

# VICTORY AND OCCUPATION

## History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II



## VOLUME V

HISTORICAL BRANCH, G-3 DIVISION, HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS

# Victory and Occupation

HISTORY OF U. S. MARINE CORPS

OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II

VOLUME V

*by*

BENIS M. FRANK

HENRY I. SHAW, JR.

*Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps*

1968

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## Foreword

This book represents the final work in the five-volume history of Marine Corps operations in World War II. The story of the Okinawa campaign, told earlier in a separate monograph, has been reevaluated and rewritten to detail events in proper proportion to each other and in a correct perspective to the war as a whole. New material, particularly from Japanese sources and from the recorded interviews conducted with senior Marine Corps officers who participated in the Marine Corps Oral History Program, has been included to provide fresh insight into the Marine Corps' contribution to the final victory of the Pacific War.

These pages cover Marine Corps activities in the Okinawa invasion and the occupations of Japan and North China as well as the little-known story of Marine prisoners of war. The book relates the Corps' postwar demobilization and reorganization programs as well. By 1945, amphibious warfare doctrine and techniques had become highly developed. While new and improved weapons were employed in the Okinawa campaign, the landing operation itself realistically demonstrated the soundness of fundamental amphibious doctrine developed over the years by the Navy and the Marine Corps. Again, as at Guadalcanal, the battle for Okinawa clearly reemphasized the fact that basic Marine Corps tactics and techniques were sound. An outgrowth of the lessons learned at Okinawa was the establishment of a balanced air-ground amphibious force in readiness which has become the hallmark of the present-day Marine Corps. Many of the senior officers and commanders at Okinawa were prewar teachers and planners who had participated in the early operations of the war in the Pacific. The successful application at Okinawa of the knowledge, expertise, and experiences of these individuals against a fanatic foe fighting a last-ditch battle to protect his homeland was a vital factor in the final victory over Japan.

The assault and capture of Okinawa represents the most ambitious joint Army-Navy-Marine Corps operation in the history of the Pacific War. Statistically, in comparison to previous assaults in this war zone, the numbers of men, ships, and planes as well as the tons of munitions and supplies employed in this campaign stagger the imagination. But, had the enemy not capitulated in face of the American victories in the western Pacific and as a result of the atom bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Naga-

saki, the personnel and logistics figures reflecting the requirements for the planned assault on Japan would have been even more overwhelming. Fortunately for both sides, the war ended before more blood was shed.

After participating in several Central Pacific landings, I returned to the United States and was assigned to Headquarters Marine Corps. From this vantage point, I observed the conduct of Marine Corps operations in the late stages of the war, when ground, sea, and air forces drove relentlessly towards the heart of the Japanese Empire. I also viewed with great pride the outstanding performance of duty of Marine occupation troops in Japan and North China. Here, small units and individual Marines proved themselves and the validity of Marine Corps training and discipline under conditions that were often trying. The fund of command experience acquired by junior officers and noncommissioned officers in a variety of circumstances has since been drawn on constantly in peace and war.

Similarly, the discipline and training of Marines captured at the outbreak of the war and after was tried and found not wanting in face of trials that beggar the imagination. In their own way, against the ever-present threat of death, these men continued fighting the enemy by various means, including sabotage and escape. The heroism of such Marines equalled and at times surpassed the records of the men who were engaged in the march across the Pacific. The record of our Marine POWs in World War II is something we can all be proud of.

Like other active duty Marines at the end of the war, I, too, experienced the period of transition when the Corps reverted to a peacetime role in the defense of this nation. Responsive to its combat experiences in World War II, the Marine Corps made many tactical and organizational changes, as this book shows. Unchanged, however, was our highly prized esprit de corps, which, even as this is written, is being as jealously guarded as when our Corps was first formed.

When the roll of America's battle honors is read, the names of the World War II campaigns in which Marines fought—Wake Island to Okinawa—will strike a familiar ring to all who cherish liberty and freedom. I am proud of my association with the men who won these honors and to have shared their hardships and their victories.

*Wallace M. Greene, Jr.*

WALLACE M. GREENE, JR.  
GENERAL, U.S. MARINE CORPS  
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

Reviewed and approved  
29 November 1967

## Preface

After the amphibious assault of Guadalcanal, which marked the opening of the American offensive in the Pacific, the steadily accelerating tempo of successful operations against the enemy inexorably led to an Allied victory in the war. Highlighting American operations was the Navy-Marine Corps team's extensive reliance on the employment of amphibious warfare techniques developed in the years before the war and improved upon under combat conditions.

The Okinawa landing has been accurately depicted as representing the culmination of amphibious development in the Pacific War and as the most audacious and complex military effort undertaken by amphibious forces of the Pacific Fleet. This operation also marked the last major ground action of the war against Japan, and the touchstone to the decisive Allied victory here was the massive interservice effort which, as much as anything else, hastened enemy capitulation.

Victory at Okinawa and the subsequent end of the war did not signal any letdown in the number and types of missions facing the Marine Corps, for at the same time that the postwar demobilization program drastically reduced their strength, Fleet Marine Force units were assigned to occupation duty in Japan and North China and to re-establishing the Pacific garrisons. This book treats these and such other hitherto-unpublished matters as the tragic story of those Marines who became prisoners of war. Appearing here also for the first time is a full treatment of the development and organization of the Marine infantry division and the many changes it experienced during the course of the war. In addition, this book presents an overview of the salient facts concerning Marine Corps campaigns in the Pacific War first discussed in the previously published volumes of this series.

Our purpose in publishing this operational history in durable form is to make the Marine Corps record permanently available for study by military personnel and the general public as well as by serious students of military history. We have made a conscious effort to be objective in our treatment of the actions of Marines and of the men of other services who fought at their side. We have tried to write with understanding about our former enemies and in this effort have received invaluable help from the Japanese themselves. Few people so militant and unyielding in war have, in

peace, been as dispassionate and analytical about their actions. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Mr. Susumu Nishiura, Chief of the War History Office, Defense Agency of Japan, and to the many researchers and historians of his office that reviewed our draft manuscripts.

This five-volume series was planned and outlined by Mr. Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Chief Historian, while Mr. Benis M. Frank was responsible for Volume V itself. Mr. Shaw wrote the story of Marines in North China and his earlier research and writing provided the basis for that part of the book concerning Marines in the occupation of Japan. Mr. Frank wrote the rest of this book, revising and editing it for publication. In his research on the Okinawa operation, Mr. Frank frequently consulted the material assembled for the monograph *Okinawa: Victory in the Pacific* by Major Charles S. Nichols, Jr., and Mr. Shaw. Mr. Frank also prepared all the appendices. Successive Heads of the Historical Branch—Major John H. Johnstone, Colonel Thomas G. Roe, Colonel Joseph F. Wagner, Jr., Lieutenant Colonel Richard J. Schening, and Colonel Frank C. Caldwell—made the final critical review of portions of the manuscript. The book was completed under the direction of Colonel Caldwell, current Head of the Branch.

A number of leading participants in the actions described have commented on the preliminary drafts of pertinent portions of the book. Their valuable assistance is gratefully acknowledged. Several senior officers, in particular General Alexander A. Vandegrift, General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., General Gerald C. Thomas, Lieutenant General Keller E. Rockey, Lieutenant General Louis E. Woods, Lieutenant General Pedro A. del Valle, Lieutenant General Francis P. Mulcahy, Major General DeWitt Peck, Major General William A. Worton, Major General Ford O. Rogers, Major General Wilburt S. Brown, and Rear Admiral Charles J. Moore made valuable additions to their written comments during personal interviews. A number of these interviews were conducted by Mr. Frank in his capacity as Head of the Oral History Unit, Historical Branch, which administers the Marine Corps Oral History Program.

Special thanks are due to the historical agencies of the other services for their critical readings of draft chapters of this book. Outstanding among the many official historians who measurably assisted the authors were: the late Dr. John Miller, Jr., Deputy Chief Historian, and Dr. Stetson Conn, Chief Historian, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army; Dr. Dean C. Allard, Head, Operational Archives Branch, Naval History Division, Department of the Navy; and Dr. Robert F. Futrell, Historian, Historical Studies Branch, U. S. Air Force Historical Division, Aerospace Studies Institute, Maxwell Air Force Base.

Chief Warrant Officer Jo E. Kennedy, and his predecessors as Historical Branch Administrative Officer, Second Lieutenant Gerald S. Duncan and First Lieutenants John J. Hainsworth and D'Arcy E. Grisier, ably

handled the many exacting duties involved in processing the volume from first drafts through final printed form. A number of the early preliminary typescripts were prepared by Mrs. Miriam R. Smallwood, Mrs. Joyce E. Bonnett, and Miss Alexandria Jozwick, while the remainder were done by Miss Kay P. Sue, who expertly handled the painstaking task of typing the final manuscript for the printer. Miss Sue also did much of the meticulous work demanded in preparing the index.

The maps were drafted by Sergeant Thomas L. Russell. Unless otherwise noted, official Department of Defense photographs have been used throughout the text.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'H. Nickerson, Jr.', written in dark ink.

H. NICKERSON, JR.  
MAJOR GENERAL, U.S. MARINE CORPS  
ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, G-3



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**PART I**

*Prologue to the End*



# Strategic Background

In a report submitted to Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal on 12 March 1945, the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet (CominCh), Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, stated that:

The amphibious operations of the spring, summer and autumn of 1944 carried our forces such great distances across the Pacific that in February 1945 they were enabled to begin the assault upon the inner defenses of the Japanese Empire itself.<sup>1</sup>

Recognizing all that had been accomplished to the date of his report, Admiral King at the same time cautioned against complacency and warned of "a long, tough and laborious road ahead."<sup>2</sup>

Among the many factors leading to the favorable Allied posture in the Pacific at the beginning of 1945 was the strategic concept for the prosecution of the Pacific War adopted at the Cairo Conference (SEXTANT) in December 1943. In essence, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill agreed upon a grand plan that dictated the thrust of two concurrent and mutually supporting series of operations across the Pacific towards the heart of the Japanese Empire. These drives along

separate approach axes would establish bases from which a massive effort could be launched against the Formosa-Luzon-China coastal areas in the spring of 1945.

One drive, to be mounted by Allied forces under General Douglas MacArthur, Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area (CinCSWPA),<sup>3</sup> was to move along the northern coast of

<sup>3</sup> On 3 March 1942, the Combined Chiefs of Staff approved for the Western Pacific a dividing line that separated assigned spheres of command in that area. Burma and all South-east Asia west of a north-south line between Java and Sumatra were added to General Sir Archibald V. Wavell's India Command responsibility, and the British Chiefs of Staff were charged with the strategic direction of this theater. The whole Pacific east of the new line was assigned to American Joint Chiefs of Staff control. The JCS then divided the Pacific into two strategic regions; the one in which the Navy would have paramount interests was the Pacific Ocean Areas, and the other in which the Army would be dominant was the Southwest Pacific Area. On 18 March 1942, MacArthur was designated CinCSWPA; on 3 April, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, was confirmed as the commander of the Pacific Ocean Areas. See LtCol Frank O. Hough, Maj Verle E. Ludwig, and Henry I. Shaw, Jr., *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal—History of U. S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, v. 1 (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1958) pp. 86-87, hereafter Hough, Ludwig, and Shaw, *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal*, and Map I, Map Section of that volume, for additional information concerning these two American commands.

<sup>1</sup> *The War Reports of General of the Army George C. Marshall, General of the Army H. H. Arnold, and Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1947), p. 613, hereafter *War Reports*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 649.

New Guinea and thence to the Philippines; in the second, forces of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Area (CinCPOA), would push through the Central Pacific to the core of Japanese island defenses guarding the heart of the Empire. During this two-pronged advance, the major components of the Pacific Fleet, under Nimitz as Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (CinCPac), would support, as assigned, specific amphibious operations within both strategic command areas, and at the same time contain the Japanese fleet.

Almost immediately after the two heads of state had approved at SEXTANT the revised plan for the defeat of Japan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), forwarded the directive to MacArthur and Nimitz, whose staffs and commands took steps to implement it. January 1944 opened with a landing at Saidor in New Guinea. At the end of the month, Central Pacific forces landed in the Marshalls and spent February thrusting deeply into the island group to collapse those outposts of the imperial defenses.<sup>4</sup> By the end of March, the Bismarck Archipelago barrier had been permanently breached and airfields and harbors seized in the Admiralties. MacArthur's forces began the drive up the New Guinea coast in April, with landings at Aitape and Hollandia. With

the naval attack on and immobilization of Truk, the capture of Guam, Saipan, and Tinian in the Marianas during the summer of 1944, and the defeat of the Japanese fleet in the First Battle of the Philippine Sea, the Central Pacific drive cut the inner ring of Japanese island defenses in several places and consolidated footholds from which the drive westward was to continue. After the amphibious assaults on Peleliu and Angaur and the unopposed capture of Ulithi for use as a fleet anchorage and an advance base, Admiral Nimitz' forces stood poised on the threshold of the Japanese defenses ringing the Home Islands.<sup>5</sup>

By the end of July, Admiral William F. Halsey's South Pacific troops had advanced up the Solomons, and MacArthur's forces along hundreds of miles of the northern coast of New Guinea, in a series of leapfrogging operations. Thousands of Japanese soldiers on Bougainville, New Britain, New Ireland, and New Guinea itself were neutralized and isolated, and beyond hope of being effectively employed elsewhere. In September, MacArthur's forces occupied Morotai, southeast of the Philippines, before the planned landing on Mindanao.

In the course of naval covering strikes prior to the landings on Morotai and in the Western Carolines, Admiral Halsey's

<sup>4</sup> For the story of the Marshalls landing and the Central Pacific drive, see Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Bernard C. Nalty, and Edwin T. Turnbladh, *The Central Pacific Drive—History of U. S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, v. III (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1966), hereafter Shaw, Nalty, and Turnbladh, *The Central Pacific Drive*.

<sup>5</sup> For the Peleliu operation and the story of Marine aviation in the Central Pacific, see George W. Garand and Truman R. Strobridge, "Operations in the Western Pacific—History of U. S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II," v. IV, to be published in 1969, hereafter Garand and Strobridge, "Western Pacific Operations."

fast carrier forces had discovered surprisingly weak enemy resistance in the central Philippines. In a follow-up to this discovery, the line of advance through the Southwest Pacific was re-oriented northwards. Fully aware of "the necessity of being alert for symptoms of enemy weakness and of being ready to exploit them," Halsey recommended an early return of American troops to the Philippines in the Leyte-Samar area and cancellation of certain operations scheduled elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> His recommendation was approved by the JCS.

In the overall planning for the defeat of Japan, the strategists anticipated that the final phase of the Pacific War would involve a massive assault against the industrial heartland of the Empire by means of amphibious landings on the southern coast of Honshu in the area bounded by Shimonoseki in the south and the Kanto Plain near Tokyo in the north. Successful Allied operations in 1944 had brought ultimate victory into sight, and submarine blockade and air bombardment both had the Japanese viewing ultimate defeat, but some American commanders doubted the wisdom of using the Formosa-Luzon-China area as a springboard from which to launch the attack against Japan in 1945. More importantly, they believed that valuable time was being wasted and that a decision had to be made. In view of the SEXTANT Plan, and the advanced state of the operations against Japan, JCS

<sup>6</sup> FAdm William F. Halsey, USN, and LCdr J. Bryan, III, USNR, *Admiral Halsey's Story* (New York: Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1947), p. 199, hereafter Halsey and Bryan, *Halsey's Story*.

planners were confronted with the problem of whether American forces should: (1) move on to Luzon and the rest of the Philippines, (2) invade only Luzon in the Philippines and also strike at Formosa and the China coast, or (3) attack the Philippines, Formosa, and the China coast. Arising out of the third option was an additional thorny problem—which area to attack first.

While Admiral King and some planners in Washington considered the possibility of entirely bypassing the Philippines, this concept was apparently only a minor aspect of the major effort by many officers to have Luzon, in particular, bypassed. The alternative to this was the seizure of Formosa. On the other hand, ample evidence exists to indicate that those who sought the Formosa objective did not intend this to be an exclusive operation, for they believed that the invasion of Luzon could proceed simultaneously with the Formosa operation or take place at a later date.<sup>7</sup>

Determined to return to the Philippines, MacArthur doubted the necessity of the Marianas campaign but generally approved the Palaus landings since they would directly support his impending operations. Admiral King took just the opposite view; he concluded that the occupation of the Marianas was essential and that the necessity of recapturing all of the Philippine Islands was questionable. Furthermore, he was firmly convinced that the main American effort should be bent in mounting a drive across the Central Pacific to Formosa

<sup>7</sup> Dir, Naval Hist, ltr to Hd, HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, dtd 4Nov65, hereafter *Dir, Naval Hist ltr I*.

and then on to the China coast.<sup>8</sup> Although various subordinate commanders in the Pacific Ocean Area held conflicting views regarding what course should be taken for the final phases of the war, the SEXTANT decision made it imperative that their staffs spend most of 1944 in planning for Operation CAUSEWAY, the invasion of Formosa, projected for the spring of 1945.

On the basis of a JCS directive issued on 12 March 1944,<sup>9</sup> the prevailing conflict was partially allayed. Admiral Nimitz was directed to land on 15 June in the Southern Marianas and on 15 September in the Palaus. General MacArthur was instructed to seize Hollandia in April and make plans for a landing on 15 November on Mindanao. Contained in the JCS order was a statement of long-range objectives that required Nimitz as CinCPOA to prepare the plans for an assault early in 1945 on Formosa, and assigned CinCSWPA the responsibility of planning for the recapture of Luzon "should such operations prove necessary prior to the move on Formosa."<sup>10</sup>

In view of the March JCS directive, which outlined the general concept of CAUSEWAY, Nimitz reconsidered and revised the troop list for the operation

<sup>8</sup> FAdm Ernest H. King and Cdr Walter M. Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King: A Naval Record* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1952), p. 537, hereafter King and Whitehill, *King's Naval Record*.

<sup>9</sup> JCS 713/4, dtd 12Mar44, cited in Maj Charles S. Nichols, Jr., and Henry I. Shaw, Jr., *Okinawa: Victory in the Pacific* (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1955), p. 12, hereafter Nichols and Shaw, *Okinawa Victory*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

many times, and finally designated the task force commanders. Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, Commander, Fifth Fleet and Central Pacific Task Forces was to be in overall charge. Vice Admiral Richmond K. Turner was to command the expeditionary forces, and Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner, Jr., USA, was to command the expeditionary troops and the Tenth Army.<sup>11</sup>

Further discussion regarding what the nature of Pacific strategy was to be following the Marianas operation continued after the JCS had directed the preparation of plans for CAUSEWAY. This topic was the subject of one of the periodic conferences which Admirals King and Nimitz and their key deputies held throughout the war, either at Pearl Harbor or San Francisco. At one such meeting on 6 May 1944, Vice Admiral Charles M. Cooke, Jr., King's chief of staff, pointed out that, although the JCS directive envisioned a landing on Formosa in February 1945, the best time for this operation—in view of other considerations—would probably be November-December 1944.<sup>12</sup> Cooke also noted that once Japan had been cut off from the mainland, her islands could be bombed and perhaps Kyushu even invaded.

During 1944, the Joint War Plans Committee (JWPC) had also considered

<sup>11</sup> CinCPOA msg of 10Aug44 to addrees, cited in History of USAFMidPac and Predecessor Commands During World War II, 7Dec41-2Sep45, Hist of G-5 Sec, n.d., p. 174, (OCMH), hereafter *USAFMidPac G-5 Hist*.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes, 2d meeting, CominCh-CinCPac Pacific Conference, 6May44, p. 14 (OAB, NHD), hereafter *Minutes CominCh-CinCPac Conference* with date.

what the nature of future Pacific strategy should be. In early June, it issued a comprehensive study which far exceeded in scope and perspective the previous strategic positions taken by the Joint Chiefs and the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS), and outlined a series of campaigns that would lead to an assault on the Tokyo Plain by the end of 1945.<sup>13</sup> In this study, the JWPC pointed out that in view of the present and anticipated rate of advance of increasingly stronger American forces in the Pacific, it would appear that the "Inner Zone Defense of Japan" would be reached by spring 1945. The study concluded that the overall strategy approved at SEXTANT was inadequate, *i.e.*, future operations as planned extended only to the perimeter of the Formosa-Luzon line.

Instead, the JWPC recommended a new schedule or strategic concept for ending the war in the Pacific. The committee suggested that three phases precede the invasion of Japan: (1) During the period 1 April to 30 June 1945, American forces would seize positions in the Bonins and the Ryukyus from which they would launch an invasion against the central China coast in the Hangchow Bay area; (2) They would spend the time from 30 June to 30 September in consolidating and initially exploiting the China beachhead; and (3) The forces would land in Southern

Kyushu 1 October and on the Tokyo Plain on Honshu on 31 December. This planning paper was passed to the Joint Staff Planners, who approved and forwarded it to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who likewise favored the revised concept. On 11 July, the CCS received the study along with a JCS recommendation that the SEXTANT timetable for operations in the Pacific be changed to reflect the suggested JWPC schedule.

At one of the meetings held during the CominCh-CinCPac conference in the period 13-22 July 1944, Admiral King informed the conferees of the JCS action regarding the JWPC study. He also indicated that he believed Luzon could not be invaded before Formosa or Japan without the Americans first investigating what Saipan and Guam could offer in the way of fleet anchorages and base facilities for the support of the Luzon invasion forces.<sup>14</sup> Vice Admiral John H. Tower, Commander, Air Forces, Pacific Fleet, stated that neither the areas in American possession at that time or prospectively available would permit the establishment of naval and supply bases which would be adequate for the support of the future operations contemplated in the JWPC study.<sup>15</sup>

Along these lines, it was suggested that the feasibility and advisability of

<sup>13</sup> JPS 476, dtd 4Jun44, Subj: Operations Against Japan, Subsequent to Formosa, cited in Ray S. Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division—United States Army in World War II* (Washington: OCMH, DA, 1951), p. 337, hereafter Cline, *Washington Command Post*.

<sup>14</sup> *Minutes, CominCh-CinCPac Conference, 13-22Jul44*, p. 10. It should be noted that Saipan, invaded on 15 June, was not secured until 9 July, when the general mop-up began. The invasion of Guam, which had been delayed until 21 July, had caused a backup in the supply pipeline and it was contemplated that this situation could adversely affect subsequent operations.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

taking San Pedro Bay in Leyte Gulf as a fleet anchorage be investigated. Although considerable discussion of this recommendation resulted, no firm decision was made at this time.

Regarding the invasion of the Bonins, Admiral Tower stated that, because the United States plans for the establishment of VLR (very long range) bomber bases in the Marianas were close to being realized, steps to enhance their effectiveness should be taken at the earliest practicable date. This meant the seizure and development of positions in the Bonins, where fighter and bomber aircraft stationed on fields developed there could supplement and support the planned air raids on Japan. On the other hand, Admiral Tower added that a study of the prospective employment of fleet and assault forces did not indicate the Bonins could be taken until 1945, unless the timing of then currently planned operations could be drastically revised. Because these were of greater importance in the overall scheme for the defeat of Japan, the occupations of Iwo Jima and Chichi Jima would have to be deferred.<sup>16</sup>

Most of the others present at this meeting generally agreed with Admiral Tower's conclusions. Rear Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, Nimitz' chief of staff and head of his War Plans Division, pointed out that for the invasions of Leyte and Formosa—the two major operations of a decisive nature scheduled following the completion of the landings in the Palau—American forces had been tailored down considerably. Sherman emphasized that if more ships and

troops became available, they should be employed to supplement those already assigned to the landings on Leyte and Formosa. In no case, should they be diverted for such "minor operations" as the occupation of Iwo Jima and Chichi Jima.<sup>17</sup>

Admiral King agreed with this line of thinking, and added that it would be unwise to assault the Bonins until American forces were ready to invade Japan following the Formosa operation. Nonetheless, at this time, he directed CinCPac to prepare plans for the invasion of the Bonins.

As for determining those objectives that were to follow the capture of the Southern Marianas and the Palau and were to be mounted before the invasion of Japan, even President Roosevelt's visit to Pearl Harbor late in July to confer with MacArthur and Nimitz failed to resolve the impasse. When the conference began, Admiral Nimitz, the first to speak, presented the Navy position.

Contrary to general belief, no real controversy arose between Nimitz and MacArthur regarding the conduct of future operations against Japan. Nimitz made this quite clear in a letter to Admiral King, summarizing in a few words the discussions at the Pearl Harbor meetings. Nimitz told CominCh that:

... our conferences with the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy [President Roosevelt] and the Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area [MacArthur] were quite satisfactory. The general trend of the discussion, like our own, was along the line of seeing

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

MacArthur into the central Philippines, thereafter going direct to the Formosa Strait, and leaving the SWPA forces to work into Luzon under the cover of the Formosa operation. It was made clear that the time has not yet arrived for firm decisions on moves subsequent to Leyte.<sup>18</sup>

It is possible, however, that Nimitz and some of his staff had some doubts on the feasibility of the Formosa operation and the concept underlying the Formosa-first policy. Partial evidence for this is found in the fact that CinCPac staff members had prepared plans to seize Okinawa as a substitute for Formosa "well before such an operation gained serious consideration among high-level planners in Washington."<sup>19</sup>

After listening to the views of both MacArthur and Nimitz, the President returned to Washington without rendering a decision on the courses of action to be followed after the landings on Leyte. Nor does it appear that a firm decision for post-Leyte operations was expected. Although Nimitz may have entertained other opinions concerning future strat-

<sup>18</sup> Adm Chester W. Nimitz ltr to Adm Ernest J. King, dtd 31Jul44 (OAB, NHD). This letter also indicates that King favored the establishment of positions in the southern or central Philippines.

<sup>19</sup> Robert R. Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines—United States Army in World War II—The War in the Pacific* (Washington: OCMH, DA, 1963), p. 9. For a thorough discussion of the Luzon-Formosa controversy, see *Ibid.*, chap 1, "The Debate Over Luzon," and Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Liberation of the Philippines—Luzon, Mindanao, the Visayas: 1944-1945—History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, v. XIII (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1959), chap 1, "Planning for Luzon, October-December 1944."

egy, he was still operating under a JCS directive relative to the Formosa operation. On 23 August 1944, the CinCPac joint staff study of CAUSEWAY was published. In this document Admiral Nimitz indicated that he intended to invade Formosa after SWPA forces had established positions in the south and central Philippines. Following the successful operations on Formosa, the Ryukyus and the Bonins or the China coast were to be invaded as a prelude to the assault on Japan itself. A Luzon operation, as such, was not mentioned in this plan.

