

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 7TH MARINES



HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

A member of Company F, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, holding an M-14 rifle, waits for his companion to fire an M-79 grenade launcher at a Viet Cong position in March 1966. (USMC Photo A186813).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 7TH MARINES

by

James S. Santelli



HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

1980

FOREWORD

This historical monograph is the tenth in a series of regimental histories. When completed, this series will cover in similar fashion each of the infantry and artillery regiments in the Fleet Marine Force, active and reserve. The present narrative not only highlights the significant actions of the 7th Marines, but also furnishes a general history of Marine Corps activities in which it took part.

Mr. James S. Santelli was a member of the staff of the Division of History and Museums from June 1967 to November 1974, during which time he occupied positions in both the Reference Section and Histories Section of the division. He holds both a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Arts degree in history from the University of San Francisco. Mr. Santelli has coauthored articles on Marine Corps topics that have appeared in various publications dealing with military subjects. Presently, he is a writer for the Department of Labor.

In the pursuit of accuracy and objectivity, the Division of History and Museums welcomes comments on this booklet from key participants, Marine Corps activities, and interested individuals.



E. H. SIMMONS
Brigadier General, U. S. Marine Corps (Ret.)
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums

PREFACE

A Brief History of the 7th Marines is a concise narrative of the regiment from its initial activation over a half century ago through its participation in World War II, the Korean War, and the war in Vietnam. Official records of the Marine Corps and appropriate historical works were utilized in compiling this chronicle. This booklet is published for the information of those interested in the 7th Marines and in the events in which it has participated.

The monograph was produced under the editorial direction of Mr. Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Chief Historian of the History and Museums Division. Final review and preparation of the manuscript was done by Miss Gabrielle M. Neufeld. Ms. Cora B. Lett of Word Processing Section of Headquarters Marine Corps typed the preliminary draft. Miss Catherine A. Stoll of the Publications Production Section set the manuscript in type and assisted Mr. Douglas Johnston in laying out the history. The maps were prepared by Sergeant Eric A. Clark and Staff Sergeant Jerry L. Jakes who also prepared the cover and title page art work. All illustrations are official Department of Defense (Marine Corps) photographs from the files of the Still Photograph Depository, History and Museums Division.


JAMES S. SANTELLI

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	iii
Preface	v
Genesis and the Cuban Prelude	1
World War II Rebirth and South Pacific Deployment	6
Guadalcanal	7
New Britain	13
Peleliu	19
Okinawa	25
North China Intervention and Occupation	29
Aggression in Korea—Return to Asia	32
Cuba Again and a New Caribbean Deployment	51
The Second Indochina War	52
Conclusion	70
Notes	73
Appendix A: Commanding Officers, 7th Marines	77
Appendix B: Chronology, 7th Marines	79
Appendix C: Honors of the 7th Marines	81
Appendix D: 7th Marines Medal of Honor Recipients	83

A Brief History of the 7th Marines

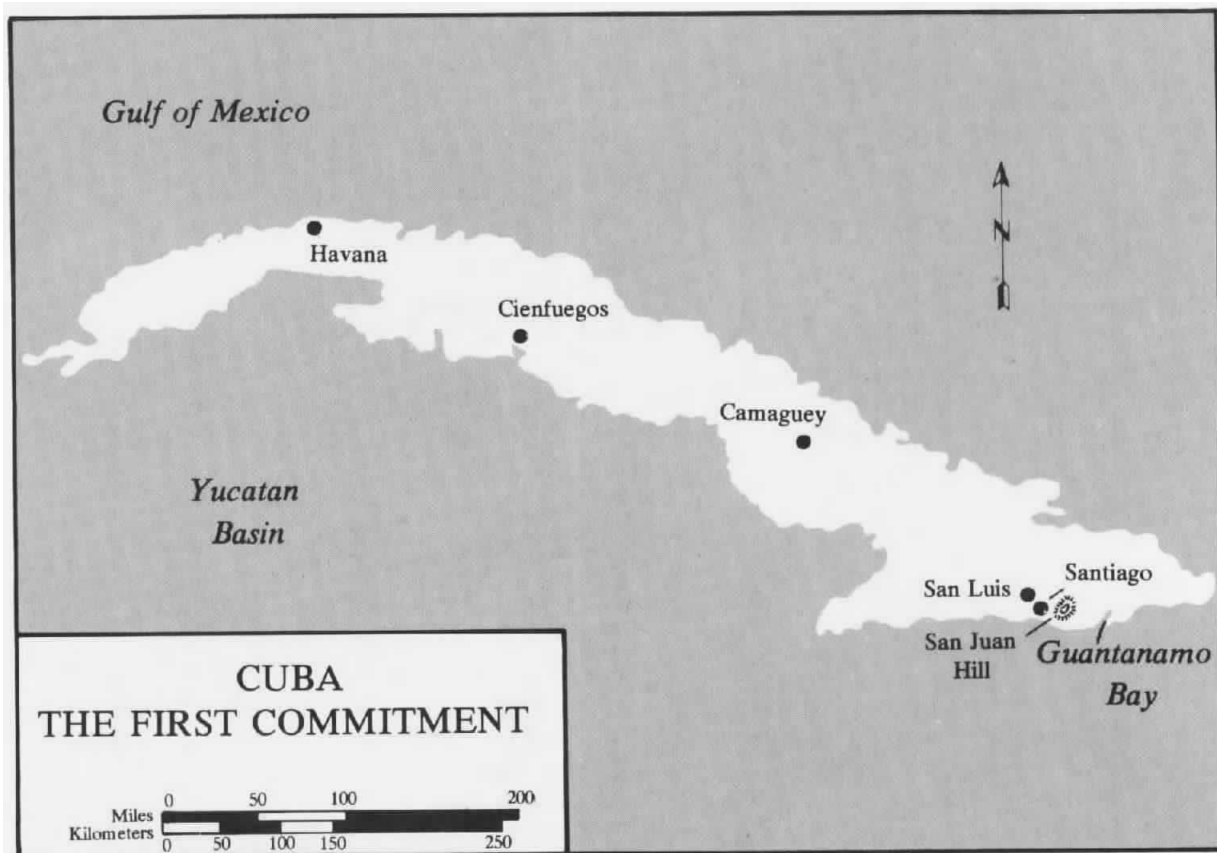
Genesis and the Cuban Prelude

The 7th Marines, because of its participation in numerous military operations and campaigns in the Western Pacific and in Asia, has long been associated with the Far East. The reason for the regiment's activation, however, did not originate in this region of the world but in the Caribbean. Internal disorder in Cuba in 1917 was the immediate cause that led to the creation of the 7th Regiment, the ancestor of the present 7th Marines. The outbreak of political unrest in Oriente Province early that year caused considerable dismay among American business interests on the island. Anxiety existed over the security of American-owned property, especially the sugar cane plantations. To ease these apprehensions and to put an end to the threats to American property, the United States in February 1917 ordered Marines ashore from several ships' detachments to protect the plantations and sugar mills. Less than 2 months later, the United States declared war on Germany and entered World War I. America's active participation in the war only amplified the necessity for the United States to continue safeguarding Cuban sugar as it was considered a strategic material. Maintenance of the supply of sugar not only to the United States but to other Allied countries was of vital concern to the American Government. The United States, nevertheless, started withdrawing its Marines from Cuba in spring 1917. It had been presumed that these troops would be needed in Europe.

It soon became apparent that the withdrawal had been premature even though political unrest in Cuba

had tapered off. Intelligence reports indicated the presence of German agents in the sugar-growing areas. These agents reportedly had given support to rebel forces and had encouraged them to perpetrate acts of sabotage on American-owned sugar installations. The American Government decided to reintroduce military forces that summer. An Army cavalry regiment was originally slated for deployment, but it could not be sent because of the pressing needs for manpower in France.¹ The Marine Corps was subsequently directed to furnish an expeditionary unit. All existing regiments were at the time either involved in preparations for deployment to France or were on expeditionary duty in Haiti or the Dominican Republic. None of these regiments could be spared for service in Cuba.

As a result, the Marine Corps activated the 7th Regiment in Philadelphia on 14 August 1917. Headquarters Detachment and the 93d and 94th Companies were its original component organizations. On 15 August, the 37th Company joined from Mare Island, California; on the 18th, the 59th Company came from New York City; and on the 20th, the 71st, 72d, 86th, and 90th Companies arrived from San Diego, California. Lieutenant Colonel Melville J. Shaw assumed command of the regiment on 19 August. Shaw was no stranger to Cuba. During the Spanish-American War he was brevetted to first lieutenant for gallantry in the June 1898 battle for Guantanamo Bay. Upon taking command Shaw immediately began preparations for the forthcoming expedition. Within 2



days the entire regiment had departed for Guantanamo Bay with all companies embarked on board the transport USS *Prairie* and the cruiser USS *Charleston*. The number of Marines sailing south totaled approximately 900. Arrival in Cuba came on 25 August.²

Initially, there had been an attempt to disguise the deployment by giving the impression that the 7th Regiment was going to Cuba for training maneuvers. This was true to a degree. Upon departure it received orders from the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General George Barnett, directing its commanding officer to "institute a comprehensive system of training in field exercises, particularly reconnaissance, patrolling, military sketching, etc."³ Its primary mission of acting as a garrison and security force would be made public at a later date.

The 7th Regiment remained at the naval base at Guantanamo following its arrival and did not immediately venture into nearby trouble spots. The nature of the deployment thus was ostensibly continued as a routine training operation. Reports of Ger-

man activity in the area still persisted, causing concern among American authorities. Lieutenant Colonel Shaw felt that German propaganda was adversely influencing the "lower classes" in Oriente and Camaguey Provinces. He, therefore, expected difficulties on the plantations. He recommended the continuation of the training ruse to allay suspicions of the actual intent behind the deployment. Specifically, he said it would be "made to appear that the troops are there for training purposes."⁴

Permission to move into the interior was granted by the Commandant in late October. Elements of the 7th Regiment began moving from Guantanamo Bay to various cities in the region on the 24th. Detachments were deployed to Santiago, Camaguey City, San Luis, and Guantanamo City. Headquarters was established on San Juan Hill, made famous by Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders during the Spanish-American War.⁵ All the camps were located in eastern Cuba, a rugged, mountainous area. Forty years later, Fidel Castro started a revolt there that eventually led



National Archives Photo No. 127-G-22288

A detachment of mounted Marines rests near Camaguey, Cuba. Horses gave the 7th Regiment greater mobility and enabled the Marines to respond quickly to emergencies.

to the establishment of the first Communist regime in the Americas. The Marines were not to suppress dissident natives but were ordered to counteract the activities of agents of Germany and the other Central Powers. It was hoped that the presence of American military units would of itself counterbalance propaganda and attempts at sabotage. A prime objective of the deployment was to bring about a stabilizing and calming effect over the local populace.

Although the regiment did not engage in antirebel operations, it did actively guard American property by conducting wide-ranging patrols and reconnaissance missions. Often the Leathernecks were mounted to increase their mobility. The use of horses enabled the men to respond quickly to an emergency on the widely scattered plantations.⁶ Marine Headquarters late in September authorized an increase of 400 horses for the regiment. The saddles were obtained from sources in both the United States and Cuba. The additional horses were intended to provide the unit with the capacity of having 500 of its men mounted—over half the regiment. A desired byproduct of this move was to make the Marines more visible in the countryside. The men enthusiastically accepted the horses and their instruction in horsemanship. By late November, Shaw

reported that he was pleased with his mounted units. He was particularly happy with the “very good effect” they were having in the vicinity of Guantanamo City. The immediate area contained 15 important sugar mills. Earlier disorders at the mills subsided after Marine patrols were instituted.⁷ One technique utilized to quiet unrest without resorting to force was the subterfuge of “practice marches.” Where there were potential disturbances and reports of pro-German sympathy, units of the regiment would conspicuously move into the countryside under the guise that the Marines were conducting a training exercise. This “showing the flag” usually had the desired effect.⁸

Although the intervention by American troops—nothing new in Cuba—was welcomed by the Cuban Government, Shaw reported the laborers and peasants did not accept it “in their hearts.” He therefore set about to improve relations with the people. By the beginning of 1918, the regimental commander had made great strides in that direction. Cuban workers were by now accustomed to the sight of the Marines. Since there had been no occasion where armed force was necessary, most peasants accepted, at least grudgingly, the presence of the Americans. They were looked upon more as

policemen than as an occupying army. Shaw's efforts were praised by both Cuban and American officials. Governor Guillermo F. Masacaro of Santiago de Cuba Province personally lauded Shaw's attempts to establish harmonious relations. In March 1918, Henry M. Wolcott, the American consul in Santiago, wrote the State Department that Shaw and his regiment were "deserving of high commendation." Consul Wolcott stated that the men's conduct "had been exemplary and their relations officially and socially with the Cuban people was most cordial at all times." He went on to declare that:

There is no doubt that the presence of these troops and the intelligent, tactful activity of the commanding officer, have been very important factors in the maintenance of order throughout the country, consequent upon which has been the progress and safety the sugar crop.⁹

In carrying out their assigned tasks the Marines of the 7th Regiment never had to resort to force as they were not openly opposed in their patrolling. The only fighting that occurred between the Marines and

A lone Marine sentry stands guard duty. While in Cuba, the 7th Regiment actively guarded American property during World War I and the immediate postwar period.

