr Emil E. Napp, MC, USN

1st Motor Transport Battalion

(14Sep–2Oct44)

CO ..... Capt Robert B. McBroom

1st Pioneer Battalion

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... LtCol Robert G. Ballance

1st Service Battalion

(15Sep–2Oct44)

CO ..... Col John Kaluf

1st Tank Battalion

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... LtCol Arthur J. Stuart

1st Marines

(15Sep–2Oct44)

CO ..... Col Lewis B. Puller
ExO ..... LtCol Richard P. Ross, Jr.
R-3 ..... Maj Bernard T. Kelly

1st Battalion, 1st Marines

CO ..... Maj Raymond G. Davis

2d Battalion, 1st Marines

CO ..... LtCol Russell E. Honsowetz

3d Battalion, 1st Marines

CO ..... LtCol Stephen V. Sabol

5th Marines

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... Col Harold D. Harris
ExO ..... LtCol Lewis W. Walt
R-3 ..... Maj Walter S. McIlhenny (to 16-Sep44)
Capt Donald A. Peppard (from 17Sep44)

1st Battalion, 5th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Robert W. Boyd

2d Battalion, 5th Marines

CO ..... Maj Gordon D. Gayle

3d Battalion, 5th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Austin C. Shofner (WIA 15Sep44)
LtCol Lewis W. Walt (night 15–16Sep44)
Maj John H. Gustafson (from 16-Sep44)

7th Marines

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... Col Herman H. Hanneken
ExO ..... LtCol Norman Hussa
R-3 ..... Maj Walter Holomon

1st Battalion, 7th Marines

CO ..... LtCol John J. Gormley

2d Battalion, 7th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Spencer S. Berger

3d Battalion, 7th Marines

CO ..... Maj E. Hunter Hurst

11th Marines

(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... Col William H. Harrison
ExO ..... LtCol Edson L. Lyman
R-3 ..... LtCol Leonard F. Chapman, Jr.

1st Battalion, 11th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Richard W. Wallace

2d Battalion, 11th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Noah P. Wood, Jr.

3d Battalion, 11th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Charles M. Nees

4th Battalion, 11th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Louis C. Reinberg

Island Command, Peleliu (1st Echelon)
(15Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... BGen Harold D. Campbell

B. PHILIPPINES
(20October–11December 1944)

Headquarters, V Amphibious Corps Artillery
(20Oct–29Nov44)

CG ..... BGen Thomas E. Bourke
ExO ..... Col Bert A. Bone
CofS ..... Col Harold C. Roberts
A-1 ..... Capt George K. Acker
A-2 ..... Maj Leo S. Unger
A-3 ..... LtCol Floyd R. Moore
A-4 ..... LtCol Richard H. Crockett

5th 155mm Howitzer Battalion
(21Oct–11Dec44)

CO ..... LtCol James E. Mills

11th 155mm Gun Battalion
(21Oct–11Dec44)

CO ..... LtCol Thomas S. Ivey

C. IWO JIMA (19February–26March 1945)

Expeditionary Troops
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CG ..... LtGen Holland M. Smith
CofS ..... Col Dudley S. Brown
G-1 ..... Col Russell N. Jordahl
G-2 ..... Col Edmond J. Buckley
G-3 ..... Col Kenneth H. Weir
G-4 ..... Col George R. Rowan

Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion, FMFPac
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Maj James L. Jones

V Amphibious Corps
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CG ..... MajGen Harry Schmidt
CofS ..... BGen William W. Rogers
C-1 ..... Col David A. Stafford
C-2 ..... Col Thomas R. Yancey, USA
C-3 ..... Col Edward A. Craig
C-4 ..... Col William F. Brown

V Corps Headquarters and Service Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Capt Cyril M. Milbrath

V Corps Troops
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col Alton A. Gladden

V Corps Signal Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol Alfred F. Robertshaw

V Corps Medical Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LCrd William B. Clapp, MC, USN

2d Separate Engineer Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol Charles O. Clark

8th Field Depot
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col Leland S. Swindler

1st Provisional Field Artillery Group
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col John S. Letcher
ExO ..... LtCol Marin H. Floom
G-3 ..... Maj William D. Winters, Jr.

2d 155mm Howitzer Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Maj Earl J. Rowse

4th 155mm Howitzer Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol Douglas E. Reeve

V Corps Provisional LVT Group
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol Harry W. G. Vadnais

2d Armored Amphibian Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol Reed M. Fawell, Jr.

3d Amphibian Tractor Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol Sylvester L. Stephan

5th Amphibian Tractor Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Maj George L. Shead

10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Maj Victor J. Croizat

24th Replacement Draft
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... Maj Ralph E. Boulton

V Corps Evac Hosp No. 1
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... Capt H. G. Young, MC, USN

11th Amtrac Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... LtCol Albert J. Roose

27th Replacement Draft
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... Capt Charles R. Puckett

28th Replacement Draft
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... Maj Michael V. DiVita

30th Replacement Draft
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... Capt Donald J. Kendall, Jr.

31st Replacement Draft
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... Capt Thomas B. Tighe

34th Replacement Draft
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... Capt Neil A. Weathers, Jr.

Island Commander, Iwo Jima
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... MajGen James E. Chaney, USA

Headquarters, 3d Marine Division
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CG ..... MajGen Graves B. Erskine
ADC ..... Col John B. Wilson
CofS ..... Col Robert E. Hogaboom
D-1 ..... Maj Irving R. Kriendler
D-2 ..... LtCol Howard J. Turton
D-3 ..... Col Arthur H. Butler
D-4 ..... LtCol James D. Hittle

Division Headquarters and Service Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... LtCol Jack F. Warner (to 14-Mar 45)
LtCol Carey A. Randall (from 14Mar45)

3d Engineer Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... LtCol Walter S. Campbell

3d Medical Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... Cdr Anthony E. Reymont, MC, USN

3d Motor Transport Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... LtCol Ernest W. Fry, Jr.

3d Pioneer Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... LtCol Edmund M. Williams

3d Service Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... LtCol Paul G. Chandler

3d Tank Battalion
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... Maj Holly H. Evans

3d Marines
(19Feb–5Mar45)
CO ..... Col James A. Stuart
ExO ..... LtCol Newton B. Barkley
R-3 ..... Capt Paul H. Groth

1st Battalion, 3d Marines
CO ..... LtCol Ronald R. Van Stockum

2d Battalion, 3d Marines
CO ..... LtCol Thomas R. Stokes

3d Battalion, 3d Marines
CO ..... LtCol Ralph L. Houser

9th Marines
(19Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... Col Howard N. Kenyon
ExO ..... LtCol Paul W. Russell
R-3 ..... Maj Calvin W. Kunz

1st Battalion, 9th Marines
CO ..... LtCol Carey A. Randall (to 6-Mar45)
Maj William T. Glass (from 6-14Mar45)
LtCol Jack F. Warner (from 14-Mar45)

2d Battalion, 9th Marines
CO ..... LtCol Robert E. Cushman, Jr.

3d Battalion, 9th Marines
CO ..... LtCol Harold C. Boehm

21st Marines

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col Hartnoll J. Withers
ExO ..... LtCol Eustace R. Smoak
R-3 ..... Capt Andrew Hedesh

1st Battalion, 21st Marines

CO ..... LtCol Marlowe C. Williams (WIA 22Feb45)
Maj Clay M. Murray (from 22-Feb45, WIA 22Feb45)
Maj Robert H. Houser (from 22-Feb45)

2d Battalion, 21st Marines

CO ..... LtCol Lowell E. English (WIA 2Mar45)
Maj George A. Percy (from 2-Mar45)

3d Battalion, 21st Marines

CO ..... LtCol Wendell H. Duplantis

12th Marines

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol Raymond F. Crist, Jr.
ExO ..... LtCol Bernard H. Kirk
R-3 ..... LtCol Thomas R. Belzer

1st Battalion, 12th Marines

CO ..... Maj George B. Thomas

2d Battalion, 12th Marines

CO ..... LtCol William T. Fairbourn

3d Battalion, 12th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Alpha L. Bowser, Jr.

4th Battalion, 12th Marines

CO ..... Maj Joe B. Wallen

Headquarters, 4th Marine Division

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CG ..... MajGen Clifton B. Cates
ADC ..... BGen Franklin A. Hart
CofS ..... Col Merton J. Batchelder
D-1 ..... Col Orin H. Wheeler
D-2 ..... LtCol Gooderham L. McCormick
D-3 ..... Col Edwin A. Pollock
D-4 ..... Col Matthew C. Horner

Division Headquarters and Service Battalion

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col Bertrand T. Fay

4th Engineer Battalion

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol Nelson K. Brown

4th Medical Battalion

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Cdr Reuben L. Sharp, MC, USN

4th Motor Transport Battalion

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol Ralph L. Schiesswohl

4th Pioneer Battalion

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol Richard G. Ruby

4th Service Battalion

CO ..... LtCol John E. Fondahl

4th Tank Battalion

CO ..... LtCol Richard K. Schmidt

23d Marines

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col Walter W. Wensinger
ExO ..... LtCol Edward J. Dillon
R-3 ..... Maj Henry S. Campbell

1st Battalion, 23d Marines

CO ..... LtCol Ralph Haas (KIA 20Feb-45)
LtCol Louis B. Blissard (from 20Feb45)

2d Battalion, 23d Marines

CO ..... Maj Robert H. Davidson (WIA 7Mar45)
LtCol Edward J. Dillon (from 7–11Mar45)
Maj Robert H. Davidson (from 11Mar45)

3d Battalion, 23d Marines

CO ..... Maj James S. Scales

24th Marines

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col Walter I. Jordan
ExO ..... LtCol Austin R. Brunelli (to 8-Mar45)
None shown (8–16Mar 45)
R-3 ..... Maj Webb D. Sawyer

1st Battalion, 24th Marines

CO ..... Maj Paul S. Treitel (to 8Mar45)
LtCol Austin R. Brunelli (from 8Mar45)

2d Battalion, 24th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Richard Rothwell

3d Battalion, 24th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Alexander A. Vandegrift, Jr. (WIA 23Feb45)
Maj Doyle A. Stout (from 23-Feb45)

25th Marines

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col John R. Lanigan
ExO ..... LtCol Clarence J. O'Donnell
R-3 ..... Maj John H. Jones

1st Battalion, 25th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Hollis U. Mustain (KIA 21Feb45)
Maj Fenton J. Mee (from 21Feb-45)

2d Battalion, 25th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Lewis C. Hudson, Jr. (WIA 20Feb45)
LtCol James Taul (from 20Feb-45)

3d Battalion, 25th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Justice M. Chambers (WIA 22Feb45)
Capt James C. Headley (from 22-Feb45)

14th Marines

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col Louis G. DeHaven
ExO ..... LtCol Randall M. Victory
R-3 ..... Maj Frederick J. Karch

1st Battalion, 14th Marines

CO ..... Maj John B. Edgar, Jr.

2d Battalion, 14th Marines

CO ..... Maj Clifford B. Drake

3d Battalion, 14th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Robert E. MacFarlane (WIA 19Feb45)
Maj Harvey A. Feehan (from 19–23Feb45)
LtCol Carl A. Youngdale (from 23Feb–10Mar 45)
Maj Harvey A. Feehan (from 10-Mar45)

4th Battalion, 14th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Carl A. Youngdale (to 23-Feb45)
Maj Roland J. Spritzen (from 23-Feb–10Mar45)
LtCol Carl A. Youngdale (from 10Mar45)

Headquarters, 5th Marine Division

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CG ..... MajGen Keller E. Rockey
ADC ..... BGen Leo D. Hermle
CofS ..... Col Ray A. Robinson
D-1 ..... Col John W. Beckett
D-2 ..... LtCol George A. Roll
D-3 ..... Col James F. Shaw, Jr.
D-4 ..... Col Earl S. Piper

Headquarters Battalion, 5th Marine Division

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Maj John Ayrault, Jr.

5th Engineer Battalion

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol Clifford H. Shuey

5th Medical Battalion

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LCdr William W. Ayres, MC, USN

5th Motor Transport Battalion

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Maj Arthur F. Torgler, Jr.

5th Pioneer Battalion

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Maj Robert S. Riddell

5th Service Battalion

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Maj Francis P. Daly (KIA 22-Feb45
None shown (from 22–27Feb45)
Maj Gardelle Lewis (from 27Feb-45)

5th Tank Battalion

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol William R. Collins

26th Marines

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col Chester B. Graham
ExO ..... Col Lester S. Hamel
R-3 ..... LtCol William K. Davenport, Jr.