The dispute remained unresolved until 9 September, when, at the Quebec Conference (OCTAGON), the Combined Chiefs of Staff formally adopted and incorporated the JWPC concept within the SEXTANT schedule for the defeat of Japan, and in effect revised it. For planning purposes, the CCS then approved a new schedule of operations, which ended the campaigns of 1945 with a landing on Kyushu in October and on the Tokyo Plain in December.<sup>20</sup>

The Combined Chiefs also agreed that, if the Formosa operation materialized, it would be preceded by invasions of the Bonins in April, the Ryukyus in May, and the China coast in the period March to June 1945. On 15 September 1944, the JCS further clarified impending Pacific operations by cancelling the scheduled invasions of Mindanao and Yap and

<sup>20</sup> CCS 417/8, dtd 9Sep44, title: Opn for the Defeat of Japan; CCS 417/9, OCTAGON, dtd 11Sep44, title: Over-All Objective in War Against Japan; Min 173d Meeting CCS, 13Sep44, all cited in Cline, *Washington Command Post*, p. 339.



*ADMIRAL NIMITZ briefs General MacArthur, President Roosevelt, and Admiral Leahy at the July 1944 Pearl Harbor conference. (USA SC207297)*



*COMBINED CHIEFS OF STAFF meet with President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill at the OCTAGON Conference in Quebec, September 1944. (USA SC194469)*

setting 20 October as the date for the invasion of Leyte.<sup>21</sup>

On 11 September, Lieutenant General Millard F. Harmon, Commanding General, Army Air Forces (AAF), Pacific Ocean Areas, proposed the abandonment of the Formosa operation in favor of amphibious landings in the Bonins and the Ryukyus. Harmon recommended the capture of Iwo Jima by 1 January 1945 and Luzon by 1 June 1945. Further, he suggested that POA troops seize Okinawa and Amami O Shima after MacArthur's forces recaptured Luzon; Kyushu was to be invaded in September 1945. Harmon also stated that he believed that the seizure and use of Luzon was an important consideration in the overall strategy of the Pacific War and that the launching of a major operation against Formosa would dilute some of the force being applied against the Japanese in other action areas.<sup>22</sup> In

<sup>21</sup> The invasion of Mindanao was restored to the plans for the recapture of the Philippines, and MacArthur's X Corps landed on the beaches of Illana Bay on 17 April 1945.

<sup>22</sup> General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army, had favored the Formosa-first plan, and like Admiral King "had expressed the opinion that Japan itself, rather than Luzon, should be considered the substitute for Formosa." Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 9. In September, General Marshall revised his opinion and believed, that, in view of existing facts, the choice for the next operation would have to be Luzon. It seemed more logical to him to secure Luzon—which MacArthur promised to take in six weeks—than to concentrate on Formosa, which would take longer to capture. Marshall reasoned that if all of the resources that were to be poured into Formosa were diverted to Luzon, Admiral Nimitz could get ready to attack the Bonins and Ryukyus all the sooner, and the timetable for the invasion of Japan could be advanced.

order to husband resources and to accelerate the march toward Japan, Harmon believed that the capture of Luzon for its airfields was imperative. Air operations launched from Luzon could neutralize Formosa and effectively cut Japanese communications to South China and Malaya.<sup>23</sup>

Less than a week later, after a review of the plans contemplated for the CAUSEWAY operation, Admiral Nimitz set forth his thoughts in a letter circulated to his senior commanders. In a key section of this letter, CinCPac recommended to consider the possibility:

. . . of a re-orientation of a strategy in the Pacific which will provide for an advance northward with eventual assaults on the Empire itself, rather than intermediate action along the China Coast, thus indicating the probability of occupation of Iwo Jima and Okinawa with target dates as early as practicable after CAUSEWAY.<sup>24</sup>

He also directed Admirals Spruance and Turner and General Buckner to recommend suitable physical targets in the Formosa-Amoy-Pescadores areas for Operation CAUSEWAY. Criteria for the selections were the number of naval and air bases that would have to be established and the type and total of major troop units required. On 26 September, General Buckner submitted what he considered to be the primary objection to the entire projected operation; he said that the shortage of available supporting and service troops in the

<sup>23</sup> CGAAFPOA ltr to CinCPOA, dtd 11Sep44 (no file or serial number), cited in Nichols and Shaw, *Okinawa Victory*, p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> CinCPOA ltr to ComFifthFlt, ComGenTen, and ComPhibsPac, Ser 000113, dtd 16Sep44 (OAB, NHD).

POA for CAUSEWAY made it infeasible.<sup>25</sup> In an afterthought, on 4 October Buckner wrote Nimitz that the need for invading Formosa would be diminished greatly if plans for the invasion of Luzon came to fruition.<sup>26</sup>

The minutes of the CominCh-CinCPac conference held in San Francisco from 29 September to 1 October 1944, indicate that by this time, Admiral King had given serious thought to bypassing Formosa. He told Nimitz that, at his proposal, the Joint Logistics Committee (JLC) had made a survey of the resources available for the Formosa operation, and that the report of this committee was very discouraging. At the time of its survey, the JLC found that resources were not available for CAUSEWAY, and would not be available unless Germany capitulated a long time before it was expected to do so.

CinCPac then told King of General Buckner's requirements for additional men and equipment and that he, Nimitz, was in no position to dispute these fig-

<sup>25</sup> CG, Tenth Army ltr to CinCPOA, dtd 26Sep44, Subj: Feasibility of CAUSEWAY, cited in *USAFMidPac G-5 Hist*, p. 177. Concerning the Marine troop requirements for Formosa, Lieutenant General Alexander A. Vandegrift, Commandant of the Marine Corps, informed Admiral King that many of the service forces General Buckner had said were needed to support the Marine component of the Tenth Army were, in fact, already organic to the Fleet Marine Force or else were neither suited nor required for Marine Corps amphibious operations. CominCh-CNO Memo to JCS, dtd 4Sep44, Subj: Employment of Marine Divisions in "Formosa" Operations (OAB, NHD).

<sup>26</sup> CG, Tenth Army ltr to CinCPOA, dtd 4Oct44, Subj: CAUSEWAY Objectives, cited in *USAFMidPac G-5 Hist*, p. 179.

ures. Nimitz then submitted a memorandum recommending changes for future Pacific operations based on the non-availability of necessary resources and the favorable results of recent carrier operations. Admiral Nimitz recommended that CinCPac forces support the SWPA invasion of Luzon with a target date of 20 December 1944, and the invasions of Iwo Jima on 20 January 1945 and of Okinawa on 1 March by POA Forces.<sup>27</sup>

CinCPac stated that the proposal for the SWPA forces to work up through the Philippines from Leyte by shore-to-shore operations had been discussed with President Roosevelt and General MacArthur at the Pearl Harbor conference in July. Because MacArthur had stated that he could not undertake these operations and in view of the insufficient resources for Formosa, Nimitz believed that the best way to keep pressure on the Japanese was for him to support the Lingayen Gulf operation proposed by MacArthur and to take the Bonins and the Ryukyus with POA forces.<sup>28</sup>

Admiral Sherman then told King that Nimitz expected to take Iwo Jima with two divisions and then to send in large numbers of construction personnel to build up the airfields rapidly. Following that, assuming that enemy air power on Formosa had been neutralized by carrier strikes assisted by shore-based air from Luzon, it was expected that Okinawa would be invaded on 1 March. King asked Nimitz why he was going to seize the Bonins if Okinawa was to be taken.

<sup>27</sup> *Minutes, CominCh-CinCPac Conference*, 29Sep-1Oct44, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Nimitz replied that fighters based in the Bonins could give protection to the B-29s raiding Japan, and that the AAF wanted this added protection.

King returned to Washington and on 2 October proposed to the JCS a course of action for the Pacific. He stated that in view of the lack of necessary resources in the POA for CAUSEWAY, and because of the inability of the War Department to make up the deficit before the end of the war in Europe, he believed that operations should be mounted against Luzon, Iwo Jima, and the Ryukyus in succession. He also added that CAUSEWAY might be feasible at a later date if conditions in the Pacific and Europe warranted.<sup>29</sup> Concurring with King's proposal, the next day the JCS ordered MacArthur to invade Luzon on 20 December 1944 and Admiral Nimitz to land Marines on Iwo Jima on 20 January 1945. Following these operations, Operation ICEBERG was to be launched on 1 March 1945.<sup>30</sup> This date was flexible, however, since it would be

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<sup>29</sup> CominCh-CNO Memo to JCS dtd 20Oct44, Subj: Future Operations in the Pacific (OAB, NHD).

<sup>30</sup> JCS 713/19, dtd 30Oct44, cited in Nichols and Shaw, *Okinawa Victory*, p. 17.

affected by the: (1) Capture of Iwo Jima in time for the prompt release of fire support units and close air support squadrons required at Okinawa; (2) Prompt release of supporting naval forces and assault shipping from the Luzon operation; and (3) Attainment of undisputed control of the sea and air in the target area in preliminary strikes against the Ryukyus, Formosa, and Japan.<sup>31</sup>

With all attention and efforts now focused on the new objectives, the Formosan venture was reserved as a strategic goal for possible future reconsideration.<sup>32</sup> Although the basic command concept and troop list organization that had been set up for CAUSEWAY were retained for employment in ICEBERG,<sup>33</sup> there was much to be done between the time that the JCS ordered the capture of Okinawa and the actual date of the invasion.

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<sup>31</sup> CinCPOA Joint Staff Study—ICEBERG, dtd 25Oct44, p. 1 (Okinawa AreaOp File, HistBr, HQMC), hereafter *ICEBERG Study*.

<sup>32</sup> JCS 713/19, dtd 30Oct44, cited in Nichols and Shaw, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> Tenth Army AR, Ryukyus, 26Mar-30Jun45, dtd 3Sep45, chap 3, p. 3 (Okinawa Area Op File, HistBr, HQMC), hereafter *Tenth Army AR*.

# The Japanese Situation<sup>1</sup>

As early as the spring of 1944, the high commands of the Japanese Army and Navy in the *Imperial General Headquarters* (IGHQ)<sup>2</sup> had, with some accuracy, predicted the trend of American strategy in Pacific War. The Japanese foresaw that the turning point of the conflict would begin developing in March or April in the Marianas. Further, the military chiefs were concerned with

what Japanese strategy should be at this critical time.

Faced with an impending accelerated American drive in the Central Pacific, IGHQ issued an Army-Navy agreement for Japanese operations in that area. The Navy was given primary responsibility for denying the Allies bases from which further operations could be launched against other islands and finally Japan itself. By the spring of 1944, defenses in the Carolines, Marianas, and Volcano Islands were to be completed. Japanese Army units were to reinforce the island defenses and would operate under overall naval control in conducting ground operations.<sup>3</sup> A broader aspect of Japanese strategy was the decision to try to entrap and defeat decisively a major portion of U. S. naval forces. As island defenses were being strengthened, the Japanese Navy committed the bulk of its aerial strength—about 1,000 aircraft of which only 650 were operational—<sup>4</sup> to the Marianas and part of the remainder to the Carolines. Meanwhile, surface forces were to remain alert and ready to steam into combat when the time to strike arose.

Most IGHQ officers and government officials alike were supremely confident of winning the war and directed every

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the material in this chapter is derived from: Foreign Histories Div, G-3, Hq, U. S. Army Japan, Japanese Monograph No. 45, rev. ed. 1959, History of Imperial General Headquarters, Army Section (OCMH), hereafter *IGHQ Hist*; Robert J. C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), hereafter Butow, *Japan's Decision*; Takushiro Hattori, *Dai Toa Senso Zenshi* [The Complete History of The Greater East Asia War], MS trans, 4 vols (Tokyo: Matsu Publishing Co., 1955), v. IV (OCMH, DA), hereafter *War History*; Saburo Hayashi and Alvin Coox, *Kōgun* (Quantico: Marine Corps Association, 1959), hereafter Hayashi and Coox, *Kōgun*; Toshikazu Kase, *Journey to the Missouri*, David N. Rowe, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), hereafter Kase, *Journey to the Missouri*; USSBS, *Japan's Struggle to End the War* (Washington: July 1946), hereafter USSBS, *Japan's Struggle*.

<sup>2</sup> IGHQ was only a term used to denote the co-equal status and existence of the Tokyo-based headquarters of the *Army General Staff* and the *Navy General Staff* and their subordinate general and special staff sections. This duality of command typified the Japanese military system not only at the highest level, but in the lower echelons also.

<sup>3</sup> *IGHQ Hist*, p. 154.

<sup>4</sup> Hayashi and Coox, *Kōgun*, p. 106.

effort to ensure an ultimate Japanese victory. Not so certain that Japan was going to be the victor was an opposition group composed of former ministers, cabinet members, and elder statesmen (*Jushin*) who had opposed the war in the pre-Pearl Harbor period. Also in this group were some other influential Japanese leaders who, while not holding positions of power, had given mere lip service to their nation's involvement in a conflict. Rounding out the opposition were other formerly powerful men, who had "retired" in the early years of the war. The original doubts of the opposition gave it a basis for believing as early as the spring of 1944 that Japan was faced with inexorable defeat. These beliefs were buttressed by a demonstration of the American determination to fight aggressively and an ability to mount successful operations in the Pacific even before a second front had been opened in Europe. Alone, these two factors gave portents of disaster to those Japanese who were able to interpret them.<sup>5</sup>

Between September 1943 and February 1944, Rear Admiral Sokichi Takagi, chief of the Naval Ministry's research section, prepared a study of Japanese lessons learned in the fighting to that date. He maintained that it was impossible to continue the war and that it was manifestly impossible for Japan to win. He thus corroborated an estimate made by top Japanese naval officers before 1941. At that time, they concluded that unless the war was won before the end of 1943, Japan was

doomed, for it did not have the resources to continue the war after that time.

Takagi's study and his conclusions were based on an analysis of fleet, air, and merchant shipping losses as of the last of 1943. He pointed out the serious difficulty Japan was facing in importing essential materials, high-level confusion regarding war aims and the direction of the war and the growing feeling among some political and military leaders that General Hideki Tojo, Prime Minister since 1941, should be removed from office.

Takagi stated also that both the possibility of American bombing raids on Japan and the inability of the Japanese to obtain essential raw and finished products dictated that the nation should seek a compromise peace immediately. In March he presented his findings orally to two influential naval officers, Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai, a former prime minister, and Vice Admiral Seibi Inouye, who employed the facts of the study to induce other members of the opposition to take firm steps to help change the course that Japan was traveling.<sup>6</sup>

Less than two months after the invasion of Normandy in June 1944, Japanese leaders began receiving reports of the massive numbers of men and amount of materiel that the Allies were able to land unopposed each day on the French coast. As a Japanese foreign ministry official later wrote:

That was more than enough to dishearten us, the defenses of our home islands were far more vulnerable than the European invasion coast. Our amazement

<sup>5</sup> USSBS, *Japan's Struggle*, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

was boundless when we saw the American forces land on Saipan only ten days after D day in Europe. The Allies could execute simultaneous full-scale offensives in both European and Asiatic theaters!<sup>7</sup>

By all accounts, Japanese and other, what really tipped the scales in favor of an eventual Allied victory in the Pacific, and more immediately caused the fall of the Tojo government, were the landings at Saipan and Japanese losses in the First Battle of the Philippine Sea. Only 1,350 miles from Tokyo, Saipan constituted one of the most vital points in the Japanese outer defense system. Toshikazu Kase, the foreign ministry official quoted above, wrote that the island:

. . . was so strongly defended that it was considered impregnable. More than once I was told by the officers of the General Staff that Saipan was absolutely invincible. Our Supreme Command, however, made a strategic miscalculation. Anticipating an early attack on Palau Island, they transferred there the main fleet and the land-based air forces in order to deal a smashing blow to the hostile navy. The result was that Saipan, lacking both naval and air protection, proved surprisingly vulnerable.<sup>8</sup>

An even greater disaster befell the Japanese in the Battle of the Philippine Sea, 19–20 June 1944. This two-day conflict began when carrier-based aircraft of the Japanese *First Mobile Fleet* attacked Admiral Spruance's Fifth Fleet while it covered the Saipan operation. On the first day, two U. S. battleships, two carriers, and a heavy cruiser were damaged; the Japanese lost over 300 aircraft and two carriers. Pilots from Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's fast

carrier task force struck back violently the next day, sinking another enemy carrier and downing many Japanese planes. According to American estimates, their opponents suffered staggering losses in the two days: 426 carrier planes and 31 float planes. In addition, the Americans claimed that approximately 50 Guam-based aircraft had been destroyed.<sup>9</sup>

Japanese sources confirm the loss of carriers and state that four others of the nine committed in the fight were damaged. Enemy records show that of the 360 carrier-based aircraft sent to attack the American fleet, only 25 survived. "Although no battleships or cruisers were sunk, . . . the loss of aircraft carriers proved an almost fatal blow to the Japanese navy. With the loss of the decisive aerial and naval battles, the Marianas were lost."<sup>10</sup> Despite this thorough defeat, most Japanese were told that it was a glorious victory for them; "it was customary for GH [IGHQ] to make false announcements of victory in utter disregard of facts, and for the elated and complacent public to believe in them."<sup>11</sup>

Although the Japanese government did not announce its losses in the Battle of the Philippine Sea—or that it had even lost the battle—news of the fall of Saipan was made public. Upon learning this in July, an opposition group consisting mainly of *Jushin* determined to

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, *New Guinea and the Marianas—History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, v. VIII (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), pp. 319–321.

<sup>10</sup> IGHQ Hist, p. 172.

<sup>11</sup> Kase, *Journey to the Missouri*, p. 74.

<sup>7</sup> Kase, *Journey to the Missouri*, p. 90.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

overthrow the Tojo regime, and forced the Prime Minister to resign from office on 18 July 1944.

The problems facing Japan were hardly resolved with the appointment and installation of General Kuniaki Koiso as premier. The Japanese Army was still a political power, capable of dictating the rise, fall, and course of government, and Tojo and his followers remained uncontrite in their adherence to a chauvinistic program of Japanese conquest and supremacy. Although the Home Islands had not yet experienced the devastation and chaos to be brought by the vast Allied air raids, after the fall of Saipan a number of critical domestic problems affecting the war effort faced the Japanese government. The output of a number of essential items fell below peak requirements, and severe shipping losses reduced the amount of raw and finished material reaching Japanese shores to a point far short of needs.

On the home front, despite its unhappiness with Tojo and his handling of the war, the Japanese public was confident in ultimate victory. Those leaders in government opposed to the war, opposition leaders behind the scenes, and some of the war hawks, too, began to have greater misgivings as they learned of previous defeats and potential disasters. As this knowledge spread, the military factions slowly lost face and became discredited, but not until the last months of the war did they lose power.

Nonetheless, confident of their ability to guide Japan to what they considered would be a just victory, the military leaders made adjustment after adjust-

ment in strategy and troop dispositions in one area after another as the Allied threat to the Home Islands intensified and accelerated. On the other hand, it is possible to understand their reluctance to view the situation realistically. From their earliest days, Japanese citizens were taught to believe that the one alternative to victory was death and that surrender was so disgraceful as to be unthinkable. And the high command planned, therefore, to continue the war, even on Japanese soil if necessary, but to fight to the finish in any case.

Even lower ranking Japanese Army and Navy officers, many of them products of a prewar conscript system, who very often came from peasant families, held the same beliefs as their seniors regarding honor and obedience and the disgrace of surrendering. The code of the *samurai* had been all-pervasive for many years and had influenced the attitude and outlook of nearly every facet of Japanese society.

IGHQ took steps for the defense of the homeland as early as the beginning of 1944, when it perceived the course that the war was taking and judged what future American strategy was to be. Japanese strategists believed that Allied forces would attack Japan proper from the direction of the Marianas and through the Philippines. The Tokyo headquarters prepared for this eventuality by setting up a defense line along the sea front connecting the Philippines, Formosa, the Ryukyu Islands, the Japanese homeland, and the Kurile Islands, and strengthened the garrisons on each. According to this plan, the Japanese would concentrate their full strength

to destroy the Allied threat at whatever point it developed.

A schedule of four prepared reactions, called the *Sho-Go* operations, was drawn up. For the defense of Formosa and the Nansei group, *Sho-Go* No. 2, *IGHQ* placed the *Thirty-second Army* under the command of the *Formosa Army* in July 1944, and added two divisions to the order of battle of the former. In the 10 months between the landing on Saipan and the invasion of Okinawa, Japanese strength was built up in the Ryukyus from an estimated 10,000 to approximately 155,000 air, ground, and naval troops.<sup>12</sup>

For the defense of the Philippines, the high command had planned *Sho-Go* No. 1. Based on a decision of the *Imperial War Council* on 19 August 1944, Japan staked her national destiny on the outcome of the impending battle of Leyte.<sup>13</sup> It was here that the Army and Navy had to destroy the Americans. The critical losses sustained by the *Combined Fleet* in the four-day battle for Leyte Gulf, 23–26 October 1944, three days after the invasion of Leyte, and the inability of ground forces to contain the invaders, created a grave threat to Japanese hegemony in the Western Pacific and even more so to the safety of Japan proper. Allied task forces dominated the waters surrounding Japan proper and the East and South China Seas as well. An additional liability resulting from American successes was the concomitant loss of airdromes from

which land-based planes could pummel Japan unmercifully.

Seeing that no good purpose would be served by prolonging the Leyte operation, *IGHQ* decided to withdraw Japanese forces from the island and to conduct delaying tactics elsewhere in the Philippines. The Luzon landing in January 1945 made it apparent that there was no further way of holding off the Americans. From November 1944 on, American air attacks on Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and northern Kyushu increased in intensity, destroying great sections of these areas and seriously impeding the war effort.

In January, the overall *IGHQ* estimate of the situation concluded that although Japan and Germany had suffered many reverses, the Axis had exacted a heavy penalty of their enemy. In viewing the Japanese cause in the same way that the viewed the Emperor and sacred homeland—through an emotional and reverent haze—<sup>14</sup> the senior commanders concluded that “the final victory will be for those who will stand up against increasing hardship and will fight to the last with a firm belief in ultimate victory.”<sup>15</sup> While it acknowledged that the defeat of Germany would mean the unleashing of tremendously powerful forces against Japan, *IGHQ* believed that one of the major American problems would be in the area of manpower mobilization. The Japanese commanders hoped that, tiring of the war, the American people would favor its end.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> MID, WD, *Disposition and Movement of Japanese Ground Forces, 1941–1945*, dtd 10Dec45 (OAB, NHD).

<sup>13</sup> Hattori, *War History*, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> USSBS, *Japan's Struggle*, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *IGHQ Hist*, p. 236.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Believing that the United States wanted to terminate the war quickly, *IGHQ* speculated that American forces would take the shortest possible route leading to Japan. This estimate foresaw that after the landings in the Philippines, the Allies would move to Formosa, Okinawa, and Iwo Jima. Based on the fact that most Japanese supply lines to the south had been well interdicted early in 1945, and an interpretation of radio intelligence reports, it seemed very likely that Iwo Jima was to be attacked in the very near future.<sup>17</sup> *IGHQ* also speculated that American forces would land on mainland China in southern Kwantung and Hongkong.<sup>18</sup>

In the face of the impending invasion and to strengthen homeland defenses further, *IGHQ* planned a large-scale mobilization of all segments of the population. In October 1944, when the government invoked general mobilization, there were 6,390,000 reservists available for call-up. Of these, 4,690,000 were ready for immediate assignment to active duty. There was a problem, however, of achieving a proper balance in the armed forces, since a shortage of trained technical personnel existed. Moreover, of the approximately 87 percent of the Japanese adult population already employed in the vital food and munitions industries, 47 percent were reservists and not available unless the war effort was to be damaged.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>18</sup> Chief, War History Office, Defense Agency of Japan, ltr to Hd, HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, dtd 4Feb66, hereafter *War History Office Comments*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

Further, at this late stage in the war, all branches of science were mobilized in the faint hope that they could develop surprise attack weapons. Unfortunately for this program, students at Army schools and serving officers were not very well trained in scientific and technological subjects; because of the nature of their duties and the weapons which the Navy employed, naval officers were in a little better position. The Army, however, was and always had been the dominant military authority in Japan, and as in the past, determined how the country would fight a war. Nevertheless, as the Japanese war situation deteriorated, military leaders optimistically sought the development of miraculously effective weapons.

Nonetheless, it became abundantly clear that the low scientific level of the nation could not possibly yield elaborate weapons. . . . The Army's attitude toward technology incurred many kinds of great criticism from private sources at the time, the major points being the following:

The Army keeps matters tightly secret. The Army has a great predilection for bamboo-spear tactics, and has little understanding of technology. . . .<sup>20</sup>

Despite the many imposing obstacles looming ahead, *IGHQ* prepared to execute a protracted war in the Japanese islands. The command headquarters made itself the supreme authority for the operation of the war and took steps to see that the governmental structure would be revised so that the Prime Minister would have comparable authority over political matters. In addition, the entire nation was to be mobilized and all citizens capable of bearing

<sup>20</sup> Hayashi and Coox, *Kōgun*, pp. 118-119.

weapons were to be armed. Key industries as well as the communications and transportation facilities were to be reorganized and operated by the state along rigidly controlled lines.<sup>21</sup>

As Japan was already a corporate state, *i.e.*, a nation in which the government controlled every facet of industry and all other productive areas, and since military control of the state had been a fact of life from the time that Japan embarked upon her course of conquest in the early 1930s, there was little new in this revised policy, except for one phrase, “. . . in a military manner.” This was a naked declaration of military ascendancy and control over all governmental functions. Even Tojo had given lip service to civilian primacy in non-military matters. But opposition elements were not yet strong enough to take over the reins of government and to begin steps to sue for a negotiated peace; the militarists were still in power, and they continued preparations for a last-ditch fight.

*IGHQ* remained convinced the America was wearying of the war and that, even if this were not so, Japanese ground strength of some 4,747,000 men in uniform—a million and a half of whom were based in Japan—<sup>22</sup> was enough to prevent the Americans from reaching Japanese shores. If invaders did attempt to come ashore, homeland defense forces would drive them back into the sea. At the beginning of 1945

a large proportion of Japanese troop strength overall was tied down in China and Manchuria, however, and a smaller portion was isolated in the Central and Southwest Pacific, where replacements, reinforcements, and replenishment could not be sent. Nor could these units be withdrawn to Japan or elsewhere, so complete was the Allied encirclement. For all practical purposes, the units in the Pacific were lost to Japan and out of the war for good.

In late 1944 and early 1945, American bombings, fast carrier task force raids, and especially the submarine blockade had increased in intensity and reduced the Japanese north-south maritime shipments to a mere trickle, so that the economic structure of that country was slowly forced to a halt. Undoubtedly, the single most effective agent in this action was the blockade imposed by the ships of the U. S. Pacific submarine fleet. American submarines torpedoed or destroyed by gunfire 60 percent of the 2,117 Japanese merchant vessels, totaling 7,913,858 tons, sunk by American forces during the war. In addition, U. S. underseas forces accounted for 201 of the 686 enemy warships sunk in World War II.<sup>23</sup>

On 13 January 1945, *IGHQ* was startled to learn that an entire convoy of nine tankers and its escort squadron had been sunk off Qui Nhon, a town on the east coast of French Indo-China. In face of this crowning blow and to

<sup>21</sup> Hattori, *War History*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> OCMH, DA Estimate of Japanese Strength and Disposition of Forces, dtd Oct55, File No. 320.2, Geographic V-Japan (OCMH). This collation was derived from authoritative American intelligence sources published in 1945.