National Archives Photo No. 127-G-519743



Cubans came during off-duty hours, and this was not combat in the traditional sense of the word. The causes, too much liquor and arguments over women, were age-old sources of trouble that plague all military organizations. In one serious incident in June 1918, off-duty Cuban Army soldiers and members of the 7th Regiment engaged in a fist fight in the red light district of Santiago. The brawl quickly deteriorated into a rock throwing match. Reportedly, the Cubans pulled knives and attacked the Marines. A few of the Cubans then fired on the Americans with handguns and rifles causing the unarmed Marines to scatter. The fight ended with three Leathernecks being injured, one seriously. In all about 25 shots were fired at the group of Marines. To avoid similar episodes in the future, Santiago's red light district was subsequently put off limits to the 7th Regiment.¹¹

Colonel Newt M. Hall, who received a brevet to major for valor during the Boxer Rebellion, replaced Lieutenant Colonel Shaw as commanding officer of the regiment in September 1918. Hall continued the policies of his predecessor and in the next 3 months the 7th Regiment covered approximately 3,200 miles on foot and on horseback in its patrol work. The patrols according to Colonel Hall had a "very good effect on the men employed in the mills and on the neighboring plantations, as the Marines are looked upon as a guarantee of order." Officers of the regiment had additional duties in that they conducted investigations of persons suspected of pro-German sympathies and activities. This task had been assumed at the request of the United States Legation in Havana.¹²

The mountainous terrain had taken its effect on the 7th's livestock. By January 1919, the regiment, although still carrying out extensive patrolling, was increasingly unable to rely on its animals for transportation. There were only 305 horses in the unit at the beginning of the month. A sizable percentage of these were not in the best of shape and could not, therefore, be fully utilized. The 7th Regiment also suffered from a lack of pack animals. Cuban horses were found to be too small, while mules were expensive. The price had doubled within a short time with the minimum being \$950 a horse in January 1919. As a result, the regiment began to depend more upon motorized vehicles. At this time it had in its inventory 14 trucks (the heaviest being 2 tons), 1 ambulance, 2 cars, and 4 motorcycles. There was, however, a drawback in the use of motor vehicles. They could only be utilized in the cities where the roads were good. The roads in the countryside were for the most part so poor that motor

transportation could only be used sparingly. In the rainy season they became impassable, and the only practical way to travel along them was by horse or mule.¹³

During its deployment in Cuba, the 7th Regiment was assigned to two different higher echelon organizations. First, it joined the 3d Provisional Brigade on 26 December 1917. Other units of the Brigade were the 8th and 9th Regiments. The 9th Regiment had entered Cuba that same month with the mission of assisting the 7th Regiment. The 8th Regiment, on the other hand, did not go to Cuba but was instead ordered to Galveston, Texas. Subsequently, the brigade's headquarters and the 9th Regiment were also transferred to Texas. When these units departed on 31 July 1918, the 7th Regiment was detached from the 3d Provisional Brigade. An assignment to another higher echelon did not take place for a number of months. Finally, on 21 December 1918, the regiment was attached to the 6th Provisional Brigade. The 1st Regiment, which had recently arrived in Cuba, was the other subordinate element of the brigade.¹⁴

For 2 years the 7th Regiment protected American-owned sugar plantations, sugar mills, railroads, and other installations. It was instrumental in seeing that the valuable sugar supply was processed and exported with only a minimal amount of interruption. With World War I over and with the easing of internal disorders, the American Government decided to recall most of its forces from Cuba. The 6th Provisional Brigade was deactivated on 21 June 1919, but the 7th

Regiment stayed on the island for 2 more months before being ordered home. The regiment was the last major Marine force to be withdrawn; two Marine companies, however, continued to occupy Camaguey Province until February 1922. Relocation of the 7th Regiment to Philadelphia was completed on 4 September 1919. The first overseas deployment of the unit thus passed into history, but this would not be the last time the regiment would see Cuba.

Postwar demobilization led to the deactivation of the 7th Regiment on 6 September 1919.¹⁵ The regiment remained in an inactive status throughout most of the interwar period. Activation of a unit bearing the designation of 1st Battalion, 7th Regiment occurred at San Diego on 1 April 1921, but it was subsequently redesignated as the 1st Battalion, 5th Brigade. It reacquired its initial designation on 21 March 1922. The battalion continued on active duty until 1 September 1924 when it was deactivated with its personnel being absorbed by the newly reorganized 4th Regiment.¹⁶ Shortly after the deactivation of the 1st Battalion, 7th Regiment, there appeared on the east coast a Reserve 7th Marine Regiment. It functioned off and on as a Reserve organization until the early 1930s. This unit is considered a separate organization and, in terms of lineage and honors, it is not connected to the present 7th Marines.¹⁷

On 6 September 1933, the regiment, bearing the present designation of 7th Marines, was reactivated at Quantico, Virginia. Colonel Richard P. Williams, a veteran of World War I and a former commander of

Members of the 7th Regiment march through the countryside of eastern Cuba in 1917.

National Archives Photo No. 127-G-518276



the Garde d'Haiti, was assigned as the commanding officer. The composition of the unit included Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Service Company, and two battalions of five companies each. It totaled 58 officers, 8 warrant officers, and 1,108 enlisted men. Personnel used to reform the regiment came from barracks and detachments located at Philadelphia and Annapolis, Maryland, and Quantico, Norfolk, and Portsmouth, Virginia.

As had been the case in 1917, the regiment was brought into existence for a possible move to Cuba because of an internal crisis that threatened American interests. But in this instance the entire regiment did not sail to the Caribbean. The first element to deploy was a machinegun platoon, consisting of 78 officers and men, that departed on 23 September 1933 on board the battleship USS *New Mexico*. The platoon's journey was cut short and it was soon returned to Quantico.¹⁸ Deployment of the 2d Battalion began on 3 October when it moved first to Norfolk. It sailed 6 days later on the battleship USS *Wyoming*, arriving at Guantanamo Bay on 14 October. The ship subse-

Colonel Richard P. Williams, first commanding officer of the regiment when it was reactivated in 1933, is shown here in the uniform he wore as Commandant of the Garde d' Haiti 1930-1933.

USMC Photo 524533



quently proceeded to Havana, but no troops were put ashore. Except for two short redeployments to Florida the battalion remained in Cuban waters through the end of January 1934. No landing was necessary, but the battalion maintained a ready posture and was poised to land to protect American interests should it have become necessary.

The rest of the regiment in the meantime was assigned on 18 December 1933 to the newly created Fleet Marine Force. A further reorganization during the next month led again to the deactivation of the regiment. Headquarters Company and Service Company were disbanded on 17 January 1934, while the 1st and 2d Battalions were redesignated as the 1st and 2d Battalions, Fleet Marine Force, respectively. The latter battalion was still in Cuban waters when this change occurred. This brief regenesis was the last for the 7th Marines until shortly before the Second World War.¹⁹

World War II Rebirth and South Pacific Deployment

The United States entered the 1940s with apprehension over the widening conflict in Europe. It initially desired to remain uninvolved but practicality dictated that it prepare for any eventuality, including the likelihood of war. The Marine Corps, as a result, embarked on a program of expansion in 1940. This gradual increase led to the reactivation of the 7th Marines on 1 January 1941. Ironically, Cuba was once more woven into the fabric of the history of the 7th Marines as this rebirth occurred at Guantanamo Bay. Colonel Earl H. Jenkins, an active participant in numerous expeditions to the Caribbean in the years following World War I, took command of the reformed unit. Besides a headquarters company, the regiment had three infantry battalions of five companies each. Personnel came mainly from the 5th Marines and from recruits recently arrived from the United States. The regiment was assigned to the 1st Marine Brigade. A month later the brigade was enlarged and redesignated as the 1st Marine Division.²⁰

Shortly after its reconstitution the regiment participated in landing exercises at Guantanamo and at Culebra. These maneuvers lasted until early spring when the regiment was ordered to the United States. It boarded the transport USS *Barnett** and sailed on 8

*The ship, commissioned in September 1940, was named in honor of Major General George Barnett, the 12th Commandant of the Marine Corps. It was redesignated APA 5 in 1943.

April for Charleston, South Carolina. The regiment soon established itself at the Marine Corps' recruit depot at Parris Island. There it resumed its training. In addition to amphibious exercises, emphasis was placed on night maneuvers, combat firing problems, beach reconnaissance, chemical warfare, demolitions, and air-ground communications.

One reason for this intense training was to prepare the regiment for a possible landing on the French Caribbean island of Martinique. Tension was growing between Vichy France, a German satellite, and the United States over a sizable French naval force at Martinique. The American Government was concerned that the naval flotilla and the island would be turned over to Germany. Plans were drawn up so the United States would be ready to take decisive action if negotiations failed. The 1st Marine Division plus elements of the Army's 1st Infantry Division were assigned the responsibility of making an amphibious landing on Martinique should that prove necessary. Fortunately, the United States did not have to resort to hostilities. The 7th Marines moved to New River, North Carolina, during the latter part of September 1941. The base was later renamed Camp Lejeune in honor of former Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune.²¹

The 7th Marines, following the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, went on immediate alert for a possible overseas deployment. None took place, however, until the following spring. At that time the unit, minus its 3d Battalion, was detached from the 1st Marine Division and attached on 21 March to the newly created 3d Marine Brigade. The Regimental Weapons Company was activated on the same day. Deployment to the Pacific began on 2 April 1942, when the regiment minus the 3d Battalion, moved by train to Norfolk, Virginia. It subsequently loaded on board the transports USS *Heywood*, *McCawley*, and *Fuller*; departure was on the 10th. Meanwhile, the 3d Battalion had entrained for San Diego where it embarked on the USS *Harris*.^{**} The ship sailed on the 13th with Samoa as its destination. The entire regiment had in fact been ordered there. First to arrive was the 3d Battalion; it disembarked at American Samoa on 28 April. The remainder of the regiment arrived and disembarked on British-held Upolu in Western Samoa between 8 and 10 May. The 3d Battalion eventually transferred to Wallis Island, a French posses-

sion.²² All units of the regiment and the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, an artillery unit, were assigned the responsibility for garrisoning and defending the Samoan Islands. Their mission was one of repulsing Japanese incursions and helping to keep open the lines of communications between the United States and Australia and New Zealand. Fortunately, the Japanese made no real thrust into the area.

Guadalcanal

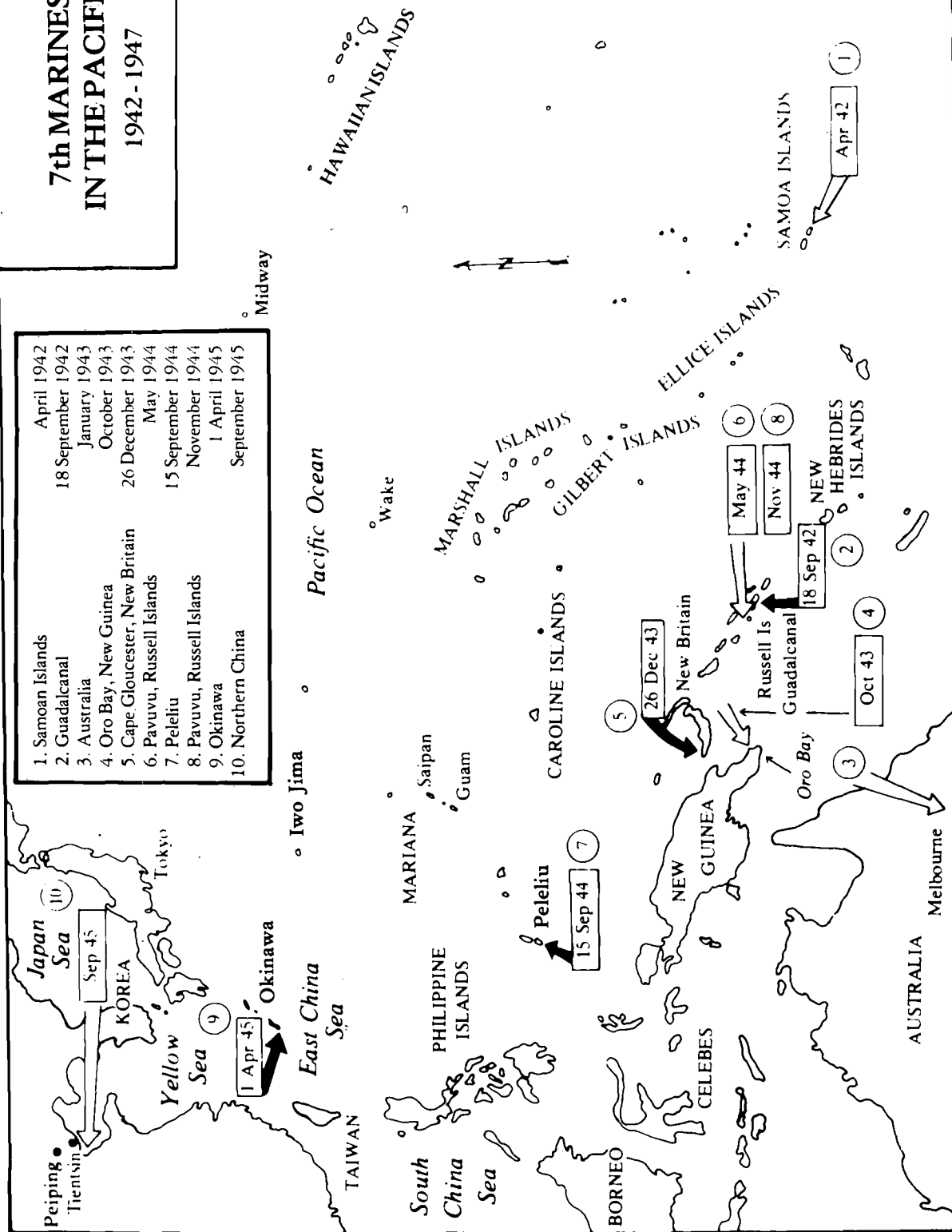
The men of the 7th Marines received word during the summer that they would be redeployed upon the completion of intensive jungle training. The regiment was relieved by the 22d Marines in August 1942. Upon being detached it began movement to the Santa Cruz Islands. Its mission was the occupation of Ndeni Island. The regiment, however, never reached the island. New orders directed the 7th Marines to reinforce Marine units already on Guadalcanal in their struggle with the enemy for control of the island which is located in the southern Solomons. Personnel from the reinforced regiment—almost 4,300 men—went ashore on Guadalcanal on 18 September. These fresh troops were promptly brought up to the line of battle and deployed near the 1st Marines in the vicinity of Lunga Point on the north coast of the island.²³ Within a week the 7th Marines, now commanded by Colonel Amor LeR. Sims, had joined the rest of the 1st Marine Division in combat operations against the Japanese.