1st Battalion, 26th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Daniel C. Pollock (WIA 19Mar45)
Maj Albert V. K. Gary (from 19-Mar45)

2d Battalion, 26th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Joseph P. Sayers (WIA 23Feb45)
Maj Amedeo Rea (from 23Feb45)

3d Battalion, 26th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Tom M. Trotti (KIA 22-Feb45)
Capt Richard M. Cook (22Feb45 only)
Maj Richard Fagan (from 23-Feb45)

27th Marines

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col Thomas A. Wornham
ExO ..... Col Louis C. Plain (WIA 19Feb-45)
LtCol James P. Berkeley (from 15Mar45)
R-3 ..... LtCol Justin G. Duryea (to 5Mar-45)
Capt Franklin L. Smith (from 5Mar45)

1st Battalion, 27th Marines

CO ..... LtCol John A. Butler (KIA 5-Mar45)
LtCol Justin G. Duryea (from 5-Mar45, WIA 9Mar45)
Maj William H. Tumbelston (from 9Mar45, WIA 14Mar45)
Maj William H. Kennedy, Jr. (from 14Mar45)

2d Battalion, 27th Marines

CO ..... Maj John W. Antonelli (WIA 9-Mar45)
Maj Gerald F. Russell (from 9-Mar45)

3d Battalion, 27th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Donn J. Robertson

28th Marines

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col Harry B. Liversedge
ExO ..... LtCol Robert H. Williams
R-3 ..... Maj Oscar F. Peatross (to 14-Mar45)
LtCol Charles E. Shepard, Jr. (from 15Mar45)

1st Battalion, 28th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Jackson B. Butterfield

2d Battalion, 28th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Chandler W. Johnson (KIA 2Mar45)
Maj Thomas B. Pearce, Jr. (from 2Mar45)

3d Battalion, 28th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Charles E. Shepard, Jr. (to 14Mar45)
Maj Tolson A. Smoak (from 14-Mar 45)

13th Marines

(19Feb–16Mar45)

CO ..... Col James D. Waller
ExO ..... LtCol Kenyth A. Damke
R-3 ..... LtCol Jack Tabor

1st Battalion, 13th Marines

CO ..... LtCol John S. Oldfield

2d Battalion, 13th Marines

CO ..... Maj Carl W. Hjerpe

3d Battalion, 13th Marines

CO ..... LtCol Henry T. Waller

4th Battalion, 13th Marines

CO ..... Maj James F. Coady

MARINE AIR UNITS

Headquarters Squadron Detachment, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing[2]..
(C—10Mar–4Jul45)[3]

CO, HQ Sqn–1 .... Capt Robert W. Baile

Advance Echelon, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing
(B—24Sep–14Oct44)

CG ..... MajGen James T. Moore
AWC ..... BGen Harold D. Campbell
CofS ..... Col John Wehle
W-1 ..... Maj William K. Lations
W-2 ..... (None shown)
W-3 ..... Col Ronald D. Salmon
W-4 ..... LtCol Walter T. Brownell
CO, Hq Sqn–2 .... Maj Charles C. Campbell

4th Marine Base Defense Aircraft Wing
(Redesignated 4th Marine Aircraft Wing effective 10Nov44)
(A—25Dec43–26Mar45)

CG ..... BGen Lewie G. Merritt (to 15-May44)
BGen Thomas J. Cushman (from 15May–20Aug44)
MajGen Louis E. Woods (from 21Aug44)
AWC ..... (None shown to 20Aug44)
BGen Thomas J. Cushman (from 21Aug–31Oct44)
(None shown from 1Nov44)
CofS ..... Col Frank H. Lamson-Scribner
W-1 ..... Maj Maurice L. McDermond (to 15Mar44)
Maj Lloyd E. Pike (from 16 Mar–5Sep44)
Col Lawrence T. Burke (from 6-Sep–17Nov44)
LtCol Corey C. Brayton (from 18-Nov44)
W-2 ..... Capt Charles J. Greene, Jr. (to 10Oct44)
Capt Thomas C. Andrews (from 11Oct44)
W-3 ..... Col Lawrence T. Burke (to 2 Feb-44)
Col Carson A. Roberts (from 3-Feb–12Apr44)
Col Lawrence T. Burke (from 13-Apr–16Jun44)
LtCol Lee C. Merrell, Jr. (from 16Jun–15Sep44)
Col Calvin R. Freeman (from 16-Sep44–1Feb45)
Maj Elmer G. Glidden, Jr. (from 2Feb–14Mar45)
LtCol Martin A. Severson (from 15Mar45)
W-4 ..... Maj Melville M. Nenefee (to 30-Sep44)
Maj Granville Mitchell (from 1-Oct44)
CO, Hq-Sqn–4 .... Maj Melchior B. Trelfall (to 15-Oct44)
Maj Charles C. Boyer (from 16-Oct–14Dec44)
LtCol Alfred C. Cramp (from 15-Dec44–24Jan45)
2dLt Robert J. Brown, Jr. (from 25Jan–3Feb45)
Maj George F. Webster (from 4-Feb45)

Marine Aircraft Group 11
Advance Echelon (B—15Sep–14Oct44)
Rear Echelon (B—25Sep–14Oct44)

CO ..... Col Caleb T. Bailey
ExO ..... Col John S. Holmberg
GruOpsO.... LtCol Jeslyn R. Bailey
CO, Hq-Sqn–11 .. Capt Cornelius Cole II
CO, SMS–11 .. Maj Leslie T. Bryan, Jr.

Marine Aircraft Group 12
Advance Echelon (C—3Dec44–4July45)
Rear Echelon (C—17Mar–4Jul45)

CO ..... Col William A. Willis (to 26Feb-45)
Col Verne J. McCaul (from 27-Feb45)

[3] Under each unit listed below there will appear a letter designation for each major area in which the unit operated, and dates of major involvement. Following are the campaigns and dates of entitlements, though individual units may have continued operations beyond the cutoff dates, particularly during the final months of the war.

A. Marshalls-Marianas-Bypassed Islands 25Dec43–26Mar45
B. Peleliu 6Sep–14Oct44
C. Philippines 10Oct44–20Jul45
D. Iwo Jima 15Feb–16Mar45

[2] Headquarters, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing did not move to the Philippines until August 1945, shortly before the end of World War II.

ExO ..... LtCol John L. Winston
GruOpsO.... LtCol Frederick E. Leek
CO, Hq-Sqn-12 .. Capt Francis L. O'Melia
CO, SMS-12 .. Capt William B. Freeman

Marine Aircraft Group 13
(A—31Jan44-26Mar45)

CO ..... Col Lawrence Norman (to 16Dec-44)
LtCol Chauncey V. Burnett (from 17Dec44)
ExO ..... Col Athur F. Binney (to 15Jul-44)
LtCol Avery R. Kier (from 16-Jul-4Sep44)
LtCol Zane Thompson, Jr. from 5Sep-8Oct44)
LtCol Chauncey V. Burnett (from 9Oct-16Dec44)
LtCol Zane Thompson, Jr. (from 17Dec44-3Feb45)
LtCol Edward J. Moore (from 4-Feb-11Mar45)
LtCol John V. Kipp (from 12-Mar45)
GruOpsO.... LtCol Zane Thompson, Jr. (to 9-May44)
LtCol Avery R. Kier (from 10 May-15Jul44)
LtCol Zane Thompson, Jr. (from 16Jul-4Sep44)
LtCol Paul R. Byrum, Jr. (from 5Sep-8Oct44)
LtCol Zane Thompson, Jr. (from 9Oct-16Dec44)
Maj James C. Otis (from 17Dec-44-10Mar45)
LtCol Edward J. Moore (from 11-Mar45)
CO, Hq-Sqn-13 .. Maj Harlan Rogers (to 22Apr44)
Maj Stanley W. Burke (from 23-Apr-3Dec44)
Capt Clement F. Hahn, Jr. (from 4Dec44)
CO, SMS-13 .. Maj David Ahee (to 9Jun44)
LtCol Corey C. Brayton, Jr. (from 10Jun-7Nov44)
Maj Joseph A. Gray (from 8 Nov-44)

Marine Aircraft Group 14
Advance Echelon (C—11Jan-15May45)
Rear Echelon (C—23Feb-28May45)

CO ..... Col Zebulon C. Hopkins (to 17-May-45)
Col Edward A. Montgomery (from 18May45)
ExO ..... LtCol Curtis W. Smith, Jr.
GruOpsO.... Maj William C. Humberd
CO, Hq-Sqn-14 .. Capt Robert M. Crooks
CO, SMS-14 .. Capt Droel H. Looney

Marine Aircraft Group 15
(A—1Apr44-25Mar45)

CO ..... LtCol Ben Z. Redfield (to 31May-44)
Col Thomas J. McQuade (from 1-Jun-30Sep44)
LtCol Ben Z. Redfield (from 10-Oct44)
ExO ..... Maj Neil R. MacIntyre (to 31May-44)
LtCol Ben Z. Redfield (from 1Jun-30Sep44)
LtCol George D. Omer (from 1-31Oct44)
LtCol Stanley W. Trachta (from 1Nov44-28Feb45)
LtCol Edward F. Knight (from 1Mar45)
GruOpsO .... Maj Ridgway Baker (to 1Oct44)
Maj Clifford R. Banks, Jr. (from 1-31Oct44)
LtCol Edward F. Knight (from 1-Nov44-21Jan45)
Maj Charles W. Sommers, Jr. (from 22Jan-5Mar45)
LtCol Desmond E. Canavan (from 6Mar45)
CO,Hq-Sqn-15 .. Capt Louis F. Ferguson (to 15-Oct44)
Maj Melchior B. Trelfall (from 16-Oct44-6Mar45)
Maj Peter Ficker (from 7Mar45)
CO, SMS-15 .. Maj Thomas H. Ray (to 8Sep44)
1st Lt Thomas F. Wade, Acting (from 9Sep-5Nov44)
Maj Thomas H. Ray (from 6Nov-44)

Marine Aircraft Group 21

(A—27Jul44–26Mar45)

CO ..... Col Peter P. Schrider (to 6Sep44)
Col Edward B. Carney (from 7-Sep44)

ExO ..... LtCol James A. Booth, Jr. (to 2-Oct44)
(None shown 3Oct–28Nov44)
LtCol George D. Omer (from 29-Nov44–7Jan45)
LtCol Wilfred J. Huffman (from 8Jan45)

GruOpsO .... LtCol Robert W. Clark (to 3Sep-44)
LtCol James A. Embrey, Jr. (from 4Sep44–6Mar45)
LtCol John S. Carter (from 7Mar-45)

CO, Hq-Sqn–21 .. Maj Robert F. Higley

CO, SMS–21 .. Maj Charlton B. Ivey (to 22Aug-44)
Capt Albert I. Haas (from 23Aug-44–30Jan45)
LtCol George E. Congdon (from 31Jan45)

Marine Aircraft Group 22

(A—19Feb44–26Mar45)

CO ..... Col James M. Daly (to 9Oct44)
Col Daniel W. Torrey, Jr. (from 10Oct44)

ExO ..... LtCol Richard D. Hughes (to 14-Aug44)
(None shown from 15–19Aug44)
Col Edward B. Carney (from 20-Aug–17Sep44)
LtCol Harrison Brent, Jr. (from 18Sep44–7Jan45)
LtCol Elmer A. Wrenn (from 8-Jan45)

GruOpsO .... LtCol Julian F. Walters (to 24Jul-44)
LtCol Charles R. Luers (from 25-Jul–3Aug44)
LtCol Harrison Brent, Jr. (from 4Aug–17Sep44)
LtCol Charles R. Luers (from 18-Sep–9Nov44)
Maj Thomas C. Colt, Jr. (from 10Nov44)

CO, Hq-Sqn–22 .. 1stLt John W. Hackner, Jr. (to 20-Nov44)
Maj Alfred C. Cramp (from 21-Nov–18Dec44)
Capt Lindsay K. Dickey (from 19-Dec44)

CO, SMS–22 .. Capt John A. Hood (to 15Aug44)
Capt Arthur Blakeney (from 16-Aug44–25Jan45)
Maj Bruce Prosser (from 26Jan-45)

Marine Aircraft Group 24

Advance Echelon (C—11Jan–8Apr45)
Rear Echelon (C—22Jan–8Apr45)

(C—22Jan–4Jul45)

CO ..... LtCol Lyle H. Meyer (to 31May-45)
Col Warren E. Sweetser, Jr. (from 1Jun45)

ExO ..... LtCol John H. Earle, Jr.

GruOpsO .... LtCol Keith B. McCutcheon

CO, Hq-Sqn–24 .. Capt J. Devereaux Wrather, Jr.

CO, SMS–24 .. Capt Horace C. Baum, Jr. (to 21-Jan45)
Maj William K. Snyder (from 22-Jan45)

Marine Aircraft Group 25

(C—30Oct44–1Apr45)

CO ..... Col Allen C. Koonce (to 13Feb45)
Col Harold C. Major (from 14Feb-45)

ExO ..... LtCol John P. Coursey (to 13Nov-44)
LtCol William H. Klenke, Jr. (from 25Nov44–8Feb45)
Col Warren E. Sweetser, Jr. (from 9Feb45)

GruOpsO .... LtCol Theodore W. Sanford, Jr. (to 4Mar45)
LtCol William H. Klenke, Jr. (from 5Mar45)

CO, Hq-Sqn-25 .. Capt LeRoy M. James (to 21Oct-44)
Maj Theodore E. Beal (from 22-Oct-9Nov44)
Maj Charles J. Prall (from 10-Nov44)

CO, SMS-25 .. LtCol Hillard T. Shepard (to 14-Nov44)
LtCol Albert S. Munsch (from 15-Nov44)

Marine Aircraft Group 31
(A—7Feb44-26Mar45)

CO ..... Col Calvin R. Freeman (to 12Sep-44)
LtCol Ralph K. Rottet (from 13-Sep-13Dec44)
LtCol Martin A. Severson (from 13Dec44-5Mar45)
Col John C. Munn (from 6Mar45)

ExO ..... Col Edward B. Carney (to 16Aug-44)
LtCol Ralph K. Rottet (from 17-Aug-13Dec44)
LtCol Richard D. Hughes (from 13Dec44-15Jan45)
LtCol Gordon E. Hendricks (from 16Jan45)

GruOpsO .... LtCol Ralph K. Rottet (to 16 Aug-44)
LtCol Richard D. Hughes (from 17Aug-12Sep44)
LtCol Kenneth D. Kerby (from 13-30Sep44)
LtCol Lee C. Merrell, Jr. (from 1Oct-21Dec44)
LtCol Kirk Armistead (from 22-Dec44)

CO, Hq-Sqn-31 .. Capt Warren S. Adams II (to 9-Apr44)
Capt James C. Woodhull, Jr. (from 10Apr-31Dec44)
Capt William L. Thompson (from 1Jan-4Feb45)
Maj Leon A. Danco (from 5Feb45)

CO, SMS-31 .. Capt Neil A. Vestal (to 14Mar44)
Capt John Zouck (from 15Mar44-18Feb45)
Maj Archibald M. Smith, Jr. (from 19Feb45)

Marine Aircraft Group 32
Group Echelon (C—27Jan-22Feb45)
Flight Echelon (C—31Jan-22Feb45)
Advance Echelon (C—10Mar-4Jul45)
Rear Echelon (C—17Mar-4Jul45)

CO ..... Col Clayton C. Jerome
ExO ..... LtCol John L. Smith
GruOpsO .... LtCol Wallace T. Scott

CO, Hq-Sqn-32 .. Capt Harold L. Maryott (to 17-Mar45)
1stLt Robert W. Mazur (from 18-Mar45)

CO, SMS-32 .. Maj Jack D. Kane

Air Warning Squadron 1
(A—20Feb44-26Mar45)

CO ..... Capt William D. Felder (to 20-Dec44)
Capt Edward R. Stainback (from 21Dec44)

Advance Echelon, Marine Observation Squadron 1
(D—19Feb-8Mar45)

CO ..... Lt Anthony E. Barrett, Jr.