<sup>23</sup> JANAC, *Japanese Naval and Merchant Ship Losses* (Feb47), pp. vi, vii, cited in Samuel Eliot Morrison, *Leyte, June 1944—January 1945—History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, v. XII (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), p. 413.

evade American planes and submarines, the Japanese devised a new system employing small convoys guarded by dispersed escorts instead of the larger convoys and concentrated escorts sent out previously. Even this method failed when air and naval bases on Luzon became operational and American attacks from the island quickened in pace with the submarine attacks.

At the beginning of March 1945, *IGHQ* stopped sending convoys to the south; northbound convoys carrying essential war material continued the attempt to reach Japanese ports, however. Some 70 to 80 percent of the ships never made it. Later in the month, Tokyo ordered shipping halted altogether.<sup>24</sup> The noose around Japan was drawing tighter and tighter.

Since February, *IGHQ* had received a mounting influx of reports of increasingly larger numbers of American convoys operating in the vicinity of the Marianas and Ulithi. On 12 February, Tokyo was alerted to the movement of a sizable task force heavily protected by carriers and headed towards Iwo Jima. On the 16th, *IGHQ* was certain that the Bonins were the American target. When the actual invasion of Iwo began three days later, there was little doubt that Okinawa would be next.<sup>25</sup>

In March, the Army and Navy concluded yet another agreement concerning joint defense operations, this one establishing responsibilities for containing Allied advances into the East China Sea. According to the plan, when American task forces approached this

area, Army and Navy air elements would mount massive attacks against the convoys. Included in the Japanese aerial formations were to be special aircraft flown by pilots trained in suicide tactics.

At the end of the month, Japanese air strength available for the defense of Okinawa was as follows:

*8th Air Division* (Army), Formosa; 120 fighters, 60 bombers, 10 reconnaissance planes, 250 special attack planes. The targets of the latter were American transports.

*Sixth Air Army* (Army), Japan; 90 fighters, 90 bombers, 45 reconnaissance aircraft, and 300 special attack planes were assigned to attack American transports; 60 fighters, 30 bombers, 20 reconnaissance aircraft, and 100 special attack planes were assigned to strike task force carriers, and Ryukyuan airfields when captured by the Americans. An additional 400 fighters and 45 reconnaissance planes were assigned to fly combat air patrols.

*First Air Fleet* (Navy), Formosa; 40 fighters, 40 bombers, 5 reconnaissance planes.

*Third Air Fleet* (Navy), Japan; 40 fighters, 30 bombers, and 20 reconnaissance planes.

*Fifth Air Fleet* (Navy), Japan; 200 fighters, 310 bombers, and 10 reconnaissance aircraft.

*Tenth Air Fleet* (Navy), Japan; 700 combat planes, 1,300 training planes. This fleet was a reserve force, and its aircraft were to be employed as special attack planes. According to the Army-Navy agreement, the Navy planes were to attack the U. S. task forces and the escort shipping guarding them. To en-

<sup>24</sup> Hattori, *War History*, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> *IGHQ Hist*, p. 256.

large the number of special attack units, both the Army and the Navy were to indoctrinate their pilots "in the spirit of suicide attacks."<sup>26</sup>

From early January until the middle of March, American carrier-based pilots had battered Formosa and Okinawa in an aerial onslaught that showed no signs of letting up. It seemed inevitable to the *Imperial General Headquarters* that the U. S. move following Iwo would be against the Ryukyus. Late in March, the Tokyo command received word that American forces had steamed out of anchorages at Ulithi and in the Marianas. During the same period, fast carrier task force aircraft pummelled Okinawa with from 500 to 700 sorties daily. The prologue to the grand climax was reached on 26 March when the Kerama Retto was invaded; Okinawa's time was not far off.

Despite the clear indication that Okinawa was the major U. S. target, Japanese air strength had dwindled to the point where it was in no condition to contest the landing. The *Fifth Air Fleet*,

with a major assignment in the defense of the Ryukyus, had been soundly crushed in February when American fast carriers visited Kyushu. The other major air commands slated for important roles in protecting Okinawa either were not yet deployed in positions from which they could fly out to hold back the impending invasion or, having been severely punished in earlier American attacks, were unable to strike back.

Japanese naval strength was hardly in better condition. The fleet was in woefully sad shape and unbalanced. The high toll in the loss of its carriers, destroyers, and aircraft had left it in a pitiable condition, while the overall shortage of fuel would have immobilized it in any case. By March 1945, it "was nothing but a partially paralyzed surviving unit."<sup>27</sup>

Following the news of the fall of Iwo Jima, the *Thirty-second Army* on Okinawa stood wary—listening, waiting, and watching for an invasion force to appear over the horizon. Its expectations were soon to be fulfilled.

<sup>26</sup> *IGHQ Hist*, pp. 274-275, 277-278.

<sup>27</sup> Hattori, *War History*, p. 26.

# Marine Corps Order of Battle<sup>1</sup>

In July 1940, the Marine Corps had 28,000 men in uniform. The January 1945 strength figure of the Corps reflected some 421,605 Marines, men and women; before the end of the war, this number was to become even larger. Broken down, the Marine Corps January strength figure represented: FMF ground forces, 212,165; aviation, 125,162; sea-going Marines, 9,430; foreign and domestic naval and shore activities, 54,483; Women's Reserve, 18,365. In addition to the above and not included in the overall total were 16,017 doctors,

hospital corpsmen, and other naval personnel assigned to the Marine Corps.<sup>2</sup>

In the beginning of 1945, no major Marine ground force as such was engaged in a major operation against the enemy. The 2d Division on Saipan and the 3d on Guam, where veterans and new replacements alike participated in on-the-job training, however, were mopping up survivors of the major Japanese defense garrisons which were defeated when those islands were officially declared secured in 1944.

The senior Marine commander in the Pacific at this time was Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the material in this chapter is derived from: CMC AnRpt to SecNav for the Fiscal Year Ending 30Jun45, hereafter *CMC Rpt 1945* (CMC Rpts for other years will be cited *CMC Rpt* with year); DivAvn, HQMC, OpD, Jan45 (AdminFile, HistBr, HQMC), hereafter *DivAvn OpD* with date; G-1 Sec, Div P&P, HQMC, OpDs, 7Dec41-31Dec44 and Jan45 (AdminFile HistBr, HQMC), hereafter *G-1 OpD* with date; CO, 1st ProvHistPlat, FMF, MS, "Historical Outline of the Development of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1941-1950 (Preliminary)," 1951 (HistBr, HQMC), hereafter *FMFPac Hist*; Kenneth W. Condit, Gerald Diamond, and Edwin T. Turnbladh, *Marine Corps Ground Training in World War II* (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1956), hereafter Condit, Diamond, and Turnbladh, *Marine Corps Training*; George McMillan, *The Old Breed: A History of the First Marine Division in World War II* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1949), hereafter McMillan, *The Old Breed*; Richard W. Johnston, *Follow Me! The Story of the Second Marine Division in World War II* (New York: Random House, 1948), hereafter Johnston, *2d MarDiv Hist*; 1stLts

Robert A. Aurthur and Kenneth Cohlma. *The Third Marine Division* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948), hereafter Aurthur and Cohlma, *3d MarDiv Hist*; Carl W. Proehl, ed., *The Fourth Marine Division in World War II* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), hereafter Proehl, *4th MarDiv Hist*; Howard M. Conner, *The Spearhead: The World War II History of the 5th Marine Division* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1950), hereafter Conner, *5th MarDiv Hist*; Bevan G. Cass, ed., *History of the Sixth Marine Division* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948) hereafter Cass, *6th MarDiv Hist*; Robert Sherrod, *History of Marine Corps Aviation in World War II* (Washington: Combat Forces Press, 1952), hereafter Sherrod, *Marine Air Hist*.

<sup>2</sup> *G-1 OpDs*, 7Dec41-31Dec44 and Jan45; FMF Status Rpts, Ground and Air for Jan45, prepared by G-3 Sec, Div P&P, HQMC (Pers and Loc File, HistBr, HQMC), hereafter *FMF Grd (or Air) Status Rpt* with month. See App F for a complete location and strength breakdown of the FMF as of 30Apr45.

(FMFPac).<sup>3</sup> His was a type command which involved administrative control only over FMFPac units.<sup>4</sup> The majority of Marine combat troops were located in the Central Pacific under Admiral Spruance's control. By January 1945, six Marine divisions had been activated, grouped three each in two corps. Headquarters of Major General Roy S. Geiger's III Amphibious Corps (IIIAC) was on Guadalcanal, where Major General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., based his 6th Marine Division. On Pavuvu in the Russells, approximately 65 miles northwest of Guadalcanal, was the 1st Marine Division commanded by Major General Pedro A. del Valle. Also in IIIAC was Major General Thomas E. Watson's 2d Marine Division on Saipan. The other major Marine ground command under FMFPac, V Amphibious Corps (VAC), was headed by Major General Harry Schmidt, whose headquarters was located on Maui, Hawaiian Islands. Also on Maui in VAC was Major General Clifton B. Cates' <sup>5</sup> 4th Marine Division. On the island of Hawaii was Major General Keller E. Rockey and his 5th Marine Division, and on Guam was the 3d Marine Division of Major General Graves B. Erskine.

All six divisions had long been in receipt of orders for their next combat

<sup>3</sup> For the history of FMFPac, see Garand and Strobridge, "Western Pacific Operations."

<sup>4</sup> Generally, a type commander has an administrative mission only and has no tactical responsibilities. For the Iwo Jima operation, General Smith was assigned an additional tactical responsibility as Commander, Expeditionary Troops.

<sup>5</sup> Generals Cates and Shepherd later became the 19th and 20th Commandants of the Marine Corps, respectively.

assignments and were actively engaged in preparing for them. Authorized strength for a Marine division at this time was 856 officers and 16,069 enlisted Marines. The 1st, 2d, and 3d Divisions were short a few officers, while the 3d Division was short 271 enlisted men and the 6th Division, 513. Replacement drafts had been assigned to the divisions, however, and were in transit to join them either before or just after the impending landings. In January 1945, 11 replacement drafts, containing 14,331 Marines and naval corpsmen and doctors, were either en route to or in the process of joining the six Marine divisions at the staging areas.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the combat divisions, there were other FMF organizations spread throughout the Pacific undertaking assigned support, garrison, or defense missions. A total of 74,474 Marines and naval personnel was involved in the operations of these units.<sup>7</sup> Two provisional field service commands, one at Guam and the other at Guadalcanal, and seven field depots and four service and supply battalions based in close proximity to the Marine divisions provided major supply support in the Pacific. Also available from FMFPac for support of and attachment to the two corps for upcoming operations were a variety of other units. These included 11 antiaircraft artillery battalions, 6 155mm gun and 6 155mm howitzer battalions, 3 armored amphibian battalions, 9 amphibian tractor battalions, and 6 amphibian truck companies. In January, most of these organizations were a part of the III and V

<sup>6</sup> *FMF Grd Status Rpt*, Jan 45.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

Amphibious Corps, although a few of the antiaircraft artillery battalions were still fulfilling island defense missions. Within FMFPac also were such other types of organizations as defense battalions, Joint Assault Signal Companies (JASCOs), provisional rocket detachments, war dog platoons, motor transport battalions, corps evacuation hospitals, bomb disposal companies, and separate engineer battalions; not all of them would be employed in future operations.

The highest level Marine aviation echelon in the Pacific, Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (AirFMFPac), was commanded by Major General Francis P. Mulcahy, whose headquarters was at Ewa, on the island of Oahu. A type command like FMFPac, AirFMFPac organized, administered, supplied, and deployed all Marine aviation squadrons in the Pacific, but controlled none. The four Marine aircraft wings (MAWs) in AirFMFPac were based on islands at widespread points in the Pacific. Included in the four wings was a total of 16 Marine aircraft groups (MAGs) holding 70 tactical squadrons broken down as follows: 28 fighter (VMFs); 14 scout bomber (VMSBs); 7 bomber (VMBs); 7 transport (VMRs); 5 night fighter (VMF(N)s); 5 observation (VMOs); and 3 torpedo bomber (VMTBs).

Major General Ralph J. Mitchell's 1st MAW headquarters was on Bougainville. He had under his command six MAGs; three of the groups and part of a fourth were assigned to CinCSWPA for the Philippines campaign; and one squadron of a fifth group was en route to join MacArthur. MAG-25, the latter

group, and the portions of the other two not committed in the Philippines, were based on Emirau, Green Island, Manus, and Cape Torokina at Bougainville.<sup>8</sup> (See Map XI, Map Section.) A transport group, MAG-25 also had another designation, SCAT (South Pacific Combat Air Transport Command), and as such, with a few AAF transport squadrons assigned from time to time flew many extensive air supply missions all over the Pacific from the time it was activated, 24 November 1942, until the end of the war. When available for such an assignment, the group also evacuated casualties from captured islands which had strips capable of sustaining the operations of transport-type aircraft.

Headquarters of the 2d MAW was at Ewa. Major General James T. Moore had only one MAG within his command at this time, and it was based on Espiritu Santo, in the New Hebrides. The reason that the wing was so depleted in January was that in mid-1944 most of Moore's squadrons had been transferred to the 4th MAW, and at the end of the year his command became the nucleus for Tactical Air Force, Tenth Army, and assigned as a task unit for the invasion of Okinawa.

The 3d Marine Aircraft Wing was commanded for the first seven days in January 1945 by Colonel Ford O. Rogers, who was relieved on the 8th by Colonel Byron F. Johnson. The wing had its headquarters command and a group at Ewa, and a MAG based on

<sup>8</sup> Green Island is approximately 80 miles north of the tip of Bougainville, and Manus is 280 miles southeast of Emirau and 80 miles north of the northeast coast of New Guinea.

Midway. Four fighter squadrons of the Ewa-based group were on carriers and supported the Lingayen landings in January and later flew strikes against Luzon, Formosa, and Indochina. *Essex* carried two of the VMFs, and *Wasp* the other two. The primary mission of 3d MAW was to train AirFMFPac tactical squadrons and pilots in night-fighting, air-warning, and radar-bombing techniques.

Major General Louis E. Woods' 4th MAW was based on Majuro in the Marshalls, and with seven groups located on islands all over the Central Pacific, his was the largest of the four AirFMFPac wings. From airfields on such widely separated islands as those in the Marshalls, Marianas, and Palaus, Woods' squadrons took off day after day to neutralize bypassed Japanese defenses. Although boring and seemingly prosaic in nature, important benefits derived from the operations of the 4th Wing squadrons in neutralizing the Marshalls. "The 4th MAW's perfection of the napalm fire jelly formula was a big contribution to the rest of the Pacific. Also important was the development of the fighter bomber, that trusty weapon so sorely needed when more planes had to be had to save the fleet from the *Kamikaze*."<sup>9</sup>

There were two other major aviation commands in the Marine Corps; these were based on each coast of the United States and held similar missions. At San Diego, Marine Fleet Air, West Coast, administered, operated, trained, and equipped all Marine aviation organ-

izations on the west coast; it also channelled personnel and materiel to AirFMFPac for further deployment in the Pacific. The east coast training command was the 9th MAW, with headquarters at the Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, N. C. Within these two commands were 14 groups—6 on the west coast and 8 on the east. There were in turn a total of 100 tactical and 29 training squadrons of various types in the groups. On the west coast were 22 carrier squadrons, 16 fighter (VMF(CVS)) and 6 torpedo bombing (VMTB(CVS)), that were slated to go aboard new *Commencement Bay*-class escort carriers as soon as the latter had completed shake-down trials.

At the beginning of 1945, Marine Corps aviation had already passed through a period of expansion and was entering an era of consolidation with respect to its ultimate objectives in the war effort. Three months earlier, in October 1944, the Chief of Naval Operations had approved a plan to man four of the new class of escort carriers with Marine squadrons. Accordingly, that same month, the Marine Corps redesignated two groups already in existence on the west coast as Marine Air Support Groups (MASGs). By January 1945, the VMF(CVS)s and VMTB(CVS)s were ready to begin a period of intense training from the decks of the carriers and at their former home bases, the Marine Corps Air Stations at El Centro and Mojave, in California. To each MASG was attached a Marine Carrier Group (MCVG), composed of a fighter and a torpedo bombing squadron; one of six Carrier Aircraft Service Detachments was to complete the

<sup>9</sup> Sherrod, *Marine Air Hist*, p. 246.

Marine complement in the carriers after the detachments had been organized on the west coast in February.

To enable Marine Corps aviation "to give support to the Fleet Marine Force in landing operations" more effectively in the future, the Navy approved a major revision of the Corps aviation structure at the beginning of 1945. Marine Corps planners envisioned a program encompassing balanced land-based and carrier-based aviation forces, which would be soundly supported by shore activities. Not all of the Marine carrier program went into effect before the end of the war, but its progress was such that the validity of basing Marine squadrons in the flattops was proven.

Fleet Marine Force ground training facilities in 1945 had advanced far beyond those in existence at the beginning of the war. In addition to base command housekeeping and training units, Camp Lejeune had 10 battalions undergoing infantry training in January 1945 and Camp Pendleton had 12. Besides this number, Camp Pendleton housed four

replacement drafts, a total of some 5,000 Marines, who were awaiting shipment to the Pacific. With the record number of six Marine divisions in the field, the constant demand for replacements and the heavy burden imposed upon the training command continued incessantly.

As IIIAC and VAC completed their training phases and began combat loading for the trip to the target areas, the anticipated demands for replacement of expected casualties on Iwo Jima and Okinawa were already being met by the organization and training of new replacement drafts. As each Marine destined for assignment to a combat organization in the Pacific left the United States, he was aware that his was the same path taken by fellow Marines who had fought at such now-famous places as Guadalcanal, Bougainville, and Tarawa. His sole consolation, if one was needed, was the knowledge that, although he had not participated in the beginning of the fight, he might possibly be there to help end it.



**PART II**

***Okinawa***



# The Target and the Enemy

## BACKGROUND<sup>1</sup>

Once the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided on Okinawa as a future target, intensive planning and preparations were begun for the assault on this once obscure island. Large amounts of information of varying importance poured into the intelligence centers concerned with the impending operation, and were added to

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the material in this chapter is derived from: HQUSAFPOA G-2 Study of Okinawa Gunto, n.d., hereafter *HQUSAFPOA Study*; MIS, WD, Survey of the Nansei Shoto, dtd 15Feb43, hereafter *WD Survey*; *War Reports*; USSBS (Pac), Nav-AnalysisDiv, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War* (Washington, 1946), hereafter USSBS, *Campaigns*; Roy E. Appleman, et. al., *Okinawa: The Last Battle—U. S. Army in World War II—The War in the Pacific* (Washington: HistDiv, DA, 1948), hereafter, Appleman, et. al., *Okinawa Battle*; Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki—The Army Air Forces in World War II*, v. 5 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), hereafter Craven and Cate, *Matterhorn to Nagasaki*; Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U. S. Marines and Amphibious War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), hereafter Isely and Crowl, *Marines and Amphibious War*; Nichols and Shaw, *Okinawa Victory*. Documents not otherwise identified in this part are located in the following files of the HistBr, HQMC: Unit Historical Reports; Okinawa Area Operations; Publications; Aviation; and Okinawa Monograph and Comments. Because Appleman, et. al., *Okinawa Battle*, and Nichols and Shaw, *Okinawa Victory* have served as guidelines for pt II, hereafter they will be cited in direct reference only.

files already bulging with a store of knowledge of the Ryukyus group. Okinawa soon became the focus of attention of the CinCPac-CinCPOA headquarters and staff members who, in compliance with the JCS directive to Admiral Nimitz “. . . to occupy one or more positions in the Nansei Shoto,”<sup>2</sup> filled in the details of an outline plan. A flurry of disciplined activity immediately engulfed the commands and staffs of the expeditionary forces assigned to the assault as they began their operational studies for ICEBERG, the code-name given to the approaching invasion.

The strategic importance of Okinawa was its location, and all other considerations stemmed from this. The Japanese viewed it as an integral link in a chain of islands, the Ryukyus or the Nansei Shoto, which formed an effective barrier to an Allied advance from the east or southeast towards the Chinese mainland, Korea, or the western coast of Japan. This group of islands was ideally situated to aid in the protection of the Japanese maritime lines of supply and communication to imperial conquests in southeast Asia. The island chain also provided the Japanese Navy with the only two substantial fleet anchorages south of the Home Islands<sup>3</sup> between

<sup>2</sup> *ICEBERG Study*, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The Home Islands were generally considered to consist of the four principal islands and the hundreds of smaller islands immediately adjacent to Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu, which formed Japan.

Kyushu and Formosa, and numerous operating bases for aircraft of all types as well. (See Map 1.)

From the Allied point of view, the conquest of Okinawa would be most lucrative. As the largest island in the Ryukyus, it offered excellent locations for military and naval facilities. There was sufficient land area on the island on which to train and stage assault troops for subsequent operations against the heart of the Empire. Kyushu was only 350 nautical miles away, Formosa 330 miles distant, and Shanghai, 450. Two other major purposes of the impending invasion were to secure and develop air-base sites from which Allied aircraft could operate to gain air superiority over Japan. It was expected that by taking Okinawa, while at the same time subjecting the Home Islands to blockade and bombardment, Japanese military forces and their will to resist would be severely weakened.

#### *OKINAWA: HISTORY, LAND, AND PEOPLE*<sup>4</sup>

Before Commodore Matthew C. Perry, USN, visited Okinawa in 1853-54, few Americans had ever heard of the island. This state of ignorance did not change much in nearly a century, but American preinvasion studies in

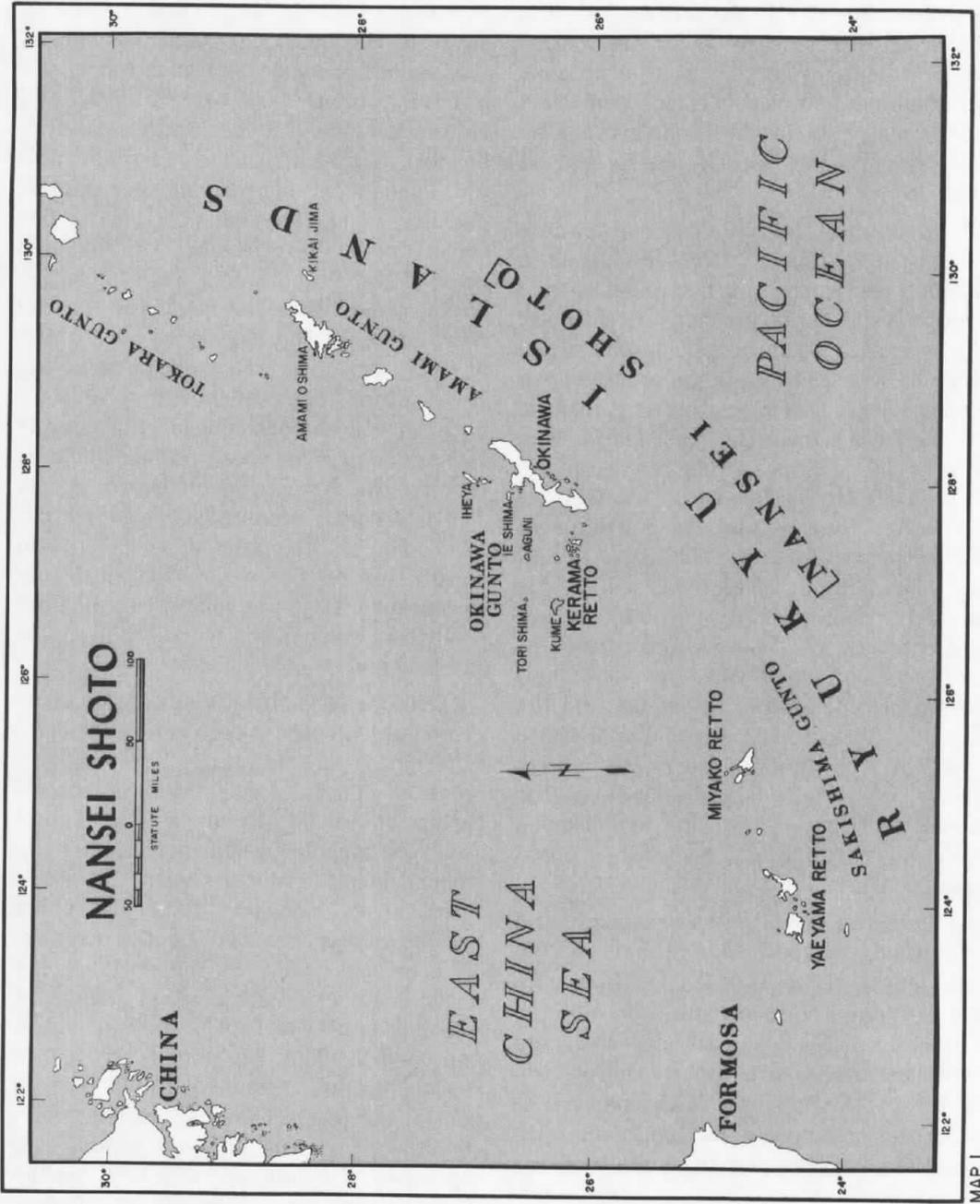
<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: JICPOA Bul 63-44, Nansei Shoto, dtd 15May44; CinCPac-CinC-POA Bul 161-44, Okinawa Gunto, dtd 15Nov44; EngrSec, FMFPac, EngrIntelInfo, Okinawa Gunto, n.d. The terrain description presented in this section is that of Okinawa as it existed at the time of the American invasion and before engineer and Seabee units performed their earth-transforming feats.

1944 soon shed some light on this all-but-unknown area.

The course of Okinawa history—from the Chinese invasions about 600 A. D. until Japanese annexation in 1879—was dominated by an amalgamation of Chinese and Japanese cultural and political determinants. For many years, the Chinese influence reigned supreme. After the first Chinese-Okinawan contacts had been made, they warred against each other until the island peoples were subdued. Shortly after 1368, when the Ming Dynasty came to power, China demanded payment of tribute from Satsudo, the King of Okinawa. The payment was given along with his pledge of fealty as a Chinese subject.

In the midst of incessant Okinawan dynastic squabbles, Chinese control remained loose and intermittent until 1609, when the Japanese overran the island, devastating all that stood in their way. The king of Okinawa then reigning was taken prisoner, and a Japanese local government was established temporarily.

For the next 250 years, the Okinawan Kingdom, as such, was in the unenviable position of having to acknowledge both Chinese and Japanese suzerainty at the same time. Finally, in May 1875, Japan forbade the islanders to send any more tribute to China, whose right to invest the Okinawan kings was now ended. In the face of mounting Okinawan protests against this arbitrary action, Japan followed its decree by dethroning the king in March 1879; he was reduced in rank, becoming a marquis of Japan. Okinawa and its neighboring islands were then incorporated within the



MAP 1

T. L. RUSSELL

Japanese political structure as the Okinawan Prefecture. Over the years, China remained restive at this obvious encroachment, until the question was one of many settled in Japan's favor by its victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894.