Initially, the 1st Battalion was most involved in active engagements with the enemy. Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift, the division commander and later Commandant of the Marine Corps, desired more offensive operations. He, therefore, initiated a number of probing patrols beyond the Marines' perimeter with the objective of securing information on Japanese troop movements. The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines was given one such assignment. It had orders to cross the Matanikau River, investigate the territory between the river and the village of Kokumbona, then turn and make for the coast. The battalion under its commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Lewis B. ("Chesty") Puller, famed Banana Wars veteran, moved out on 23 September. A clash, the first between an enemy and a unit of the regiment, occurred on the following day. Shortly after nightfall Puller's men sur-

^{**}Later APAs 6, 4, 7, and 2 respectively. All four ships were named appropriately for former Commandants of the Marine Corps.

7th MARINES IN THE PACIFIC 1942 - 1947

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Samoa Islands | April 1942 |
| 2. Guadalcanal | 18 September 1942 |
| 3. Australia | January 1943 |
| 4. Oro Bay, New Guinea | October 1943 |
| 5. Cape Gloucester, New Britain | 26 December 1943 |
| 6. Pavuvu, Russell Islands | May 1944 |
| 7. Peleliu | 15 September 1944 |
| 8. Pavuvu, Russell Islands | November 1944 |
| 9. Okinawa | 1 April 1945 |
| 10. Northern China | September 1945 |





USMC Photo 51335

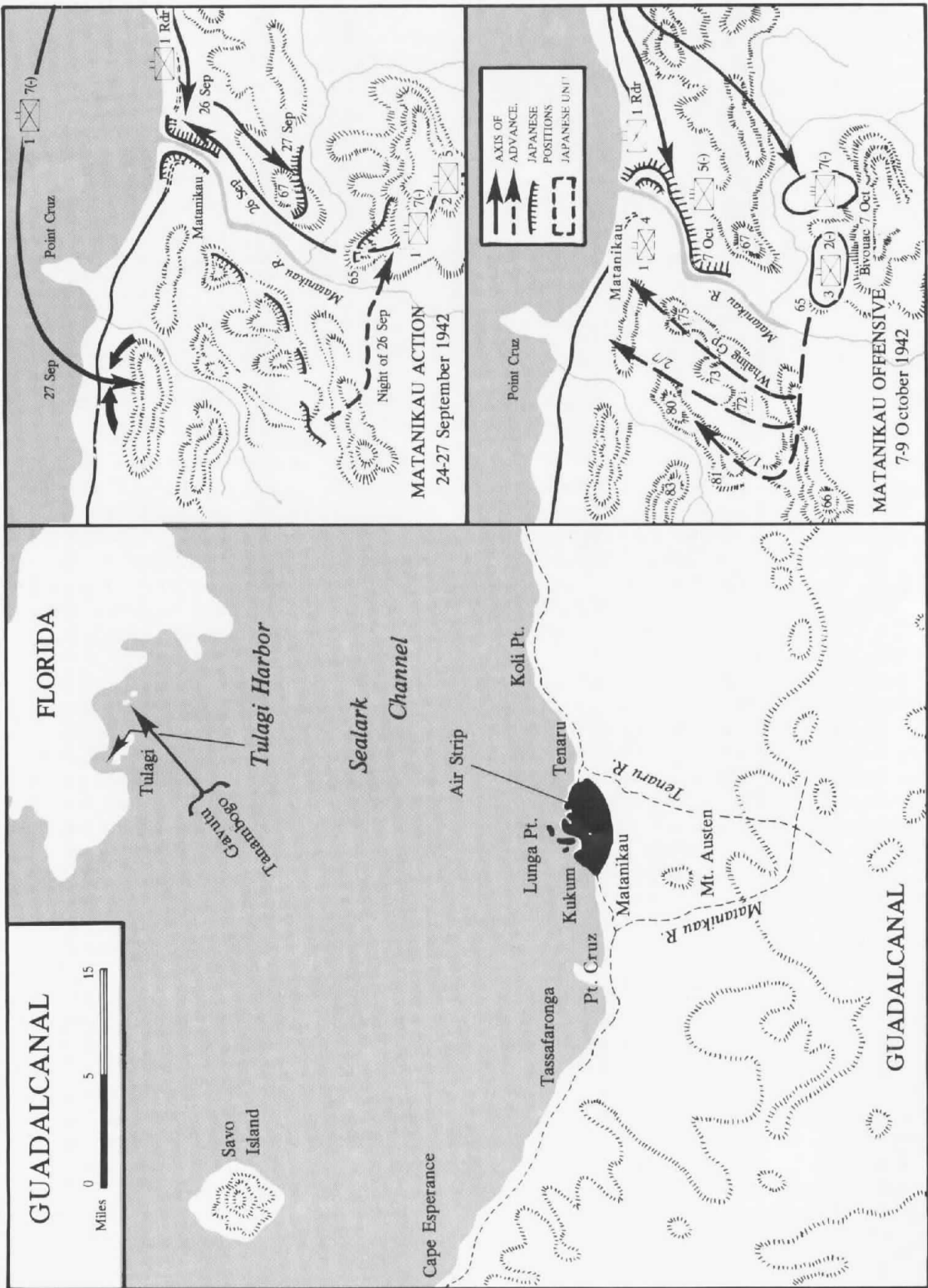
Marines head for the frontlines near the Matanikau River on Guadalcanal. Elements of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines were involved in a fierce battle with Japanese units east of the river in October 1942.

prised a force of Japanese on the slopes of Mount Austen, southwest of Lunga Point. This brief skirmish cost the Marines 32 casualties. Reinforcements from the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines joined the battalion on the 25th and the combined group of Americans pushed on, minus the wounded who were taken back to American-held Henderson Field. The Matanikau was reached on the 26th but no crossing was attempted; instead the two units turned north toward the sea. During the afternoon the column came under fire from the opposite bank. It halted and the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines tried to make a crossing but was repulsed. Fighting broke off at dusk. The 1st Raider Battalion in the meantime had reached the scene of the engagement and Colonel Merritt A. ("Red Mike") Edson, its commanding officer, assumed command of all three units. Edson, a veteran of World War I and a Navy Cross recipient for action in Nicaragua, later received the Medal of Honor for his leadership on Guadalcanal. Lieutenant Colonel Puller acted as his executive officer while the three battalions were operating together.

Combat resumed on the following day with the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, minus Company C, making an amphibious landing west of Point Cruz on the north coast. The intent of this maneuver was to launch an attack on the enemy's rear while he was engaging the other two Marine units. The landing came off smoothly and the battalion began hacking its way through the dense jungle. Suddenly, a strong enemy force hit the unsuspecting Marines. Major Otho Rogers who was in charge of the operation fell dead in the initial burst of fire. The attacking Japanese forced the Marines to establish defensive positions as

heavy fire stymied the men from making any further headway. The Raiders and the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines in the meantime had renewed the battle on their front but were still unable to penetrate enemy lines. Lieutenant Colonel Puller, learning of his battalion's tenuous position, boarded the destroyer USS *Ballard* (DD 267) to effect a rescue. After making contact with the beleaguered battalion, the ship began firing on Japanese positions. Sergeant Robert D. Raysbrook, braving enemy fire, stood on a ridge to semaphore the *Ballard* the much-needed fire control instructions. Under the guns of the destroyer, the Marines started withdrawing to the beach to await the arrival of landing craft to extricate them. As the men struggled to return to the beach they desperately fought off the attacking Japanese. A number of heroic deeds occurred during the movement to the beach. One act of valor was especially conspicuous. Platoon Sergeant Anthony P. Malanowski, Jr., knowing that it would mean sure death, chose to remain behind to cover the withdrawal of Company A. He was eventually overrun and killed by the enemy, but most of his unit's men were able to reach the beach safely.

As Navy and Coast Guard landing craft approached the shore, Japanese artillery opened up on the exposed vessels. A number of boats were struck and casualties were sustained by the crews. Their movement to the selected pickup area was seriously impeded. Observing the action below and the difficulties the boats were having, a lone Marine scout bomber, piloted by 2d Lieutenant Dale M. Leslie of VMSB-231, descended to a low level and made a number of strafing runs over enemy artillery sites. Heartened by the passes of the



“Dauntless” SBD the coxswains renewed their attempts to reach the shore. With Coast Guard Signalman First Class Douglas Munro leading the way, the boats succeeded in maneuvering through continuous Japanese fire to finally reach the beach. Munro was subsequently killed as he covered the extrication phase of the withdrawal. Perseverance combined with a strenuous effort resulted in the removal of the battalion, although the enemy fusillade had delayed completion of the rescue. Sergeants Raysbrook and Malanowski and Lieutenant Leslie were each awarded the Navy Cross for their efforts in the withdrawal. Signalman Munro received the Medal of Honor for helping to make the rescue a success. Once safely on board the *Ballard*, the 1st Battalion counted its casualties and found the Japanese fire had taken a heavy toll—24 killed and 23 wounded.²⁴

Another attempt at driving across the Matanikau began on 7 October with elements of the assault group coming from the 2d, 5th, and 7th Marines. The latter unit, less its 3d Battalion which remained in reserve, crossed without incident. Resistance to the attacking force was encountered eventually by all units after the Marines were established on the opposite bank. Once again the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines made the most significant contact of the probe. Puller’s unit on 9 October found a strong concentration of Japanese in a deep ravine located about 1,500 yards inland from Point Cruz. The tenacious commander immediately brought artillery and mortar fire to bear on the enemy. Those who survived the barrage tried to scramble up the far side of the ravine. Escape proved fruitless as the Marines raked the side of the hill with rifle and machinegun fire. Following the destruction of this group of enemy, the battalion and the rest of the raiding force of Marines withdrew back across the river. Fighting had lasted for 3 days with the Americans inflicting 700 casualties on the Japanese.²⁵

The next major engagement for the 7th Marines took place on 25 October* with the 1st Battalion again bearing the brunt of a strong enemy attack. The unit at this time was deployed southeast of Lunga Point and Henderson Field. Shortly after midnight a large enemy unit positioned itself opposite the battalion’s defenses; once ready, the Japanese rushed forth in a headlong *banzai* charge against the 1st Bat-



USMC Photo 56976
Sergeant John Basilone, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines—Medal of Honor, Guadalcanal.

talion’s lines. The Marines held against the onslaught until reinforcements from the Army’s 3d Battalion, 164th Infantry Regiment arrived. The concentrated fires from the two battalions plus supporting artillery repulsed the attack. By 0700, the Japanese had departed the scene of the battle, leaving the field strewn with the bodies of their dead. Sergeant John (“Manila John”) Basilone received the Medal of Honor for this fight, because of the courage he displayed in manning his machinegun and in braving enemy fire to bring up much needed ammunition. He thus had the double distinction of being the first enlisted Marine in World War II and also the first member of the 7th Marines to be awarded the medal.²⁶

Another strong Japanese assault was launched on the 26th. This time it hit elements of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Herman H. Hanneken,** a veteran of the occupation of both Haiti and Nicaragua. The Americans threw the attackers back after a fierce, but brief fight in an area near the coast and just east of the Matanikau River. The 7th Marines acquired its second Medal of Honor winner as a result of the engagement. Platoon

*This battle resulted in Lieutenant Colonel Puller being awarded his third Navy Cross. He already had two for Nicaragua. Subsequently, he would acquire two more: one for the New Britain Campaign and one during the Korean War.

**Hanneken, already a holder of the Medal of Honor and two Navy Crosses for his exploits in Latin America, received a Silver Star for an engagement that took place in early November 1942.



USMC Photo 56974

Platoon Sergeant Mitchell Paige had already been commissioned as a second lieutenant when he received the Medal of Honor for his performance on Guadalcanal.