Air Warning Squadron 3
(C—17Apr-4Jul45)

CO ..... Capt Harold W. Swope (to 1Jul45)
Capt Freeman R. Cass (from 2-Jul45)

Advance Echelon, Marine Observation Squadron 3
(B—15Sep-14Oct44)

CO ..... Capt Wallace J. Slappey, Jr.

Air Warning Squadron 4
(C—10Mar-4Jul45)

CO ..... Capt Charles T. Porter

Marine Observation Squadron 4
(D—19Feb-16Mar45)

CO ..... 1stLt Thomas Rozga

Marine Observation Squadron 5
(D—19Feb-16Mar45)

CO ..... 1stLt Roy G. Miller

Marine Fighter Squadron 111
(A—7Mar44–26Mar45)
CO ..... Maj J. Frank Cole (to 6Apr44)
Maj William E. Clasen (7Apr–27Oct44)
Maj William T. Herring (28Oct44–1Mar45)
Maj Robert D. Kelly (from 2Mar-45)

Marine Fighter Squadron 112
(USS *Bennington*)
(D—15Feb–4Mar45)
CO ..... Maj Herman Hansen, Jr.

Marine Fighter Squadron 113
(A—15Jan44–26Mar45)
CO ..... Capt Loren D. Everton (to 7Sep-44)
Maj Charles Kimak (from 8Sep–18Dec44)
Maj Philip R. White (from 19Dec-44–20Feb45)
Maj Hensley Williams (from 21-Feb45)

Marine Fighter Squadron 114
Ground Echelon (B—15Sep–14Oct44)
Flight Echelon (B—26Sep–14Oct44)
CO ..... Capt Robert F. Stout

Marine Fighter Squadron 115
(C—17Dec44–4Jul45)
CO ..... Maj John H. King, Jr. (to 29May-45)
Maj John S. Payne (from 30May-45)

Marine Fighter Squadron 121
Ground Echelon (B—15Sep–14Oct44)
CO ..... Maj Walter J. Meyer

Marine Fighter Squadron 122
Ground Echelon (B—15Sep–14Oct44)
Flight Echelon (B—1–14Oct44)
CO ..... Maj Joseph H. Reinburg

Advance Echelon Marine Fighter Squadron 123
(USS *Bennington*)
(D—15Feb–4Mar45)
CO ..... Maj Everett V. Alward (to 25-Feb45)
Maj Thomas E. Mobley (from 25-Feb45)

Marine Fighter Squadron 124
(USS *Essex*)
(C—3–22Jan45)
(D—15Feb–4Mar45)
CO ..... Maj William A. Millington

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 133
(C—22Jan–4Jul45)
CO ..... Maj Lee A. Christoffersen (to 8-Mar45)
Maj Floyd Cummings (from 9-Mar45)

Marine Torpedo-Bomber Squadron 134
Ground Echelon (B—30Sep–14Oct44)
Flight Echelon (B—6–14Oct44)
CO ..... Maj Russell R. Riley

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 142
Ground Echelon (C—22Jan–4Jul45)
Flight Echelon (C—27Jan–4Jul45)
CO ..... Capt Hoyle R. Barr (to 8Jun45)
Maj James L. Fritsche (from 9-Jun45)

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 151
(A—29Feb44–26Mar45)
CO ..... LtCol Gordon H. Knott (to 30Oct-44)
Maj Randolph C. Berkeley, Jr. (from 31Oct–4Dec44)
Maj Bruce Prosser (from 5Dec44–25Jan45)
Maj Robert J. Shelley, Jr. (from 25Jan45)

Marine Observation Squadron 155
(redesignated Marine Fighter Squadron 155, effective 31Jan45)
(A—1Nov44–26Mar45)
CO ..... Capt John P. Haines, Jr. (to 13-Jan45)
Maj John E. Reynolds (from 14-Jan–14Feb45)
Maj Wayne M. Cargill (from 15-Feb45)

Marine Fighter Squadron 211
(C—5Dec44–4Jul45)

CO ..... Maj Stanislaus J. Witomski (to 30Jan45)
Maj Philip B. May (from 31Jan–20Mar45)
Maj Angus F. Davis (from 21Mar–45)

Marine Fighter Squadron 212
(C—19Jan–14May45)
CO ..... Maj Quinton R. Johns (to 27Apr–45)
Maj John P. McMahon (from 28–Apr45)

Marine Fighter Squadron 213
(USS *Essex*)
(C—3–22Jan45)
(D—15Feb–4Mar45)
CO ..... Maj Donald P. Frame (to 28Jan–45)
Maj Louis R. Smunk (from 29Jan–4Feb45)
Maj David E. Marshall (from 5–Feb45)

Advance Echelon, Marine Fighter Squadron 216
(USS *Wasp*)
(D—15Feb–4Mar45)
CO ..... Maj George E. Dooley

Advance Echelon, Marine Fighter Squadron 217
(USS *Wasp*)
(D—15Feb–4Mar45)
CO ..... Maj Jack R. Amende, Jr. (to 16–Feb45)
Maj George E. Buck (from 17Feb–45)

Marine Fighter Squadron 218
(C—10Mar–4Jul45)
CO ..... Maj John M. Massey

Advance Echelon, Marine Fighter Squadron 221
(USS *Bunker Hill*)
(D—15Feb–4Mar45)
CO ..... Maj Edwin S. Roberts, Jr.

Marine Fighter Squadron 222
(C—11Jan–14May45)
CO ..... Maj Roy T. Spurlock (to 27Apr45)
Maj Harold A. Harwood (from 28Apr45)

Flight Echelon, Marine Fighter Squadron 223
(C—19Jan–15May45)
CO ..... Maj Robert F. Flaherty (to 24Mar–45)
Maj Robert W. Teller (from 25–Mar–16Apr45)
Maj Howard E. King (from 17–Apr45)

Marine Fighter Squadron 224
(A—1Jan44–26Mar45)
CO ..... Maj Darrell D. Irwin (to 24Aug–44)
Maj Howard A. York (from 24–Aug–31Dec44)
Maj James W. Poindexter (from 31Dec44)

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 231
(A—4Feb44–1Aug45)
CO ..... Maj Elmer G. Glidden, Jr. (to 4–Sep44)
Maj William E. Abblitt (from 5–Sep44–3Feb45)
Maj Joseph W. White, Jr. (from 3Feb45)

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 233
(C—26Jun–6Jul45)
CO ..... Capt Edmund W. Berry

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 236
Advance Echelon (C—11Jan–4Jul45)
Rear Echelon (C—28Jan–4Jul45)
CO ..... Maj Fred J. Frazer

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 241
Advance Echelon (C—22Jan–4Jul45)
Rear Echelon (C—25Jan–4Jul45)
CO ..... Maj Benjamin B. Manchester, III (to 19Feb45)
Maj Jack L. Brushert (from 20–Feb45)

Advance Echelon, Marine Torpedo-Bomber Squadron 242
(C—8–16Mar45)
CO ..... Maj William W. Dean

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 243
Ground Echelon (C—22Jan–4Jul45)
Flight Echelon (C—31Jan–4Jul45)
CO ..... Maj Joseph W. Kean, Jr.

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 244
Ground Echelon (C—22Jan-4Jul45)
Flight Echelon (C—31Jan-4Jul45)
CO ..... Maj Vance H. Hudgins

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 245
(A—1Jun44-15Aug45)
CO ..... Maj Julian F. Acers (to 23Sep44)
Maj Robert F. Halladay (from 24-Sep44-30Jun45)
Maj John E. Bell (from 1Jul45)

Marine Fighter Squadron 251
(C—2Jan-12May45)
CO ..... Maj William C. Humberd (to 9-Feb45)
Maj William L. Bacheler (from 10Feb-14Apr45)
Maj Thomas W. Furlow (from 15-Apr45)

Marine Transport Squadron 252
(D—3-9Mar45)
CO ..... LtCol Russell A. Bowen

Marine Transport Squadron 253
(D—3-16Mar45)
CO ..... LtCol John V. Kipp (to 9Mar45)
Maj Jack F. McCollum (from 10-Mar45)

Marine Fighter Squadron 311
(A—15May44-20Jan45)
CO ..... Maj Harry B. Hooper, Jr. (to 23-Oct44)
Maj Charles M. Kunz (from 24-Oct44)

Marine Fighter Squadron 313
Ground Echelon (C—3Dec44-1Jun45)
Flight Echelon (C—18Dec44-1Jun45)
CO ..... Maj Joe J. McGlothin, Jr. (to 26-Apr45)
Capt Jay E. McDonald (from 27-29Apr45)
1stLt John M. Lomac (from 30-Apr45)

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 331
Flight Echelon (A—25Feb44-1Aug45)
Ground Echelon (A—2Mar44-1Aug45)
CO ..... Maj Paul R. Byrum, Jr. to 9May-44)
Maj James C. Otis (from 10May-15Dec44)
Maj John H. McEniry (16Dec44-2Feb45)
Maj Winston E. Jewson (from 3-Feb45)

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 341
Ground Echelon (C—22Jan-4Jul45)
Flight Echelon (C—28Jan-4Jul45)
CO ..... Maj Christopher F. Irwin (to 3-May45)
Maj Robert J. Bear (from 4May-45)

Marine Transport Squadron 353
(B—6-14Oct44)
(D—8-16Mar45)
CO ..... Maj John R. Walcott

Marine Fighter Squadron 441
(A—1Jan44-6Apr45)
CO ..... Maj James B. Moore (to 4Apr44)
Maj Grant W. Metzger (from 5-Apr44-20Jan45)
Maj Robert O. White (from 21-Jan45)

Marine Fighter Squadron 422
(A—24Jan44-25Apr45)
CO ..... Maj John S. MacLaughlin, Jr. MIA 24Jan44)
Maj Edwin C. Fry (from 25Jan-1Feb44)
Maj Elmer A. Wrenn (from 2Feb-31Dec44)
Maj Elkin S. Dew (from 1Jan45)

Advance Echelon, Marine Fighter Squadron 451
(USS *Bunker Hill*)
(D—15Feb-4Mar45)
CO ..... Maj Henry A. Ellis, Jr.

Marine Fighter Squadron 511
(USS *Block Island*)
(C—26Jun-6Jul45)
CO ..... Capt James L. Secrest

Marine Fighter Squadron 512
(USS *Gilbert Islands*)
(C—26Jun–6Jul45)
CO ..... Maj Blaine H. Baesler

Marine Night Fighter Squadron 532
(A—27Feb–23Oct44)
CO ..... Maj Everett H. Vaughan (to 23-Sep44)
Capt Warren S. Adams II (from 24Sep44)

Marine Night Fighter Squadron 534
(A—4Aug44–15Aug45)
CO ..... Maj Ross S. Mickey (to 23May45)
Maj James B. Maguire, Jr. (from 24May–15Jun45)
Maj Clair C. Chamberlain (from 21Jun45)

Marine Night Fighter Squadron 541
Ground Echelon (A—15Sep44–28Aug45)
Flight Echelon (A—24Sep–3Dec44)
Flight Echelon (C—4Dec44–10Jan45)
Flight Echelon (A—11Jan–28Aug45)
CO ..... LtCol Peter D. Lambrecht (to 20-Jun45)
Maj Norman L. Mitchell (from 21Jun–7Jul45)
Maj Reynolds A. Moody (from 8Jul45)

Marine Bombing Squadron 611
Ground Echelon (C—17Mar–4Jul45)
Flight Echelon (C—30Mar–4Jul45)
CO ..... LtCol George A. Sarles (KIA 30-May45)
Maj Robert R. Davis (from 1–19-Jun45)
Maj David Horne (from 20Jun45)

Marine Bombing Squadron 612
(D—15Feb–16Mar45)
CO ..... Maj Lawrence F. Fox

Marine Bombing Squadron 613
(A—23Dec44–26Mar45)
CO ..... Maj George W. Nevils

Marine Transport Squadron 952
(B—1–14Oct44)
(D—1–16Mar45)
CO ..... Maj Malcolm S. Mackay

Marine Casualties[1]

Location and Date	KIA		DOW		WIA		MIAPD		TOTAL	
	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted
Marines										
Peleliu[2] (6Sep–14Oct44)	66	984	18	232	301	5,149	0	36	385	6,401
Iwo Jima (19Feb–26Mar45)	215	4,339	60	1,271	826	16,446	3	43	1,104	22,099
Aviation[3]	66	49	3	6	91	212	44	32	204	299
Sea-duty	4	61	0	9	8	142	0	63	12	275
Total Marines	351	5,433	81	1,518	1,226	21,949	47	174	1,705	29,074
Naval Medical Personnel Organic to Marine Units[4]										
Peleliu	1	49	0	11	11	238	0	0	12	298
Iwo Jima	4	183	0	22	19	622	0	0	23	827
Marine Aviation[5]	0	2	0	0	2	10	0	0	4	10
Total Navy	5	234	0	33	32	870	0	0	39	1,135
Grand Total	356	667	0	1,551	1,258	22,817	47	174	1,744	30,209

[1] These final Marine casualty figures were compiled from records furnished by Statistics Unit, Personnel Accounting Section, Records Branch, Personnel Department, HQMC. Figures for the Peleliu Operation were certified and released on 1 June 1950; those for Iwo Jima in August 1952. Naval casualties were taken from NavMed P-5021, *The History of the Medical Department of the Navy in World War II* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953). The key to the abbreviations used at the head of columns in the table follows: KIA, Killed in Action; DOW, Died of Wounds; WIA, Wounded in Action; MIAPD, Missing in Action, Presumed Dead. Because of the casualty reporting method used during World War II, a substantial number of DOW figures are also included in the WIA column.