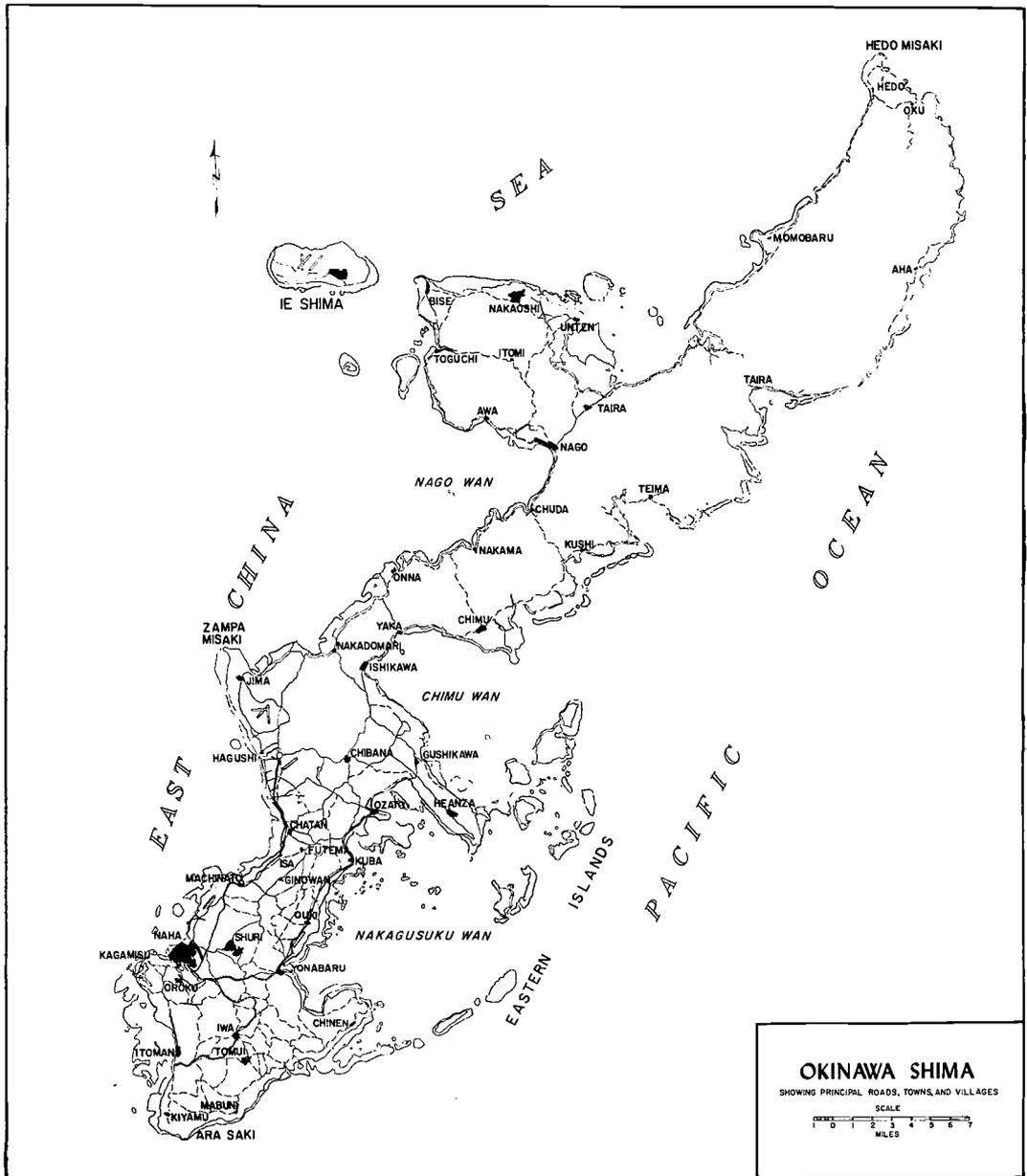
The islands to which the Japanese successfully gained title, the Ryukyu Retto, were in the southernmost of two groups which make up the Nansei Shoto. The shoto is a chain of islands which stretch in a 790-mile-long arc between Kyushu and Formosa, separating the Pacific Ocean from the East China Sea. One of the groups which make up the Ryukyu Retto is the Okinawa Gunto.<sup>5</sup> The other four major island groups in the retto are Osumi, Tokara, Amami, and Sakishima. Okinawa Gunto is located at the half-way point in the arc and consists of Okinawa and numerous smaller islands. These include Kumi Shima, Aguni Shima, Ie Shima, and the Kerama Retto in the west; Iheya Retto and Yoron Shima in the north; and a group of small islands, named the Eastern Islands by the Americans, roughly paralleling the east central coast of Okinawa.

The island of Okinawa is narrow and irregularly shaped throughout its 60-mile length. (See Map 2.) In the north, the Motobu Peninsula juts out into the East China Sea and extends the island to its maximum breadth, 18 miles; immediately to the south is the narrowest part, the two-mile-wide Ishikawa Isthmus. The coastline of the island ranges

in nature from a precipitous and rocky shore in the north, through a generally reef-bound lowland belt just below the isthmus, to an area of sea cliffs and raised beaches in the south. Landing beaches suitable for large-scale amphibious operations were neither numerous nor good. The most extensive flat areas and largest beaches on the east coast were found along the shores of Nakagusuku Wan (or bay) and, on the west coast, in the area between Zampa Misaki (or point) and Oroku Peninsula. Two major fleet anchorages existed, both on the eastern side of the island: Nakagusuku Wan (later named Buckner Bay by the Americans in honor of the Tenth Army Commander) and Chimu Wan. The leading port of the Okinawa Gunto was on the west coast at Naha, the major city of the island group. Port facilities elsewhere were limited to small vessels.

Okinawa is easily divisible into three geographical parts, each one physically different from the other. The territory north of the Ishikawa Isthmus, constituting about two-thirds of the island area, is largely mountainous, heavily wooded, and rimmed with dissected terraces—or one-time flatlands which became deeply ravined by the ravages of erosion. About 80 percent of the north is covered with a dense growth of live oak and conifers, climbing vines, and brush. The highlands, rising to rugged peaks, 1,000 to 1,500 feet in height, dominate the area. Small, swift streams drain the clay or sandy-loam topsoil of the interior which is trafficable under most conditions. Cross-country movement is limited mainly by the steepness of the hills and the lush

<sup>5</sup> Gunto, retto, shoto all are Japanese geographic terms for group or chain of islands; jima or shima is translated as island.



MAP 2

T.L. RUSSELL

vegetation. The few roads that existed in 1945 were mostly along the coast.

The middle division, consisting of that area lying between Ishikawa Isthmus and an east-west valley running between the cities of Naha and Yonabaru, is broadest in its northernmost part. Just south of the isthmus is an area resembling northern Okinawa, but the rest of the sector is, for the most part, rolling, lightly wooded country interrupted by steep cliffs and ravines. The few streams, flowing through hills which rarely exceeded a height of 500 feet, are generally narrow and shallow, so they could be easily bridged or forded.

The southernmost tip of the island, triangular in shape, is extremely hilly and was dominated by extensive limestone plateaus, some reaching over 500 feet in height. At each angle of the base of the triangle is a peninsula, Oroku on the west, and Chinen on the east.

The primary roads built by the Japanese were little more than coral- or limestone-surfaced trails, varying in width from 12 to 16 feet, on a sand and clay base. Use of these roads depended largely upon the weather, since rain reduced them to sticky and slow-drying morasses. In the dry season, the slightest movement on the roads threw up dense clouds of dust. The major arteries threaded along the coastlines, branching off into a few cross-island roads which then broke down into a capillary system of trails connecting the small villages, settlements, and individual farms. The central sector, the densely populated part of the island, contains an intricate network of roads. Only one, the broad stone-paved

highway connecting the cities of Shuri and Naha, could support two lanes of traffic. In this area, the road net was augmented by a narrow gauge railway, with approximately 30 miles of track. This system provided the major trans-island communications net, running from Naha to Yonabaru on the east coast, via the towns of Kobakura and Kokuba, while trunk lines linked Kobakura and Kokuba with the west coast towns of Kadena and Itoman, respectively.

Okinawa's climate is tropical, with moderate winters, hot summers, and high humidity throughout the year. The annual temperature range is from a minimum of 40 degrees to a mean maximum of 95 degrees in July. The months of May through September are marked by a heavy and erratic rainfall. During the typhoon season (July-November), torrential rains and winds of over 75 miles-per-hour have been recorded.<sup>6</sup> During the rest of the year, except for brief downpours, good climatic conditions generally prevail.

The inhabitants of Okinawa in 1945 were heirs to a complex racial mixture. The original population is believed to have been a branch of the hairy Ainu and Kumaso stock which formerly inhabited Kyushu and other Japanese islands. A Mongoloid strain was introduced when Japanese pirates, who made Okinawa their headquarters, engaged in their time-honored habit of kidnapping women from the Chinese mainland.

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<sup>6</sup> A typhoon in late September 1945 recorded winds of up to 120 miles per hour. LtGen Edward W. Snedeker ltr to Hd, HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, dtd 15Oct65, hereafter *Snedeker ltr 1965*.

Malayan blood was infused into this melting pot through intermarriage, immigration, and invasion. This evolution produced a people with the same basic characteristics as those of the Japanese, but with slight physical differences. The Okinawans are shorter, darker, and are inclined to have more body hair.

The 1940 census gave an estimate of slightly over 800,000 people in the Nansei Shoto as a whole, with nearly a half-million of these on Okinawa proper. Farmers constituted the largest single population class, with fishermen forming a smaller, but important, group. Approximately 15 percent of the Okinawa populace lived in Naha, and within this community were most of the higher officials, businessmen, and white collar workers—most of them Japanese who either had emigrated or been assigned from the Home Islands.

During the period of the Okinawan monarchy, there was an elaborate social hierarchy dominated by nobles and court officials. After Japanese annexation, the major social distinctions became those that existed between governing officials and natives, between urban and rural inhabitants, and between the rich and the poor—with the latter in the majority. Assimilation of the Japanese and Okinawan societies was minimal, a situation that was further irritated by the preferential treatment tendered by the Japanese to their fellow-countrymen when the more important administrative and political posts were assigned.

Another chasm separating the Japanese and Okinawan was the difference in languages. Despite a common archaic tongue which had branched into the

language families of both Okinawa and Japan, there were at least five Ryukyuan dialects which rendered the two languages mutually unintelligible. The Japanese attempted to reduce the language barrier somewhat by directing that standard (Tokyo) Japanese was to be part of the Okinawan school curriculum. Several decades of formal education, however, failed to remove the influence of many generations of Chinese ethnic features which shaped the Okinawan national characteristics. The Chinese imprint on the island was such that one Japanese soldier noted that "the houses and customs here resemble those of China, and remind one of a Chinese town."<sup>7</sup> The natives retained their own culture, religion, and form of ancestor worship. One outward manifestation of these cultural considerations were the thousands of horseshoe-shaped burial vaults, many of impressive size and peculiar beauty, which were set into the sides of numerous cliffs and hills throughout the island.

The basic Okinawan farm settlement consisted of a group of farmsteads, each having the main and other buildings situated on a small plot of land. The farmhouses were small, thatch-roofed, and set off from the invariably winding trailside by either clay or reed walls. The agricultural communities generally clustered around their own individual marketplaces. Towns, such as Nago and Itoman, were outgrowths of the villages, differing only in the fact that these larger settlements had several modern business and government struc-

<sup>7</sup> "Diary of a Superior Private, 272d IIB," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 147-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 32, dtd 16Jun45, p. 48.

tures. The island's cities, Naha and Shuri, were conspicuous by their many large stone and concrete public structures and the bustle that accompanies an urban setting. Shuri was the ancient capital of the Ryukyuan kingdom and its citadel stood on a high hill in the midst of a natural fortress area of the island.

The fundamentally agrarian Okinawan economy was dependent upon three staple crops. About four-fifths of southern Okinawa was arable, and half of the land here was used for the cultivation of sweet potatoes, the predominant foodstuff of both men and animals. Sugar cane was the principal commercial crop and its cultivation utilized the second largest number of acres. Some rice was also grown, but this crop consistently produced a yield far below local requirements. Since rice production was sufficient to satisfy only two-thirds of the population's annual consumption needs, more than 10 million bushels had to be imported annually from Formosa.<sup>8</sup>

Industrial development on the island was rudimentary. The Naha-Shuri area was the leading manufacturing center where such items as alcoholic beverages, lacquerware, and silk pongee were produced. Manufacturing was carried out chiefly in small factories or by workers in their homes. The only relatively important industry carried on outside of the Naha-Shuri complex was sugar refining, in which cattle supplied the power in very primitive mills. The fish-

ing trade, of some importance, centered around Naha and Itoman. There were also small numbers of fishing craft based at all of the other usable harbors on the island; however, lack of refrigeration, distance to the fishing grounds, and seasonal typhoons all hindered the development of this industry and prevented its becoming a large source of income for the Okinawans.

From the very beginnings of the 1879 annexation, the Japanese government made intensive efforts to bring the Ryukyuan people under complete domination through the means of a closely controlled educational system, military conscription, and a carefully supervised system of local government. The prefectural governor was answerable only to the Home Minister in Tokyo. Although the elected prefectural assembly acted as the gubernatorial advisory body, the governor accepted, rejected, or ignored their suggestions as he saw fit. On a local level, assemblies elected in the cities, towns, and townships in turn elected a mayor. All local administrative units were, in effect, directly under the governor's control, and their acts or very existence were subject to his pleasure.

In every aspect—social, political, and economic—the Okinawan was kept in a position inferior to that of any other Japanese citizen residing either on Okinawa or elsewhere in the Empire. This did not prevent the government from imposing on the Okinawan a period of obligated military service.<sup>9</sup> The periodic

<sup>8</sup> MilHistSec, Japanese Research Div, HQ-USAFFE, Japanese Monograph No. 135, Okinawa Operations Record, revised edition dtd Nov49, p. 60, hereafter *Okinawa Operations Record*.

<sup>9</sup> Military conscription was first enforced on Okinawa in 1898, although in Japan proper, conscription had been in effect since 1873. *War History Office Comments*.

call-ups of age groups was enforced equally upon the natives of Okinawa and the Ryukyus as on the male inhabitants of Japan proper. This provided Japan with a reservoir of trained reservists from which it could draw whenever necessary.

With the exception of those drafts of reservists leaving for active duty elsewhere, Okinawa, for all practical purposes, was in the backwash of the early stages of World War II. The island remained in this state until April 1944, when Japan activated the *Thirty-second Army*, set up its headquarters on Okinawa, and assigned it responsibility for the defense of the island chain.

### THE JAPANESE FORCES<sup>10</sup>

Following the massive and devastating United States naval air and surface bombardment of Truk, 17–18 February 1944, and the breaching of the Marianas line shortly thereafter, the Japanese *Imperial General Headquarters* awakened to the obviously weak condition of the Ryukyus' defenses. Prior to 1944, little attention had been paid to the arming of the Nansei Shoto. The island group boasted two minor naval bases only, one at Amami O-Shima and the

<sup>10</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: Tenth Army Intel-Mono, dtd Aug45, pt I, secs A and B, hereafter *IntelMono*; Tenth Army G-3 POW Interrogation Summaries Nos. 1–19, Jul-Aug45, hereafter *POW InterSum*; Tenth Army G-2 Interrogation Rpt No. 27, Akira Shimada, dtd 24Jul45, hereafter *Shimada Interrogation*; Tenth Army Interrogation Rpt No. 28, Col Hiromichi Yahara (Senior Staff Officer, Thirty-second Army), dtd 6Aug45, hereafter *Yahara Interrogation*; Hayashi and Coox, *Kōgun; Okinawa Operations Record*.

other at Naha, and a few small Army garrisons such as the *Nakagusuku Wan Fortress Artillery Unit* on Okinawa.<sup>11</sup> Acting with an alacrity born of distinct necessity, *IGHQ* took steps to correct this weakness in the Empire's inner defensive positions by expediting and intensifying:

. . . operational preparations in the area extending from Formosa to the Nansei Islands with the view of defending our territory in the Nansei area and securing our lines of communication with our southern sector of operations, and thereby build a structure capable first, of resisting the enemy's surprise attacks' and, second, of crushing their attempts to seize the area when conditions [change] in our favor.<sup>12</sup>

In order to improve Japanese defenses in the Ryukyus, *IGHQ* assigned this mission on 22 March 1944, to the *Thirty-second Army*, the command of which was assumed formally on 1 April by Lieutenant General Masao Watanabe. At Naha, headquarters of the new army, staff officers hoped that enough time would be available for adequate fortification of the island. All planning was tempered by memories of the immediate past which indicated that "an army trained to attack on any and every occasion, irrespective of conditions, and with no calculation as to the real chances of success, could be beaten soundly."<sup>13</sup> Added stimuli to Japanese

<sup>11</sup> Actually, there were three garrisons located in Nansei Shoto: one on Amami O-Shima founded in 1922; and two founded in August 1941—Funauki Fortress at Nishi Omote-Jima and the Nakagusuku Wan Fortress noted above. *War History Office Comments*.

<sup>12</sup> *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> *IntelMono*, pt I, sec A, p. 3.

preparations were the American invasions of Peleliu and Morotai on 15 September 1944. By this time, the Japanese high command became quite certain that either Formosa, the Ryukyus, or the Bonins, or all three, were to be invaded by the spring of 1945 at the latest. Initially, Japanese Army and Navy air forces were to blunt the assaults in a major air counteroffensive. The establishment of Allied air superiority and demonstrated weaknesses of Japanese air forces, however, caused the military leaders in Tokyo to downgrade the aviation role in the coming struggle for the defense of the Home Islands. The ground forces, then, would carry the major burden.

The *Thirty-second Army* staff planners wasted no time in organizing the ground defenses of Okinawa. They had learned by the cruel experiences of Japanese forces on islands which had been invaded by the Americans that a stand at the shoreline would only result in complete annihilation and that their beach positions would be torn to pieces in a naval bombardment. It became apparent, therefore, that the primary defensive positions had to be set up inland. Then, should the invaders escape destruction at sea under the guns and torpedoes of Japanese naval forces, or at the beachhead under the downpour of artillery shells, the death blow would be administered by the ground forces' assumption "of the offensive in due course."<sup>14</sup> To steel the troops' determination to fight and to keep their morale at a high peak, army headquarters devised the following battle slogans:

One Plane for One Warship  
 One Boat for One Ship  
 One Man for Ten of the Enemy  
 or One Tank.<sup>15</sup>

The command of the *Thirty-second Army* was assumed by Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima in August 1944, when General Watanabe was forced to retire because of a continuing illness. Because of the importance of the impending Okinawa battle, *IGHQ* assigned General Ushijima one of the most competent officers of the Japanese Army, Major General Isamu Cho, as his chief of staff. On 21 January, army headquarters was split into two groups. Ushijima's operations staff moved to Shuri where the general was to direct his army for the major portion of the campaign. A "rear headquarters" composed of the ordnance, veterinary, judicial, intendance,<sup>16</sup> and the greater part of the medical staff set up near Tsukasan, south of Shuri.

Lieutenant Generals Ushijima and Cho<sup>17</sup> complemented each other's military qualities and personality, and formed a command team that reflected mutual trust and respect. They were ably abetted by the only holdover from

<sup>15</sup> "Thirty-second Army Battle Instructions, dtd 15Feb45," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 122-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 30, dtd 1Jun45.

<sup>16</sup> The intendance service, which had no exact U. S. military equivalent, controlled clothing, rations, forage, pay, and the upkeep of Army buildings. In effect, it combined the functions of the U. S. Army Quartermaster Corps and Finance Department. WD, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, TM-30-480 (Washington, 1Oct44), p. 50.

<sup>17</sup> On 1Mar45, at the age of 51, Cho was promoted to lieutenant general.

<sup>14</sup> Hayashi and Coox, *Kōgun*, p. 116.

the old staff, Colonel Hiromichi Yahara, who retained his billet as Senior Officer in Charge of Operations,<sup>18</sup> and Major Tadao Miyake as the logistics officer.<sup>19</sup> Ushijima, a senior officer slated for promotion to general in August 1945, was reputedly a man of great integrity and character who demonstrated a quiet competence which, in turn, inspired great confidence, loyalty, and respect from his subordinates. Cho, in comparison, was a fiery, ebullient, and hard-driving individual with a brilliant, inquiring mind. He spared neither himself nor his staff. His abounding energy was effectively counterbalanced by his senior's calm outward appearance. This combination of personalities was served by comparatively young and alert staff members who were allowed a great latitude of action and independence of thought.

The new commander of the *Thirty-second Army* inherited a combat organization which had been specially established for the expected invasion of Okinawa. Many independent artillery, mortar, antiaircraft artillery (AAA), antitank (AT), and machine gun groups supplemented the fire power of the basic infantry units assigned to the army. As a result of the *IGHQ* decision in June 1944 to reinforce the Okinawa garrison, nine infantry and three artillery battalions were to be sent to aug-

ment the force already on the island.<sup>20</sup> The majority of the reinforcements arrived from their previous stations in China, Manchuria, and Japan between June and August 1944.

The veteran *9th Infantry Division*, first to arrive, possessed battle honors dating from the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. Coming directly from Manchuria, and scheduled by the high command as the backbone of the defense force, the *9th's* stay on Okinawa was short-lived. The critical situation on Leyte required the assignment of the *9th* there, and Ushijima, ". . . in accordance with orders of Imperial General Headquarters, decided on 17 November to redeploy the 9th Division in order to send an elite unit with a proud and glorious war record to a battlefield where the Imperial Army would engage in a decisive battle."<sup>21</sup>

Probably, the most important of all of the factors which may have influenced the course of the coming battle for the Japanese, and favored an Allied victory, was the loss of this division and the fact that it was never replaced. It left in late December for the Philippines by way of Formosa where it sat out the rest of the war, prevented by Allied submarines and airplanes—and MacArthur's landing on Luzon in January—from either continuing on to its destination or returning to Okinawa.<sup>22</sup>

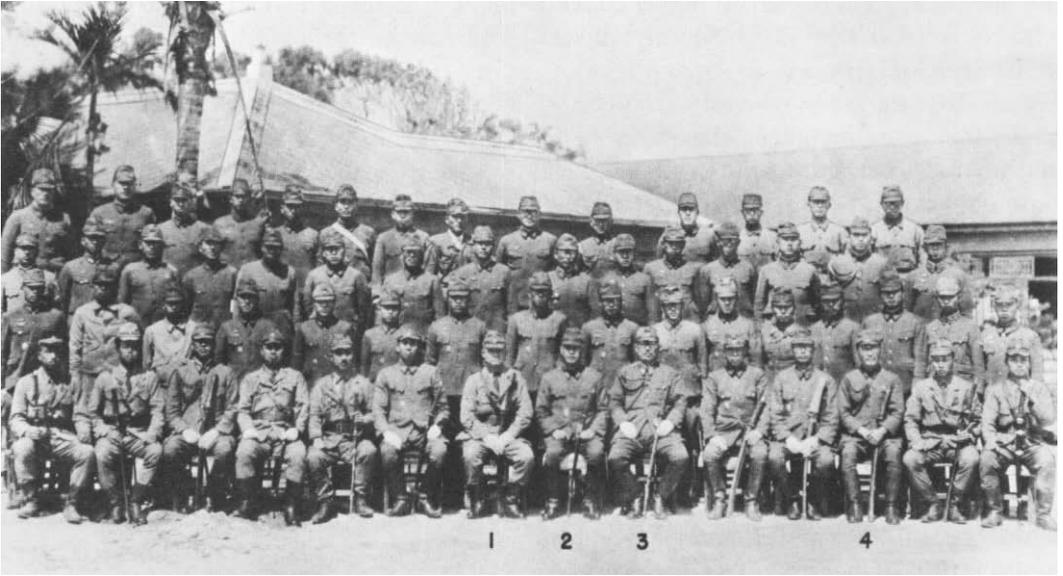
<sup>18</sup> Colonel Yahara's professional background included a preponderance of staff assignments. He had been a military attache in the United States and Thailand, returning to the latter country as a participant in the Burma campaign. MIS, HistDiv, GHQ, FEC, *Personal History Statements*, n.d., p. 56.

<sup>19</sup> *War History Office Comments*.

<sup>20</sup> "Empire Defense Operations Plan, dtd 15Jun44," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 194-45, Special Translation No. 86, dtd 7Aug45, pp. 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> MIS, WD, *Order of Battle for the Japanese Armed Forces*, dtd 1Mar45, p. 32.



THIRTY-SECOND ARMY OFFICERS sit for a formal portrait in February 1945. Numbers identify: (1) Rear Admiral Minoru Ota, Commander, Naval Base Force; (2) Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima, Commanding General, Thirty-second Army; (3) Lieutenant General Isamu Cho, Army C/S; (4) Colonel Hiromichi Yahara, Army Senior Staff Officer. (Photograph courtesy of OCMH, DA)



NORTH BANK of the Bishi Gawa shows the typical integrated tomb-cave-dugout defenses which characterized Japanese organization of Okinawan terrain. (USA SC183743)

Since the *9th Infantry Division* was no longer available to the *Thirty-second Army*, and in order to carry out his defensive plans, Ushijima asked for replacements. He was notified by IGHQ on 23 January 1945 that the *84th Division* in Himeji would be sent to Okinawa. This notification was cancelled that same day with the explanation that the greatest possible supply of munitions would be sent, but replacements neither could nor would be sent to the army.<sup>23</sup> This, in effect, put Ushijima on notice that the means to improve his situation had to be found locally.

In June 1944, the *Thirty-second Army* was to have been reinforced by Major General Shigeji Suzuki's *44th Independent Mixed Brigade (IMB)*, a unit of approximately 6,000 men organized that very month on Kyushu. It was originally composed of the *1st* and *2d Infantry Units* (each essentially of regimental size) and attached artillery, engineer, and signal units. While en route to Okinawa, the *Toyama Maru*, the ship carrying the brigade, was torpedoed by an American submarine off Amami O-Shima on 29 June. More than 5,000 men were lost and only about 600 survivors of the ill-fated brigade landed on Okinawa; these were used as the nucleus of a reconstituted *2d Infantry Unit*. Other replacements were obtained from Kyushu as well as from the ranks of conscripted Okinawans, but the reorganized unit was never fully re-equipped. As a result, this lack of basic infantry equipment caused the *2d Infantry Unit* to be known among other soldiers on the island as the *Bimbo*

*Tai* or "have-nothing-unit."<sup>24</sup> The *1st Infantry Unit* was never rebuilt and existed merely as a headquarters organization. Instead, the *15th Independent Mixed Regiment (IMR)*, a unit newly raised in Narashino, Chiba-ken, was flown directly to Okinawa during the period 6–11 July and added to the *44th IMB* in September, bringing its strength up to about 5,000 men.