Sergeant (later Colonel) Mitchell Paige directed the fire of his machinegun section until the crews were either killed or wounded. He then singlehandedly manned first one gun then a second. In the latter stages of the battle Paige organized and led a bayonet charge which drove the enemy off and prevented a breakthrough in Marine lines. Major (later Brigadier General) Odell M. Conoley, the battalion executive officer, earned the Navy Cross during the same engagement.²⁷

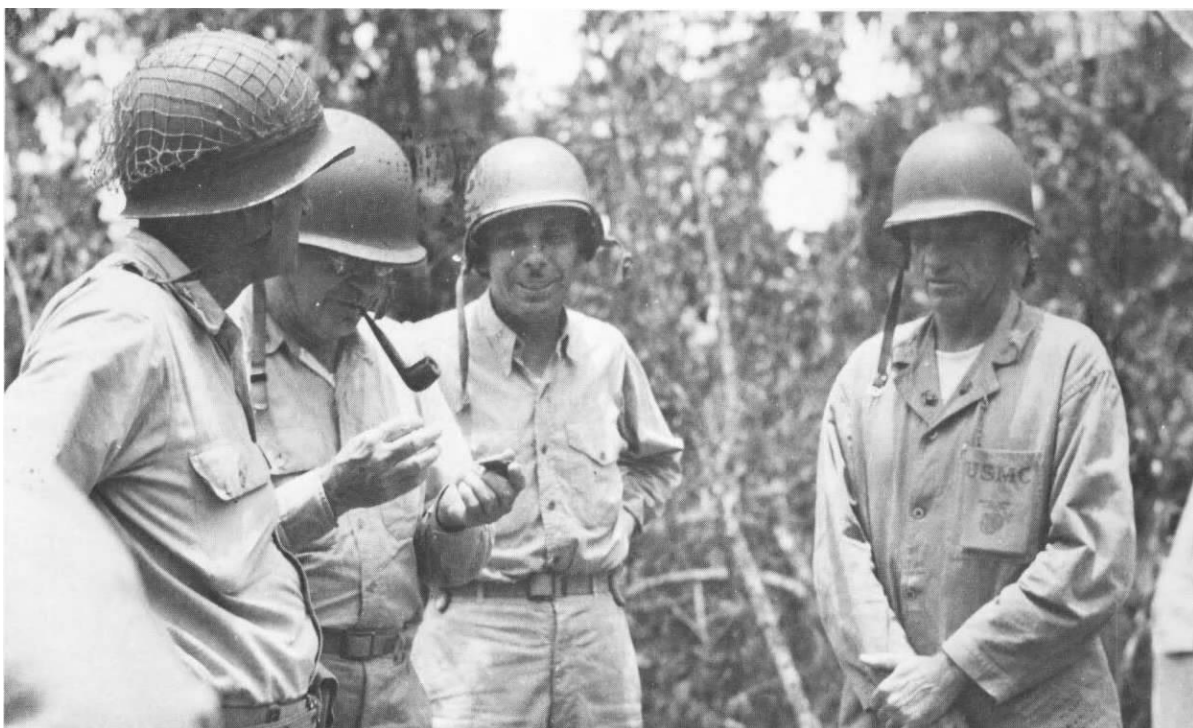
Between 8 and 12 November 1942, the 1st and 2d Battalions were involved in a number of sharp encounters with enemy units around Koli Point, which is about 5 miles east of Lunga Point; but heavy fighting for the regiment soon ended as the entire 7th Marines pulled back to the Lunga Point defensive area. For the next several weeks the unit carried out routine patrols to eliminate those Japanese soldiers who still remained behind in the areas seized by the Americans.²⁸ On 9 December, the 1st Marine Division began stand down procedures. Command of all troops ashore subsequently passed from General Vandegrift to Major General Alexander M. Patch, commander of the Army's Americal Division. Most of the 1st Marine Division had seen 4 months of intense fighting and, as a result, a large percentage of its units were weakened by casualties, malaria, and just

plain fatigue. The men needed a rest from the rigors of Guadalcanal's unhealthy climate and harsh terrain.²⁹

Relief on the 7th Marines took place in January 1943. The entire regiment sailed from Guadalcanal on the 5th on board the transports USS *President Jackson* (AP 37), *President Adams* (AP 38), and *President Hayes* (AP 39). A week later the three ships dropped anchor in Port Phillip Bay off Melbourne, Australia. The regiment moved ashore and went into camp at Mount Martha, a few miles outside of the city. Eventually all members of the 1st Division were relocated to Australia.³⁰ Back on Guadalcanal the battle continued—a responsibility of the U.S. Army. The campaign finally came to an end on 9 February after the Japanese completed the withdrawal of their forces. Although the enemy was able to evacuate thousands of troops, the Japanese lost nearly 25,000 men killed, died of wounds and disease, missing, and captured in fighting on Guadalcanal. American Marine and Army units during the campaign sustained over 6,300 killed and wounded. The first United States offensive against the Japanese had resulted in a tangible American victory. The forward thrust of the enemy into the South Pacific had been stopped; America now prepared to roll the Japanese back from their initial conquests.

The first order of business in Australia was to give the men a well-deserved liberty. Melbourne, with its many similarities to an American city, was the focal point for Marines on leave. The Australian people responded to the arrival of the 1st Division with great warmth and genuine hospitality. The newspapers, in fact, welcomed the Americans by calling them "the saviours of Australia." Most Marines viewed their stay in Australia as an enjoyable respite from the unpleasantness and horrors of war. Fond memories of both the country and the people are carried by the men who were stationed in Australia in 1943.

Once replacements and supplies arrived from the United States, the division reorganized and made plans to initiate a series of training exercises. Before the division could embark on maneuvers, lost and wornout equipment had to be replaced. One item that would prove to have a significant effect in later battles of the war was acquired by the 7th Marines. The M-1, the first semiautomatic service rifle to be produced in quantity by the United States, was issued to the 1st Division shortly after its arrival in Australia. Beginning in April, training was conducted with the new weapons instead of the old bolt-action Springfields. Combat training emphasized the techniques of amphibious warfare with a number of practice assaults



USMC Photo 53330

Lieutenant General Thomas Holcomb, CMC, makes an inspection tour of the 7th Marines on Guadalcanal in December 1942. Left to right: Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift, 1st Division commander; Lieutenant General Holcomb; Colonel Amor L. Sims, regimental commander; and Lieutenant Colonel Julian N. Frisbie, executive officer.

taking place that spring in Port Phillip Bay. These exercises were designed in anticipation of further campaigns in the South Pacific.³¹

New Britain

The regiment in summer 1943 received notification of its inclusion in the forthcoming 1st Marine Division landing at Cape Gloucester on the western tip of the island of New Britain. American strategists by mid-1943 began formulating plans for the capture of the Philippines. To facilitate an approach to the former colony, it was necessary to force an opening of the Vitiaz and Dampier Straits separating New Guinea and New Britain. With the straits in friendly hands Japanese bases along the New Guinea coast would become vulnerable to pressure by the United States. Relatively safe access to the Philippines could then be exploited. In accord with this thinking the decision was made to establish an American presence on

western New Britain. A successful seizure of this area would hopefully accomplish a secondary objective—further isolation of the enemy bastion at Rabaul in eastern New Britain. The 1st Marine Division, now commanded by Major General William H. Rupertus, had the assignment of carrying out the assault. The landing phase of the campaign was scheduled for 26 December 1943 with Cape Gloucester as the designated target.³²

In early fall after 8 months in Australia, the 7th Marines left in two echelons for the staging area at Oro Bay, New Guinea. The first arrived on 2 October; the second on 9 October. Beginning on the latter date, the troops were subjected to intermittent Japanese aerial bombardment. Although the bombing continued until the end of the month, the regiment was still able to conduct amphibious exercises as part of the preparation for the upcoming operation.³³ Over 2 months elapsed before the invasion force started moving to the objective with the 7th Marines leaving on Christmas Eve. The regiment, under Colonel Julian N. Frisbie, had been delegated the responsibility of securing the beachhead as quickly as possible. Frisbie,

a Banana Wars veteran, won a Silver Star on Guadalcanal while he was executive officer of the regiment.

The convoy carrying the assault force rendezvoused in Buna Harbor north of Oro Bay before sailing to Cape Gloucester on D-minus-1; arrival came early on the following day, the 26th. As H-hour drew near, Navy cruisers and destroyers opened fire on predetermined targets. Air strikes were also employed. The men of the 7th Marines in the meantime prepared to transfer from their destroyer transports (APDs) to landing craft. With the Navy's guns hammering away at Japanese positions, the Marines loaded on board LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel) for the journey to the beach. Shortly after the last salvo was fired, the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines headed for shore. It landed at 0746. It was the first unit of the invasion force to land on the narrow beach and was immediately followed by the 1st Battalion which waded ashore 2 minutes later. The last battalion of the regiment, the 2d, made its way through the surf to the beach approximately an hour after the other two units had set foot on the island. All units of the division succeeded in coming ashore on time. The landings on D-day, 26 December, had taken place without a hitch.

The assault troops met little resistance. One brisk but deadly clash, however, did take place in the initial landings. Elements of Lieutenant Colonel William R. Williams' 3d Battalion, 7th Marines upon reaching the shore came under long-range machinegun fire from hidden enemy bunkers. Reduction of the fortifications was carried out by the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines which suffered a number of casualties. For the most part, the real enemy was not the Japanese but the dense jungles. New Britain's tropical rain forest and nearly impenetrable swamps combined to hamper the maneuverability of the invasion force once it pushed out from the beach. The Americans were also plagued by a near constant rain that fell in the first day of the campaign. The deluge brought on by the advent of the rainy season often turned normally dry, high-ground areas into quagmires.³⁴

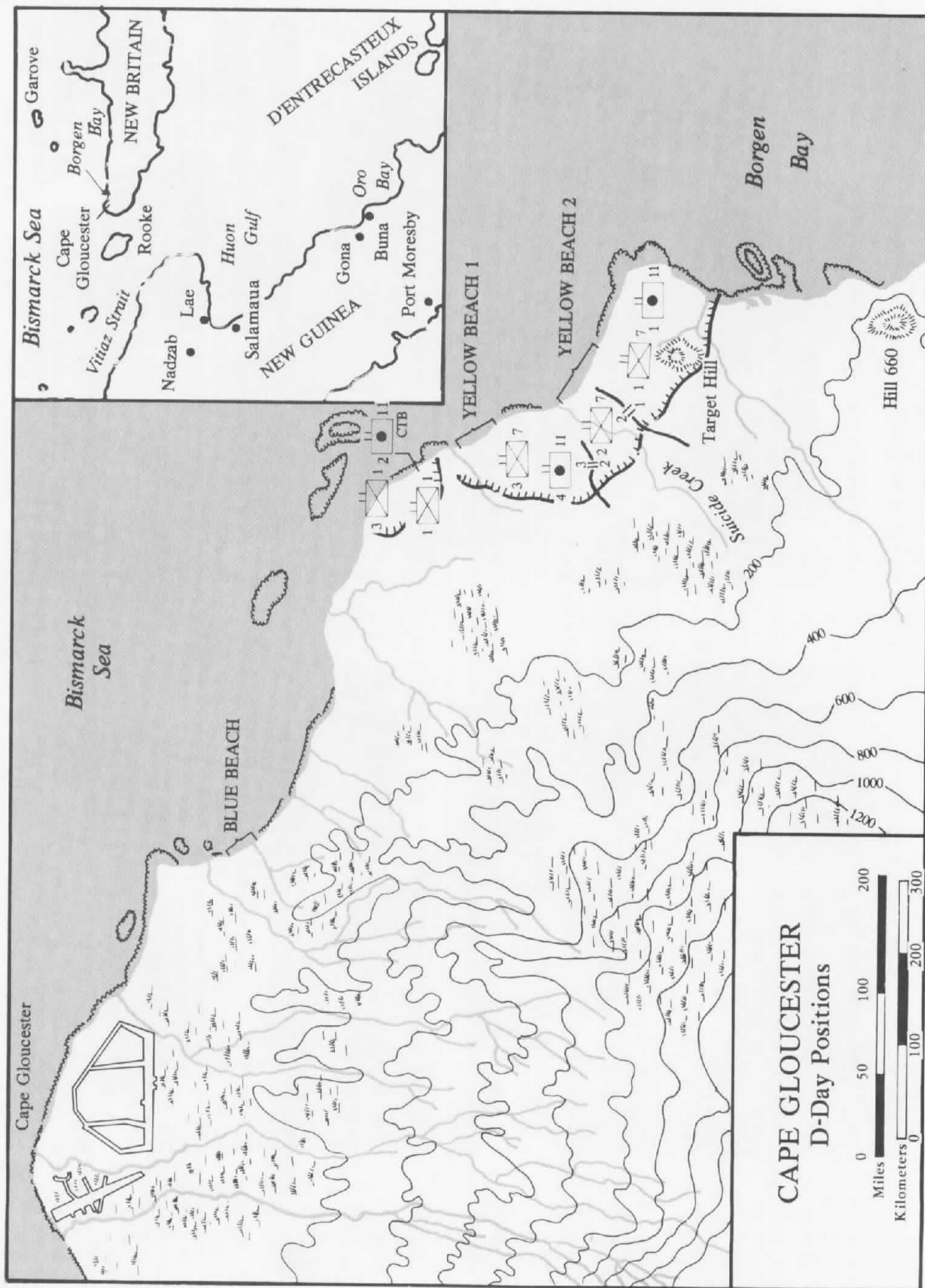
Opposition from the Japanese continued to be light throughout the first day. Bad terrain notwithstanding, all major division objectives were attained, including the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines' capture of the key geographical feature of the region—Target Hill. Division units next concentrated their attention on the nearby Cape Gloucester airdrome. The troops hacked and slashed their way through the jungle to attack the Japanese installation.³⁵ The beachhead meanwhile

steadily expanded with the Americans making little contact with the enemy.