[2] Includes Ngesebus.

[3] Includes bypassed Marshalls, Carolines, Palau, Philippines, and Volcano Bonin Islands, overall period covering February 1944 - June 1945.

[4] See Footnote (1) above.

[5] Time frame identical to (3) above.

Unit Commendations

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
Washington

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to the

FIRST MARINE DIVISION (REINFORCED)

consisting of

FIRST Marine Division; First Amphibian Tractor Battalion, FMF; U.S. Navy Flame Thrower Unit Attached; Sixth Amphibian Tractor Battalion (Provisional), FMF; Third Armored Amphibian Battalion (Provisional), FMF; Detachment Eighth Amphibian Tractor Battalion, FMF; 454th Amphibian Truck Company, U.S. Army; 456th Amphibian Truck Company, U.S. Army; Fourth Joint Assault Signal Company, FMF; Fifth Separate Wire Platoon, FMF; Sixth Separate Wire Platoon, FMF,

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces at Peleliu and Ngesebus from September 15 to 29, 1944. Landing over a treacherous coral reef against hostile mortar and artillery fire, the FIRST Marine Division, Reinforced, seized a narrow, heavily mined beachhead and advanced foot by foot in the face of relentless enfilade fire through rain-forests and mangrove swamps toward the air strip, the key to the enemy defenses of the southern Palaus. Opposed all the way by thoroughly disciplined, veteran Japanese troops heavily entrenched in caves and in reinforced concrete pillboxes which honeycombed the high ground throughout the island, the officers and men of the Division fought with undiminished spirit and courage despite heavy losses, exhausting heat and difficult terrain, seizing and holding a highly strategic air and land base for future operations in the Western Pacific. By their individual acts of heroism, their aggressiveness and their fortitude, the men of the FIRST Marine Division, Reinforced, upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

JOHN L. SULLIVAN,
Secretary of the Navy

EXTRACT

GENERAL ORDERS)
No. 22)

WAR DEPARTMENT
Washington, D. C., 14 February 1947
Section
XV

BATTLE HONORS — Citation of Unit
XV — BATTLE HONORS.

The Marine Night Fighter Squadron 541 is cited for extraordinary performance of duty in action against the enemy at Leyte, Philippine Islands, from 3 to 15 December 1944. During a critical period in the fight for the control of the Philippine Islands, the pilots and ground crews of this unit signally distinguished themselves by the intrepidity and unyielding determination with which they overcame exceptionally adverse weather conditions and operational difficulties engendered by lack of ground facilities and incomplete radar directional coverage. Their superb airmanship and daring resourcefulness displayed in outstanding night patrol and interception work, which forestalled destruction of airfield facilities, and in the completeness of cover provided for numerous vital convoys and Patrol Torpedo boat patrols, effectively thwarted enemy attempts to prevent consolidation and further expansion of the foothold gained by United States forces in the Philippines. Achieving a record unparalleled at that time, the unit, composed of but 15 aircraft and 22 pilots, flew 136 sorties totaling 298.6 combat hours, destroyed 18 enemy aircraft in aerial combat without unit loss or damage, and on numerous occasions pitted consummate skill and accuracy against overwhelming numerically superior enemy strength. The extraordinary performance of the air and ground personnel of the Marine Fighter Squadron 541 in overcoming the greatest of aerial hazards and maintenance difficulties reflects the highest credit on themselves and the military service of the United States.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER,
Chief of Staff

OFFICIAL:

EDWARD F. WITSELL
Major General
The Adjutant General

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
Washington

The President of the Unites States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP TWELVE

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces in the Philippine Islands from December 3, 1944, to March 9, 1945. Operating from the captured airfield at Tacloban, Marine Aircraft Group TWELVE employed Corsairs as bombing planes to strike destructive blows at escorted enemy convoys and to prevent the Japanese from reinforcing their beleagured garrisons by landing troops and supplies on western Leyte. Undeterred by intense aerial opposition and accurate antiaircraft fire, these pilots provided effective cover for ground troops, shore installations and Fleet units and, on several occasions, when ground troops were held up by heavy enemy fire, bombed and strafed Japanese positions, thereby enabling our land forces to advance unopposed. As hostile resistance lessened on Leyte, Marine Aircraft Group TWELVE expanded its sphere of operations to strike at enemy garrisons on the Visayan Islands and southern Luzon and to support the Lingayen beachheads, neutralizing the enemy's lines of communication, his harbors, airfields and escape routes, and ranging far from base to provide aerial cover for ships of the SEVENTH Fleet and merchant-ship convoys operating in the area. During February and the early part of March, this courageous Group gave direct support to Guerrilla units fighting on Cebu Island and aided in their rapid advance and the ultimate neutralization of the island. Well supported by skilled and dependable ground personnel, the gallant pilots of Marine Aircraft Group TWELVE caused the Japanese severe losses in airplanes, installations and surface craft, contributing to the achievement of air superiority so essential to the success of the campaign and thereby upholding the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

FRANCIS P. MATTHEWS,
Secretary of the Navy

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
Washington

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to

ASSAULT TROOPS OF THE FIFTH AMPHIBIOUS CORPS, REINFORCED
UNITED STATES FLEET MARINE FORCE

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism in action during the seizure of enemy Japanese-held Iwo Jima, Volcano Islands, February 19 to 28, 1945. Landing against resistance which rapidly increased in fury as the Japanese pounded the beaches with artillery, rocket and mortar fire, the Assault Troops of the FIFTH Amphibious Corps inched ahead through shifting black volcanic sands, over heavily mined terrain, toward a garrison of jagged cliffs barricaded by an interlocking system of caves, pillboxes and blockhouses commanding all approaches. Often driven back with terrific losses in fierce hand-to-hand combat, the Assault Troops repeatedly hurled back the enemy's counterattacks to regain and hold lost positions, and continued the unrelenting drive to high ground and Motoyama Airfield No. 1, captured by the end of the second day. By their individual acts of heroism and their unfailing teamwork, these gallant officers and men fought against their own battle-fatigue and shock to advance in the face of the enemy's fanatical resistance; they charged each strongpoint, one by one, blasting out the hidden Japanese troops or sealing them in; within four days they had occupied the southern part of Motoyama Airfield No. 2; simultaneously they stormed the steep slopes of Mount Suribachi to raise the United States Flag; and they seized the strongly defended hills to silence guns commanding the beaches and insure the conquest of Iwo Jima, a vital inner defense of the Japanese Empire."

The following Assault Troops of the FIFTH Amphibious Corps, United States Fleet Marine Force, participated in the Iwo Jima Operation from February 19 to 28, 1945:

9th Marines; 21st Marines; 3rd Engineer Battalion (less detachment); 3rd Tank Battalion; 3rd Joint Assault Signal Company (less detachment); Reconnaissance Company, Headquarters Battalion, THIRD Marine Division; Liaison and Forward Observer Parties, 12th Marines; Pilots and Air Observers, Marine Observation Squadron 1; 23rd Marines; 24th Marines; 25th Marines; Companies A, B, and C, 4th Tank Battalion; Companies A, B, and C, 4th Engineer Battalion; 1st Joint Assault Signal Company; 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Platoons, Military Police Company, Headquarters Battalion, FOURTH Marine Division; Companies A, B, and C, 4th Pioneer Battalion; 10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion; 5th Amphibian Tractor Battalion; Reconnaissance Company, Headquarters Battalion, FOURTH Marine Division; Companies A and B and Detachment,

Headquarters Company, 2nd Armored Amphibian Battalion; 7th Marine War Dog Platoon; Pilots and Air Observers, Marine Observation Squadron 4; Liaison and Forward Observer Parties, 14th Marines; 1st Provisional Rocket Detachment; 26th Marines; 27th Marines; 28th Marines; 5th Engineer Battalion; 5th Tank Battalion; 6th War Dog Platoon; 5th Joint Assault Signal Company; 3rd Amphibian Tractor Battalion; 11th Amphibian Tractor Battalion; Companies A, B, and C, 5th Pioneer Battalion; Reconnaissance Company, Headquarters Battalion, FIFTH Marine Division; 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Platoons, Military Police Company, Headquarters Battalion, FIFTH Marine Division; 3rd Provisional Rocket Detachment; Pilots and Air Observers, Marine Observation Squadron 5; Liaison and Forward Observer Parties, 13th Marines; Companies C, D, and Detachment, Headquarters Company, 2nd Armored Amphibian Battalion.

For the President,

JOHN L. SULLIVAN
Secretary of the Navy

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
Washington

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

III AMPHIBIOUS CORPS SIGNAL BATTALION

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extremely meritorious service in support of military operations, while attached to the I Marine Amphibious Corps during the amphibious assault on Bougainville, and attached to the III Amphibious Corps during operations at Guam, Palau and Okinawa, during the period from November 1, 1943 to June 21, 1945. The first American Signal Battalion to engage in amphibious landings in the Pacific Ocean Areas; the III Amphibious Corps Signal Battalion pioneered and developed techniques and procedures without benefit of established precedent, operating with limited and inadequate equipment, particularly in the earlier phase of these offensive actions, and providing its own security while participating in jungle fighting, atoll invasions and occupation of large island masses. Becoming rapidly experienced in guerrilla warfare and the handling of swiftly changing situations, this valiant group of men successfully surmounted the most difficult conditions of terrain and weather as well as unfamiliar technical problems and, working tirelessly without consideration for safety, comfort or convenience, provided the Corps with uninterrupted ship-shore and bivouac communication service continuously throughout this period. This splendid record of achievement, made possible only by the combined efforts, loyalty and courageous devotion to duty of each individual, was a decisive factor in the success of the hazardous Bougainville, Guam, Palau and Okinawa Campaigns and reflects the highest credit upon the III Amphibious Corps Signal Battalion and the United States Naval Service."

All personnel attached to the III Amphibious Corps Signal Battalion who actually participated in one or more of the Bougainville, Guam, Palau and Okinawa operations are hereby authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

JAMES FORRESTAL
Secretary of the Navy

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
Washington

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

THIRD 155-mm. HOWITZER BATTALION

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For outstanding heroism in support of military operations against enemy Japanese forces on Peleliu, Palau Islands, from 15 to 29 September 1944. Landing on an unestablished beachhead between 300 and 400 yards deep despite rugged terrain and fanatic opposition, the Third 155-mm. Howitzer Battalion established a position across a 200-yard front and emplaced its weapons precariously on top of solid rock within 300 yards of heavily entrenched, well concealed Japanese fortifications on commanding ground. The Battalion effectively utilized its 155-mm. howitzers in the same method of operation as demolitions to pound hostile pillboxes, machine-gun positions and troop concentrations with heavy fire and succeeded in annihilating the enemy, breaking down the hillsides and closing the caves in the sheer coral cliffs with rubble. Ordered later to hold a defensive sector on the front lines, the men and officers of the Battalion functioned effectively as an infantry unit despite the lack of specific training, and resolutely held the line until relieved. Resourceful and daring in the unorthodox employment of howitzers, the Third 155-mm. Howitzer Battalion provided unfailing support vital to the conquest of this strategic enemy stronghold, thereby upholding the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

All personnel attached to and serving with the Third 155-mm. Howitzer Battalion during this period are hereby authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

FRANCIS P. MATTHEWS
Secretary of the Navy

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP ELEVEN

for service as follows:

"For outstanding heroism in support of military operations against enemy Japanese forces during the Peleliu Campaign and the consolidation of the Western Carolines from September 15, 1944, to January 31, 1945. Performing valuable service during the early stages of the Peleliu Campaign by coordinating with ground units in unloading, establishing the air base and furnishing riflemen and stretcher bearers, Marine Aircraft Group ELEVEN commenced air operations on September 24 while the airfield was still under direct enemy fire. Assigned the mission of providing close support for ground troops which necessitated utmost precision because of close in-fighting between the opposing forces, the officers and men evolved new and unique tactics as exemplified in the development of steep-angle glide-bombing with varied fuse settings for diversified targets; low-level precision skip-bombing of almost impregnable caves in precipitous cliffs; and the employment of napalm bombs without fuses to be fired simultaneously by phosphorus shells from infantry weapons. By their resourcefulness, courage and skill, the flight personnel and ground crewmen of Marine Aircraft Group ELEVEN achieved an illustrious combat record in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