The next unit of importance to arrive was the *24th Infantry Division* which landed in August. Since its initial organization as part of the *Kwantung Army* in October 1939, the *24th* had been responsible for the security of the eastern boundaries of Manchuria. The division, commanded by Lieutenant General Tatsumi Amamiya, was well-equipped and well-trained, but not battle-proven, before it joined the *Thirty-second Army*. The *24th* was a triangular division which had been stripped of its infantry group headquarters, one battalion from each infantry regiment, an artillery battalion, and an engineer company, all of which had been added to expeditionary units sent from Manchuria to the Central Pacific in early 1944. Until a general *Thirty-second Army* reorganization in February 1945, the *24th's* infantry regiments (*22d*, *32d*, and *89th Infantry*) functioned with only two battalions each. The division set up its headquarters at Kadena, and in October, it assigned 300 Okinawan conscripts, received from the *Thirty-second Army*, to each of its infantry regiments for training and retention later by the training unit. The February reorganization brought the *24th* nearly up to its

<sup>23</sup> *Okinawa Operations Record*, pp. 44–45.

<sup>24</sup> *IntelMono*, pt I, sec B, chap 3, p. 9.

original strength and made it the largest tactical unit in the *Thirty-second Army*, with more than 14,000 Japanese troops and Okinawan draftees assigned to infantry, artillery, reconnaissance, engineer, and transport regiments, and divisional troops.

The final major unit assigned to General Ushijima's command was the *62d Infantry Division*, commanded by Lieutenant General Takeo Fujioka. This was a brigaded organization which had seen action in China following its activation there in June 1943. Its table of organization, considerably different from the *24th Division's*, was similar to that of like units in the *Chinese Expeditionary Army*. Both of the *62d's* brigades had served as independent commands in China since 1938, while the division as a whole fought in the April–June 1944 campaigns in northern Honan Province. Each brigade had four independent infantry battalions (*IIBs*); the *63d Brigade* had the *11th*, *12th*, *13th*, and *14th IIBs*, while the *15th*, *21st*, *22d*, and *23d IIBs* were assigned to the *64th Brigade*. In 1944, two additional *IIBs* were sent to Okinawa as reinforcements and attached on 15 December to the division which, in turn, assigned them to the brigades. The *272d IIB* went to the *64th Brigade*, while the *273 IIB* went to the *63d*.

The *62d Division* lacked organic artillery and had few other supporting arms. It never attained a strength greater than 12,000 troops, the largest proportion of whom were infantrymen. The infantry battalions of the *62d* were the strongest units of their type on Okinawa, as each battalion mustered a total of 1,200 men organized into five rifle companies, a machine gun company,

and an infantry gun company armed with two 75mm guns and two 70mm howitzers. The *272d* and *273d IIBs* were reported later as having a strength of 700 men each, but with one or two less rifle companies per battalion.

Some variance in strength was found in the infantry components of the other two major fighting organizations of the *Thirty-second Army*. The *2d Infantry Unit* and *15th IMR* of the *44th IMB* had in common three rifle battalions, an antitank company (four 37mm or 47mm AT guns), and a regimental gun company (four 75mm guns). Each of the battalions listed a total strength of 700 men who were assigned to three rifle companies, a machine gun company, and an infantry gun unit (two 70mm howitzers). The *24th Division* regimental organization was similar except for the replacement, in one battalion of each regiment, of the 70mm howitzers by a mortar platoon manning four 81mm mortars.

Since the Japanese high command envisioned the coming battle for Okinawa as developing into one of fixed position defense, the defenders were not assigned any appreciably strong armored force. The entire Japanese tank strength, given to the *Thirty-second Army* in July, consisted of the *27th Tank Regiment*, organized originally in Manchuria in April 1944, from elements of the *2d Armored Division*. It was a regiment in name only, as one of its medium tank companies was sent to the garrison at Miyako Jima. What remained was an armored task force with a strength of 750 men who filled the ranks of one light and one medium tank company, a tractor-drawn artillery bat-

tery, an infantry company, a maintenance company, and an engineer platoon. The regiment's heavy weapons included 14 medium and 13 light tanks, 4 75mm guns, 2 47mm AT guns, and 10 machine guns. The heaviest tank-mounted weapon was the 57mm gun on the medium tanks.

As the Japanese position in the Philippines became hopeless, shipments of weapons to be sent there were diverted by IGHQ to Okinawa. The result was that the *Thirty-second Army* possessed a heavier concentration of artillery power, grouped under a single command, than had been available to any Japanese force in previous Pacific campaigns. The total artillery strength on Okinawa, with the exception of the *24th Division's* organic *42d Field Artillery Regiment*, was grouped within Major General Kosuke Wada's *5th Artillery Command*. Besides the comparatively weak *7th Heavy Artillery Regiment* (formerly the *Nakagusuku Wan Fortress Artillery Unit*), General Wada's command included two medium regiments, a heavy battalion, and the artillery units of the *44th IMB* and *27th Tank Regiment*. Combat-tested at Bataan in the Philippines, the *1st Medium Artillery Regiment* had one of its two battalions assigned to Miyako Jima upon arrival from Manchuria in July. The other medium regiment was the *23d* which, until its departure for Okinawa in October, had been stationed in eastern Manchuria from the time of its activation in 1942. The two medium artillery regiments together mustered a total of 2,000 troops who manned 36 150mm howitzers. The artillery command also contained the *100th Inde-*

*pendent Heavy Artillery Battalion*. This unit was formed in June of 1944 in Yokosuka and sent to Okinawa in July with 500 men and 8 150mm guns.

Besides artillery units, General Wada's troop list included a mortar regiment and two light mortar battalions. The *1st Independent Heavy Mortar Regiment's* 320mm spigot mortars were an unusual type of weapons which Marines had first encountered on Iwo Jima.<sup>25</sup> These awesome weapons, firing a 675-pound shell dubbed a "flying ashcan" by Americans, were the basic armament of this unit. Only half of its six batteries were on Okinawa, as the other three had been sent to Burma in mid-1942. Although the 96 81mm mortars of the *1st* and *2d Light Mortar Battalions* were nominally under the command of General Wada, actually they were assigned in close support of the various infantry units and usually operated under the direction of their respective sector defense commanders.

The infantry was strengthened with other types of artillery weapons from antiaircraft artillery, antitank, and automatic weapons units which were attached to them during most of the campaign. A dual air-ground defense role was performed by the 72 75mm guns and 54 20mm machine cannon in 4 independent antiaircraft artillery, 3 field antiaircraft artillery, and 3 machine-cannon battalions. In addition, 48 lethal, high-velocity, flat trajectory 47mm guns (located in 3 independent antitank battalions and 2 independent

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<sup>25</sup> LtCol Whitman S. Bartley, *Iwo Jima: Amphibious Epic* (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1954), pp. 13-14, hereafter Bartley, *Iwo Jima*.

companies) were added to the defense. Completing the infantry fire support of the *Thirty-second Army* were 4 independent machine gun battalions which had a total of 96 heavy machine guns.

The rest of General Ushijima's army consisted of many diverse units and supporting elements. The departure of the *9th Division* created a shortage of infantry troops which had to be made up in as expeditious a manner as possible. The reserve of potential infantry replacements on the island varied in quality from good, in the two shipping engineer regiments, to poor, at best, in the various rear area service organizations. The *19th Air Sector Command*, whose airfield maintenance and construction troops were stationed at the Yontan, Kadena, and Ie Shima airstrips, provided the largest number of replacements, 7,000 men.

Another source of troops to fill infantry ranks was found in the sea-raiding units. These organizations, first encountered by American forces in the Philippines, were designed for the destruction of amphibious invasion shipping by means of explosive-laden suicide boats. There were a total of seven sea-raiding squadrons in the Okinawa Gunto, three of which were based at Kerama Retto. Each of the squadrons had assigned to it 100 hand-picked candidates for suicide and martyrdom, whose caliber was uniformly high since each man was considered officer material. When one of these men failed to return, it was presumed that his had been a successful mission and, reportedly, he was therefore given a posthumous promotion to second lieutenant.

Japanese naval base activities on Okinawa were under the command of Rear Admiral Minoru Ota. Admiral Ota was commander of the *Naval Base Force* for the Okinawa area, commander of the *4th Surface Escort Unit*, and also was in charge of naval aviation activities in the Nansei Islands. Army-Navy relations and the chain of command on Okinawa were based locally on mutual agreements between the *Thirty-second Army* and the *Naval Base Force*.<sup>26</sup>

Admiral Ota directed the activities of approximately 10,000 men, of whom 3,500 were Japanese naval personnel and the other 6,000–7,000 were civilian employees belonging to sub-units of the *Naval Base Force*. Of the total number of uniformed naval troops, only about 200 were considered to have received any kind of infantry training. Upon the activation of the base force on 15 April 1944, a small number of naval officers and enlisted men, and most of the civilians, were formed into maintenance, supply, and construction units for the large airfield on Oroku Peninsula and the harbor installations at Naha. At Unten-Ko, on Motobu Peninsula in the north, were stationed a torpedo boat squadron and a midget submarine unit.

In organizing for the defense of the island, the greater portion of regular naval troops were formed into anti-aircraft artillery and coastal defense bat-

<sup>26</sup> *Okinawa Operations Record*, pp. 57–59; for a discussion of the Japanese high command setup, see Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Maj Douglas T. Kane, *Isolation of Rabaul—History of U. S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, v. II (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1963), hereafter Shaw and Kane, *Isolation of Rabaul*, especially that section in chap I entitled "Japanese Strategy."

teries. These were broken down into four battery groups which were emplaced mainly in the Naha-Oroku-Tomigusuku area. The antiaircraft units manned 20 120mm guns, 77 machine cannon, and 60 13mm machine guns, while the 15 coast defense batteries, placed in strategic positions on the coastline under the control of Army local sector commanders, stood ready by their 14cm and 12cm naval guns. Although the total strength in numbers was impressive, the *Okinawa Naval Base Force* did not have a combat potential commensurate with its size.

Continually seeking means to bolster his defenses, General Ushijima received permission to mobilize a home guard on the island. In July 1944, the Okinawa Branch of the Imperial Reservists Association formed a home guard, whose members were called *Boeitai*. They were organized on a company-sized basis by town or village and were mainly comprised of reservists. Since the *Boeitai* represented a voluntarily organized group, it did not come under the Japanese Military Service Act, although their training and equipment came from the regular forces into whose ranks they were to be integrated when the battle was joined. The total number of *Boeitai* thus absorbed by the *Thirty-second Army* has been estimated between 17,000 and 20,000 men.

On Okinawa there were certain units which have often been confused with the *Boeitai*. These were the three *Special Guard Companies* (223d, 224th, and 225th) and three *Special Guard Engineer Units* (502d, 503d, and 504th) which were special components of the *Thirty-second Army*. During peacetime,

each unit had a cadre of several commissioned and noncommissioned officers. When war broke out, certain designated reservists reported to the above units to which they had been previously assigned.<sup>27</sup>

Even the youth of the island were not exempt from the mobilization. About 1,700 male students, 14 years of age and older, from Okinawa's middle schools, were organized into volunteer youth groups called the *Tekketsu (Blood and Iron for the Emperor Duty Units)*. These young boys were eventually assigned to front-line duties and to guerrilla-type functions for which they had been trained. Most, however, were assigned to communication units.

It has not been conclusively determined how many native Okinawans were actually added to the forces of the *Thirty-second Army*, or to what extent they influenced the final course of battle. What is known, however, is that their greatest contribution was the labor they performed which, in a period of nine months, transformed the island landscape into hornets' nests of death and destruction.

### THE JAPANESE DEFENSES<sup>28</sup>

Continuing American successes in the conduct of amphibious operations forced the Japanese to recognize the increasing difficulties of defending against assaults from the sea. The loss

<sup>27</sup> War History Office Comments.

<sup>28</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *IntelMono*; *POW InterSum*; *Shimada Interrogation*; *Yahara Interrogation*; Hayashi and Coox, *Kōgun*.

of some islands in 1944 reportedly caused Japanese garrison units at other Imperial bases in the Pacific to lose confidence in themselves and their ability to withstand an American seaborne invasion. The Japanese high command hastily published the "Essentials of Island Defense," a document which credited Americans with overwhelming naval and air power, and emphasized that the garrisons should "lay out and equip positions which can withstand heavy naval and aerial bombardment, and which are suitable for protracted delaying action . . . diminish the fighting effectiveness of landing units . . . seize opportunities to try to annihilate the force in one fell swoop."<sup>29</sup>

This document may have influenced General Ushijima's decisions when he settled on a final defense plan, although his particular situation was governed primarily by the strength of the *Thirty-second Army* and the nature of the area it was to defend. Captured on Okinawa were a set of instructions for the defense of Iwo Jima, which were apparently a blueprint also for the defense of critical areas on the coasts of the islands of Japan. It is assumed that Ushijima may have seen these instructions, for they bore directly on his problem:

In situations where island garrisons cannot expect reinforcements of troops from rear echelons, but must carry on the battle themselves from start to finish, they should exhaust every means for securing a favorable outcome, disrupting the enemy's plans by inflicting maximum losses on him, and, even when the situation is

hopeless, holding out in strong positions for as long as possible.<sup>30</sup>

In order to deceive the assaulting forces as to Japanese intentions, a *Thirty-second Army* battle instruction warned the troops to "guard against opening fire prematurely."<sup>31</sup> A later battle instruction explained that "the most effective and certain way of [the Americans'] ascertaining the existence and organization of our firepower system is to have us open fire prematurely on a powerful force where it can maneuver."<sup>32</sup>

These instructions were a forewarning that, rather than forcing the issue on the beaches, "the Japanese soldier would dig and construct in a way and to an extent that an American soldier has never been known to do."<sup>33</sup> Japanese organization of the ground paralleled that which assault troops had discovered on Biak, Saipan, and Peleliu in 1944 and Iwo Jima in 1945.<sup>34</sup> General Cho, a strong advocate of underground and cave fortifications, took an active

<sup>30</sup> "Land Defense Doctrine (Provisional), dtd 1Dec44," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 147-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 32, dtd 16Jun45, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> "Thirty-second Army Battle Instructions No. 3, dtd 15Feb45," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 122-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 30, dtd 1Jun45, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> "Thirty-second Army Battle Instruction No. 8, dtd 8Mar45," in *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> *IntelMono*, pt I, sec A, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of Japanese defenses on these islands, see Robert R. Smith, *The Approach to the Philippines—U. S. Army in World War II* (Washington: OCMH, DA, 1953), pp. 300-302; Maj Frank O. Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu* (Washington: HistDiv, HQMC, 1950), pp. 192-197; Bartley, *Iwo Jima*, pp. 5-18.

<sup>29</sup> Hayashi and Coox, *Kōgun*, pp. 115-116.

part in designating where defensive positions were to be placed. The most favorable terrain for the defense was occupied and honeycombed with mutually supporting gun positions and protected connecting tunnels. Natural and man-made barriers were effectively incorporated to channel attackers into prepared fire lanes and pre-registered impact areas. The reverse as well as the forward slopes of hills were fortified, while artillery, mortars, and automatic weapons were emplaced in cave mouths, with their employment completely integrated within the final protective fire plan.

Each unit commander, from brigade down to company level, was made responsible for the organization of the ground and fortification of the sector assigned to him. The need for heavy construction was lessened, in some cases, by the abundance of large caves on Okinawa which required but slight reinforcement to enable them to withstand even the heaviest bombardment. Once improvements were made, these natural fortresses served either as hospitals, barracks, command posts, or all of these combined when the size of the cave permitted. There were generally two or more entrances to the caves, which sometimes had more than one level if time and manpower was available for the extensive digging necessary. Tunnels led from the caves to automatic weapons and light artillery positions which, in conjunction with the pillboxes and rifle pits in the area, dominated each defense zone. The approaches and entryway to each cave were invariably guarded by machine guns and,

in addition, by covering fire from positions outside the cave.

Integrated within the whole Japanese defensive system, these cave strongholds were, in turn, centers of small unit positions. Item Pocket, one of the most vigorously defended sectors on Okinawa, was typical of the ones American forces ran into. (See Map I, Map Section.) The area encompassed by this position, roughly 2,500 by 4,500 yards in size, was in the vicinity of Machinato Airfield. Both the 1st Marine and 27th Infantry Divisions fought bitterly to gain it. Disposed within the caves and bunkers of the pocket was a reinforced infantry battalion which manned approximately 16 grenade launchers, 83 light machine guns, 41 heavy machine guns, 7 47mm antitank guns, 2 81mm mortars, 2 70mm howitzers, and 6 75mm guns. A minefield and an anti-tank trench system completed the defenses. This sector was so organized that there were no weak points visible to the attacker. Any area not swept by automatic weapons fire could be reached by either artillery or mortars. These defensive positions formed a vital link in the chain of the tough outer defenses guarding Shuri.

Based on the dictum that "the island must be divided into sectors according to the defense plan so that command will be simplified,"<sup>35</sup> each combat element of the *Thirty-second Army* was assigned a sector to develop and defend as it arrived on Okinawa. By August 1944, the *44th IMB's 2d Infantry Unit* (400 troops) under Colonel Takehiko

<sup>35</sup> "Combat Regulations for Japanese Garrison Units," n.d., in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 115-44, dtd 18Aug44.

Udo had occupied its assigned area, Kunigami Gun (County), and had assumed responsibility for all of the island north of the Ishikawa Isthmus, and also for Ie Shima and its airfields. Upon its arrival on Okinawa, the *24th Division* had begun to construct field fortifications around Yontan and Kadena airfields in an area bounded by Ishikawa Isthmus in the north and a line from Sunabe to Ozato in the south. Below the *24th's* zone of defense, the *62d Division* was unflagging in its efforts to alter the ridges, ravines, and hillsides north of Shuri. Responsibility for the entire southern portion of Okinawa below Shuri had been assumed by the *9th Division* commander.

The receipt of orders in November for the transfer of the *9th Division* forced a redeployment of *Thirty-second Army* troops and strained a defense that was already dangerously weak. The *24th Division* began moving south to take over some *9th Division* positions while the *44th IMB*, leaving two reinforced battalions of the *2d Infantry Unit* behind on Ie Shima and Motobu Peninsula, occupied an area which reached from Kadena airfield southward to Chatan. The *62d Division* positions were likewise affected by the withdrawal of the *9th's* 14,000 combat troops, as the northern divisional boundary of the *62d* dropped to the Chatan-Futema line. In the south, the *62d* zone of responsibility was increased tremendously to include all of Naha, Shuri, Yonabaru, and the entire Chinen Peninsula.

Although the construction of fortifications, underground positions, and cave sites had been going on since the

spring of 1944, the urgency of the war situation and the expectance of an imminent invasion compelled the defenders to reevaluate their plans of deployment for blunting the assault. The exact date of the new *Thirty-second Army* plan is not known, but a reasonable assumption is that the loss of the *9th Division* in November which triggered the shuffling of units also forced a decision on a final defense plan. At the end of the month, General Ushijima and his staff pondered the following alternatives before settling on the one which they believed would guarantee the success of their mission:

Plan I: To defend, from extensive underground positions, the Shimajiri sector, the main zone of defenses being north of Naha, Shuri, and Yonabaru. Landings north of these defenses were not to be opposed; landings south of the line would be met at the beaches. Since it was impossible to defend Kadena airfield [with available troops], 15cm guns were to be emplaced so as to bring fire on the airfield and deny the invaders its use.

Plan II: To defend from prepared positions the central portion of the island, including the Kadena and Yontan airfields.

Plan III: To dispose one division around the Kadena area, one division in the southern end of the island, and one brigade between the two divisions. To meet the enemy wherever he lands and attempt to annihilate him on the beaches.

Plan IV: To defend the northern part of the island, with Army Headquarters at Nago, and the main line of defense based on Hill 220, northeast of Yontan airfield.<sup>36</sup>

Realistically appraising the many factors which might effect each one of the alternate plans, the Japanese settled on Plan I. Plan III was abandoned simply because the *Thirty-second Army*

<sup>36</sup> *IntelMono*, pt I sec A, pp. 1-2.

did not have the strength adequate to realize all that the plan encompassed. Plan IV was rejected because it conceded the loss of the militarily important south even before the battle had been joined. Plan II, the one which American staff planners feared as offering the greatest threat to a successful invasion, was regretfully relinquished by the Japanese. Ushijima, recognizing his troops' capabilities and limitations, realized that his forces, in the main, had not been trained to fight this type of delaying action which would prolong the battle, bloody the invaders, and permit the bulk of his army to withdraw to the more heavily fortified southern portion of Okinawa. Yet, in effect, this is exactly the strategy he was forced to employ after the initial American landings.

Placing Plan I into effect, the Japanese centered the main battle position in the Shuri area, where the rugged terrain surrounding the ancient capital was developed with the strongest installations oriented north toward the Hagushi beaches. (See Map 3.) The Hagushi region, coincidentally, evolved as a secondary target to the Japanese and a primary target to American staff planners. In addition, "handicapped by their lack of ability to make a logistics estimate for a landing operation,"<sup>37</sup> the Japanese believed that the major effort would be made in the southeast with an assault across the Minatogawa beaches. Overlooking both the Minatogawa and Nakagusuku Wan beaches, Chinen Peninsula heights presented the defenders with the most favorable ter-

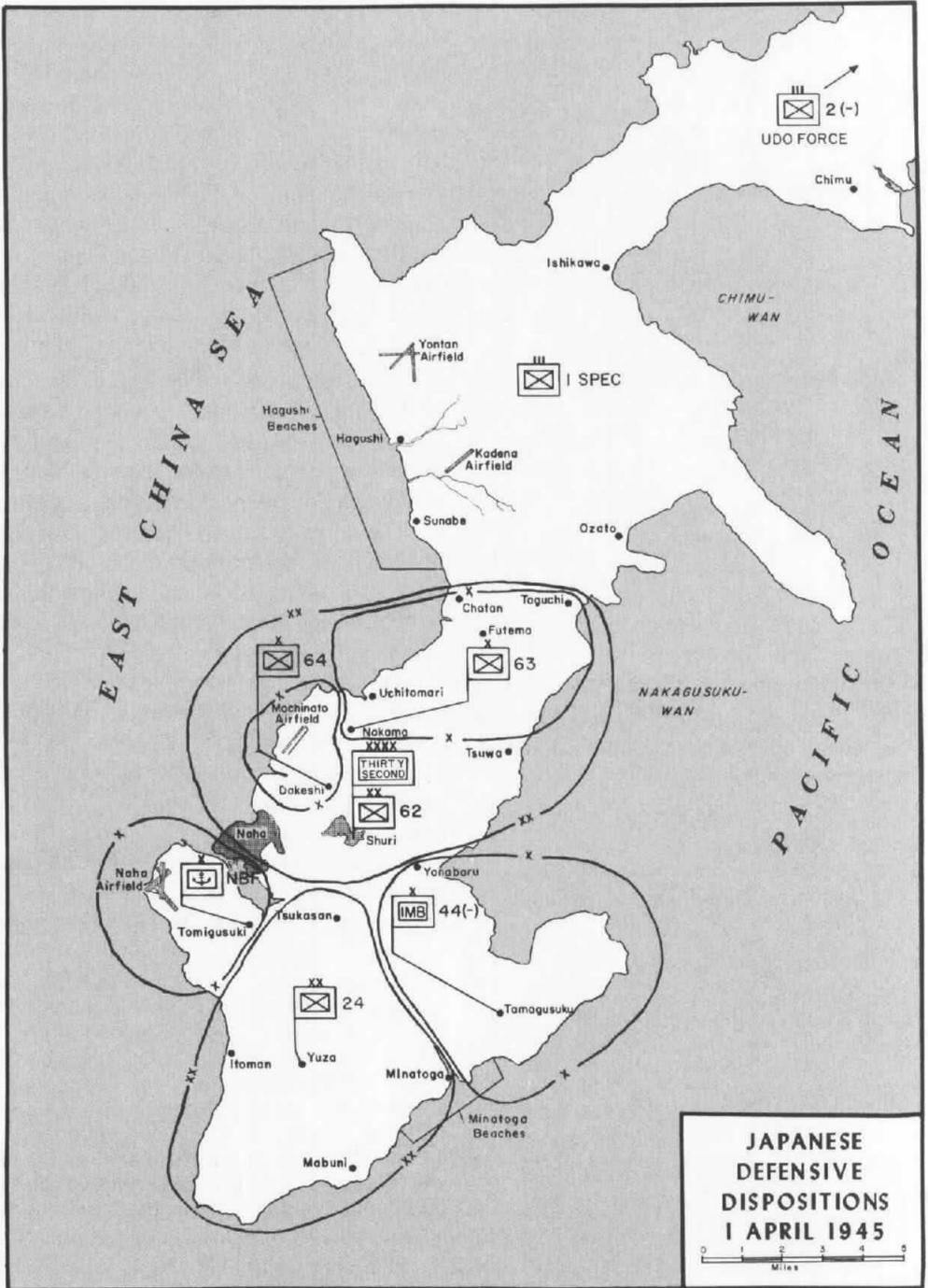
rain of its type on Okinawa and, as such, it was hoped that the invaders could be met and defeated here. Since, from the standpoint of actual manpower, the Chinen sector was the weakest area in the final defense plan, a goodly portion of the artillery and infantry strength of the *Thirty-second Army*—which could have been better employed in reinforcing Shuri positions—was diverted to the peninsula, remaining there out of action during the first weeks of the campaign.<sup>38</sup>

Among Ushijima's most pressing needs were additional troops and time in which to train them. Extra time was needed also to provide for expanding and strengthening existing fortifications as well as the communications net. With the exception of a drastic fuel shortage, the army was in good logistical shape. Although the *Thirty-second Army* itself had no provisions in reserve, enough had been distributed to subordinate units, and stored by them in caves near troop dispositions, to last until September 1945. This system was satisfactory in that the strain on the overworked transportation facilities was removed, but when an area was overrun by Americans and the Japanese were

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<sup>38</sup> In the *Thirty-second Army* staff there was sharp disagreement as to the probability of this additional landing. Colonel Yahara, senior staff officer, insisted that a diversionary landing, possibly the principle one, would be made in the Minatoga region. Major Yakamaru, the intelligence officer, held that the only American landing would be in the Hagushi area. Prestige and seniority won the argument. 'Yakamaru, bitterly disappointed at the final decision, went off the next few days to inundate his sorrows in prolonged draughts of expensive sake.' *Shimada Interrogation*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.



MAP 3

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forced to withdraw, the supplies were lost.