The Japanese delayed their counterthrust, however, only until the morning of D-plus-1. Attacking during a driving rainstorm, the enemy's *2d Battalion, 53d Infantry* then hit the positions of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, which held the center of the Marine perimeter. Three times the enemy hurled his troops at the battalion, but on each occasion the Americans held. No significant penetration occurred. The battalion now under Lieutenant Colonel Conoley (recently promoted) inflicted severe losses on the Japanese. Two hundred dead were counted on the battlefield. Those who survived retreated into the jungle shortly after daybreak. Conoley later received the Silver Star for his leadership in the repulse of the attack.³⁶

The 1st Division pressed on with its drive toward the airfield that morning, but the first Marines did not reach it until 29 December. The field was secured by elements of the 1st and 5th Marines on the 30th after a brief fight.³⁷ Brigadier General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., assistant division commander and later the 20th Commandant of the Marine Corps, then headed a new drive southward along Borgen Bay following the seizure of the airdrome. The main units in this thrust, which started on 2 January 1944, were the 7th Marines; 3d Battalion, 5th Marines; and the 1st and 4th Battalions, 11th Marines. The last two units provided artillery support. One major encounter with the enemy took place along a small stream which soon acquired the nickname "Suicide Creek." For 2 days, the entrenched Japanese halted the Marines. The stalemate was finally broken with tank support. Only by laborious effort had the armor been brought up and placed into positions to assault the enemy fortifications. A new advance was ordered with the tanks leading the way. This time the obstacles were breached and Japanese resistance disintegrated. Once the breakthrough had been achieved the column pushed on and continued its march.³⁸

Another significant engagement began on 9 January when Lieutenant Colonel Lewis W. Walt's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, with Companies K and L of the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines attached, discovered a strong enemy defensive position that included a maze of intricate bunkers extending along Aogiri Ridge. Walt, later a full general and the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, had his men attack the Japanese stronghold, but in an all-day fight they were unable to penetrate the enemy's defenses. By evening, however, the Americans through sheer tenacity gain-





USMC Photo 72290

Marines ford a Cape Gloucester stream while searching for a Japanese pillbox. The jungle terrain and torrential rains on New Britain added to the difficulties.



USMC Photo 77636

Members of the 7th Marines' regimental staff at Cape Gloucester are, left to right: Major Victor H. Steit, operations officer; Lieutenant Colonel Lewis B. Puller, executive officer; First Lieutenant Francis T. Farrell, intelligence officer; Major Thomas J. Cross, quartermaster; Captain R. T. Musselwhite, Jr., communications officer; First Lieutenant John J. Aubuchon, assistant operations officer.



USMC Photo 72616

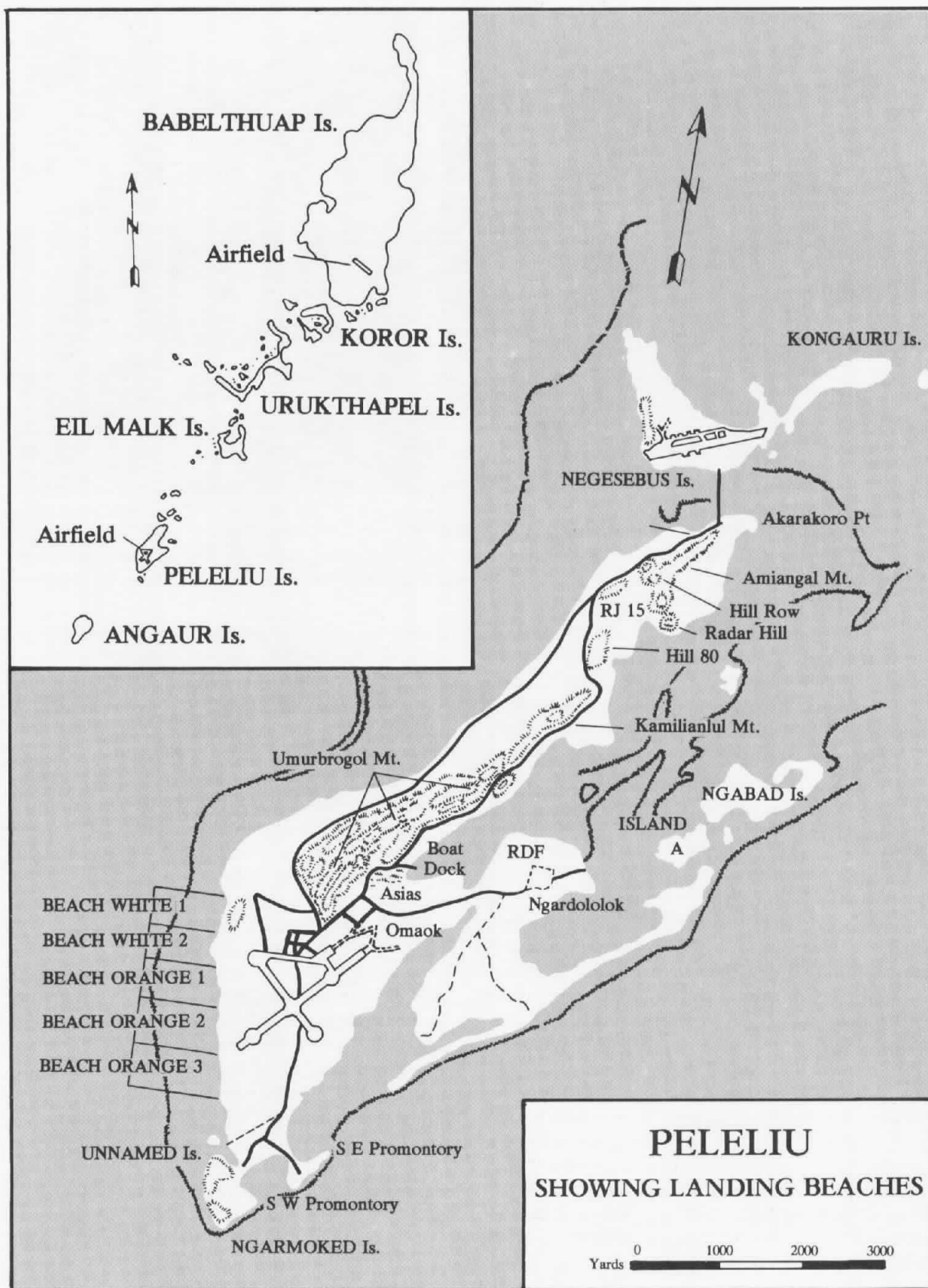
Senior officers of the 7th Marines in January 1944. From left to right: Lieutenant Colonel Odell M. Conoley, 2d Battalion; Lieutenant Colonel Lewis B. Puller, executive officer; Colonel Julian N. Frisbie, regimental commander; Lieutenant Colonel Henry W. Buse, Jr., 3d Battalion; Lieutenant Colonel John E. Weber, 1st Battalion; Captain Joseph W. Buckley, Weapons Company.

ed a foothold on the crest of the ridge. Japanese defenders, beginning at 0115 on 10 January, launched the first of five counterattacks against the Marines. The Leathernecks held in spite of the furious onslaughts. By dawn all the enemy reserves had been spent, forcing the Japanese to retreat. The ridge was permanently lost to the enemy as he had no further troops available for a new counterattack.³⁹

The only important enemy stronghold left in the area was on Hill 660. General Shepherd wanted the jungle-covered hill seized. He assigned this task to the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines which was now under Lieutenant Colonel Henry W. ("Bill") Buse, Jr., later chief of staff of the Marine Corps and commanding general, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific. The battalion, supported by Weapons Company, 7th Marines, initiated a number of sorties over the next 2 days that probed enemy positions on the hill. Then, a dramatic rush to the top through a heavy downpour occurred on 14 January 1944. The sudden surge took the Japanese completely by surprise. The exhausted and rainsoaked Marines dug in on the crest and waited for the expected counterattack. The anticipated thrust came before sunrise on the 16th. Although vicious at times the fighting did not last long. Buse's skillful use of available firepower wrought devastating and lethal

destruction upon the attacking force. Buse received the Silver Star for the capture of the hill. The repulse of the enemy on Hill 660 marked the end of organized resistance in the Cape Gloucester-Borgen Bay area. In this phase of the New Britain Campaign, the 7th Marines and the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines plus supporting units had borne the brunt of the heaviest fighting in a region that contained some of the most difficult jungle territory in the world—territory made even less passable by torrential rains and the resulting mud. Colonel Frisbie received the Navy Cross for his leadership during this part of campaign.⁴⁰

Marine operations in western New Britain immediately following the successful push to Hill 660 were in the form of extensive patrolling missions to seek out the elusive Japanese. The enemy in his retreat hoped to reach Rabaul on the opposite end of the island. The 7th Marines thus received a new mission—the destruction of the fleeing enemy troops. The regiment had this responsibility until the end of February when it was then ordered to participate in the defense of the Cape Gloucester airstrip against Japanese stragglers. All combat-associated activity for the regiment and for the division ended in the latter part of April. The number of enemy killed by the division was estimated at 4,000 while the Marines lost ap-





USMC Photo 72081

A Marine fires a Thompson submachine gun into a Japanese pillbox before venturing inside. Members of the 7th Marines probed enemy positions on Hill 660 in January 1944.

proximately 1,300 men killed and wounded. The Army's 40th Infantry Division relieved the 1st Marine Division of its duties on the island and the Marines withdrew to Pavuvu in the Russell Islands. Arrival of the 7th Marines occurred in early May.⁴¹ Pavuvu was considerably less than ideal as a site for a unit to obtain the rest and recuperation required after months in a jungle environment. There the men found mud and more mud plus the ever incessant tropical heat. To make matters worse the island was infested with rats and land crabs. Adversities and illness, especially malaria, continued to afflict the troops as they had on New Britain. Hardship notwithstanding, the 1st Marine Division reorganized and reequipped itself and prepared for the next campaign.

Peleliu

Operation Stalemate, code name for the seizure of the Palaus, got underway in September 1944. The III Amphibious Corps (III AC) under Major General Roy S. Geiger* had the responsibility of taking the islands.

*Geiger, a pioneer in Marine aviation, commanded a Marine squadron in France during World War I and won a Navy Cross during his tour there. He also commanded a squadron in Haiti in 1920.

General Geiger in June had detached a provisional planning staff from III AC to plan the operation. The group was sent to Pearl Harbor and received the designation X-Ray Provisional Amphibious Corps. Major General Julian C. Smith, the deputy commander of the V Amphibious Corps, was placed in charge. The Palaus were Japan's main bastion in the western Carolines and only 530 miles east of Mindanao in the Philippines. Justification for the operation came from General Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander of Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific. He believed that no invasion of the Philippines could succeed unless the potential enemy threat from the Palaus was eliminated. The Japanese there represented a real danger to his lines of communication that could not be overlooked. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander in chief, Pacific Fleet, added another justification: the need to secure a base where American forces could support MacArthur's operations into the southern Philippines.

American planners focused their attention on taking the southernmost islands—Peleliu and Angaur. The task of capturing Peleliu with its important airfield fell to the 1st Marine Division still commanded by Major General Rupertus, who was to receive the Distinguished Service Medal for the campaign.⁴² Peleliu contained extensive defenses, and its fortifications included both antitank and antiboat guns in reinforced pillboxes, minefields, barbed wire, and antitank



USMC Photo 94937

Members of the 1st Marine Division take cover on Orange Beach 3 at Peleliu. Amphibious tractors hit while carrying the Leathernecks ashore burn in the background.

obstacles. The Umurbrogol Ridge which dominated Peleliu was the key to the enemy defense set up. The ridge was masked by dense jungle and honeycombed with caves and tunnels, some natural and some man-made. In addition, the Japanese had effectively constructed exits, firing ports, and artillery positions in the ridge's hard coral limestone. The enemy's defenses, as it soon became apparent, had been made practically impervious to naval and air bombardment. The Navy felt its bombardment was more than sufficient. Years later General Gerald C. Thomas,* former Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, summed up the attitude of one of the naval commanders at Peleliu: "They're [the Japanese] all dead, go on ashore and take over the island. We fired all these guns and they're all dead, now you just go over and occupy the area."⁴³

The campaign began early on 15 September 1944 with the 1st Marine Division poised to strike at the southwest coast of the island. Shortly after dawn the troops clambered on board LVTs (Landing Vehicle, Tracked). The amphibious tractors began moving toward the beach at approximately 0800. Less than 40 minutes later, the first waves of infantry landed and rapidly fanned out over the coral sands. The 1st Marines assaulted the northern sector. The 5th Marines were in the center. The 7th Marines, less the 2d Battalion which was in reserve, landed in the

southern zone of the beachhead. Colonel Herman H. Hanneken, former commanding officer of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, now commanded the regiment in what would prove to be its most difficult campaign up to that time.⁴⁴

Even before its units reached the shore the regiment came up against heavy enemy fire—a foretaste of what was to come. Intense antboat, mortar, and machinegun fire raked the 7th Marines as the landing craft churned through the surf. The resulting confusion due to the enemy's enfilade fire caused elements of the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines to mistakenly land in the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines' zone. Once the beachhead had been established, heavy fighting delayed the taking of the 7th's first day objectives. Major (later Brigadier General) Edward H. Hurst's 3d Battalion, 7th Marines had a particularly hard time against Japanese soldiers stubbornly resisting from caves and blockhouses. Hurst personally led his men in attacks on the enemy which by the next day resulted in the annihilation of one reinforced battalion of approximately 1,600 men. Major Hurst was subsequently awarded a Silver Star for his leadership in eliminating this Japanese unit.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, forward progress on D-day ended early that evening with the men directed to prepare a defensive perimeter. The beachhead held by the 1st Division was 3,000 yards in length and averaged 500 yards in depth with one maximum penetration of 1,500 yards. Several counterattacks hit the perimeter that night with the Japanese launching their strongest attack against the lines of Company C, 1st Battalion,

*In 1944 Brigadier General Thomas was the director of Division of Plans and Policies at Headquarters, Marine Corps. Previously he had been chief of staff of the 1st Division.