All personnel attached to and serving with Marine Aircraft Group ELEVEN, consisting of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Marine Aircraft Group ELEVEN; Marine Service Squadron, Marine Aircraft Group ELEVEN; Marine Fighting Squadron ONE HUNDRED FOURTEEN; Marine Fighting Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY ONE; Marine Fighting Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY TWO; Marine Night Fighting Squadron FIVE HUNDRED FORTY ONE; and Marine Torpedo Bombing Squadron ONE HUNDRED THIRTY FOUR, from September 15, 1944, to January 31, 1945, are authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

JOHN L. SULLIVAN
Secretary of the Navy

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
Washington

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

EIGHTH 155-mm. GUN BATTALION

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For outstanding heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces on Peleliu, Palau Islands, from 17 to 29 September 1944. Landing heavy material over treacherous coral reefs in the face of fanatic opposition, the Eighth 155-mm. Gun Battalion pushed forward to the southern edge of the airfield where the enemy was concentrating the fire of heavy mortars and anti-boat and anti-tank guns. Undeterred by infiltrating Japanese troops and intense mortar barrages, this Battalion went into firing position and rendered effective support to the Eighty-First Army Division. Moving around the outlying islands in LVT'S equipped with radar, this gallant Battalion prevented the reinforcement of hostile defenses on Peleliu and, in the later stages, denied routes of escape to the remnants of the defending garrison. When the infantry was confronted by an almost impenetrable barrier of man-made and natural defenses which withstood the onslaughts of tank and demolition squads and the fire of mortars, machine guns and small arms, elements of the Battalion moved forward and boldly emplaced a 155-mm. gun in an unprotected position close to the enemy. Braving intense hostile fire which caused several casualties, this indomitable group courageously fired its weapon at point-blank range and succeeded in exploding concealed ammunition dumps, annihilating the enemy and completely eliminating the strong point, thus permitting the infantry to clear the area. By their valor, determination and fighting spirit, the officers and men of the Eighth 155-mm. Gun Battalion rendered invaluable service in breaking down the enemy's resistance and in hastening the conquest of this strategic Japanese stronghold, achieving a gallant combat record in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

All personnel attached to and serving with the Eighth 155-mm. Gun Battalion during this period are hereby authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

FRANCIS P. MATTHEWS
Secretary of the Navy

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
Washington

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

MARINE BOMBING SQUADRON SIX HUNDRED TWELVE

for service as follows:

"For outstanding heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces during numerous offensive missions in the Central Pacific Area from November 1, 1944, to May 31, 1945. Aggressive and courageous in the execution of their manifold assignments, the pilots and aircrewmen of Marine Bombing Squadron SIX HUNDRED TWELVE served heroically despite severe weather and relentless opposition in a series of air-sea rescues, special experimental operations and highly successful night, low-level rocket attacks against strongly defended shipping and shore installations. By their expert airmanship and superb skill, they saved the lives of several B-29 crews, developed and tested valuable new technical equipment and destroyed or extensively damaged 29 Japanese ships. This outstanding record of service and combat achievement, made possible only by the teamwork and steadfast devotion to duty of the pilots, flight crews and maintenance men of Marine Bombing Squadron SIX HUNDRED TWELVE, is in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

The pilots, aircrewmen and ground crews attached to Marine Bombing Squadron SIX HUNDRED TWELVE during the above mentioned period are hereby authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

JAMES FORRESTAL
Secretary of the Navy

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
Washington

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP THIRTY-TWO

for service as follows:

"For exceptionally meritorious service in support of the United States SIXTH Army in the Lingayen Gulf and Manila, Philippine Islands, Areas, from January 23 to March 15, 1945. After landing at Lingayen with the assault forces on D-day, Marine Aircraft Group THIRTY-TWO operated continuously against Japanese forces, flying a series of more than 8,000 daring and brilliantly executed sorties despite relentless air and ground force opposition. Dauntless and determined, these units penetrated numerous hostile defenses ahead of our advancing troops and, destroying vital ammunition and fuel dumps, bridges, gun bastions and troop concentrations, effectively reduced the enemy's power to resist and contributed materially to our ground forces' sweeping victory in this area. The heroic achievements of Marine Aircraft Group THIRTY-TWO reflect the skill, personal valor and steadfast devotion to duty of these courageous officers and men, and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

All personnel of the United States Armed forces serving with Marine Aircraft Group THIRTY-TWO during the above period are hereby authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

JAMES FORRESTAL
Secretary of the Navy

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
Washington

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP TWENTY-FOUR

for service as follows:

"For exceptionally meritorious service in support of the United States SIXTH Army in the Lingayen Gulf and Manila, Philippine Islands Area, from January 23 to April 10, 1945. After landing at Lingayen with the assault forces on D-day, Marine Aircraft Group TWENTY-FOUR operated continuously against Japaneses forces, flying a series of more tha n 8,000 daring and brilliantly executed sorties despite relentless air and ground force opposition. Dauntless and determined, these units penetrated numerous hostile defenses ahead of our advancing troops and, destroying vital ammunition and fuel dumps, bridges, gun bastions and troop concentrations, effectively reduced the enemy's power to resist and contributed materially to the sweeping victory of our ground forces in this area. The heroic achievements of Marine Aircraft Group TWENTY-FOUR reflect the skill, personal valor and steadfast devotion to duty of these courageous officers and men, and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

All personnel of the United States Armed Forces serving with Aircraft Group TWENTY-FOUR during the above period are hereby authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

JAMES FORRESTAL
Secretary of the Navy

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
Washington

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

SUPPORT UNITS OF THE FIFTH AMPHIBIOUS CORPS
UNITED STATES FLEET MARINE FORCE

for service as follows:

"For outstanding heroism in support of Military Operations during the seizure of enemy Japanese-held Iwo Jima, Volcano Islands, February 19 to 28, 1945. Landing against resistance which rapidly increased in fury as the Japanese pounded the beaches with artillery, rocket and mortar fire, the Support Units of the FIFTH Amphibious Corps surmounted the obstacles of chaotic disorganization, loss of equipment, supplies and key personnel to develop and maintain a continuous link between thousands of assault troops and supply ships. Resourceful and daring whether fighting in the front line of combat, or serving in rear areas or on the wreck-obstructed beaches, they were responsible for the administration of operations and personnel; they rendered effective fire support where Japanes pressure was greatest; they constructed roads and facilities and maintained communications under the most difficult and discouraging conditions of weather and rugged terrain; they salvaged vital supplies from craft lying crippled in the surf or broached on the beaches; and they ministered to the wounded under fire and provided prompt evacuation to hospital ships. By their individual initiative and heroism and their ingenious teamwork, they provided the unfailing support vital to the conquest of Iwo Jima, a powerful defense of the Japanese Empire."

All personnel attached to and serving with the following Support Units of the FIFTH Amphibiius Corps, United States Fleet Marine Force, during the Iwo Jima Operation from February 19 to 28, 1945, are authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

Headquarters & Service Battalion; Medical Battalion; Signal Battalion; Motor Transport Company; Detachment, 1st Separate Radio Intelligence Platoon; Detachment, Signal, Headquarters, Air Warning Squadron 7 - Army Fighter Command; Detachment, 568th Signal Air Warning Battalion - Army; Detachment, 726th Signal Air Warning Company - Army; Detachment, 49th Signal Construction Battalion - Army; Detachment 44 - 70th Army Airways Communications Service - Army; Detachment, Communication Unit 434 (Group Pacific 11); Landing Force Air Support Control Unit No. 1; 2nd Separate Engineer Battalion; 62nd Naval Construction Battalion; 2nd Separate Topographical Company; Detachment, 23rd Naval Construction Battalion (Special); 8th Field Depot (plus Headquarters Shore Party); 33rd Marine Depot Company; 34th Marine Depot Company; 36th Marine Depot Company; 8th Marine Ammunition Company; Detachment, 8th Naval Construction Regiment; Corps Evacuation Hospital No. 1; 2nd Bomb Disposal Company; 156th Bomb Disposal Squad - Army; Company B, Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion, Fleet Marine Force; A and C Platoons, 38th Field Hospital - Army; Joint Intelligence Corps, Pacific Ocean Area, Intelligence Teams No. 22, 23, 24, and 25; Detachment,

Joint Intelligence Corps, Pacific Ocean Area, Enemy Materiel and Salvage Platoon; Detachment, 1st Platoon, 239th Quartermaster Salvage and Collection Company - Army; Detachment, Headquarters, Army Garrison Forces, APO 86; Detachment Headquarters, 147th Infantry - Army; Detachment, Headquarters, 7th Fighter Command - Army; Detachment, 47th Fighter Squadron - Army; Detachment, 548th Night Fighter Squadron - Army; Detachment, 386th Air Service Group (Special) - Army; Detachment, Group Pacific 11; Detachment, Port Director; Detachment, Garrison Beach Party; Headquarters & Service Battery, 1st Provisional Artillery Group; 2nd 155-mm. Howitzer Battalion; 4th 155-mm. Howitzer Battalion; 473rd Amphibian Truck Company - Army; Detachment, Headquarters & Headquarters Battery, 138th Antiaircraft Artillery Group - Army; Detachment, 506th Antiaircraft Gun Battalion - Army; Detachment, 483rd Antiaircraft Air Warning Battalion - Army; 28th and 34th Replacement Drafts (less Advance Groups and those assigned assault units); Headquarters Battalion, THIRD Marine Division, (less Reconnaissance Company); 3rd Marine War Dog Platoon; 3rd Service Battalion (less detachment); 3rd Pioneer Battalion (less 2nd Platoon, Company C), 3rd Medical Battalion (less Company C); 3rd Motor Transport Battalion (less Company C); 12th Marines (less detachment); Marine Observation Squadron 1 (less detachment); Headquarters Battalion, FOURTH Marine Division, (less Reconnaissance Company and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Platoons, Military Police Company); 4th Motor Transport Battalion; 4th Medical Battalion; 133rd Naval Construction Battalion; 4th Tank Battalion (less Companies A, B, and C); 4th Engineer Battalion (less Companies A, B, and C); 4th Service Battalion; 4th Pioneer Battalion (less Companies A, B, and C); 442nd Port Company - Army; 14th Marines (less detachment); 4th Marine Amphibian Truck Company; 476th Amphibian Truck Company - Army; Marine Observation Squadron 4 (less detachment); Detachment, 726th Signal Air Warning Company - Army (FOURTH Marine Division-Reinf.); 24th and 30th Replacement Drafts (less Advance Groups and those assigned assault units); Headquarters Battalion, FIFTH Marine Division, (less Reconnaissance Company and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Platoons, Military Police Company); 5th Medical Battalion; 13th Marines (less detachment); 5th Marine Amphibian Truck Company; 471st Amphibian Truck Company - Army; Marine Observation Squadron 5 (less detachment); Detachment, 726th Signal Air Warning Company - Army (FIFTH Marine Division-Reinf.); 5th Pioneer Battalion (less Companies A, B, and C); 31st Naval Construction Battalion; 592nd Port Company - Army; 5th Motor Transport Battalion; 5th Service Battalion; 27th and 31st Replacement Drafts (less Advance Groups and those assigned assault units).

JOHN L. SULLIVAN
Secretary of the Navy

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
Washington

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUPS, ZAMBOANGA

consisting of the following Marine Aircraft Groups:

Marine Aircraft Group TWELVE	March 10 - June 30, 1945
Marine Aircraft Group THIRTY TWO	March 16 - June 30, 1945
Marine Aircraft Group TWENTY FOUR	April 11 - June 30, 1945

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For exceptionally meritorious service and outstanding heroism in support of elements of the EIGHTH Army during operations against enemy Japanese forces on Mindanao, Philippine Islands, and in the Sulu Archipelago. After landing with the assault forces, Marine Air Groups, ZAMBOANGA, effected wide coverage of battle areas in flights made extremely hazardous by dense jungles, precipitous cloud-obscured mountains and adverse weather conditions. The gallant officers and men of these Groups penetrated hostile defenses to press relentless attacks and reduce vital enemy targets, disrupt communications and troop concentrations, and destroy ammunition and fuel dumps despite intense antiaircraft fire over Japanese objectives. The vital service rendered during these campaigns in providing convoy cover, fighter defense and close aerial support of ground forces is evidence of the courage, skill and devotion to duty of the pilots, aircrewmen and ground personnel operating as a well coordinated team, and reflects the highest credit upon Marine Aircraft Groups, ZAMBOANGA, and the United States Naval Service."