Unable to halt the inexorable press of time, General Ushijima now found it imperative to beef-up his infantry component from sources on the island, for he knew that he could expect no outside help. In addition to the mobilized *Boeitai* and a continuing stream of Okinawan conscriptees, the Japanese commander attempted to free his uniformed labor and service personnel for front-line duty by replacing them with able-bodied males from the large population of the island. In February 1945, more than 39,000 Okinawans were assigned to Japanese Army units on the island. The natives were placed into such categories as Main Labor (22,383), Auxiliary Labor (14,415), and Student Labor (2,944).<sup>39</sup> The Japanese attempted to evacuate to the northern part of the island all of the rest of the population who were incapable of aiding the war effort or who were potential obstacles in the battle zone.<sup>40</sup>

General Ushijima found the additional infantry troops he required in the ranks of *Thirty-second Army* special and service units. The first elements affected by an army-wide reorganization at this time were seven sea-raiding base battalions. Each suicide squadron was supported by a base battalion of 900 men, and since they had completed

their basic assignment of cave and suicide boat site construction, the army decided to utilize these men in an area where they were critically needed. Beginning 13 February 1945, these battalions, although retaining their original numerical designations, were re-assigned as the *1st, 2d, 3d, 26th, 27th, 28th, and 29th Independent Battalions* (each averaging about 600 men) to the *24th and 44th IMB* for thorough training and subsequent absorption.<sup>41</sup> Only the maintenance company of each battalion was to remain with its respective sea-raiding suicide unit. In comparison with the regular infantry of the Japanese Army, the new battalions were poorly trained and equipped, but these 4,500–5,000 men invested enemy forces with an additional source of strength.

During the next month, March, a final army reorganization took place, at which time the *Thirty-second Army* directed "the various shipping, air, and rear echelon forces [to] set up organizations and dispositions for land combat."<sup>42</sup> Besides their basic missions, these units now had to give infantry training and field fortification construction priority in their schedules. The March reorganization supplied the army with two brigades and a regiment which appeared more significant on paper than actually was the case. These lightly equipped and untrained service troops could serve only as combat replacements with slight tactical value.

<sup>39</sup> "Thirty-second Army Assignment of Conscript Labor, dtd Feb45," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 161-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 34, dtd 27Jun45.

<sup>40</sup> "Standards for the Establishment of Nansei Shoto Garrison Plans, dtd 1Jan45," in *CICAS Trans* No. 83; *Okinawa Operations Record*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>41</sup> *IntelMono*, pt I sec A p. 10.

<sup>42</sup> "Thirty-second Army OpOrd A-113, Reorganization of Service Units into Combat Troops, dtd 21Mar45," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 107-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 28, dtd 14May45, p. 15.

Units from the *19th Air Sector Headquarters* were funneled into the *1st Specially Established Regiment* which, under *62d Division* control, was responsible for the defense of the areas in the vicinity of Kadena and Yontan airfields. Support positions in the Naha-Yonabaru valley were assumed by the *1st Specially Established Brigade*, composed of three regiments and formed from *Thirty-second Army* transport, ordnance, construction, and supply troops formerly within the *49th Line of Communications Headquarters* command. A *2d Specially Established Brigade* of three regiments, culled from the *11th Shipping Group Headquarters* shipping, sea transport, and engineer rosters, was deployed in support of the *24th Division* mission—the defense of southernmost Okinawa. “Army rear echelon agencies not included in this order and their personnel will be under command of the front line unit in the vicinity where their duties are carried on, and will reinforce it in combat,” stated the all-inclusive 21 March order which put the entire *Thirty-second Army* in a status of general mobilization for combat.<sup>43</sup>

By 26 March, *Okinawa Base Force* naval and civilian personnel had been formed into the same type of jerry-built, poorly equipped, and undertrained defense units as had been the service troops of the *Thirty-second Army*. On Oroku Peninsula, naval lieutenants commanded those units designated as battalions while lieutenants (junior grade) became company commanders. Admiral Ota’s 13mm and 25mm anti-aircraft batteries were re-equipped and

transformed into an 81mm mortar battery and two independent machine gun battalions and, thus armed, were the only adequately weaponed units in the naval garrison.

In less than two months after the first reorganization order had been published, General Ushijima had nearly doubled the potential combat strength of his army by the addition of approximately 20,000 *Boeitai*, naval, and service troops. Hurriedly, the concerted efforts of this determined Japanese force converted the Shuri area into what was to be an almost impregnable bastion, for the final defensive plan was strengthened by the defenders’ determination to hold Shuri to the last man.

Concurrent with the February army reorganization, the troops were deployed in their final positions. General Ushijima’s main battle force was withdrawn to an outpost zone just north of Futema, while elements of the *1st Specially Established Regiment* were loosely disposed in the area immediately behind the Hagushi beaches. Although this was the least likely place where the Americans were expected to land, the Japanese troops defending this area were to fight a delaying action in any such eventuality, and then, after destroying the Yontan and Kadena airfields, were to beat a hasty retreat to the Shuri lines.

In the suspected invasion area, the Minatogawa beaches, the bulk of the Japanese infantry and artillery forces were positioned to oppose the landings. The *5th Artillery Command* observation post was established near Itokazu in control of all of its major components, which had been emplaced in defense of

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

the Minatogawa sector. Since landings further north on Chinen Peninsula would give the invaders a relatively unopposed, direct route into the heart of the major Japanese defense system, the 44th *IMB* was assigned control of the rugged heights of the peninsula. The 24th *Division*, taking over the defense works begun by the 9th *Division*, occupied the southern portion of Okinawa from Kiyan Point to an area just north of Tsukasan. The whole of Oroku Peninsula was assigned to Admiral Ota's forces, who were prepared to fight the "Navy Way," contesting the invasion at the beaches in a manner reminiscent of the Japanese defense of Tarawa.<sup>44</sup>

Since the heart and soul of the Japanese defenses were located at Shuri, the most valuable and only battle-tested organization on the island, the 62d *Division*, was charged with the protection of this vital area. The Japanese had shrewdly and industriously constructed a stronghold centered in a series of concentric rings, each of which bristled with well dug-in, expertly sited weapons. Regardless of where the Americans landed, either at Hagushi or Minatogawa or both, the plans called for delaying actions and, finally, a withdrawal into the hard shell of these well-disguised positions.

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<sup>44</sup> Although the *Base Force* was under command of the *Thirty-second Army* and Admiral Ota sincerely attempted to cooperate with the army, classic interservice rivalry apparent in many Japanese Pacific operations, on a lower echelon in the case of Okinawa, hampered the naval commander's desires. "Naval Units on Okinawa," in *POW InterSum* No. 16, dtd 28Jul45.

The isolated north was defended by the *Udo Force*, so-called after its leader and commanding officer of the 2d *Infantry Unit*—Colonel Takehiko Udo. Its mission was twofold, defense of both Motobu Peninsula and Ie Shima. The reinforced battalion on Ie Shima was assigned secondary missions of destroying the island's airfield and assisting in the transfer of aviation materiel to the main island. Upon completion of these duties, the unit was then to return to Okinawa where it would be assigned to the control of the 62d *Division*. Udo's battalion on Motobu Peninsula, in expectation of an invasion of Ie Shima followed by a landing on the peninsula, was disposed with its few artillery pieces so placed as to make its positions and positions on Ie Shima mutually supporting. As a result of its detachment earlier from the larger portion of the *Thirty-second Army*, Udo's command was destined to fulfill a hopeless undertaking to the very end.

Air defense was not included in the *Thirty-second Army* plan, nor was any great aviation force available to Ushijima. He had expected that approximately 300 airplanes would be sent to Okinawa, but feared that their projected time of arrival, April, would be too late to influence the local situation. The American preinvasion air and naval bombardments in March, combined with planned Japanese destruction efforts, had rendered the Ie Shima, Yontan, Kadena, and Oroku airfields unusable.

The army did expect, however, that its exertions would be complemented by

the combat activity of its organic suicide sea units. The sea-raiding squadrons located at positions in Kerama Retto and along the Okinawa coast, would "blast to pieces the enemy transport groups with a whirlwind attack in the vicinity of their anchorages."<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately for the Japanese, their midget submarines and motor torpedo boats at Unten-Ko could not join this offensive endeavor, for, by the day of the American invasion, they had all been destroyed by American carrier strikes or scattered in the aftermath of an unsuccessful attack on the destroyer *Tolman* of Task Force 52.<sup>46</sup>

The significance of *Thirty-second Army* deployments and redeployments, the frenzied last-minute preparations, and the general air of expectancy were not lost upon even the lowest ranks. One private wrote as early as February, "it appears that the army has finally decided to wage a decisive battle on Okinawa."<sup>47</sup> Another soldier noted that

"it's like a frog meeting a snake, just waiting for the snake to eat him."<sup>48</sup>

Between 20 and 23 March 1945, the Japanese command on Okinawa made an even more realistic estimate than had the troops of what the future held for the garrison. The Japanese reacted to news of a conference held in Washington between Admirals King and Nimitz in early March by placing a general alert into effect "for the end of March and early April," since statistics demonstrated "that new operations occur from 20 days to one month after [American] conferences on strategy are held."<sup>49</sup> This estimate of when the Americans were expected was reduced three days after its publication following receipt of reports of increased shipping in the Marianas, and when repeated submarine sightings and contacts were made. All of this enabled the Japanese intelligence officers to predict without hesitation that the target was to be "Formosa or the Nansei Shoto, especially Okinawa."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> "Thirty-second Army OpOrd A 115, dtd 23Mar45," in *CICAS Trans* No. 321.

<sup>46</sup> "Naval Units on Okinawa," in POW Inter-Sum No. 16, dtd 28Jul45; CTF 52 AR, Okinawa Gunto, 21Mar-20Apr45, dtd 1May45, chap III, p. 9, hereafter *CTF 52 AR*.

<sup>47</sup> "Diary of a superior private, 272d IIB," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 147-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 32, dtd 16Jun45, p. 48.

<sup>48</sup> "Diary of a radioman, 5th Harbor Base Unit," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 161-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 34, dtd 27Jun45, p. 50.

<sup>49</sup> "Thirty-second Army Estimate of the Situation, dtd 20Mar45," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 140-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 31, dtd 7Jun45, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> "62d Division IntelRpt on Findings Since the 20Mar Rpt, dtd 23Mar45," in *Ibid.*, p. 6.

# Project ICEBERG

## THE TASK DEFINED <sup>1</sup>

Three weeks after receipt of the Joint Chiefs of Staff directive ordering the Okinawa invasion, Admiral Nimitz' headquarters published and distributed the ICEBERG Joint Staff Study. This study served as a planning guideline for the units assigned to the campaign and defined for them the objectives, the allotment of forces, and roughly outlined the scheme of maneuver ashore.

Although Operation CAUSEWAY, the invasion of Formosa, had been cancelled in favor of ICEBERG, the principal commanders for CAUSEWAY were retained for the Okinawa landing and redirected their staffs' efforts towards planning for the assault on the newly assigned target. Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, whose Task Force 50 (TF 50) contained the Fifth Fleet and the Central Pacific Task Forces, was made responsible for the Ryukyus operation. His staff, previously charged with preparing plans for the Iwo Jima invasion

scheduled for 20 January 1945, was now given the concurrent assignment of planning for Okinawa.

Certain assumptions governed task planning and the assignment of assault and garrison forces for ICEBERG. Adherence to the scheduled 1 March 1945 invasion date (L-Day) for Okinawa was based on the presupposed seizure of Iwo Jima at a date early enough to permit release of naval gunfire and air support units for the second operation. It was further assumed that ICEBERG commanders would be able to secure the prompt release from General MacArthur of assault shipping, support shipping, supporting naval forces, and Army troops assigned to the Philippines operation which had been earmarked for use later at Okinawa. Finally, before Okinawa was invaded, Allied air and surface superiority had to be gained in the target area.

This last point was one of the most important in the overall concept of the operation, for it was believed that air attacks on Japan, together with the conquest of Iwo Jima, would force a concentration of Japanese air strength on the bases which ringed the Home Islands. It would be necessary, therefore, to destroy enemy air installations at Japanese staging areas in Kyushu and Formosa, and neutralize those at Okinawa, since it was a basic assumption that enemy aircraft would vigorously oppose any invasion attempt. For this reason, the scheme of maneuver ashore included plans for the

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *ICEBERG Study*; CinCPac-CinCPOA OPlan 14-44, dtd 31Dec44, hereafter *CinCPOA OPlan 14-44*; USAFMid-Pac G-5 Hist; ComFifthFlt OPlan 1-45, dtd 3Jan45, hereafter *ComFifthFlt OPlan 1-45*; CG, Tenth Army TntvOPlan 1-45, ICEBERG, dtd 6Jan45, hereafter *Tenth Army TntvOPlan 1-45*; Samuel Eliot Morison, *Victory in the Pacific, 1945—History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, v. XIV, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), hereafter Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*.

early securing of airfields on Okinawa and their equally early use by Allied land-based aircraft. Japanese sea communications in the Ryukyus area were to be severed before the operation by surface and air attacks on enemy shipping and by a maximum effort mounted by American submarines.

According to the ICEBERG staff study, operations ashore were to be conducted in three phases. To be accomplished in the first phase were the capture of the southern portion of Okinawa and small adjacent islands and the initial development of base facilities. In Phase II, Ie Shima and the remainder of Okinawa were to be seized and the base build-up continued with the construction of installations in favorable locations designated in the development plan. Phase III required the exploitation of Allied positions in the Nansei Shoto and, when Admiral Nimitz directed, the seizure and development of additional positions with forces then locally available. (See Map 4.)

It was envisioned that an army of two corps, each composed of three reinforced infantry divisions, would be required in the initial assault. In addition, two divisions were to be assigned as area reserve. Okinawa's proximity to the heart of the Empire as well as to other major Japanese bases, and the expectation of fanatic resistance by enemy troops on a battleground of such large dimensions, presaged a prolonged period of fierce combat. For these reasons, a new command relationship was established for the Okinawa operation differing, in some respects, from that which had been effective in previous Pacific campaigns.

As strategic commander of the invasion forces, Admiral Nimitz directed that the chain of command would descend to Admiral Spruance, thence to Vice Admiral Richmond K. Turner who would command Task Force 51 (Joint Expeditionary Force), and then to Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner, Jr., USA, who would command the Army, Navy, and Marine units comprising the Expeditionary Troops. When Spruance had determined that the amphibious phase of the invasion had ended, he would pass the command of all forces ashore to Buckner. As Commanding General of the Tenth Army, Buckner would assume responsibility for the defense and development of positions captured on the island. When the situation permitted, he would also relieve Admiral Spruance of the responsibility for the defense and development of the Ryukyus as a whole and, at that time, he would be directly responsible to CinCPOA for the captured island positions and for the waters within a 25-mile radius. Concurrently, responsibility for the establishment of an Island Command and a military government on Okinawa would be General Buckner's also.

#### *ALLIED COMMANDERS AND FORCES*<sup>2</sup>

Many units of Admiral Nimitz' command not directly assigned Task Force 50 were to support the Okinawa landing

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from: *ICEBERG Study*; *CinCPOA OPlan 14-44*; *USAFMidPac G-5 Hist*; *ComFifthFlt OPlan 1-45*; *Tenth Army TntvOPlan 1-45*; Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*.



from bases widespread in the Pacific Ocean Areas. Additionally, from their airdromes in China and the Southwest Pacific, Army Air Forces elements were to assist the ICEBERG effort, both prior to and during the course of the campaign. In all, about 548,000 men of the Marine Corps, Army, and Navy, together with 318 combatant and 1,139 auxiliary vessels—exclusive of numerous small personnel craft of all types<sup>3</sup>—and a profusion of strategic and tactical aircraft were to strike some of the last blows dooming the Japanese attempts to gain supremacy in Asia and the Pacific.

In the Fifth Fleet were the Covering Forces and Special Groups which included the Fast Carrier Force (TF 58, Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher) and the British Carrier Force (TF 57, Vice Admiral Sir H. Bernard Rawlings, RN). These two forces were to conduct air strikes and neutralize Japanese air power prior to the landing, and prevent enemy air and surface interference with the Allied landing and subsequent occupation of Okinawa.

The units more directly concerned with the landing were components of Turner's Task Force 51. Its complex composition reflected its many assignments incident to the capture, occupation, and defense of Okinawa. Any enemy attempt to disrupt the movement to the target or landing on the beach would be handled by the force's support elements. These naval units would also undertake air support and minesweeping operations once the beachhead had been gained. Assignments for these

tasks were allocated, in turn, to the Amphibious Support Force (TF 52, Rear Admiral William H. P. Blandy) which provided direct air and naval support, and to the Gunfire and Covering Force (TF 54, Rear Admiral Morton L. Deyo).<sup>4</sup> The Northern Attack Force (TF 53, Rear Admiral Lawrence F. Reifsnider) and the Southern Attack Force (TF 55, Rear Admiral John L. Hall, Jr.) contained the transports which were to lift the assault troops to the objective and the tractor units which were to land them on L-Day.

The assault of Okinawa and its surrounding islands was to be accomplished by the landing forces of Buckner's Expeditionary Troops (TF 56). The assault force of the Northern Attack Force was Major General Roy S. Geiger's III Amphibious Corps (IIIAC), composed of the 1st Marine Division (Major General Pedro A. del Valle) and the 6th Marine Division (Major General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr.). The Army XXIV Corps (Major General John R. Hodge) would be lifted by the Southern Attack Force and would consist of the 7th Infantry Division (Major General Archibald V. Arnold) and the 96th Infantry Division (Major General James L. Bradley).

One other major Marine echelon in the Tenth Army was Major General Francis P. Mulcahy's joint air task

<sup>4</sup> Vice Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf, originally the commander of TF 54, was injured at Ulithi shortly before the operation. "Fortunately, Rear Admiral Morton L. Deyo, veteran gunfire support commander in Operation OVERLORD [Normandy invasion] and DRAGOON [invasion of southern France], was available to relieve Admiral Oldendorf." Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*, p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> *War Reports*, p. 664.

command, Tactical Air Force (TAF), which was to provide land-based air support for the operation once its squadrons were ashore. The elements initially assigned to TAF were to come primarily from the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing (2d MAW). Although TAF was established under the Tenth Army on 21 November 1944, its staff was not really organized until late in December. By that time, much of the earlier, basic, and important preinvasion planning had been completed without TAF participation. As a matter of fact, the last of the personnel assigned to TAF staff did not even report until after the assault echelon had already left for the target.<sup>5</sup> Although he had not taken part in ICEBERG planning, General Mulcahy was kept fully abreast of Tenth Army activities and decisions by his chief of staff, Colonel Perry O. Parmelee, who daily visited Buckner's headquarters and attended briefings and conferences there.<sup>6</sup>

A most important element of TAF was its fighter arm, the Air Defense Command (ADC), headed by Brigadier General William J. Wallace who had

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<sup>5</sup> *Tenth Army AR*, chap 11, sec IV, pp. 2-3; TAF WarDs, 29Oct44-31Jan45; Tactical Air Force, Tenth Army, AR, Ph I, Nansei Shoto, 8Dec44-30Jun45, dtd 12Jul45, pt I, chap 3, p. 2, hereafter *TAF AR*.

<sup>6</sup> MajGen Ford O. Rogers interview with HistBr, HQMC, dtd 14Apr66, (Oral History Collection, HistBr, HQMC), hereafter *Rogers interview*. General, then Colonel, Rogers, who was the Air Defense Command Chief of Staff, did not arrive at Pearl Harbor to take over his new job until early January 1945. In commenting on the fact that TAF and the Air Defense Command had not participated in planning for the invasion, General Rogers said that it had no serious or visible effect on the conduct of Marine air operations at Okinawa.

formerly been AirFMFPac Chief of Staff. Wallace's squadrons were to begin operations from previously designated airfields on Okinawa as soon as they had been captured by the ground troops. Initially, General Wallace's command consisted of a headquarters squadron and a service squadron, and three MAGs with a total complement of nine fighter, two night fighter, and four air warning squadrons. The radar installations of the units last named would give early warning of enemy air attacks. An Army Air Forces fighter wing was also part of ADC, but only one group was to join TAF before the campaign was brought to a close.

General Mulcahy's Bomber Command was made up wholly of AAF flight and support elements, none of which arrived on Okinawa before the beginning of June. Photographic coverage of enemy installations, interpretation of the pictures thus obtained, and an aerial photographic survey of the island for mapping purposes were to be the missions of an AAF photo-reconnaissance squadron which was also part of the TAF organization.

Rounding out the Tenth Army air force were two Marine torpedo-bomber squadrons which were to conduct anti-submarine warfare operations together with the carrier-based naval aircraft at the target. The Marine squadrons were also prepared to conduct bombing attacks on ground targets and any other missions when the need for them arose.

Marine aviation, other than that which was organic to TAF, was to play an important part in the invasion. Artillery spotting was the assigned mission of Marine observation squad-

rons attached to the Marine divisions and corps. Scheduled to control all aircraft in support of the ground forces were Colonel Vernon E. Megee's Landing Force Air Support Control Units (LFASCUs). When directed by Admiral Turner, LFASCUs, set up ashore at the headquarters of Tenth Army and its two corps, would take over control from their shipboard naval counterparts.

In addition to the tactical units assigned to the Tenth Army for the assault and consolidation phases of the operation, General Buckner was to have direct command of the defense and service troops assigned for the garrison phase. Major General Fred C. Wallace, USA, was designated Island Commander, Okinawa,<sup>7</sup> while the Naval Forces, Ryukyus, were to be commanded by Rear Admiral Calvin H. Cobb, who would assume his command upon completion of the amphibious phase of the operation. Although strategic air force and naval search squadrons were to be based on Okinawa, they would remain under the operational control of the Commanding General, Army Air Forces, Pacific Ocean Area, and Commander, Fifth Fleet, respectively.

Infantry units were assigned also to the Western Islands Attack Group (TG 51.1, Rear Admiral Ingolf N. Kiland) which had the 77th Infantry Division (Major General Andrew D. Bruce) as its landing force; the Demonstration Group (TG 51.2, Rear Admiral Jerauld Wright) whose landing force was the

2d Marine Division (Major General Thomas E. Watson); and the Floating Reserve Group (TG 51.3, Commodore John B. McGovern) which carried 27th Infantry Division (Major General George W. Griner, Jr.).

### JOINT PREPARATIONS AND PLANNING<sup>8</sup>

Intensive joint planning attested to the immensity of the future operation. Smooth Army, Navy, and Marine Corps coordination of operational, logistical, and administrative matters was imperative. Since the Tenth Army, under CinCPOA, would consist of an Army corps and a Marine amphibious corps, and a large naval contingent, General Buckner believed that it was important for him to have a joint staff. He therefore requested Admiral Nimitz to authorize a Marine and naval augmentation of his staff. When this request was granted, approximately 30 Marine and 30 Navy officers, and enlisted assistants from each of these services, were assigned and integrated within the Tenth Army staff. "There was no Marine or naval section of the staff."<sup>9</sup> One of the Marine officers was Brigadier General Oliver P. Smith, who became the Marine Deputy Chief of Staff; he had been the Assistant Division Commander of the

<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from: *Tenth Army AR*; 1st MarDiv SAR, Nansei Shoto, 1Apr-31Jun45, dtd 1Jul, hereafter *1st MarDiv SAR*; 6th MarDiv SAR, Okinawa Operation, Phases I and II, dtd 30Apr45, hereafter *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph I & II*.

<sup>7</sup> This command also was to include the Ie Shima garrison, and, on Okinawa, the Naval Operating Base and the Naval Air Bases.

<sup>9</sup> Gen Oliver P. Smith, Personal Narrative, n. d., p. 4, hereafter Smith, *Personal Narrative*.

1st Marine Division in the Peleliu campaign. His counterpart on the Tenth Army staff was Brigadier General Lawrence E. Schick, who filled the billet of Army Deputy Chief of Staff.

When General Smith arrived at Tenth Army headquarters, he found that CINCPAC had already approved the Marine augmentation for the Army staff. The Marine general believed that this augmentation was overly large, for:

This padding would result in Marine officers doing clerical duty at Army Headquarters as there were manifestly not enough bona fide billets to take care of all the Army officers on the staff as well as the Marine and naval officers.<sup>10</sup>

After considerable discussion with the Army officer responsible for the assignment of staff billets, General Smith managed to have the number of Marine officers on the Tenth Army staff reduced by nearly 30 percent.<sup>11</sup>

A tactical concept based upon the directive stated in the ICEBERG joint staff study, and later incorporated in the TF 50 operation plan, required "early use of sufficient airdrome capacity in Okinawa, together with unloading facilities adequate to support its development and to maintain positive control of the air in the area."<sup>12</sup> In a study of all landing beach areas in southern Okinawa, those beaches on the west coast which lay north and south of Hagushi were deemed to be best suited to sup-

port the ICEBERG landing. Admiral Turner's operation plan assumed that there would be bitter Japanese air reaction to the Okinawa invasion; that enemy submarines would be very active in the target area; that the Japanese surface fleet might possibly sortie out from its bases in Japan; and, that attempts might be made to reinforce the garrison on Okinawa. The first three assumptions proved correct; the fourth was not tested because, in accordance with the JCS directive ordering the invasion of Okinawa, Allied air and surface superiority had been gained prior to L-Day.

Based on Admiral Turner's plan, the Tenth Army staff drew up Plan Fox, which committed the assault forces to a landing on the west coast. Plan Fox also included the pre-L-Day capture of Keise Shima, since a study of this small island indicated the feasibility of its use as a fixed emplacement for artillery which would first augment the naval and air bombardment of the main objective before the landing, and afterwards provide support during the land campaign. This plan, approved by Buckner, was presented to Turner at the initial joint conference held at Pearl Harbor on 1 November 1944.

Following this presentation, Turner stated his views of the operation and outlined what would be the requirements of the Navy during the course of ICEBERG. He believed that, prior to the landings on Okinawa, the adjacent islands had to be neutralized. Once this had been done, the major landings on Okinawa would be more secure and the fleet could be replenished in a safe an-

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> A list of the names of Marine officers on the Tenth Army staff when ICEBERG forces landed on Okinawa is located in *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>12</sup> *ComFifthFlt OPlan 1-45*, Anx B, p. 2.

chorage without danger from enemy surface vessels or submarines.

Two provisions of Plan Fox particularly concerned the Fifth Fleet commander. Because of the suspected presence of Japanese mines and submarines immediately west of Okinawa, should the Hagushi beaches be used for the invasion, the landings here would perforce require the fleet to steam into a hazardous area. The second apprehension arose because 1 March had been scheduled as L-Day. He feared that unfavorable weather conditions, which generally prevailed in March, might possibly affect the conduct of the landings and unduly prolong the unloading of supplies on exposed beaches. Available meteorological data justified this concern, for from October to March the Ryukyus experienced strong northerly winds with a mean velocity of 17-19 miles-per-hour as well as frequent gales. A generally moderate wind, averaging 11 miles-per-hour, marked the beginning of the summer monsoon period and characterized the weather of Okinawa in April, which was a more suitable time for the invasion.<sup>13</sup> In any case, Turner requested that the possibility of landings along the east coast be restudied. At the same time, he suggested that the value of a feint landing be determined and, if valid, should be incorporated in the plan finally adopted for ICEBERG.