USMC Photo 95787

Colonel Herman H. Hanneken, who won early fame as a captain in the Garde d' Haiti, took command of the regiment on New Britain and led it through the assault on Peleliu.

7th Marines. Four hours of fighting ensued; the Japanese finally broke contact at 0600. The attempt at a breakthrough had failed, although some enemy soldiers had succeeded in penetrating a few forward positions before they were repulsed.

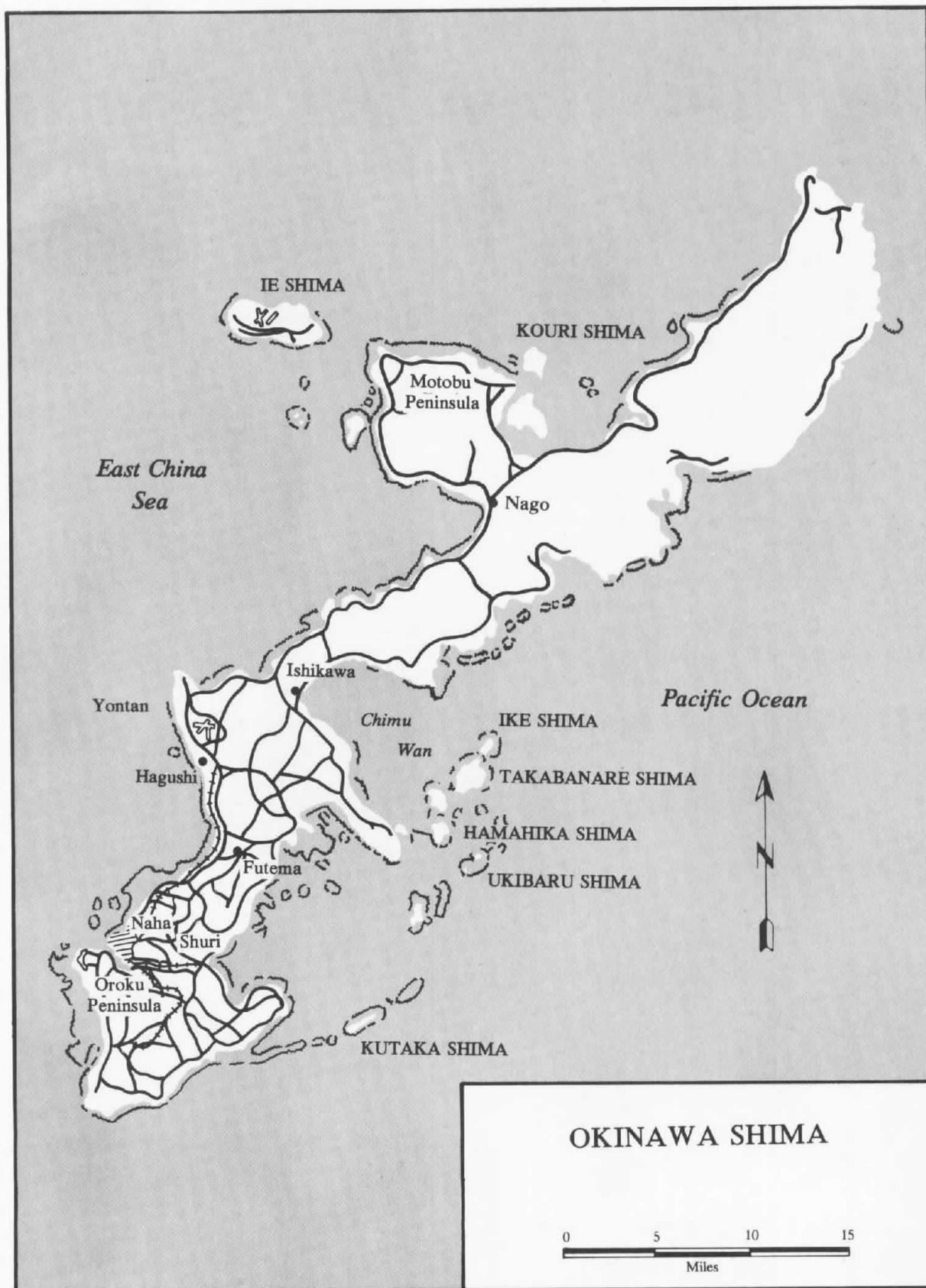
A new regimental drive to secure the southern tip of the island got underway on D-plus-1. This sweep lasted until the afternoon of the 18th when the 7th Marines reported to division headquarters that the area had indeed been seized. Private First Class Arthur J. Jackson of the 3d Battalion contributed immeasurably to the regiment's success. On the 18th, he virtually became a one-man assault force in storming one enemy gun position after another. Jackson succeeded in personally wiping out 12 pillboxes and killing 50 Japanese soldiers. He was subsequently awarded the Medal of Honor.⁴⁷ In the first 4 days of the Peleliu Campaign, the regiment, less its 2d Battalion, killed 2,609 of the enemy while suffering 47 dead, 414 wounded, and 36 missing in action. One well-trained enemy infantry battalion had been completely destroyed. The number of enemy casualties was indicative of the Japanese determination to fight to the death.⁴⁸

While most of the regiment was still locked in battle in the south, the 2d Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Spencer S. Berger, was put ashore and ordered north to assist the 1st Marines. When the unit moved into the line on 17 September 1944, the newly arrived Marines found the 1st Marines pressing an attack on a section of the Umurbrogol. The vicious battle had battered the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines to the degree that it had to be withdrawn and replaced by the 2d Bat-



USMC Photo 95771

The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines moves to the front lines of Peleliu. A regimental drive to secure the southern end of the island began on D-plus-1.





USMC Photo 302307

Second Lieutenant Arthur J. Jackson was a private first class when he won the Medal of Honor on Peleliu.

talion, 7th Marines. The assault continued with little ground gained, yet the cost to the Americans remained high. In one furious exchange of hand grenades Private First Class Charles H. Roan saved four of his comrades by jumping on a grenade that land in their midst. Posthumously, he was awarded the Medal of Honor. The rest of the regiment redeployed to the Umurbrogol and joined in the attack on the 20th. The 2d Battalion subsequently went into reserve. No forward progress occurred even with the addition of two new battalions. Frontal assaults were of little avail. The Japanese could not be dislodged. Fighting remained bloody and arduous, and it was made more difficult by the precipitous terrain. The Umurbrogol appeared to be impregnable as the advance ground to a halt.⁴⁹

Another posthumous Medal of Honor was awarded to a member of the 2d Battalion during a battle that occurred on 25 September. Private First Class John D. New and two other men from Company F were directing mortar fire on enemy positions when a Japanese grenade landed in their midst. New flung himself onto it and absorbed the full impact of the explosion that followed, thus saving the lives of his companions. A similar instance of unselfish valor occurred a few days later. Private Wesley Phelps of Company K, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines saved the life of a fellow

Marine when he jumped on a Japanese grenade that had been thrown into their foxhole. His award was also posthumous.

A new drive was ordered with fresh Army troops from the 81st Infantry Division being brought up for added muscle. Units from this division had just succeeded in seizing Angaur, an island about 10 miles south of Peleliu. The Japanese stubbornly resisted the latest attempt at overwhelming the Umurbrogol, although other enemy-held areas on Peleliu had been taken by United States forces. The Umurbrogol pocket had only been made smaller, not eliminated. By the end of September, the entire island was in American hands and all that remained was the reduction of the Japanese-dominated ridge.⁵⁰ General Rupertus again ordered another attack. It was scheduled for the 30th with the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 7th Marines spearheading the assault. Before it could be launched enemy troops struck the lines of the 7th Marines on the proceeding night. The enemy attack came during a heavy rainstorm and resulted in much confusion and in a number of casualties, but it did not delay plans for 30 September.

The 7th's drive began on time with both battalions making some rather substantial gains. The advance



USMC Photo 96873

Men of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines traverse the rocky ground of the Umurbrogol. This Japanese-dominated ridge was the last area on Peleliu to fall to the Americans.

forced the Japanese to withdraw from a number of defensive positions and enabled the Americans to capture one mountain gun and knock out several machinegun emplacements. Considerable sniper and harassing fire in the meantime took a heavy toll on the rest of the regiment which had remained stationary in the forward area. As the day wore on resistance stiffened. The two assaulting battalions often had to engage in hand-to-hand combat. Hand grenades, flamethrowers, and high explosives were employed to root out the enemy from his caves. Marine losses mounted as the battle raged. Recurring illnesses, especially dysentery, and casualties depleted the ranks of both the 1st and 3d Battalions. At the end of the day Lieutenant Colonel John J. Gormley's 1st Battalion had an effective strength of only 90 men. The 3d Battalion's combat efficiency was placed at less than 50 percent. The momentum of the attack could not long be sustained with the loss of so many men.

The spent 1st Battalion moved to the rear while the 2d Battalion was brought up. Renewal of the drive on the Umurbrogol began on the morning of 3 October with Company G jumping off first. It advanced for rapidly towards its objective—Walt Ridge, named for Lieutenant Colonel Lewis W. Walt, then the executive officer of the 5th Marines. Once Company G gained a foothold on the ridge the enemy opened up with a heavy volume of fire. The rest of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines followed by the 3d Battalion rushed forward to assist Company G. Although temporarily pinned down, units of the 2d Battalion were able to push their way over the crest by late afternoon. Dogged enemy resistance forced a halt to the drive at nightfall. Elements of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines eventually

deployed to the front to reinforce those units already on the crest. Casualties for the day mounted to over 100 for the regiment.

Most of the next day was spent in consolidating newly won ground and in mopping-up operations. In one such maneuver a platoon from Company L, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines moved to seize Hill 120 near Baldy Ridge, an enemy fortified position. After the Marines had occupied their objectives, the Japanese unleashed a murderous barrage from the security of Baldy. The men attempted to withdraw but were cut off by heavy shelling from enemy mortars and cannons. Withering fire took a devastating toll. Below the scene of the battle the rest of Company L stood helpless. Attempts at rescuing the trapped Marines proved fruitless—and costly. Captain James V. Shanley, the commanding officer, in trying to recover an injured rifleman was hit by mortar shell fragments and fell mortally wounded. Second Lieutenant Ralph H. Stadler rushed to his aid but was killed as he ran across open ground. Shanley was posthumously awarded his second Navy Cross; his first had come for valorous conduct in the battle for Hill 660 on New Britain. Of the 48 men who were on Hill 120 only 11 made it to safety and just 5 emerged unscathed. The battalion could only look upon this engagement as a tragedy. The entire regiment, in fact, had suffered severe losses throughout the campaign. Following the near calamity on Hill 120, the 7th Marines was relieved by the 5th Marines. At this point it simply could not function effectively as a combat organization on a regimental scale.³¹

Elements of the regiment came back into the line in mid-October 1944 to participate in yet another at-



USMC Photo 94709

Senior officers of the 7th Marines during Peleliu are shown (left to right): Major E. Hunter Hurst, commanding officer, 3d Battalion; Lieutenant Colonel Norman Hussa, regimental executive officer; Colonel Herman H. Hanneken, regimental commander; Lieutenant Colonel Spencer S. Berger, commanding officer, 2d Battalion; and Lieutenant Colonel John J. Gormley, commanding officer, 1st Battalion.

tempt at reducing the Umurbrogol pocket. The 1st Battalion came up on the 14th and remained engaged in operations for 3 days when it was then relieved by the Army's 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry Regiment. Headquarters and Weapons Companies remained behind the lines and were employed as a defensive force for the island's airfield. The 2d Battalion was assigned to patrolling operations on the islands northeast of Peleliu. On 17 October, elements of the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines were dispatched to the Umurbrogol and a rather costly battle ensued. This turned out to be the last engagement of the campaign for a unit of the 7th Marines. On 20 October the 81st Infantry Division took over all responsibility for continuing operations against the diehard enemy units. The 1st Marine Division stood down and all elements of the 7th Marines except the 3d Battalion left for Pavuvu on the 22d. The remaining battalion redeployed on 30 October.³²