All personnel attached to and serving with Marine Aircraft Group 12, 32 or 24 during their respective periods of service as designated are authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

FRANCIS P. MATTHEWS
Secretary of the Navy

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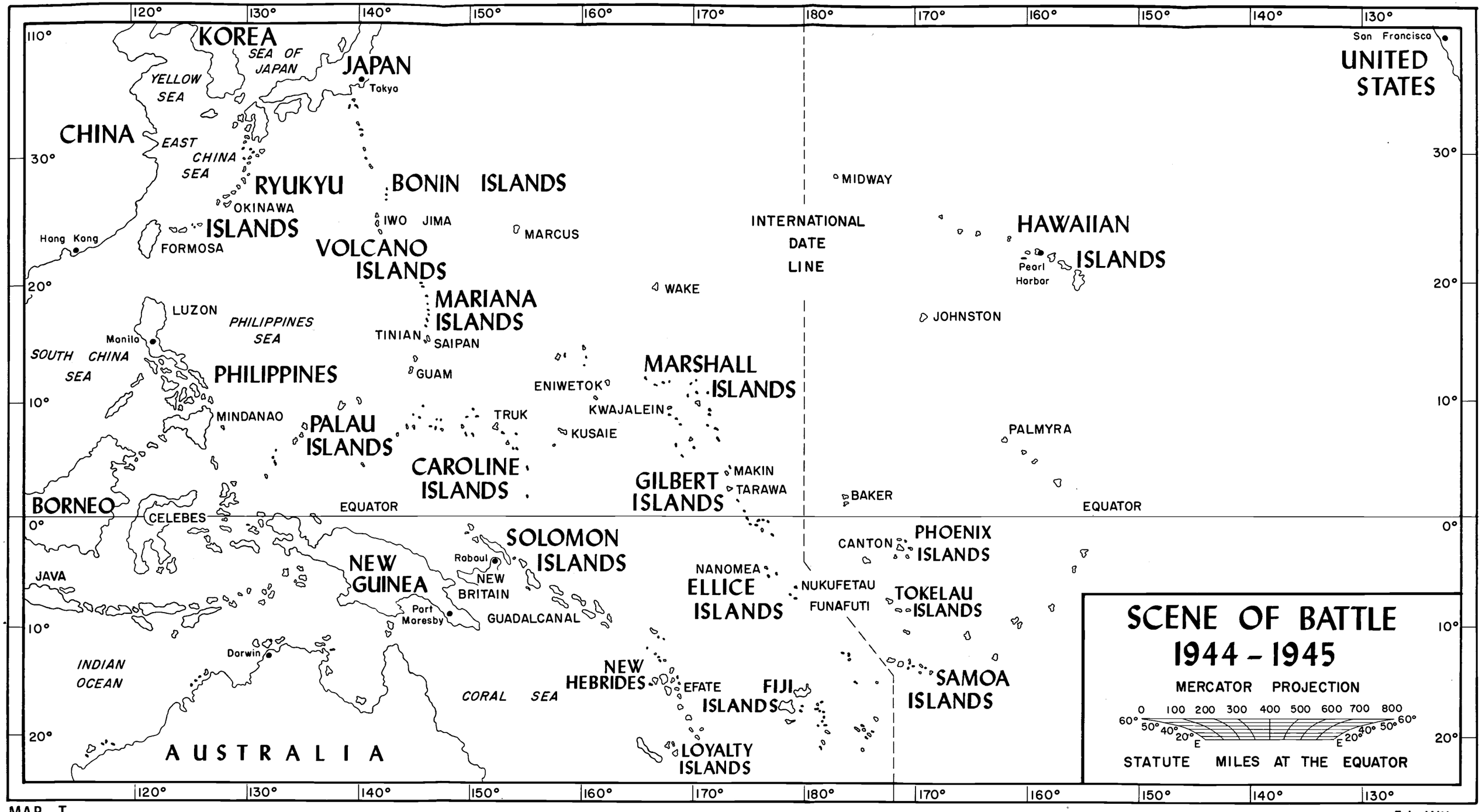

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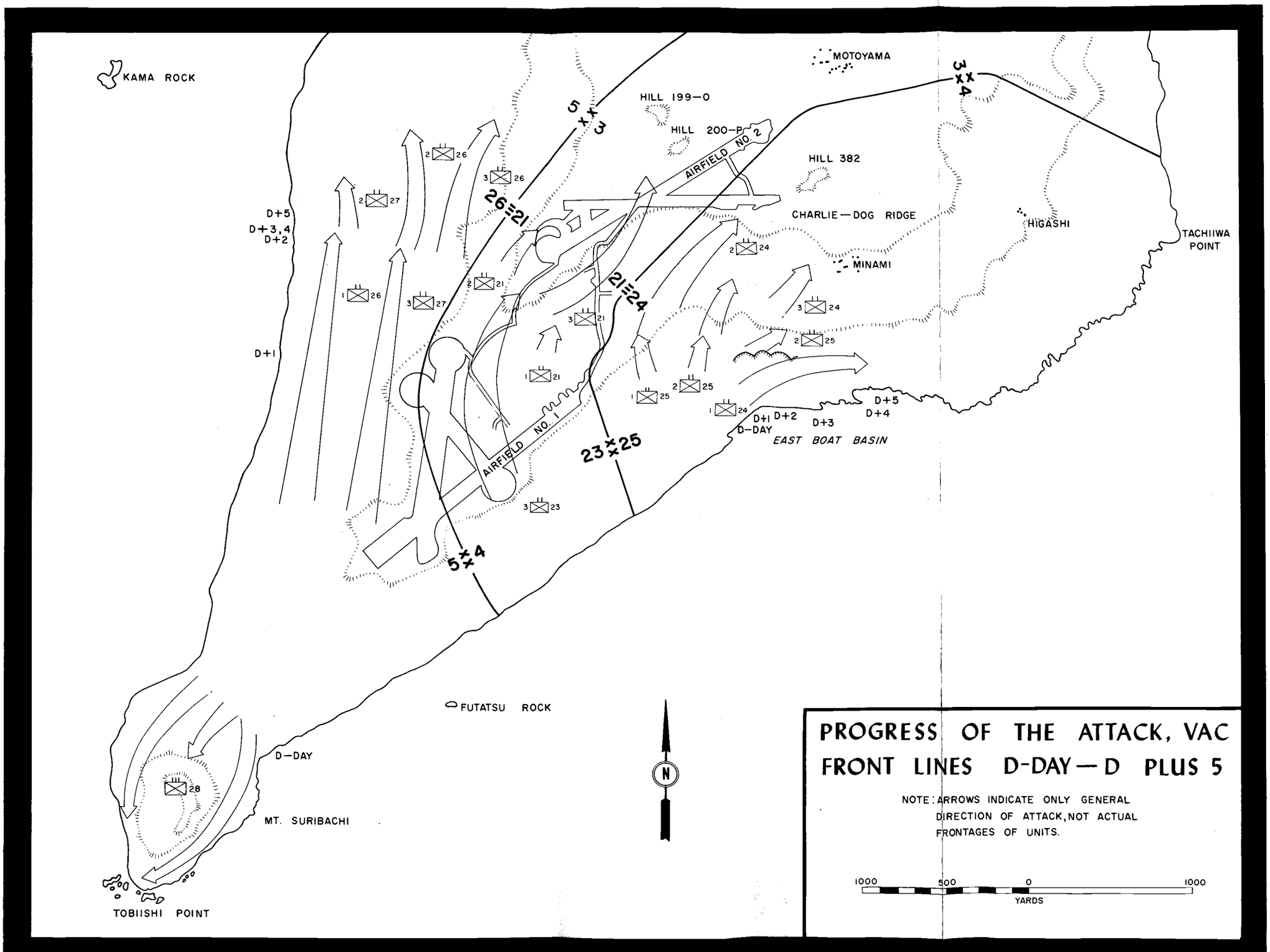

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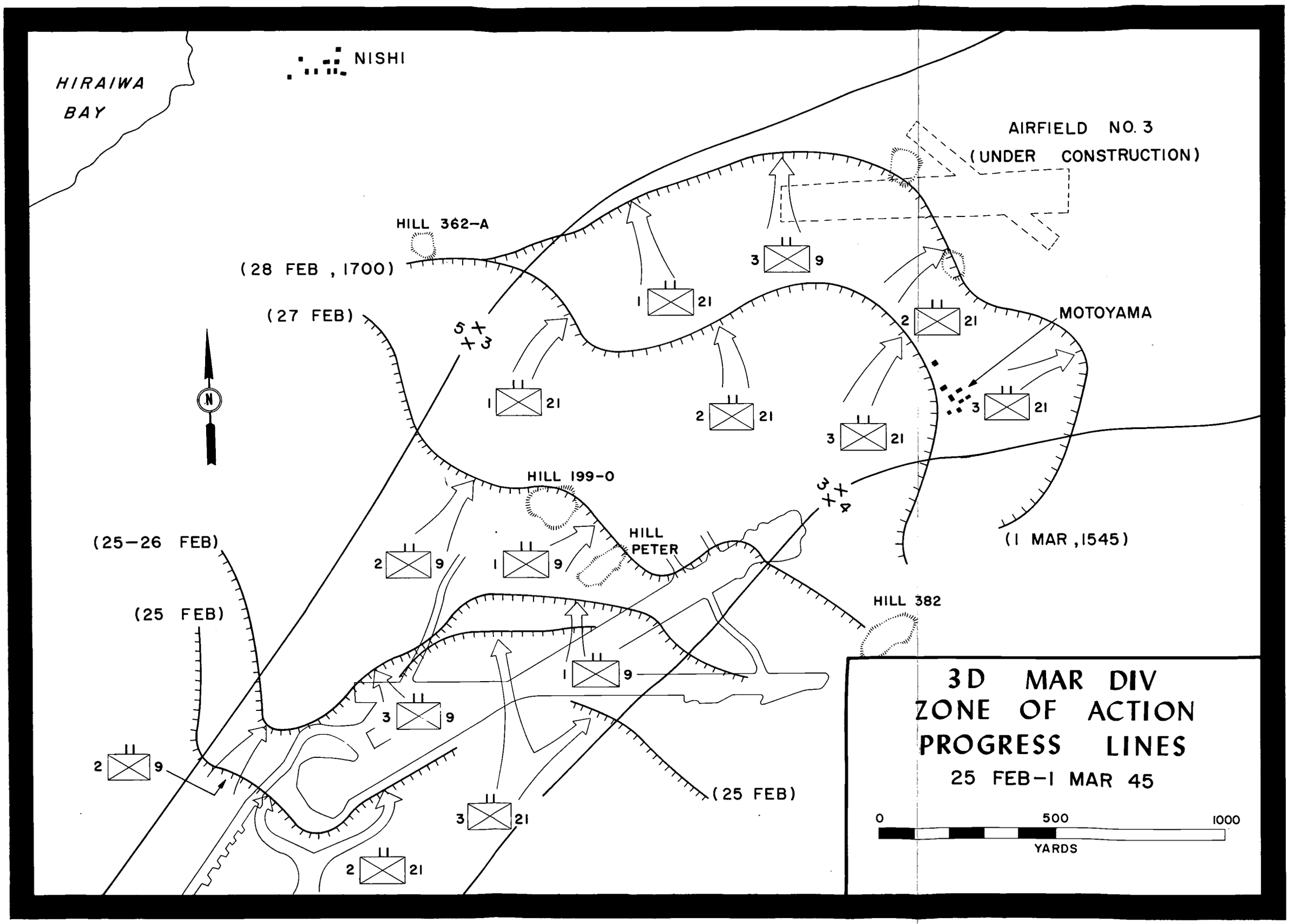

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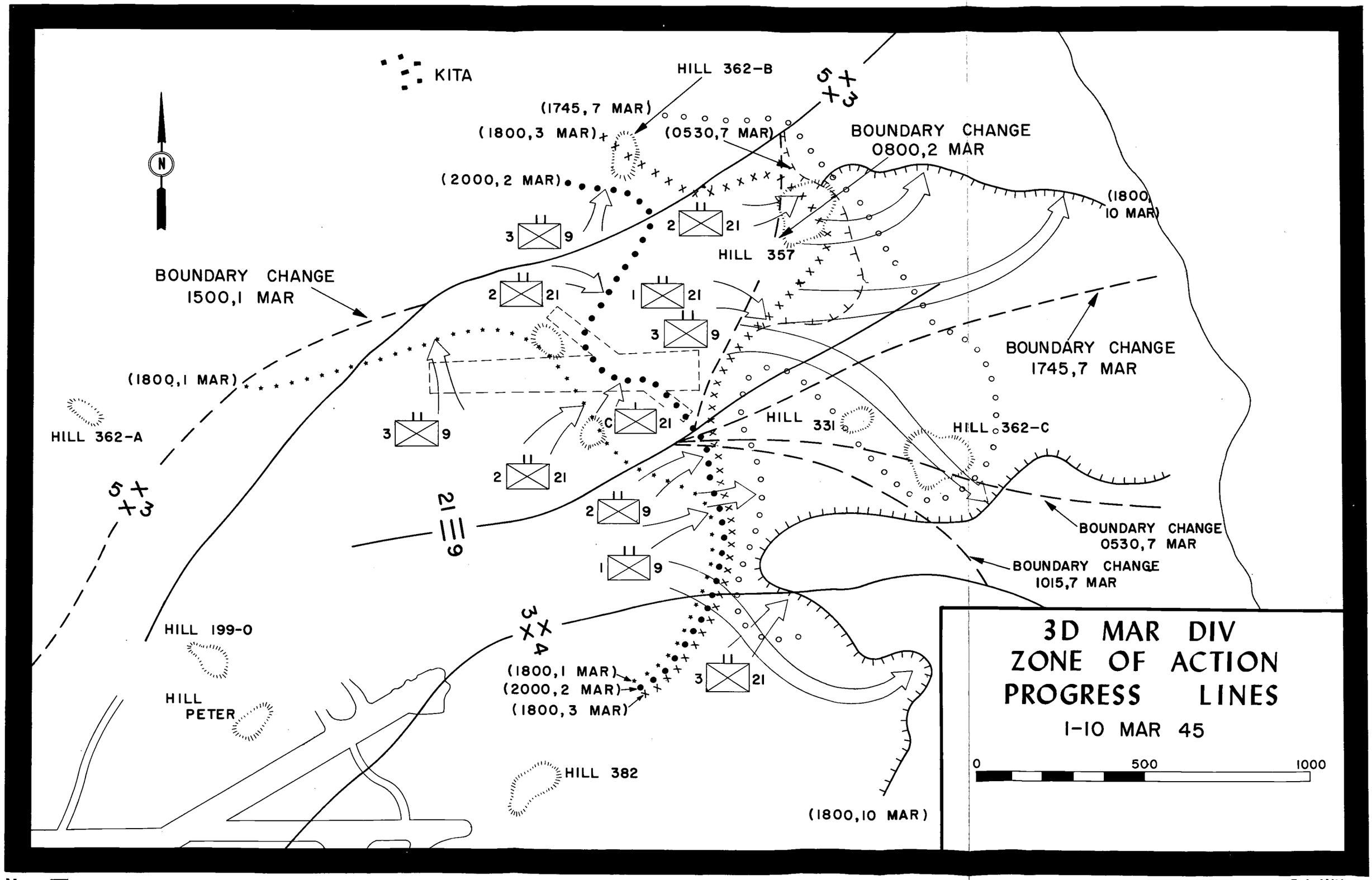