After a lengthy discussion of the problems inherent in the proposed plan, the conferees concluded that a landing on the western beaches on 1 March was fraught with considerable risk. The alternatives were either a 30-day delay

of the operation or a landing on the southeast coast on the date originally scheduled for the assault. All other possible courses of action were re-examined, with the result that the Hagushi beaches were recommended again as the site for the landings. Final approval was withheld by Turner because he retained doubts as to the practicality of landing and supporting the proposed assault force of four divisions over the Hagushi beachhead. In spite of the objections of Admiral Turner, the Plan Fox estimate was distributed on 5 November.<sup>14</sup> When completed on 9 November, another detailed study upheld the original contention that Hagushi held the only beaches in southern Okinawa adequate to receive four divisions abreast and, subsequently, to handle sufficient logistical support for the operation.

In the face of these convincing arguments, Admiral Turner accepted the plan with the proviso that both Kerama Retto and Keise Shima were to be captured prior to the main landing. With minor exceptions, General Buckner concurred with these modifications, and the revised plan was forwarded to Turner on 11 November. The original target date of 1 March was changed twice within the next month, first to 15 March and finally to 1 April. The first change was made on 19 November in anticipation of bad weather at the target at the beginning of March. On 7 December, Admiral Nimitz advanced L-Day two more weeks when doubts arose as to whether the shipping assigned to General MacArthur's Lingayen Gulf opera-

<sup>13</sup> *HQUSAFPOA Study*, sec XX, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 13.

tions could be returned in time to permit its reemployment at Okinawa.<sup>15</sup>

Since the naval planning staff recommended a sustained seven- or eight-day bombardment of the assault beaches, the resulting expenditure of Navy supplies and ammunition would force the bombardment group to either withdraw from the area for resupply and refueling or to conduct these operations under dangerous conditions in the open sea offshore of the objective. Basically, it was this consideration that prompted Turner's insistence on the pre-L-Day capture of the entire Kerama group. At first, these islands appeared to be only worthy as targets for amphibious raids in which the raiding

parties would retire after destroying enemy coastal artillery. Later plans for their capture grew out of Admiral Turner's proposal that, once taken, the Keramas provide a protected anchorage for the establishment of a small-boat pool and a seaplane base.

Because the Kerama assault was now to be a full-scale invasion instead of a raid, the assignment of a larger force was indicated and Major General Thomas E. Watson's 2d Marine Division was chosen initially. This unit, designated IIIAC Reserve, had been slated for early commitment in support of operations on Okinawa, and so the task of capturing the Keramas was given instead to the 77th Infantry Division while the Marine division was assigned tentatively to a feint landing off south-eastern Okinawa.<sup>16</sup>

As the scope and importance of preliminary operations grew, the reserves which had been made available to General Buckner originally decreased in number, and it was found necessary to secure from CinCPOA release of the area reserve division (27th Infantry Division). This unit was then designated as the Tenth Army floating reserve and was replaced by the 81st Infantry Division which remained in New Caledonia under Admiral Nimitz' control.

The alternate plan for the operation, Plan Baker, was approved on 3 January 1945. It envisioned first the capture of

<sup>15</sup> *USAFMidPac G-5 Hist*, pp. 183, 201. "The deferment of the target date to April 1 was most fortunate from the logistic angle. Under CinCPOA procedures, all maintenance supplies for Okinawa were to be shipped from the West Coast to the control point at Ulithi (3d and subsequent echelons were staged through Eniwetok) for call forward as required. Requisitions for these supplies had to be in the hands of West Coast supply agencies 60 days prior to sailing date of the shipment. Due to the sailing time required, requisitions for the first maintenance shipment to support a 1 March target date had to be on the West Coast by 20 November. With no firm tactical plan until after the conference with Admiral Turner on 9 November, and lacking a firm troop basis, the determination of supply requirements had to be based on very rough estimates. The 30-day delay in target date enabled supply agencies to make a more careful estimate of the supply requirements of the assault force. This delay also enabled critical supplies and augmentation personnel, required for the assault, to be shipped to mounting points of the divisions (some had to be shipped by air) prior to mounting date." BGen David H. Blakelock, USA ltr to CMC, dtd 3Oct54, hereafter *Blakelock ltr*.

<sup>16</sup> *Tenth Army AR*, chap 3, pp. 11-12. The original concept of the operation anticipated that the 2d Marine Division would come out of army reserve, pass through the 1st Division, and take the Katchin Peninsula to the southeast of the latter's zone. *1st MarDiv SAR*, chap III, OperAnx, p. 1.

Kerama Retto, followed by a sweep of the Eastern Islands by General Watson's Marines. Both of these actions were to be conducted prior to the assault of Okinawa itself. A mixed Marine and Army corps artillery group was to support both the XXIV and III Amphibious Corps assault of the east coast.

On L-Day, General Geiger's Marines would land between Chinen Point and Minatoga, secure the high ground behind the beaches, and, following the Army landing two days later, tie-in with XXIV Corps at Yonabaru. After effecting this juncture, both corps were to make a rapid advance across the island during which time the Marines were to take the airfield on Oroku Peninsula and the Army was to capture the unfinished field at Yonabaru. Included in the alternate plan were provisions for the capture of Ie Shima, feints against Chimu Wan on L plus 3 or 4, and, overall, the maintenance of flexibility of action in the commitment of Army reserves to either of the corps zones or for the protection of XXIV Corps' northern flank.

Although the principal advantages of Plan Baker were that the approach to the east coast of Okinawa was more direct and the weather here was vastly superior to that of the west coast, they were outweighed by the disadvantages. These included: (1) the difficulty of providing optimum naval gunfire support because of the interposition of the Eastern Islands and off-shore islets, (2) the paucity of good beaches, (3) the length of time it would take to uncover airfields, located, for the most part, on the west coast, and, (4) because of Plan Baker landing zone assignments, the possibility that Japanese forces

might be able to concentrate considerable strength against IIIAC troops before they could even contact the XXIV Corps. General Smith was convinced at this time that "in the advent of bad weather on the west coast, landings would have been delayed rather than resort to the east coast landing as provided in the alternate plan."<sup>17</sup>

General Geiger became involved in the planning for ICEBERG in November 1944, when he was directed to report to General Buckner for planning purposes. Upon receipt of this order, the IIIAC commander immediately reported by dispatch. Shortly thereafter, IIIAC headquarters received a copy of the tentative Plan Fox together with all available intelligence on the prospective target, and a request that Geiger prepare a tentative corps operation plan.

When the IIIAC plan was completed, and at the request of Buckner, Geiger, accompanied by his chief of staff, Colonel Merwin H. Silverthorn,<sup>18</sup> his G-2, Lieutenant Colonel Sidney S. Wade, his G-3, Colonel Walter A. Wachtler, his G-4, Colonel Francis B. Loomis, Jr., and other members of his staff, departed Guadalcanal for Pearl Harbor, arriving at Schofield Barracks on 9 December. After personally contacting their opposite numbers on the Tenth Army staff, the IIIAC staff officers prepared to present their plan to General Buckner.

Geiger planned to employ the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions in the assault, with General del Valle's division on the right or south flank. The choice of these

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> Silverthorn was promoted to the rank of brigadier general on 19 December while still in Hawaii.

divisions was logical since they were both located in the Solomons and there would be no problem in establishing liaison. The 2d Division, based on Saipan, would be the floating reserve of the army, according to the IIIAC plan. The question then arose regarding what steps would be taken if the Japanese were encountered in strength as IIIAC advanced eastward across Okinawa, for there was no doubt that an additional division would have to be inserted in the line before the east coast was reached. General Smith took this question up with the Tenth Army commander, who agreed that IIIAC would have first call on the 2d Marine Division.<sup>19</sup>

General Watson's division was scheduled to make the feint landings on the southeast coast of Okinawa on L-Day and L plus 1, and it was not contemplated that Geiger would need it before the third day of the operation. The IIIAC staff presented their plan orally to General Buckner on 19 December, when it was approved. According to General Smith, who was present on this occasion, Geiger's staff members "did a very creditable job. . . ." <sup>20</sup>

#### SCHEME OF MANEUVER <sup>21</sup>

Basically, the scheme of maneuver ashore was designed to attain early use

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from: *Tenth Army TntvO-Plan 1-45*; IIIAC OPlan 1-45, dtd 1Feb45, hereafter *IIIAC OPlan 1-45*; 1st MarDiv OPlan 1-45, ICEBERG, dtd 10Feb45, hereafter *1st MarDiv OPlan 1-45*; 6th MarDiv OPlan 1-45, dtd 10Feb45, hereafter *6th MarDiv OPlan 1-45*.

of the airfields so that land-based air supremacy over the target could be gained and held. An additional dividend derived from the capture of the airfields would be their use as staging bases for continuing mass air raids on both Japan and those areas within flying range of Okinawa under enemy control. As in the case of earlier amphibious landings in the Pacific, certain preliminary softening-up steps had to be taken before the main assault was launched.

Kerama Retto was to be seized by the 77th Infantry Division (Reinforced) on 26 March 1945, or six days before L-Day. Following the first day of operations in the Kerama Retto and beginning the night of the 26th, Marines of the FMF Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion were to reconnoiter the reef islets of the island group. First they were to investigate Keise Shima for the presence of enemy troops, and in the following days and nights prior to L-Day, they were to land on Aware Shima, Mae Shima, and Kuro Shima. To support the landing on Okinawa, a field artillery group of XXIV Corps Artillery was to land and be emplaced on Keise Shima prior to L-Day. While these operations were underway, Okinawa would receive increased air and naval gunfire bombardment which would mount in intensity until the first assault waves neared the beaches. At this time, the fire would lift from the beach area and continue inland.

The Army and Marine divisions were to land on the Hagushi beaches, General Geiger's corps on the left. The mouth of the Bishi Gawa marked the beginning of the corps boundary, which

roughly followed the course of the river to a point just north of Kadena; here, the line headed almost due east to bisect the island. (See Map 4.)

Once landed north of Hagushi town, the Marine assault divisions were to move rapidly inland, coordinating their advance with that of XXIV Corps. On the Marine left flank was the 6th Division; the 22d Marines on the left and the 4th Marines, less its 2d Battalion in division reserve, on the right. The 29th Marines, the third infantry regiment of the 6th Division, was corps reserve and was to be ready to land on any of the beaches. It was also to be prepared to revert one battalion landing team to the 6th Division on order. General Shepherd's initial mission was the capture of Yontan airfield while protecting the northern flank of the Tenth Army.

General del Valle's division, landing to the right of the 6th, was to assist in the capture of Yontan by quickly seizing the high ground northeast of China. The attack was then to continue, with major emphasis placed on maintaining contact with General Hodge's corps and assisting his advance. The 1st Marine Division scheme of maneuver placed the 5th and 7th Marines in the assault, 7th on the left, and the 1st Marines in division reserve.

Adjoining the 1st Marine Division was to be the 7th Infantry Division, with one regiment in division reserve but under the operational control of XXIV Corps. The other Army assault division was to be 96th, which was to land with two regiments abreast and a third in corps reserve.

Artillery support for the Marines was to come from IIIAC Corps Artillery and those artillery units organic to the divisions. General Geiger's guns were to land on his order to support the attack and, once ashore, corps artillery would coordinate all supporting arms in the Marine sector. XXIV Corps Artillery, less the group on Keise Shima, would land on General Hodge's order and support the attack with long-range interdiction, counterbattery, and harassing fires.<sup>22</sup>

Following the initial landing, operations were designed to isolate the Phase I objective, which consisted of that part of the island lying south of a general line drawn across the Ishikawa Isthmus, through Chimu, and including the Eastern Islands. In order to prevent enemy reinforcement from the north and to fulfill its assignment in Phase I, IIIAC was to gain control of the isthmus as swiftly as possible. To seal off the Japanese in the south, General Hodge's troops were to drive across the island, his right flank units holding a line that ran through Futema to Kuba Saki. Once the central portion of the island had been captured and secured, the direction of attack would be faced to the south and continued until all of the objectives of the first phase had been achieved.

Phase II, the seizure of northern Okinawa and the capture of Ie Shima, was to be executed with Tenth Army troops locally available when Buckner was satisfied that Phase I had been accomplished. The first major military objec-

<sup>22</sup> XXIV Corps FldOrd 45, dtd 8Feb45, pp. 4-8.

tive in the north was Motobu Peninsula, which was to be taken by means of simultaneously launched attacks from sea and land. Once the peninsula had been gained, a shore-to-shore assault would be made against Ie Shima. The end of Phase II would be signalled when the rest of northern Okinawa had been captured.

While higher echelon air planning for ICEBERG detailed both strategic and tactical missions, the Tenth Army was more immediately concerned with the latter. Carrier-based tactical aviation, aboard the TF 52 escort carrier group (TG 52.1, Rear Admiral Calvin T. Durgin), was to provide the invasion force with air support until General Mulcahy's squadrons were established ashore and could take over. At this time, TAF would also be responsible for overall air defense.

When this responsibility was assumed, TAF operations would be based on the following order of priority: (1) attainment of air superiority by annihilation of enemy aircraft in the air and on the ground, and destruction of enemy air installations; (2) interdiction and destruction of enemy troop and supply movements immediately within or heading towards the target area; and (3) execution of combined air-ground attacks on specific frontline objectives. The importance of the first priority lay in Tenth Army recognition of the yet-existing Japanese air strength and the threat it posed to the invasion force.

As soon as Air Defense Command fighter squadrons were established ashore on captured airfields, they were

to begin fulfilling their assigned missions. From these fields, ADC was to provide air defense to ground units on the island and naval forces in its environs. Combat air patrols, close air support, and other related flight missions were considered the means by which the defense was to be maintained. Although it was a function of ADC, close air support is not normally a part of air defense; it is more closely associated with a ground offensive concept. Despite this fact, however, Okinawa's terrain and the nature of the Japanese defenses were to provide Marine aviators of the Air Defense Command with ample opportunities to display close air support techniques born of experience accumulated in earlier Pacific campaigns.

#### LOGISTIC SUPPORT PLANNING <sup>23</sup>

Fortunately for those preparing ICEBERG, much in the logistical plans for the cancelled Formosa operation could

<sup>23</sup> Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from: *ICEBERG Study*; CTF 51 OPlan A1-45, dtd 16Feb45, hereafter *CTF 51 OPlan A1-45*; CTF 51 General Action Report, Capture of Okinawa Gunto, Phases I and II, 17Feb-17May45, dtd 25Jul45, hereafter *CTF 51 AR*; *CinCPOA OPlan 14-44*; *Tenth Army TntvOPlan 1-45*; *Tenth Army AR*; *USAFMidPac G-5 Hist*; IIIAC, AR, Ryukyus Operation, Phases I and II (Okinawa), dtd 1Jul45, hereafter *IIIAC AR*; Tactical Air Force, Tenth Army, OPlan 1-45, dtd 10Feb45, hereafter *TAF OPLAN 1-45*; *TAF AR*; IsCom OPlan No. 1, LEGUMINOUS [code name assigned to island of Okinawa], dtd 1Feb45, hereafter *IsComOPlan No. 1*; IsCom, Okinawa, AR, 13Dec44-30Jun45, dtd 30Jun45, hereafter *IsComAR*; *War Reports*; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph I & II*.

be salvaged and adapted for the invasion of Okinawa with but few changes. Without competent logistics planning of the highest order, and utilization of a resupply and shipping support schedule designed to function with clockwork precision, the target date for the Okinawa operation could not have been met. This would have caused all related planned strategy to have been either nullified or advanced to a later date.

The logistics plan for Okinawa "was the most elaborate one of its kind developed during World War II, involving prearranged movement of both assault and cargo shipping over vast ocean distances."<sup>24</sup> The plan required establishment of a 6,000-mile-long supply line, stretching across the Pacific, with 11 different ports-of-call,<sup>25</sup> to support the mounting of 182,821 troops encumbered with some 746,850 measurement tons<sup>26</sup> of cargo loaded into 434 assault transports and landing ships.

A great limitation imposed upon pre-invasion logistical planning was the shortage of shipping and the delay in the return from the Philippines of the vessels which were to be used for Okinawa. Seeking a solution to lift and timetable problems was not the only concern of the Tenth Army logistics

staff, "for the mere loading of more ships led only to congestion at the receiving end unless the development of unloading facilities kept pace."<sup>27</sup>

It had been decided that the Hagushi beaches were sufficiently large to handle the supply tonnage required by the assault echelon of two corps and their support troops; however, it was impossible to prophesy exactly how soon after the landings the beachhead would be secured and the advance continued inland, or how soon thereafter base development could begin and the supplies for this aspect of Phase I would be required and available. Nor was it possible to forecast the possibility that Phase II would be completed before the accomplishment of Phase I. Nonetheless, estimates of troop progress had to be made in order to prepare a logistics plan at all.

The main features of the ICEBERG logistics plan required an initial supply level to be taken to Okinawa by the assault troops who were mounted at such distantly scattered points as Leyte, Guadalcanal, Espiritu Santo, Banika, Pavuvu, Saipan, Eniwetok, Oahu, and the west coast of the United States. Upon completion of the assault phase of the landing, a staggered series of supply shipments would replenish the Tenth Army in accordance with a schedule established earlier. This timetable had been based on the estimated time required to conduct combat operations ashore and, in turn, on how quickly the beach and port capacity could be expanded.

<sup>24</sup> Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, "Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943-1945—U. S. Army in World War II" (unpublished MS, OCMH), pt VI, "Shift to a One-Front War," chap XXIV, p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Guadalcanal, Espiritu Santo, New Georgia, Makin, Kwajalein, Saipan, Ulithi, Manus, Milne Bay, Finschhafen, and Hollandia.

<sup>26</sup> Measurement ton is defined as a unit of carrying capacity of a ship, usually equal to 40 cubic feet; it is sometimes designated a freight ton.

<sup>27</sup> Coakley and Leighton, *op. cit.*, pt V, "The War Against Japan, 1943-1944," chap XVIII, p. 3.

Beginning on 20 February 1945, ICEBERG replenishments were to leave the west coast every 10 days for regulating points at Ulithi, Eniwetok, and Saipan, the first shipments to arrive at each place on L minus 5 (27 March). The supplies would remain at these points until they were called-up by General Buckner. It was planned to continue these automatic resupply shipments for a period of 210 days beyond L-Day. The Tenth Army was also to have emergency reserves located at Saipan, Tinian, and Guam.

The prediction of supply requirements depended upon completed tactical plans, a firm troop basis, and other necessary items of information which either were nonexistent or had not yet been made available to the logistics planners. Adding to the logistics dilemma was the factor of time, for it took 120 days for supplies to be requisitioned, procured, and shipped from the Pacific Coast of the United States to the objective.

To facilitate the preparation and shipment of resupply items in accordance with the scheduling of the various invasion echelons, Army commanders established a standard unit of supply, or "block requisitions," tailored specifically to the organization of each of the support and assault elements. The composition of the individual block requisition was determined by estimating the logistic support required by a particular unit for a given number of days regardless of the combat situation.

In contrast to this approach, Marine supply agencies, drawing on their experience, felt that the combat situation

as envisioned in the planning stages should govern the nature of the supplies requisitioned, and the number, types, and frequency of shipments. Tenth Army considered the Marine system to be more flexible than the Army's because the requisitioning agencies were better able to make the several automatic resupply shipments conform to their view of how the campaign would progress.

Each service was responsible for initial support of its own elements in the Okinawa task force, with the exception of troops mounting in the South and Southwest Pacific. Area commanders there would be charged with logistical support of units assigned to ICEBERG. After the landing had been accomplished, and when directed by Admiral Turner, Island Command would take over as the Tenth Army central support agency charged with funneling supplies to all of the assault forces.

Early in January <sup>28</sup> it became obvious that ICEBERG had been allocated insufficient shipping to accomplish the tactical mission, to support base development, and to lift to the target those air units which were to be committed early in the campaign. An inadequate transport quota for engineer units, whose services would be needed in the

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<sup>28</sup> Actually, questions regarding the allocation of shipping had appeared earlier, for on 24 November 1944, Colonel Francis B. Loomis, Jr., the G-4 of IIIAC, reported in at the Tenth Army headquarters for a short tour of temporary duty. General Geiger apparently was concerned about the shipping problem and believed it necessary to have a G-4 representative with the army. Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 9.

early development of airfields, roads, and waterfront facilities, was improved slightly by scheduling the immediate return of assault LSTs to Saipan after the initial landings to shuttle eight naval construction battalions (Seabees) to the target. In the same manner, other LSTs would be sent to Leyte to pick up any XXIV Corps equipment not carried in assault shipping.<sup>29</sup>

Of the overall inadequate shipping situation and its effect on the combat divisions, the former G-4 of the Tenth Army recalled that, if needed, ICEBERG was to get all shipping available in the Pacific, because:

the amount of assault shipping assigned for the operation was far below that required to properly lift the assault elements of the Tenth Army. This resulted in [the Tenth Army being given] authority to modify Combat Loading Doctrine so that the most essential equipment and supplies could accompany the assault echelon. Additional items that should have been in the assault echelon were loaded in a subsequent shipping echelon.<sup>30</sup>

The overall assault lift was augmented by other means also. Vessels to be used for the Luzon and Iwo Jima landings were made available later for Okinawa through adherence to a stringently monitored and thoroughly regulated shipping schedule. Additional space for Tenth Army troops was gained by reducing the tonnage requirements of IIIAC, substantially at the expense of the 2d Marine Division. It was rea-

soned that since the division was not going to be committed immediately, it could acquire whatever additional shipping it needed within a short time following the initial assault. Further lift capacity was gained by loading landing ships to their rated limits, by the addition to the invasion flotilla of newly constructed attack transports (APAs) with greater cargo-carrying characteristics, and by an increased allocation of landing ships, tank, (LSTs) and landing ships, medium (LSMs).

The shipping allocation for the garrison forces was governed by the estimated capacity of Okinawan beach and port unloading facilities. Past experience, however, resolved the size of the lift necessary to transport an assault echelon of three reinforced Marine divisions, three reinforced Army divisions, a Marine amphibious corps headquarters and corps troops, and an Army corps headquarters and corps troops. Thus, the required assault tonnage was a firm figure from the beginning and was deducted from that allotted to the ICEBERG forces overall. The remainder was assigned as the lift for Tenth Army support troops, which included air, naval, and airfield construction units.

After the Marianas and Palau operations, it was found that one transport group (12 APAs and 3 cargo ships, attack (AKAs)), made up of three transport divisions, had sufficient lift capacity for a combat-loaded reinforced infantry division. For the ICEBERG lift, however, a new shipping echelon, the transport squadron (transron) was formed to carry a proportionate share of assault forces, corps troops, and ele-

<sup>29</sup> *Blakelock ltr.*

<sup>30</sup> BGen David H. Blakelock, USA, ltr to Asst G-3, HQMC, dtd 6Nov65, hereafter *Blakelock ltr 1965.*

ments from corps and army headquarters. The transron was nothing but the old transport group augmented by three APAs and three AKAs.

Each transron was to be accompanied by one APH, which was a troop transport specially rigged as a hospital and equipped to treat casualties and then evacuate them from the battle zone.<sup>31</sup> There were to be six hospital ships (AHs) assigned to ICEBERG; one was to be on station L minus 5 with the Kerama Retto invasion group, three were assigned to the main attack forces and were to arrive off Hagushi on L plus 1, while the other two were scheduled to reach Okinawa three days later.

Improved casualty evacuation was planned for this invasion by assigning four hospital landing ships (LST(H)s) to each of the two naval attack forces in the major assault. Assigned to each vessel was a naval medical officer who functioned as an evacuation control officer and, as such, was responsible for screening the wounded as they arrived, giving treatment and classifying them with reference to their estimated recovery time, and transferring the casualties in accordance with the provisions of a system related to their recovery classification. Accordingly, hospital ships would evacuate those men wounded seriously enough to require hospitalization for two months or more. Casualties requiring treatment for a minimum of

two and a maximum of eight weeks would be evacuated in APHs during the initial assault phase and, after that, would receive further treatment in hospitals established on Okinawa. Those men who could be returned to duty within two weeks after being wounded would be treated and held in the hospital transports or landing ships until they had fully recovered or until the land-based hospitals had been established.

The LST(H)s were to remain on station until released by Admiral Turner, at which time the medical officers aboard would land and assign casualties directly to the ships from aid stations set up on the beaches. When General Buckner assumed command ashore, he would become responsible for the establishment and administration of medical services on the island, and for air evacuation of casualties, when airfields became operational.

The equipment and supplies to be taken to Okinawa by the corps and the divisions had been specifically designated by Tenth Army order. After cargo space in assigned shipping had been allocated to this material, any other available space would be filled by additional items which the corps and division commanders had decided the troops could carry. Logistical planning on the division level was influenced by the supposition that the beaches would be heavily defended and that the inland advance stubbornly resisted. As a result, only "hot cargo," predetermined blocks of high-priority supplies, was to be landed on L-Day. Included in a block of cargo

<sup>31</sup> The APH should not be confused with the better-known hospital ship (AH), which is unarmed and protected only by international recognition of the provisions of the Geneva Convention.

were one CinCPOA unit of fire<sup>32</sup> for all weapons and rations and water for one day. Moreover, all organic division motor transport would be taken to the target in available shipping space because the prospect of prolonged operations over a relatively large land mass envisioned wide-spread use of vehicles.<sup>33</sup>

To assist in Marine logistical planning and preparations, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, established the 2d Field Service Command on Guadalcanal. Here relatively close liaison could be maintained with Marine ICEBERG elements mounting from the Solomons. This service command was empowered to coordinate the efforts of the supply agencies of both the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions and to deal with Army and Navy sources of supply directly. In the same manner, the Marianas-based 1st Field Service Command assisted the 2d Marine Division. Re-equipment of General del Valle's division on Pavuvu was relatively simple since its primary supply source, the 4th Base Depot, under the 2d Field Service Command, was on the other major island in the Russells, Banika. General Shepherd's division experienced some difficulties, however, because its supply source was a transfer rather than a

stocking agency and had to obtain its requisitioned items from the 4th Base Depot. As a result of the cumbersome and time-consuming administrative procedures involved in processing requisitions through the several service echelons in the area, the 6th Division experienced many delays in the delivery of much of its needed equipment and supplies.<sup>34</sup> Both assault divisions, however, embarked for the target with but few shortages, none of which affected combat readiness and efficiency.

By the time that the TAF logistics section had been activated, AirFMFPac had already issued warning orders and was in the process of preparing subordinate units for the impending campaign. The basis for logistic support of Marine aviation units was different, in certain ways, from that of Marine ground elements. While items peculiar to the Marine Corps were drawn by both ground and air units from the same sources, all technical aviation materiel was received through Navy supply channels or, in some cases, from the Army. Since this was the case, the TAF logistics staff established liaison with representatives of Commander, Aircraft, Pacific Fleet (ComAirPac), the agency responsible for fulfilling the fuel and installation requirements at the Okinawa air fields the TAF units were to occupy. The supply section of Commander, Naval Air Bases, Okinawa (ComNABS) was made

<sup>32</sup> CinCPOA Unit of Fire Table, dtd 6Dec44, included in *Tenth Army TntvOPlan 1-45*, Anx 13, App B, was based on the successful criteria established by use during the Central Pacific landings. Allocation of ammunition for various ordnance was, for example: 100 rounds for each M-1; 1,500 rounds for .30 caliber and 600 rounds for .50 caliber machine guns; 275 rounds for 60mm and 81mm mortars; 250 rounds for 105mm howitzers; 150 rounds for 155mm howitzers.