Although the bloody battle for Peleliu was over for the 7th Marines and the 1st Marine Division, it continued for the Army until 27 November 1944 when the last fortified enemy stronghold was overrun. Even then, fighting did not end as small skirmishes between American troops and Japanese soldiers occurred for many weeks after the official termination of organized resistance.³³ The capture of Peleliu brought to a close one of the hardest-fought battles in the Pacific War and one of the most costly. Almost 10,400 casualties were incurred by the Marine Corps, Army, and Navy during the campaign. Of this figure the 7th Marines suffered nearly 1,500 battle losses.³⁴

Okinawa

After filling its thinned ranks with replacements, the 7th Marines began preparing for its role in Operation Iceberg, the invasion of Okinawa. The 1st Marine Division in January 1945 began rotating its infantry regiments to Guadalcanal to conduct training exercises since rat-infested Pavuvu was too small for such maneuvers. The division was now commanded by Major General Pedro A. del Valle, an artillery officer who had commanded the 11th Marines on Guadalcanal. The division was slated to participate in the assault on Okinawa as an integral part of a much larger force. As a result, it had to face new problems of control and coordination with which it had no previous experience. The 1st and 6th Marine Divisions were the main units of the III Amphibious Corps which itself formed a major element of the Tenth Army, the



USMC Photo 116425

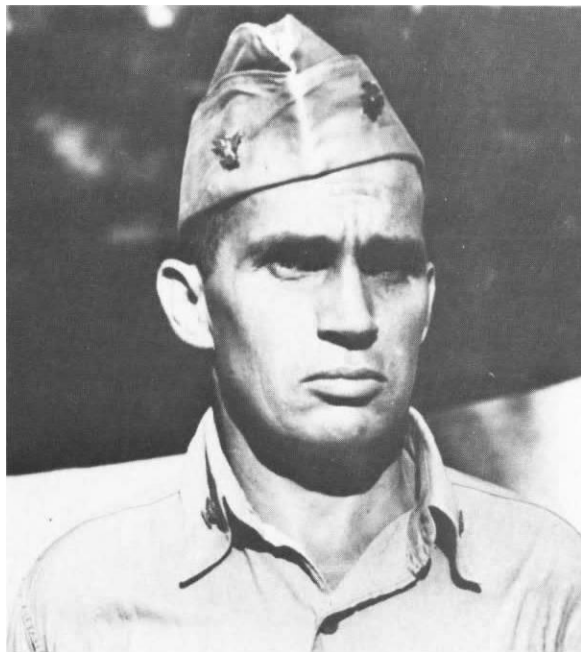
Marines land unopposed on Okinawa. They encountered little resistance in the first days and objectives were taken well ahead of schedule.

organization responsible for the seizure of Okinawa. Command of this huge force was given to Army Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner who was subsequently killed* by hostile fire during the closing days of the campaign.

The principal reason for undertaking the Okinawa invasion was obvious—the island's proximity to Japan. It lay only 350 miles away. Numerous sites for air and naval bases existed on the island. In American hands Okinawa could be turned into a veritable bastion from which the United States could strike with impunity at the heartland of the Japanese Empire. Additionally, it afforded the United States a potential staging area for a future amphibious invasion of the Japanese home islands.

Training for the operation ended in early March 1945. By mid-March, units of the invasion force had assembled and were proceeding to the objective. L-day, the day of the assault, was set for Easter Sunday which fell on 1 April that year. Plans called for the landing to take place on the southwestern side of the island.³⁵ The two divisions of the III Amphibious Corps were

*Upon the death of General Buckner, command of the Tenth Army fell to Lieutenant General Roy S. Geiger who initially commanded the III Amphibious Corps during the struggle for Okinawa. This was the first time a Marine general commanded an American field army.



USMC Photo 108714

Colonel Edward W. Snedeker, later lieutenant general, commanded the 7th Marines before and during the assault on Okinawa.

scheduled to land abreast on the beaches north of the town of Hagushi; to the south two divisions of the Army's XXIV Corps would come ashore. The 1st Division after landing would assist the 6th Division in capturing Yontan airfield before striking inland. The first assault waves began making their way to the beaches shortly after 0800. In the vanguard were the armored amphibian tractors followed closely by the troop-carrying LVTs. Among the first Marine units to land were the 1st and 2d Battalions, 7th Marines. Much to the surprise of the Americans only slight enemy resistance was encountered. Advancing Marines made

rapid progress. Consequently, the 3d Battalion, which had been in reserve, was put ashore and joined the movement inland.³⁶ Objectives were taken ahead of schedule. For example, Colonel (later Lieutenant General and Commandant of the Marine Corps Schools) Edward W. Snedeker's 7th Marines was able to reach the east coast late on 3 April. Although the men met some moderate opposition, fighting did not seriously impede their progress. Rugged terrain and poor roads caused the most difficulty. Spearheading the drive was the 3d Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Hurst which had the honor of being the first Marine unit to make it to the opposite side of the island. Okinawa had thus effectively been cut in two. The 2d Battalion, still commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Berger, followed by the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John J. Gormley, went into reserve after reaching the coast on the 4th. The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines continued to be deployed along the front to the north but attached to the 5th Marines. For the rest of April, the 7th Marines primarily occupied itself with patrolling operations in the rugged hills that lay behind the lines as the 6th Division cleared Motobu Peninsula and the northern end of the island and the Army XXIV Corps attacked to the south. It had the mission of destroying small bands of enemy that had been bypassed in the advance on the north.³⁷

The 1st Marine Division on 1 May redeployed south to assist the Army's XXIV Corps in its advance. The 7th Marines, the last major unit of the division to transfer to the new theater of battle, completed its redeployment on 2 May. Progress against the enemy in the south had been halted at the Shuri Line, a strong network of Japanese defenses. The Army's repeated attempts at breaching the enemy's for-



USMC Photo 116632

Marines, including one equipped with a flamethrower, climb a stone wall as they drive across Okinawa. The 7th Marines reached the east coast on 3 April.



USMC Photo 121760

A machinegun opens up on an enemy position. Marine units moved to southern Okinawa after organized resistance ceased in the north.

tifications proved futile. General Buckner called for another effort but felt a breakthrough would require reinforcements. Both Marine divisions, therefore, shifted their zones of operation to southern Okinawa. Most Marine units were free to move since organized resistance in the north had ended on 21 April.⁵⁸

The 1st Division maneuvered into assault positions opposite the Dakeshi-Awacha hill complex, a heavily defended section of the Shuri Line. A new attack was launched by the Tenth Army in early May. Murderous fire slowed the 1st Marine Division's advance on the Shuri Line. The 7th Marines, however, did gain a firm hold on Dakeshi Ridge. The assault started on the morning of 11 May 1945. Prior to the 7th Marines' push, the Japanese unleashed a fusillade of mortar and machinegun fire on the 3d Battalion's positions. A foolhardy charge by the enemy followed. Division artillery opened up on the onrushing soldiers while the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines hurried to render support. The two battalions with artillery assistance beat back the attack and inflicted many casualties on the attackers. The 7th Marines subsequently went ahead with its own attack which started on schedule. Although weakened by their thrust, the Japanese remained capable of offering vigorous resistance to the American assault. The 1st and 2d Battalions, especially, found the going difficult, but the regiment by sheer

determination forced its way onto the ridge by nightfall.

Considerable credit for the regiment's success was given to Lieutenant Colonel James M. Masters, Sr., the 7th Marines' executive officer. Masters, who later became a lieutenant general and commandant of Marine Corps Schools, established an advanced observation post in the only possible position—on the frontlines. From there he observed and helped direct the attack. He continued to man the post, in spite of intense enemy mortar and small arms fire, and to report information vital to the capture of the desperately defended Dakeshi Ridge. He was awarded a Navy Cross for his efforts. A seesaw battle for control of the ridge raged on 12 May. The fighting was so violent that it brought back memories of the battles of Peleliu. Dakeshi Ridge was finally secured on the 13th.⁵⁹ The enemy apparently had remained determined to fight to the last man, because he held out for nearly the whole day despite the employment by the Marines of tanks, self-propelled 75mm guns, and 37mm antitank guns.⁶⁰

Company E, following the seizure of Dakeshi Ridge, sent a platoon towards Wana Ridge but forward movement was halted by the enemy. The Marines had to pull back to Dakeshi Ridge for the night. The 1st and 2d Battalions rested and reorganized during the next 3

days. Mopping-up operations also occurred, but no offensive engagements were ordered because of the weakened condition of both units. The 3d Battalion on the 17th relieved the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines since it could only muster a single company of effectives. On 17 May the 3d Battalion pressed the attack up Wana Ridge, but its ranks were thinned by a heavy volume of enemy fire. Lieutenant Colonel Hurst, the battalion commander, received a Navy Cross for assisting in the evacuation of a wounded man over a path swept by Japanese small arms fire. Bloodied and battered, the battalion was in turn relieved on 19 May by the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines. In 4 days of fighting Hurst's unit lost 12 officers, producing a severe shortage of leadership in the battalion. Equally as important was the painful fact that the entire regiment had sustained approximately 1,250 casualties from all causes between 10 and 19 May.⁶¹

The regiment stayed in reserve during near constant rain until 2 June 1945. A few days earlier, Japanese defenses along the Shuri Line crumpled with enemy units retreating to the island's southern tip for what looked like a last-ditch stand. The 7th Marines moved up to the front near Naha, the capital, and into positions previously occupied by elements of the 22d and 29th Marines, regiments of the 6th Division. The 2d Battalion, 7th Marines immediately crossed the Kokuba River and encountered a small Japanese force which was quickly brushed aside.⁶² Once the regiment established itself on the south bank of the river, its commanding officer, Colonel Snedeker, ordered his men to storm nearby hostile emplacements. Snedeker's goal was to close the neck of the Oroku Peninsula south of Naha, thus entrapping Japanese forces that had withdrawn there. Units of the 6th Marine Division in the meantime launched a direct assault on the peninsula itself. This coordinated operation resulted in the annihilation of practically all enemy soldiers on the peninsula. The 1st Division ordered another major advance upon completion of the bottling up of the Japanese on Okoku. Marine units were directed to push south and west toward the sea. Rain, mud, and rough terrain slowed the drive, but the Marines nevertheless reached the coast on 7 June. This resulted in the opening of a new supply route for the division. It now could be easily supplied by sea rather than by the arduous overland route. Dependence upon hazardous air drops was also eliminated.

The division next made a stab at the Itoman-Tera area. The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines initiated two at-

tempts at seizing high ground overlooking Tera but both failed. Concurrently, the 2d Battalion struck at enemy positions in the vicinity of Itoman. The next day, 10 June, the unit crashed through Japanese defenses and swept beyond the southern edge of the town. Success did not come without a price—five battalion officers were hit by enemy fire in the first 7 minutes of fighting. The 1st Battalion, aided by an artillery barrage, meanwhile seized its objective of the previous day.⁶³

The offensive continued with both battalions turning their attention to Kunishi Ridge, a heavily defended coral escarpment. On 11 June, the 2d Battalion pushed out from Itoman while the 1st Battalion started a drive from Tera. The frontal attack was quickly halted by accurate small arms fire and concentrated artillery and mortar volleys. Colonel Snedeker ordered a night assault to avoid needless casualties. Companies E and F moved out early on the 12th while it was still dark. The Americans surprised the Japanese and reached the crest of the ridge. A counterattack temporarily cut the companies off from the rest of the regiment. Reinforcing units with tank support forced their way onto the heights, but intense fire from the defenders thwarted the seizure of the ridge. The enemy was so well entrenched that the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines came up to assist in breaking the will of the Japanese to resist. The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, which had been in division reserve, also joined in the operation. Forward progress continued to be slow as Japanese opposition did not abate in spite of increased pressure. Naval gunfire had to be employed to destroy pockets of die-hard holdouts. The tired 7th Marines finally withdrew from the battle on the 18th as the fighting drew to a close. Its place was taken by the 8th Marines, a fresh unit from the 2d Marine Division. Colonel Snedeker eventually received the Navy Cross for leading his regiment through the last stages of the Okinawa campaign, including the successful penetration of hostile defenses on Kunishi Ridge.

Combat did not cease altogether for the 7th Marines even though it had been pulled back from the frontlines. Enemy snipers were active in its area causing a number of Marine casualties. In one encounter a concealed Japanese rifleman wounded Lieutenant Colonel Hurst in the neck. The 28-year-old battalion commander had to be evacuated and the command of the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines passed to Lieutenant Colonel Stephen V. Sabol on 19 June. Organized resistance ended 2 days later and the 7th Marines

redeployed north to the Motobu Peninsula for rest and rehabilitation.⁶⁴ Enemy casualties were extraordinarily high during the struggle for Okinawa. No exact toll has been tabulated, but various estimates have placed Japanese dead at well over 100,000. Unfortunately, many of these were civilians. American forces also paid a heavy price: 12,000 killed and over 36,600 wounded. All hostilities in the Pacific ended on 15 August, and the Second World War officially was concluded on 2 September 1945 when Japan formally surrendered to the Allies in Tokyo Bay.