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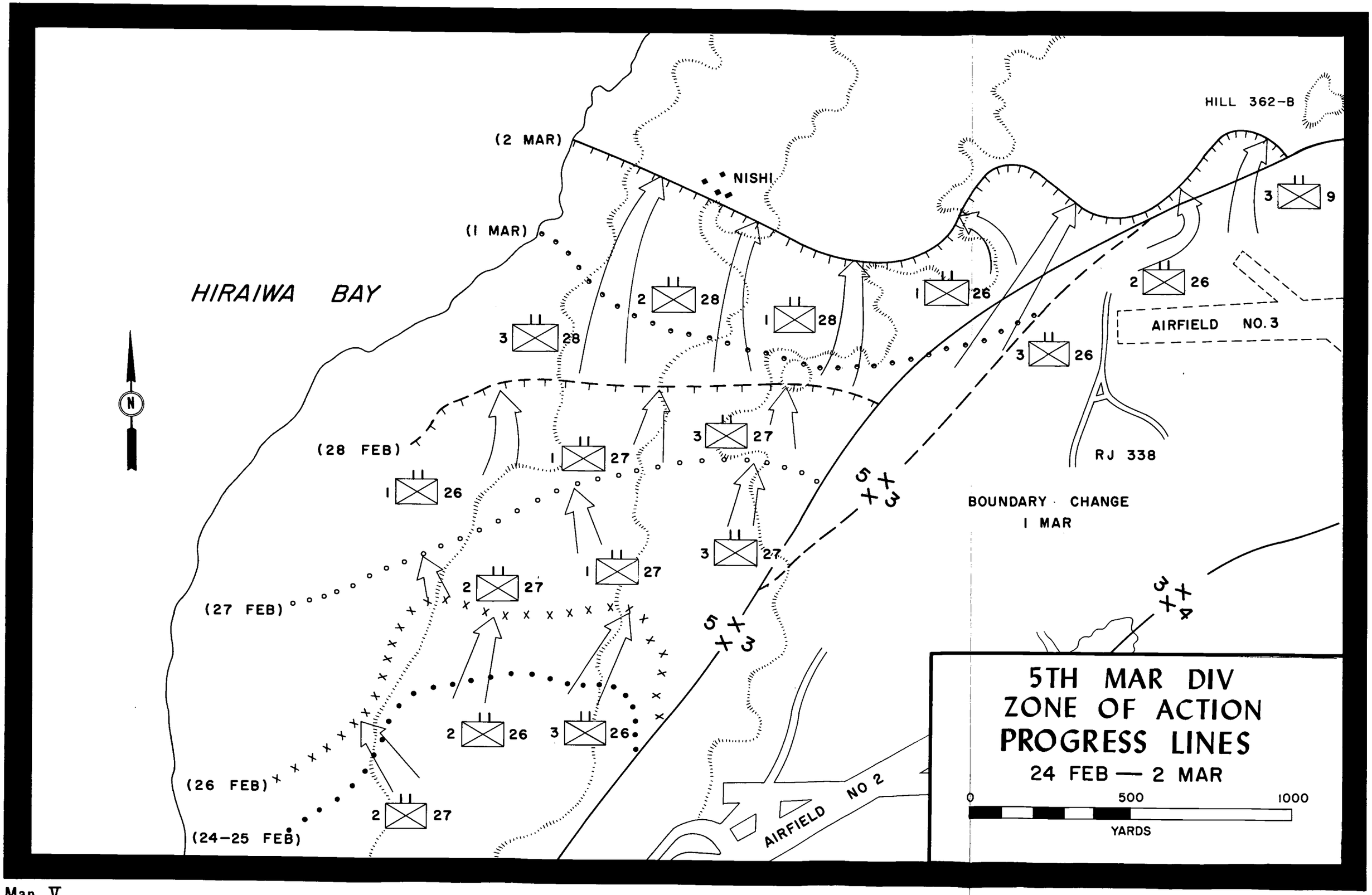

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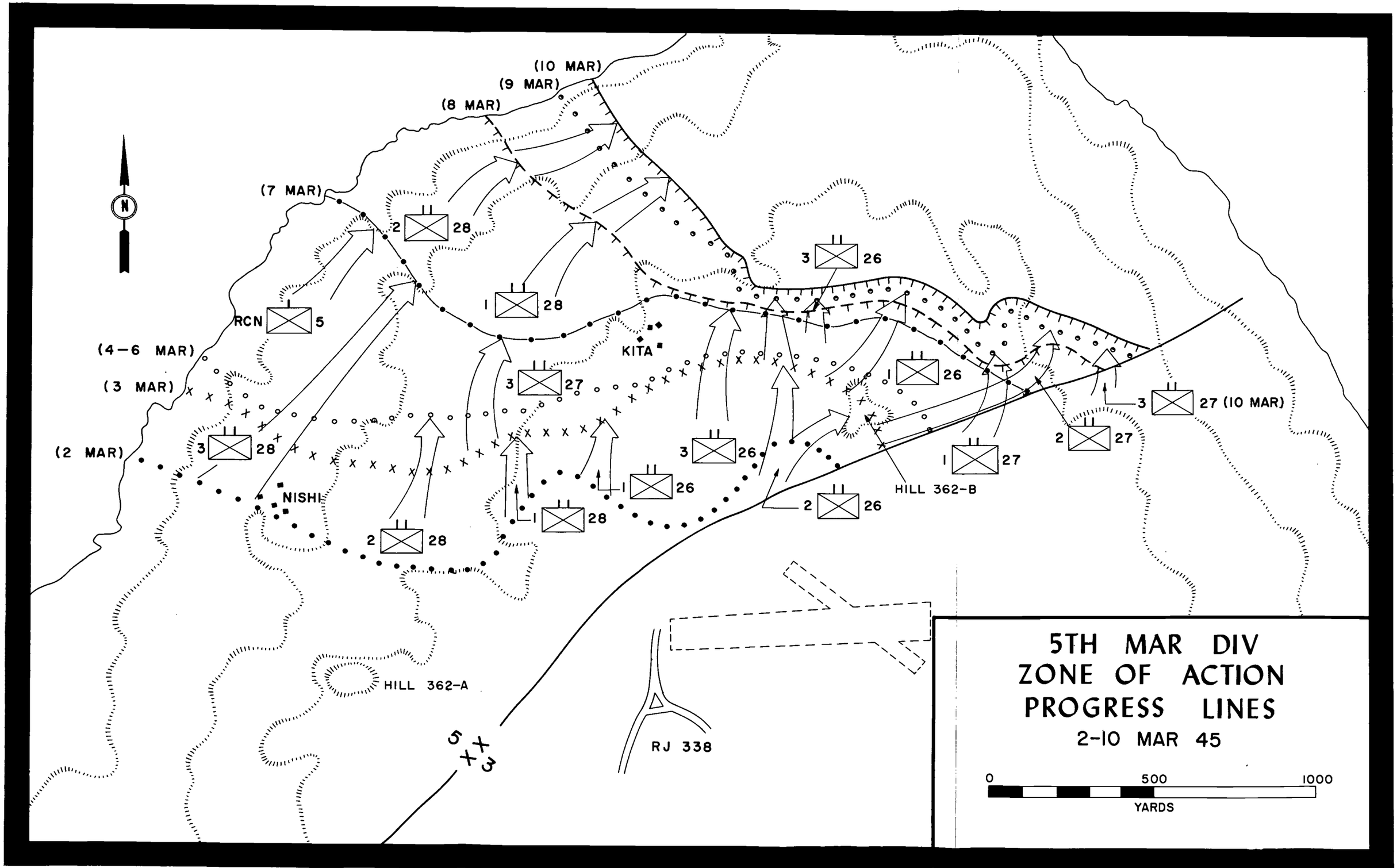

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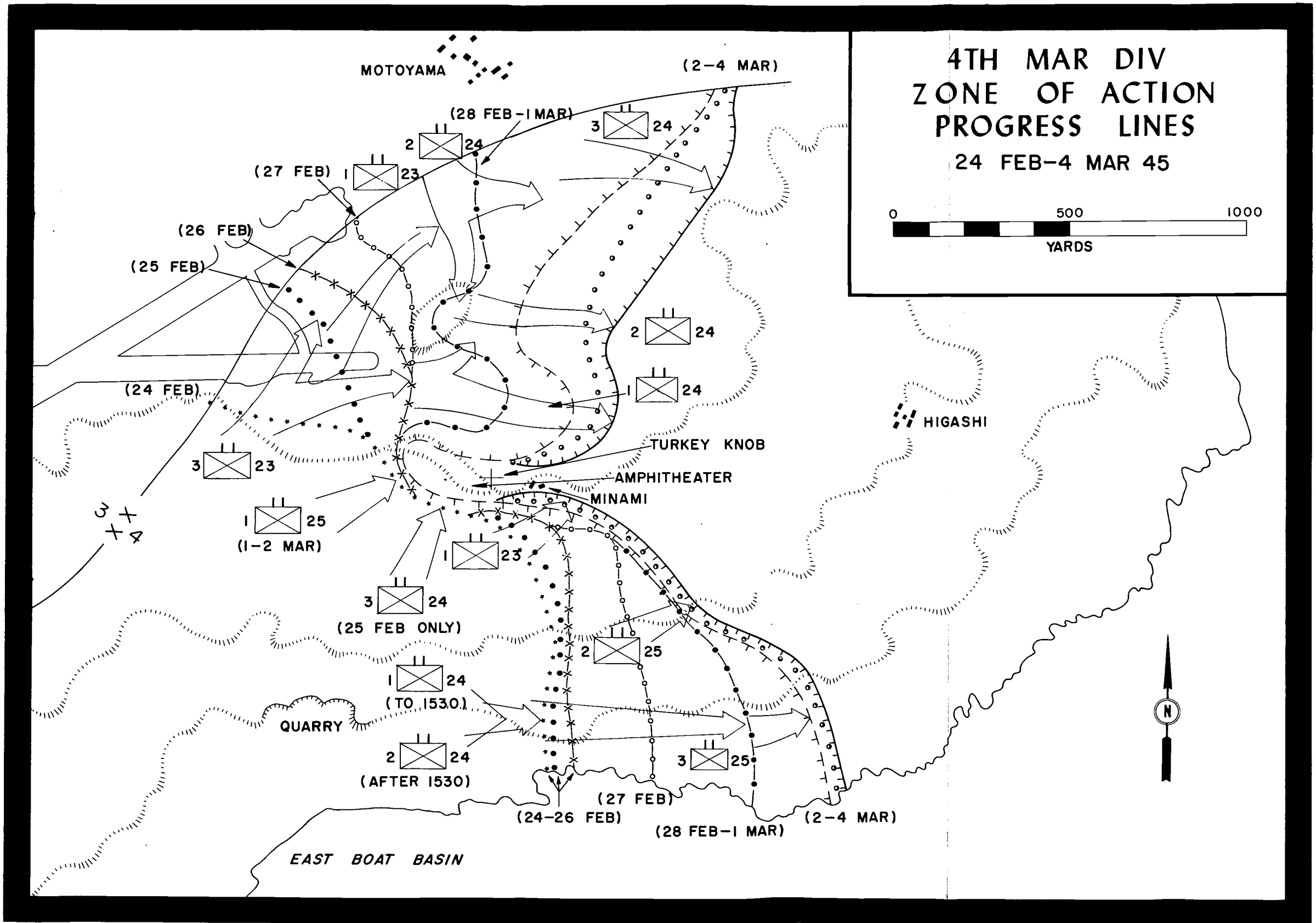