North China Intervention and Occupation

As part of the 1st Marine Division, the 7th Marines had slogged its way through four rough, gruelling campaigns. The regiment had seen some of the toughest and bloodiest fighting of the war. With the war over the Marines felt relieved in knowing that they would not have to face the prospect of another battle. They expected an immediate return home, but this did not prove to be the case. Shortly after the surrender of Japan, the 1st Marine Division received orders to transfer to China.

Japanese forces in large numbers held vast sections

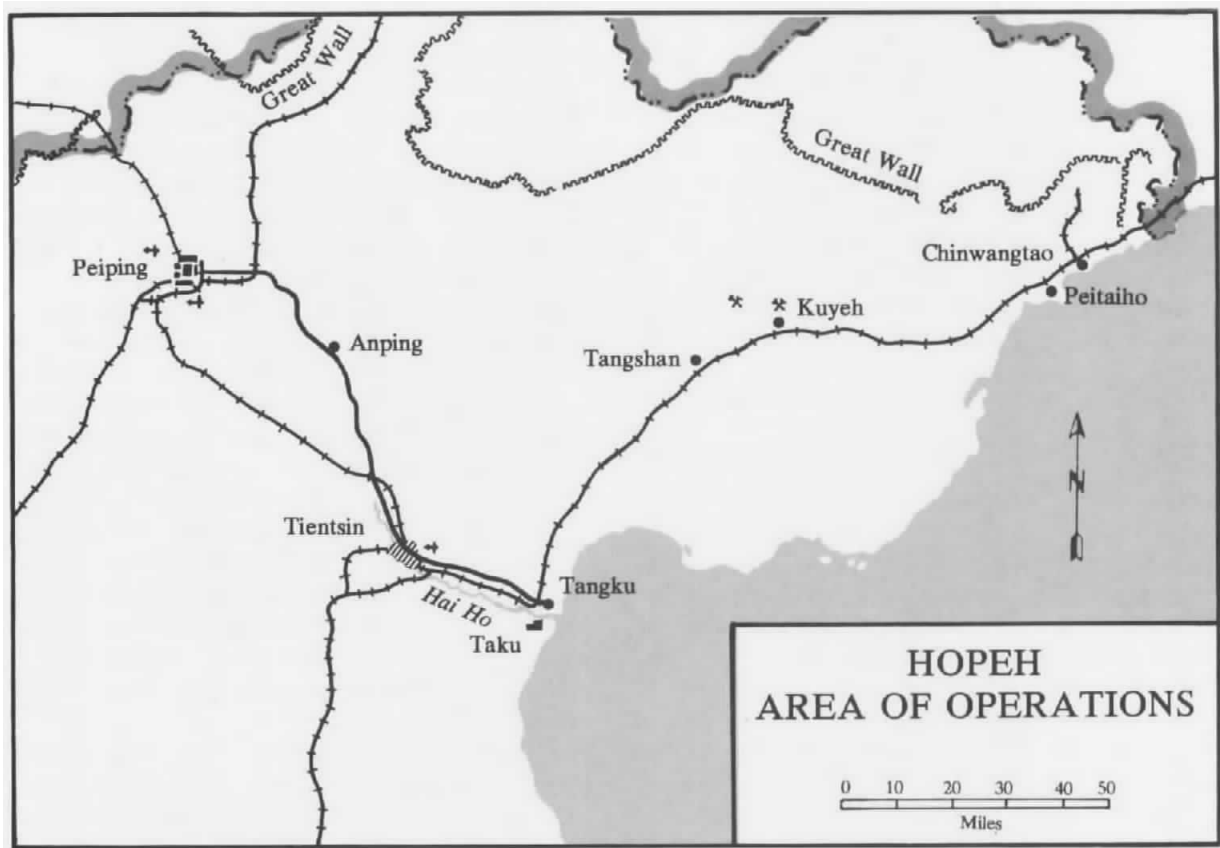
of North China. The Chinese Nationalist Government, having no readily available troops to relieve the Japanese, agreed to the continued use of former enemy units in garrisoning the area until Allied forces could take over the responsibility. The Nationalists thought that the agreement would prevent their old enemy, the Communists, from seizing the area. The American Government approved of such an arrangement and also agreed to send its own forces to aid the Nationalists in reoccupying the region. In some circles there had been worry over possible encroachments by the Soviet Union in North China if a vacuum was created there. Soviet armies had already taken Manchuria from the Japanese and their puppet supporters. The United States in the view of many, therefore, had a number of justifiable reasons for sending thousands of its troops to North China. Its goals there were: (1) to disarm and to accept the surrender of enemy troops including local native units allied to the Japanese; (2) to assist the Nationalists in reasserting their suzerainty over the area and thus prevent a forcible Communist takeover; and (3) to act as a barrier against Soviet imperialism.⁶⁵

The III Amphibious Corps was selected as the best suited organization for duty in China. Corps Headquarters, Corps Troops, and the 1st Marine Division went to Hopeh Province while the 6th Marine Division



USMC Photo 225046

Marines parade through the main street of Tientsin, China. Crowds line the street carrying the flags of both nations.



sion, less the 4th Marines, deployed to Shantung Province. Both divisions were supported by units of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing based on airfields in the two provinces. First Marine Division units had instructions to occupy positions in and around the cities of Tangku, Tientsin, Peiping, and Chinwangtao. Initial orders directed the Marines to accept the surrender of Japanese forces and their native auxiliaries and to supervise the repatriation of enemy military and civilian personnel.⁶⁶ The 7th Marines left Okinawa on 26 September and arrived and disembarked at Tangku 4 days later. For its new commanding officer, Colonel Richard P. Ross, it was a second tour in China. As a young officer he had been assigned to the Legation Guard in Peiping between 1929-1932.

Upon arrival, the 1st Battalion received further orders sending the unit to Chinwangtao on 1 October. There the battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Gormley, succeeded in bringing to an end the fighting that sporadically erupted between the Communists on one side and the Japanese and their Chinese allies on the other. Originally, the regiment was dispersed to the following localities: Tienstsin, Chinwangtao, Tangku, and Tangshan.⁶⁷ Although technically the

fighting had stopped in China, Marines did not come to view their assignment there as one normally associated with a peacetime garrison force. They were instructed to prepare for any eventuality including combat with hostile units. And on occasions fighting did break out between Marines and Communist Chinese soldiers.

Late in October 1945, the 7th Marines received responsibility for guarding the vital rail line between Tangku and Chinwangtao. Protection of the coal mines at Tangshan also came under the jurisdiction of the regiment. In conjunction with the safeguarding of the railroad, detachments were placed along the route in fixed positions—the most common being bridges and train stations. Their mission was to make sure that rail traffic, especially coal destined for Shanghai, moved uninterrupted along the line.⁶⁸ The regiment remained occupied in this task for nearly 6 months. Often the outpost units were little more than the size of an average infantry squad. The duty was lonely and dangerous with the men not having, at least initially, adequate quarters, clothing, or rations to endure the harsh winter of North China. Meanwhile, the political-military situation in the country continued to



USMC Photo 226307

A machinegun crew guards a train on the Tientsin-Chinwangtao Railroad. This railroad was vital to the Leathernecks who were assisting in the disarmament and evacuation of Japanese forces in the area.

deteriorate. Open warfare flared between the Nationalists and the Communists. Simultaneously, pressure was mounting in the United States to demobilize its huge military machine and to withdraw from China. By early spring 1946, the Japanese repatriation program was almost complete. The American Government, taking all these factors into consideration, decided to reorganize its forces in North China. Deactivation of certain Marine units and the transfer of their personnel to the United States then followed. Lieutenant Colonel Sabol's 3d Battalion, 7th Marines was one organization selected for deactivation. Disbandment occurred on 15 April 1946 at the Chinese town of Peitaiho after the battalion had moved there from Tangshan.⁶⁹

The uneasy relations that existed between the Marines and Communist guerrillas grew worse during July 1946. On the 13th, eight men from the 7th Marines who had been guarding a bridge near Peitaiho left to search for ice in a nearby village. The men wanted to use the ice to help alleviate the blistering heat of the hot summer day. However, going to the village was a violation of a division directive against leaving a defensive position. The Marines found no ice; instead, all were captured by Communist troops.

One man did escape and alerted the regimental headquarters. Combat patrols from the 1st and 2d Battalion, 7th Marines fanned out through the countryside in pursuit of the Communists. All traces of the guerrilla band and its captives had vanished. Negotiations with the Communists eventually led to an early release of the men on 24 July. Five days after their capture, a much more serious incident took place. On this occasion a convoy was ambushed near Anping between Peiping and Tientsin. The attack resulted in 4 dead and 10 wounded, all from the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines.⁷⁰

Withdrawal of Marines from China extended into 1947 with Colonel Paul Drake's 7th Marines being one of the first units ordered home that year. The entire regiment transferred to Chinwangtao and boarded the transports USS *Bollinger* (APA 234) and *Chilton* (APA 38). Sailing took place on the 3d and 5th of January 1947 with arrival in San Diego coming approximately 3 weeks later. Relocation to nearby Camp Pendleton followed with the regiment being attached to the 3d Marine Brigade. Demobilization plans called for the deactivation of the 7th Marines soon after its return to the United States. Weapons Company was deactivated on 19 February 1947. The 2d Battalion

followed a week later. In March, the 1st Battalion was deactivated on the 5th, while Headquarters Company went out of existence on the following day.⁷¹

The regiment's postwar inactive status did not endure for long. A major reorganization of units in the Marine Corps that fall led to the reestablishment of the 7th Marines. It was reborn at Camp Pendleton on 1 October but in an abbreviated state. Colonel Alva B. Lasswell was placed in command. The unit consisted only of Headquarters, A, B, and C Companies. Men of this battalion-size organization came from the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines. Subsequently, the new condensed version of the 7th Marines embarked upon a combat-training program. Its three lettered companies in April 1948 temporarily transferred to Barstow, California. The following January, all four companies received orders to deploy to Alaska for cold weather training. The 7th Marines loaded on board the transport USS *Bronx* (APA 236) at San Diego and sailed on 18 January 1949 for Kodiak. After a stay of less than a month, the unit returned to California.⁷²

Within a few weeks of its completion of the Alaskan deployment, the 7th Marines was alerted for an emergency move to China. The last vestige of America's occupation of North China was in the process of being liquidated during spring 1949. Concern, however, over the security of the handful of remaining Americans in China mounted as the withdrawal concluded. A decision was made to send temporarily a battalion-size unit of infantry to China to ensure the safe departure of those military and civilian personnel still there. The 7th Marines thus received orders to sail to China to protect American citizens from possible attacks. Headquarters and Companies A and B embarked on board the heavy cruiser USS *St. Paul* (CA 73) at San Pedro, California and sailed on 22 April. Company C also left from the same port but on the light cruiser USS *Manchester* (CL 83).⁷³ By the time the two ships reached Pearl Harbor a new recommendation had been made. Instead of a battalion a rifle company was requested. Company C, as a result, was detached and sent on to the Far East. The rest of the unit returned to Camp Pendleton at the end of May after sailing to Alameda, California. Company C, commanded by Captain George E. Kittredge, Jr., moved to its destination without incident. It remained in Chinese and adjacent waters for 6 weeks, entering such ports as Tsingtao, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. The withdrawal of Americans was completed shortly after its arrival. Fortunately, no serious outbreak of attacks marred the exit.

Its task successfully terminated, Company C sailed from Chinese waters for Manila in the Philippines in the latter part of June. The company, accordingly, had the distinction of being the last element of the Fleet Marine Force to leave China. Its departure brought to a close a long and colorful chapter in Marine Corps History. The "China Marine" was no more. Company C, 7th Marines returned to Camp Pendleton on 16 July and rejoined its parent organization. Further reductions in Marine Corps strength led to another reorganization, which as a by-product saw the second postwar deactivation of the 7th Marines. It went into effect on 1 October 1949.⁷⁴

*Aggression in Korea—Return to Asia*⁷⁵

A new emergency arose in mid-1950 to precipitate the reactivation of the regiment. Early on 25 June, Marshal Choe Yong Gun, commanding the North Korean Army, unleashed a carefully planned attack across the 38th parallel, the dividing line between North and South Korea. The invasion came without justification or warning. The bulk of the invading force converged on Seoul, the capital of the Republic of Korea. Ignoring a United Nations resolution calling upon North Korea to cease its aggression, the North Korean Army pushed down the peninsula smashing South Korean defenders. President Harry S Truman announced on 27 June that he had ordered American air and naval forces to support the retreating South Korean (ROK) Army. The United Nations Security Council on the same day recommended that member nations furnish aid to the beleaguered South Koreans. President Truman 3 days later authorized the use of American ground troops in the war. American Army units shortly thereafter started crossing from Japan to Korea in an attempt to stem the invasion.⁷⁶

Marine ground forces were also soon committed. The first unit to enter the war-torn peninsula was the understrength 5th Marines, accompanied by Marine Aircraft Group 33. The initial landing took place at Pusan on 2 August 1950. Back in the United States the rest of the 1st Marine Division embarked on a hurried program of making itself ready for combat. It had to be brought up to wartime strength. The 7th Marines, consequently, was reborn at Camp Pendleton on 17 August 1950. Its structure paralleled that which existed during World War II—a headquarters element plus three battalions. Colonel Homer L. ("Litz the Blitz") Litzenberg, Jr., was assigned as