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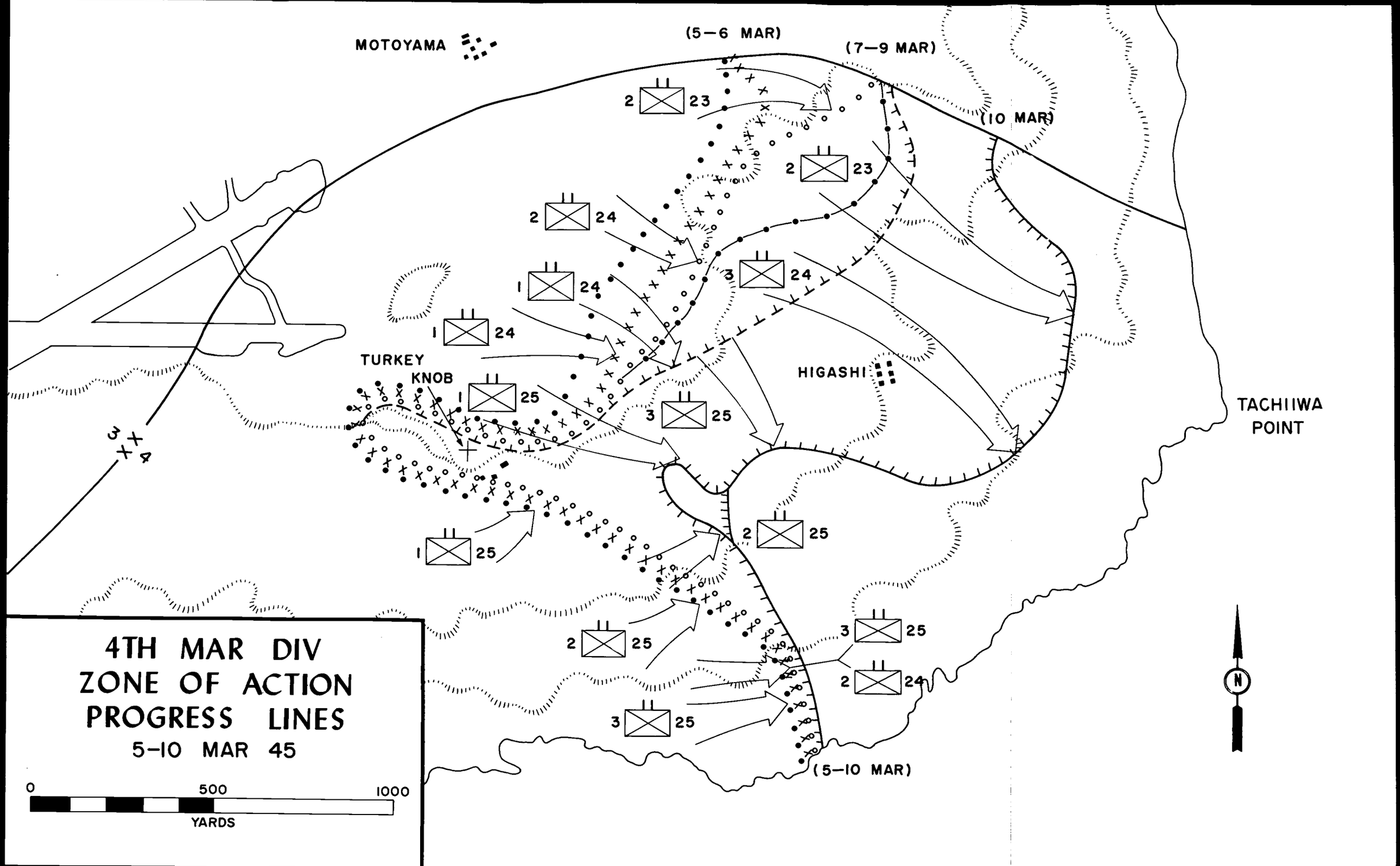

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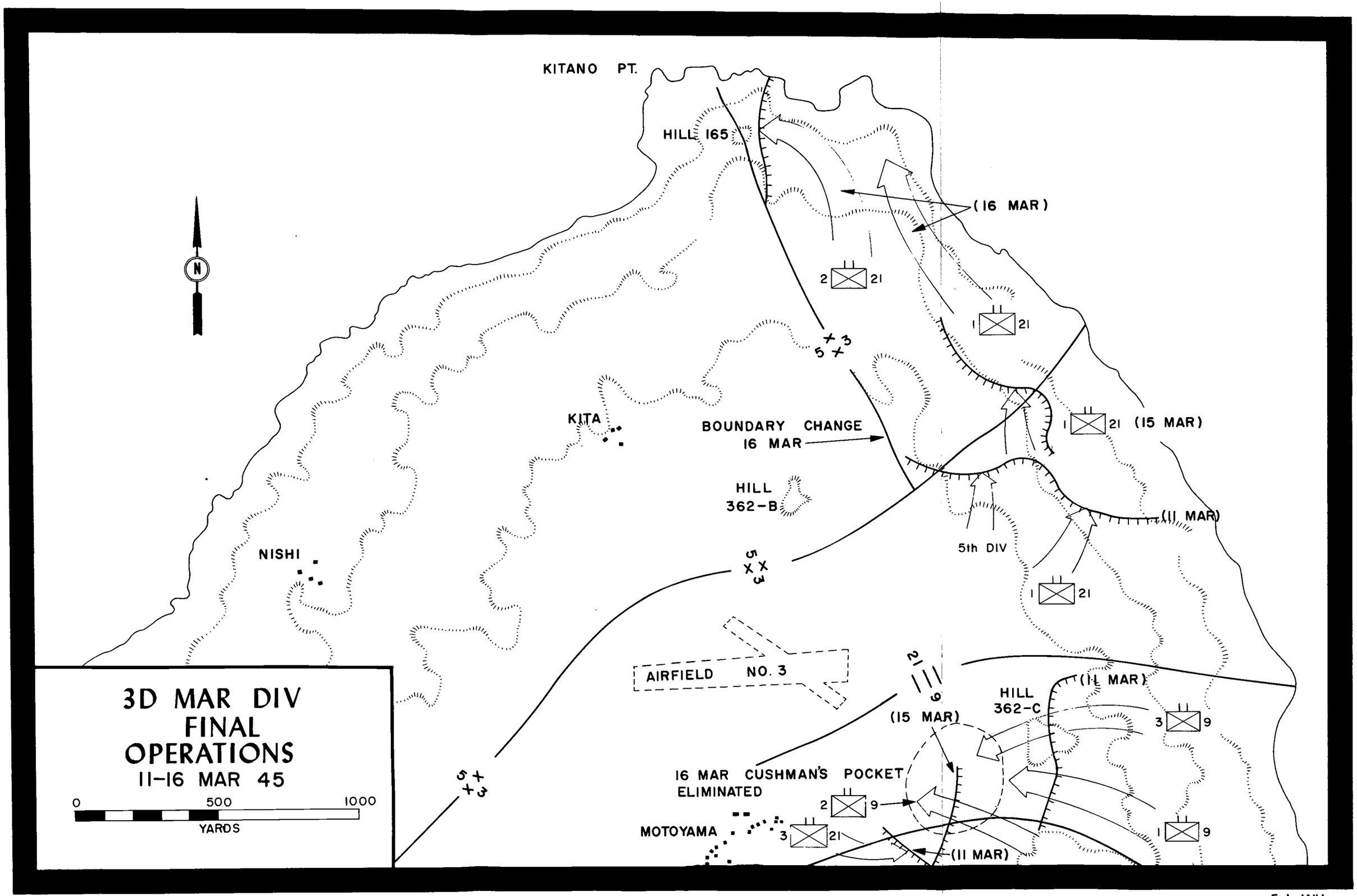

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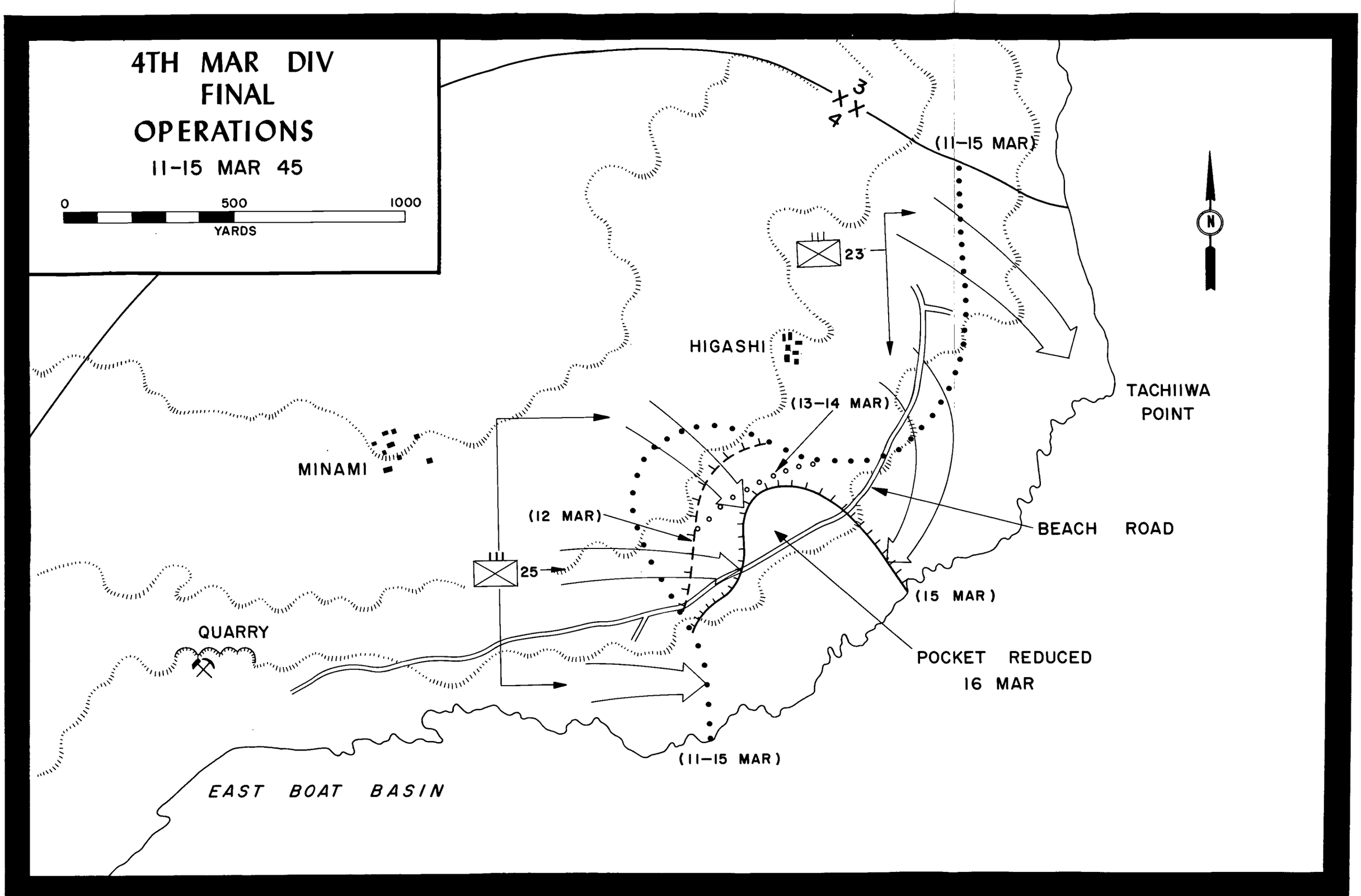

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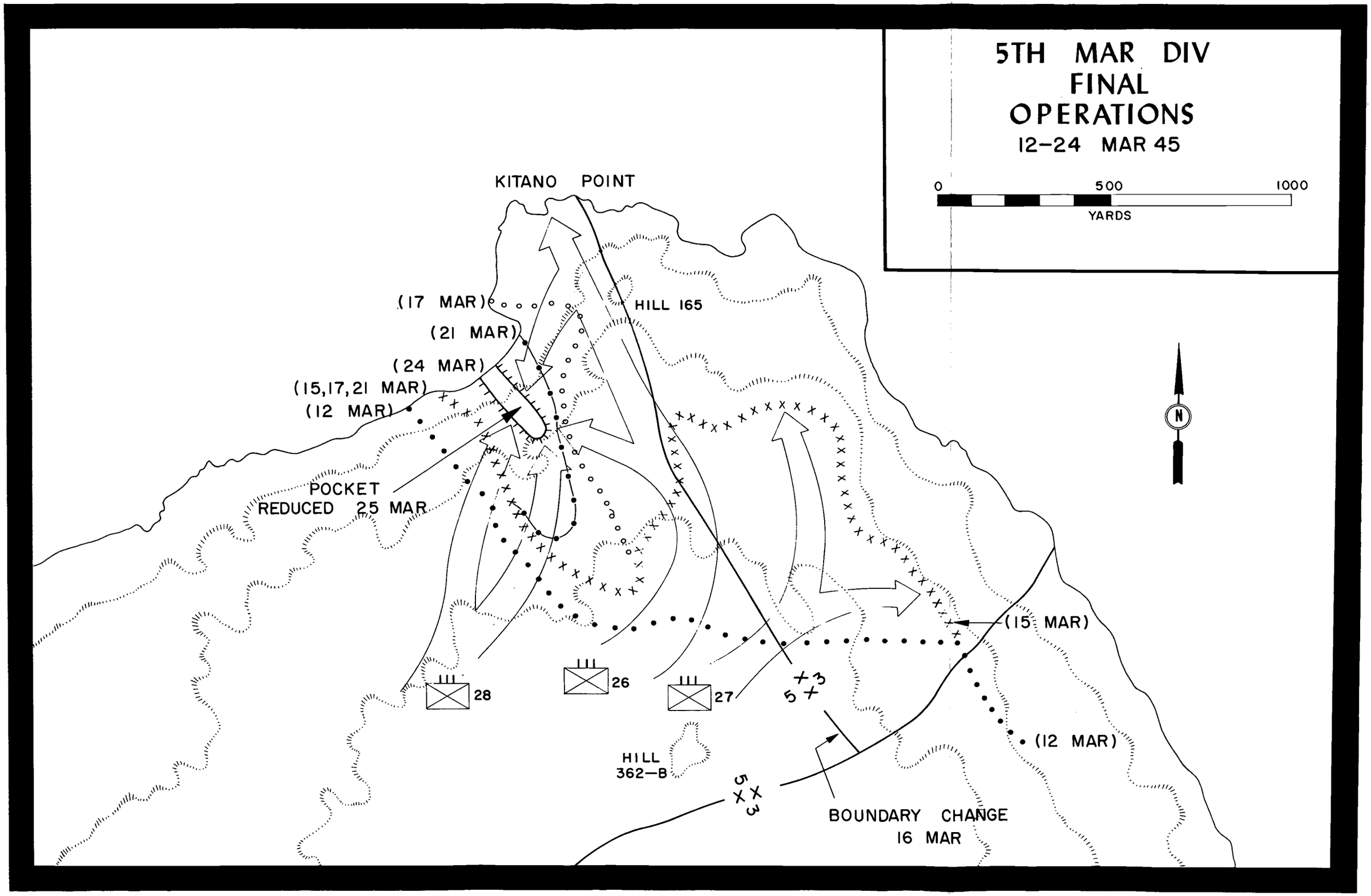

Map XI

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