<sup>33</sup> *1st MarDiv SAR*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>34</sup> 6th MarDiv SAR, Okinawa Op, Ph III, dtd 30Jun45, pp. 5-6, hereafter *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*, and including the SARs of the following units: 4th, 15th, 22d, and 29th Marines, hereafter (unit) *SAR, Ph III*.

the ComAirPac type command logistics representative for these matters.

All other supply requirements were to be handled by the supply section of the Navy's Pacific service command. Liaison was also established with Army Air Forces logistics representatives to determine the nature and extent of support required by Army elements in General Mulcahy's command. Arrangements were then made to obtain special combat clothing and equipment for the AAF personnel to be assigned to TAF. Based upon the latter's recommendations, automatic resupply shipments for the Army squadrons were adjusted to coincide with the schedule established for the Marines.

The organization and general administration of the supply system on Okinawa was to be an Island Command function, in which it would receive and distribute Tenth Army supplies. The Marine groups in TAF, however, would support their own squadrons and would draw Marine Corps supplies from the 2d Wing or other designated Marine sources. Air base commanders would provide aviation fuel and lubricants to squadrons operating from their strips; all technical aviation supplies were to be requisitioned through ComNABS, Okinawa.

Service units organic to the AAF fighter and bombardment groups would support the flying squadrons of each. All supplies other than the technical items peculiar to AAF planes would be requisitioned from sources designated by the Island Commander. Until an Air Service Command Depot was established on Okinawa, the one at Guam would supply the remainder.

### *BASE DEVELOPMENT AND MILITARY GOVERNMENT PLANNING*<sup>35</sup>

A second logistic mission given to ICEBERG, separate yet related to the assault effort, was the immediate development of Okinawa as an advanced air and fleet base. In order to support all of the aircraft assigned to the invasion, eight airfields and one seaplane base were to be built almost immediately and during the later phases of the operation this number would be increased. Also, two ports were to be developed—one, Nakagusuku Wan, by the Navy and the other, Naha harbor, by the Army. Since Okinawa was to serve merely as a staging base for final operations against Japan, it was not contemplated that the installations on the island were to be of permanent construction. Ie Shima was included in the base development program as the island was to hold four airfields and to garrison ground and antiaircraft artillery defense troops.

Base development would proceed right on the heels of the assault troops as two of Okinawa's airfields were to be seized, improved, and made operational by L plus 5, while two more fields were to be available by L plus 20. The preparation of Okinawa as a mounting and staging point was to be undertaken concurrently. First priority was given the early development and activation of airfields; next in order of importance was the construction of bulk fuel storage facilities; and the third most important mat-

<sup>35</sup> Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from: *ICEBERG Study*; *USAFMidPac G-5 Hist*; *War Reports*; *Tenth Army AR*; *IsCom OPlan No. 1*; *IsCom AR*.

ter was the development of waterfront installations. Reflecting the urgency of these tasks, every effort was made to schedule the shipments of supplies required to support base improvement so that they would arrive at the island when they were needed. Accordingly, garrison troops and the materials which they were to employ were to arrive in 17 successive echelons. The timing of their arrival was governed not only by the preplanned work schedule but also by the projected unloading capacity of the captured beaches.

To establish this schedule, a series of echelonment conferences were held between the staffs of the Tenth Army and the different type commanders who were furnishing troops for the operation. In any large amphibious operation, it is neither possible nor feasible, because of shipping limitations, to transport to the target in the assault convoy both those troops required to undertake the campaign to its end and the troops, equipment, and supplies required to develop the captured base. Even if all required shipping had been made available for an operation of the size of Okinawa, it would have been patently undesirable to schedule the simultaneous arrival at the target of both assault and garrison troops. Until the assault forces had landed, unloaded their shipping, and gained enough room on the beaches for the landing of the garrison elements and equipment, the shipping in which garrison troops were embarked would have had to lie off Okinawa, where it would have been vulnerable to enemy submarines and aircraft. For these reasons, it was imperative that echelonment plans covering the movement of thousands of

assault, service, and construction troops had to be precise.

In addition to its other functions, Island Command was also to establish a military government on Okinawa. Since this was to be the first Pacific operation in which large numbers of enemy civilians would be encountered by combat troops, it was expected that the island would serve as a valuable testing ground of civil affairs and military government procedures which would be applied later when Japan itself was occupied.

In 1943, the JCS gave the Navy basic responsibility for establishing military government on certain outlying islands of the Japanese Empire, once they had been captured. Included in this group were the Ryukyus. Because the Tenth Army would be in overall control of the Okinawa land campaign, Admiral Nimitz believed that General Buckner should be responsible for military government on the island. Accordingly, once the War Department concurred in this transfer of authority, CinCPOA was able to get the 1943 JCS order reversed.

Because of its European commitments, the Army was unable to furnish all of the civil affairs personnel needed to round out the entire Tenth Army military government component. Therefore, the Navy supplied Brigadier General William E. Crist's command with naval officer and enlisted personnel so that Military Government would have well-balanced teams.

Direct naval participation in military government planning for Okinawa began in July 1944, when work was begun in New York City by the research staff of the Chief of Naval Operations' military government section. The pooled

efforts of the staff resulted in the *Civil Affairs Handbook for the Ryukyu Islands*, a publication which proved to be of inestimable value to Tenth Army civil affairs administrators during both the ICEBERG planning phase and the rehabilitation period after Okinawa had been secured.<sup>36</sup>

The ICEBERG joint staff study originally anticipated that, within the Okinawan population to come under Tenth Army control, a small element would be "antipathetic" and would have to be "placed under detainment pending screening and probable internment." No figures were available to determine how many mainland Japanese civilians on Okinawa might possibly be captured, but preparations had to be made for the construction of an internment camp whose facilities were flexible enough to provide for upwards of 10,000 island natives and Japanese civilian internees. It was expected that by L plus 40 this number would skyrocket to an approximate total of 306,000 captured civilians, whose food, clothing, and housing would have to come from captured stocks of salvagable material, since there was no room aboard assault ships for supplies of this nature. By the time ICEBERG had reached the garrison phase, 12 military government camps were to be in operation, each unit staffed and equipped to handle 2,500-10,000 civilians.

<sup>36</sup> Deputy Commander for MilGovt ltr to ComNOB, Okinawa, and Chief MilGovt Officer, Ryukyus, dtd 1Jul45, Subj: Rpt of MilGovt Activities for Period from 1Apr45 to 1Jul46, hereafter *MilGovt AR*.

Assigned to General Crist's jointly staffed military government section were such varied Army and Navy units as a military police battalion, a truck company, 20 Navy dispensaries, and 6 Navy hospital units. In addition to these and some purely administrative elements, 350 officer and 890 enlisted civil affairs personnel were organized into four types of teams, each of which had been tailored for specific functions. One of the teams was assigned to each of the assault divisions and, after landing, was to conduct preliminary reconnaissance missions relating to military government as the attack advanced. Teams in another group, attached to the two corps and all divisions also, were to take charge of civil affairs behind the front lines as civilians were encountered by the combat forces. A third type of team was made up of refugee camp administrators, while in the fourth category there were six teams, each of which was to take charge of one of the six military government districts into which Okinawa was to be divided.

The Chief Military Government Officer was to be directly subordinate to the Island Commander and would function as his deputy. The importance of this close relationship and the emphasis placed on intensive civil affairs planning was justified later during the campaign, when, by 30 April, there were approximately 125,000 civilians under military government jurisdiction on Okinawa. This figure climbed steadily following this date, reached 147,829 by 31 May, 172,670 by 15 June, and totaled 261,115 on 30 June.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Tenth Army AR*, chap 11, sec XXVII, p. 4.

### INTELLIGENCE PLANNING <sup>38</sup>

In October 1944, the statement that "information as to enemy defensive installations on Okinawa Jima is meager," <sup>39</sup> was indisputable. Despite the early lack of information concerning the island, the various intelligence gathering and processing agencies in the Pacific, as well as those in the United States, began to sift through available material and soon were able to clarify the enemy situation for ICEBERG forces. In keeping with the established principle of coordinated planning, the corporate activities of all intelligence agencies in the various Pacific commands quickly resulted in the production of urgently needed basic intelligence.

Currently valid military information of the Japanese situation was difficult to obtain because of the location of Okinawa within the Empire's well-protected, strategic, inner defense line. For the most part, captured documents, interrogations of prisoners as well as of former island inhabitants, and old Japanese publications provided the basis for the intelligence estimates initially issued.<sup>40</sup> In addition, the Navy was able to make use of both captured and previously available hydrographic charts

<sup>38</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *ICEBERG Study*; *CTF 51 OPlan A1-45*; *CTF 51 AR*; *Tenth Army TntvOPlan 1-45*; *Tenth Army AR*; *IIIAC OPlan 1-45*; *IIIAC AR*; *1st MarDiv OPlan 1-45*; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph I & II*.

<sup>39</sup> *ICEBERG Study*, App A (Enemy Strength and Capabilities), p. 19.

<sup>40</sup> Admiral Turner's intelligence staff discovered the existence in the United States of an American civilian who, having spent many years in Japan and Okinawa, was able to

for navigational studies of the waters surrounding Okinawa.

For a terrain study, a determination of the location and nature of enemy defenses, and an estimate of enemy strength, most of the data at hand was inadequate and an aerial photographic mission over the target had to be laid on. In conjunction with other information of the enemy received right up to L-Day, the thorough interpretation and evaluation of these photographs enabled Tenth Army to issue detailed intelligence studies which contained an accurate estimate of the Japanese situation.

Aerial photos were required also for use in the production of a map of the target. It was difficult to obtain adequate photographic coverage at first because of the distance of Okinawa from the closest Allied air base, some 1,200 nautical miles. This factor limited the conduct of such missions to either carrier aircraft, whose ships could carry them close to the target, or B-29s. Other obstacles to the amassing of a complete intelligence picture of Okinawa were the notoriously poor weather over the target, the vastness of the land mass to be photographed, and the schedule of carrier strikes against the target—few of which were timed to coincide with immediate Tenth Army intelligence requirements.

On 29 September 1944, the first ICEBERG photographic mission was flown by B-29s. While they covered all of Okinawa, and the outlying islands to a degree, the results of this flight were

divulge much valuable information. "He worked with this section and later worked with both the Army and the Navy at the objective." *CTF 51 AR*, pt V, sec A, p. 1.

limited by clouds which obscured about half of the area photographed, mainly the northern portion of the major island. Because of this inadequate photo coverage, the first map produced and distributed had many blank portions in which there was little or no topographic detailing. Modifications of this first map were made later in the campaign, when captured Japanese maps provided more thorough contouring information.

During the first fast-carrier strikes on Okinawa Gunto of 10 October 1944, large scale vertical and oblique aerial photographs were acquired, giving 90 percent coverage of the area. From 29 September 1944 to 28 March 1945, a total of 224 photo-reconnaissance sorties were flown over the target. Information gained from these photographs was collated and analyzed, and the resultant intelligence summaries were distributed to Tenth Army units.

In the week preceding L-Day, escort carrier-based photographic aircraft flew daily missions over the island. Careful interpretation of the photos thus obtained permitted bomb damage assessments and, at the same time, comparison of these photos with ones taken earlier enabled the interpreters to locate many enemy installations previously concealed by effective camouflage. From a close study of successive sorties, it was possible to determine each displacement of the enemy's defensive positions, to hazard guesses of his relative strength, and to compile a preliminary target information list for distribution to artillery units.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> IIIAC Artillery Action Report, Phase I, Nansei Shoto, 1Apr-30Jun45, dtd 25Jul45, p. 7, hereafter *IIIAC Arty AR*.

After L-Day and while the fighting was still in progress, the island was completely rephotographed, the results of which enabled a more accurate map to be printed and distributed.<sup>42</sup> A scale of 1:25,000 was used for the basic map originally issued from which maps of the initial zones of action, scaled at 1:10,000, were produced for the use of the lower echelon assault units. At the same time, smaller scale maps were re-produced for use as road maps in traffic control planning.

The Tenth Army made rubber relief maps on a scale of 1:10,000, which were issued to General Geiger's troops in sufficient quantity to permit distribution down to and including assault battalions. The mapping sections of IIIAC, and the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions worked together to produce plastic terrain models of the corps zone of action. Made to a scale of 1:5,000 and constructed with a 2:1 vertical exaggeration, these models facilitated the briefing of commanders and their troops for the prospective operation. Wholesale distribution of these relief models was made soon after the troops embarked for the target, at which time some 600 copies of a 1:5,000 map of the landing beaches, specially prepared by the 1st

<sup>42</sup> ". . . the absence of an adequate one over twenty five thousand map during the planning phase, and even during the early phases of the operation, served greatly in influencing everything the landing force did. It was often a critical impediment. As a matter of fact, the area in which the 6th Division operated as early as L-plus 4 had large blank segments on the map." CMC [Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr.] Memo to G-3, dtd 18Jan55, hereafter *Shepherd memo I*.

Marine Division, were issued to its assault units.

To supplement aerial photographs, the USS *Swordfish*, a specially equipped submarine, was dispatched to Okinawa from Pearl Harbor on 22 December 1944 with the mission of photographing Okinawa's beaches and Japanese defensive installations on the island coasts. After making her last known radio transmission on 3 January 1945, the submarine was never heard from again and was reported missing. As a result, no beach photographs were taken before L-Day for, as succinctly stated in the TF 51 AR, "no information from submarine reconnaissance was available."<sup>43</sup>

In October 1944, enemy strength on Okinawa was set at 48,600. It was estimated that two well-trained and experienced infantry divisions, and a tank regiment, comprised the major defense force on the island. At this time, it was recognized that an additional threat to the landings was posed by the size of the civilian population located in southern Okinawa. This manpower potential of more than 300,000 individuals would swell the enemy strength figure if they were used to form a home guard or militia, or to conduct guerrilla activities. In January 1945, the Tenth Army estimate assumed that the Japanese reinforcement capability could increase the regular force figure to 66,000 by L-Day, at which time enemy defense forces on Okinawa would be two and a half infantry divisions. If the enemy

exerted his maximum reinforcement capability, he could then oppose the landing with four infantry divisions constituting the principal combat elements of the defense. Total Japanese strength would then be 87,000 men.

All possible Japanese courses of action were considered, and troop dispositions for each course were analyzed in light of what was known of current Japanese tactical doctrine and its evolution to date. All indications pointed to the fact that the enemy would most likely organize the southern third of Okinawa for a defense in depth while the bulk of his troops were withheld as a mobile reserve. This course of action would present a potentially more dangerous situation to the landing force than would the more commonly experienced alternative of a determined defense of the beaches.

An interpretation of aerial photographs in February revealed that the enemy force on Okinawa comprised two infantry divisions and an independent mixed brigade, service and support troop reinforcements for the infantry, all totaling an estimated 56,000-58,000 men. It also appeared that, while the far northern sector was defended by a single battalion only, the main force was disposed in the south in the projected XXIV Corps area. In the III Amphibious Corps zone of action, it was estimated that two infantry regiments defended. Conceivably, these six or seven thousand men could be reinforced by local auxiliaries.

While the small garrison in the north was given the capability of mounting counterattacks against the invader left flank, it was expected that the most

<sup>43</sup> Theodore Roscoe, *United States Submarine Operations in World War II* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1949), pp. 446-447; *CTF 51 AR*, pt V, sec A, p. 1.

violent enemy reaction would come from the heavily defended south, on the XXIV Corps' right flank, where the Japanese mobile reserve would be maintained in considerable strength. It was anticipated that, as soon as the Japanese had appraised the landing force's dispositions, a counteroffensive in force would be mounted by the enemy reserve.

The estimate of Japanese strength was again revised in mid-February, this time downwards to 37,500-39,500, when information was received that a full division had been withdrawn from Okinawa. In view of this reduction, and supplemented by indications that the enemy was concentrating in the Nakagusuku Bay area, it was presumed that the two Marine divisions would be opposed in their zones by no more than one infantry regiment deployed in position, and that the total number of Japanese troops in the overall sector would be more than 10,000.

This numbers guessing game continued when, a month later, the estimate of Japanese defense forces was revised upwards to 64,000. It appeared that the enemy had been able to reinforce the garrison with an understrength infantry division as well as with some miscellaneous units of unknown origin, in all about 20,000 men. It was believed that an additional force of 4,000-6,000 men had arrived in March, having been lifted by shipping which successfully evaded the Allied blockade. The Tenth Army assumed that, if the March enemy reinforcements were the advance elements of another division, it was reasonable to assume further that by 1 April the landing force would be opposed by at least

75,000 men. In the week preceding L-Day, while the assault elements sortied for the target, still another estimate of enemy strength in the IIIAC zone was issued. In this supplementary revision, it was stated that the principal Japanese opposition now would come from two reinforced infantry regiments with a strength of 16,000 men.

Air and naval capabilities assigned to the Japanese remained relatively unchanged all during the planning phases of ICEBERG. At all times it was expected that the enemy would be capable of mounting heavy and repeated air attacks against invasion shipping. It was expected that this vigorous air effort would include continued employment and intensification of the suicide bombing tactics which first had appeared during the invasion of Leyte in October 1944. The Japanese were credited with an air strength of approximately 3,000 planes which were based within range and capable of blunting the Okinawa landing. Along with this air capability, the enemy was believed able to mount an airborne counterattack, for "as air action is practically the only assistance he can give the Okinawa garrison from outside [the island], he may expend considerable aircraft and endeavor to land several thousand troops within our beachhead."<sup>44</sup>

It was known that the Japanese had suicide motor torpedo boat units at Okinawa and it was assumed that midget submarines were based there also. Added to the possible tactical employment of these suicide organizations was the potential use of suicide swimmers

<sup>44</sup> *Tenth Army TntvOPlan 1-45*, anx 3, sec V, p. 14.

whose mission was also disruption of the invasion fleet at anchor off the objective. Although the Japanese Navy was a mere shadow of its former self, it still retained operational forces strong enough to pose a threat to the landing's success. For that reason, it was deemed necessary to maintain a strong surface cover at the objective.

While the southern part of Okinawa was ideally suited for the tactical use of tanks, the enemy was not given an armored capability. This was because the relation of estimated tank strength to the total estimated garrison strength was too low, and it was not felt that this support arm would offer any great opposition.

Three months after Admiral Nimitz had received the JCS directive for Okinawa's invasion, General Buckner issued the initial operation order setting the ICEBERG juggernaut's wheels into motion. During the course of this planning period, each Tenth Army general and special staff section prepared that portion of the operation order for which it was responsible while maintaining liaison with the subordinate units which were preparing to put words into action. Although most of the ICEBERG assault, support, and garrison forces did not issue their own operation orders until January 1945, warning orders had already alerted them to the impending invasion.

# Assault Preparations

## TRAINING AND REHEARSALS<sup>1</sup>

The Pacific-wide dispersion of troops and shipping assigned to ICEBERG prevented the Tenth Army from conducting either training or rehearsals as a cohesive unit. Because of the vast distances separating General Buckner and his corps and division commanders, the latter were invested with the responsibility for training their respective organizations along the lines of Tenth Army directives. With these orders as a guide, all Marine units committed to the operation were trained under the supervision of FMFPac.

Assault preparations of ICEBERG Army divisions were hindered by the limited time available for their rehabilitation, reorganization, and training.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *CTF 51 AR*; *Tenth Army AR*; *TAF AR*; *XXIV Corps AR*, Ryukyus, 1Apr-30Jun45, n.d., hereafter *XXIV Corps AR*; *IIIAC AR*; *IIIAC Arty AR*; *IsCom AR*; *MilGovt AR*; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *2d MarDiv AR*, Phase I, Nansei Shoto, dtd 15Apr45, hereafter *2d MarDiv AR*; *6th MarDiv SAR*, *Ph I & II*; *7th InfDiv OpRpt*, Ryukyus Campaign, dtd 30Jul45, hereafter *7th InfDiv OpRpt*; *27th InfDiv OpRpt*, Phase I, Nansei Shoto, 1 Jan-30Jun45, dtd 19Jul45, hereafter *27th InfDiv OpRpt*; *77th InfDiv OpRpt*, Phase I (in 3 parts—Kerama Retto, Keise Shima; Ie Shima; Okinawa), n.d., hereafter *77th InfDiv OpRpt* and appropriate part; *96th InfDiv AR*, Ryukyus Campaign, dtd 28Jul45, hereafter *96th InfDiv AR*.

This was especially true in the case of XXIV Corps units already in combat in the Philippines. Many of the garrison and service units which were to be attached to the various assault forces were also handicapped by the time factor because they, too, were either fighting or heavily committed in support of operations in the Philippines. In order that Tenth Army staff planners could better evaluate the combat readiness of all organizations within the command, each of General Buckner's commanders submitted a monthly training status report to ICEBERG headquarters on Oahu.<sup>2</sup> Since the reports lacked what an inspection at first-hand could provide, Buckner and some of his principal staff officers made a series of flying trips to each of the corps and divisions. These personal visits at the end of January 1945 "did much to weld the far-flung

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<sup>2</sup> The voluminous training status reports were in reality check-off lists for newly formed divisions. When the Marine Deputy Chief of Staff of the Tenth Army learned that the IIIAC assault divisions, whose troops had recently been in combat and were in an advanced state of training, had to submit these reports, he pointed out that preparation "of these reports merely harassed the divisions and served no useful purpose." Once General Buckner "saw the training being engaged in by the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions . . . the word was passed to [Brigadier General] Silverthorn to forget about the submission of the Status Reports." Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 43.

units of the Tenth Army into a unified whole.”<sup>3</sup>

One determinant forcing the postponement of the Formosa-South China invasion in favor of the Okinawa assault had been the shortage of service and support troops, a shortage that still existed when the Tenth Army began its final training and rehearsal phases.<sup>4</sup> Many of these specialist units were slated to reinforce corps and divisions for the assault and then to augment Island Command during the initial base development. Because they were too deeply involved otherwise, often with primary missions related to the buildup for the operation, the support troops could not train with the assault units they were to reinforce. The time borrowed for training would seriously disrupt the mounting and staging efforts

<sup>3</sup> *Blakelock ltr.* Of Buckner's visit to his Marine units in the Solomons, General Geiger wrote: "General Buckner and five of his staff spent about three days with us the latter part of January. You know how difficult it is to make a very favorable impression in the mud down here, especially in cleanliness of equipment; but I believe he and his staff were satisfied with what they saw. They spent a day with each division observing training. We took them over to the 1st Division in a PBV-5A." MajGen Roy S. Geiger ltr to LtGen Alexander A. Vandegrift, dtd 2Feb45 (Vandegrift Personal Correspondence File, HistBr, HQMC).

<sup>4</sup> General Oliver P. Smith recalled that in order to obtain at least a minimum of additional service troops, the Tenth Army "had to comb the entire Pacific Ocean Area and resort to considerable improvisation. For example, a veteran tank battalion was broken up to make Quartermaster Truck Companies. I happened to talk to the battalion commander of this tank battalion, who was heartbroken over the matter. . . ." Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 12.

for ICEBERG. Nevertheless, support unit commanders carried out adequate individual weapons' qualification and physical conditioning programs which met Tenth Army training requirements. Although they were released to General Buckner's control only a few days before mounting for the target, a number of garrison organizations were able to conduct limited training with the combat outfit to which they were attached.

The major assault components of the Tenth Army were battle-experienced for the most part, but they needed to undertake an intensive training schedule in order to bring veterans and newly absorbed replacements alike to peak combat efficiency. To accomplish this task, Army and Marine Corps units in the South Pacific, and the 2d Marine Division on Saipan, conducted extensive programs which fulfilled the training requirements stipulated by General Buckner's directives. General Hodge's XXIV Corps, however, was engaged in operations on Leyte, and his divisions were not released to Tenth Army by General MacArthur until 10 February 1945,<sup>5</sup> just two months before L-Day.

After the extended period of bitter fighting in the Philippines, however, the combat units slated for ICEBERG were understrength. General Hodge's problems were further aggravated when his infantry divisions were required to fur-

<sup>5</sup> In 1944 when the JCS approved the recommended invasion of Leyte, the XXIV Corps was fully combat loaded, already at sea, and en route for the invasion of Yap. As a result of the decision to land at Leyte, the Yap landing was cancelled and the XXIV Corps was re-assigned to General MacArthur, who ordered it to invade Leyte on 20 October 1944.

nish the Leyte Base Command<sup>6</sup> with large working parties as soon as the troops returned from mopping-up operations at the front. The servicing, crating, and loading of organic division equipment siphoned off the services of other infantrymen as well as making it impossible to impose a major training program on any of the divisions. Finally, as one command reported, the "deterioration of the physical and mental condition of combat personnel after 110 days of continuous contact with the enemy made it plain that rigorous field training in the wet and muddy terrain would prove more detrimental than beneficial."<sup>7</sup>

Besides undertaking the many other incidental duties preparatory to mounting for Okinawa from Leyte, some Army units had to construct their own camps and make their own billeting arrangements as soon as they arrived in the rear area from the front lines. What little time was available to the Southern Landing Force before L-Day was divided between training in small-unit tactics and practice for breaching and scaling operations, in anticipation of the conditions to be found at Okinawa beaches. Because of the large influx of raw replacements into the divisions, great emphasis was placed on developing the teamwork of riflemen and their supporting weapons.

Of the three divisions in XXIV Corps, the 96th was the most fortunate in that

<sup>6</sup> This logistical organization suffered from a chronic shortage of service troops which threatened the dual mission of the command of supporting both the Luzon and Okinawa invasions.

<sup>7</sup> *7th Inf Div Op Rpt*, p. 28.

some of its new troops arrived during mopping-up stages on Leyte. At that time, the replacements were given an opportunity to take an "active part in combat and reconnaissance patrols, gaining valuable battle indoctrination through physical contact and skirmishes with small isolated groups of Japanese."<sup>8</sup>

According to the Tenth Army Marine Deputy Chief of Staff, General Smith:

The conditions of the Army divisions on Leyte gave General Buckner considerable concern. This was not the fault of the divisions; they were excellent divisions. However, they had been in action on Leyte for three months and two of the divisions were still engaged in active operations. The divisions were understrength and adequate replacements were not in sight. There were [numerous men suffering from] dysentery and skin infections. Living conditions were very bad. A considerable number of combat troops had been diverted to Luzon and converted into service troops. There was some doubt as to whether reequipment could be effected in time.<sup>9</sup>

The fighting record of the XXIV Corps on Okinawa indicates how well it overcame great obstacles in preparing for its ordeal. Once they had reconstituted their combat organizations, trained their fresh replacements, and attended to the many details incident to mounting for the target, the veteran units of this corps were able to give good accounts of themselves against the enemy.

In the South Pacific and the Marianas, Tenth Army units were not as heavily committed as the units of the Southern Landing Force, and completed a more comprehensive training pro-

<sup>8</sup> *96th Inf Div AR*, chap V, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 47.

gram. The 27th Infantry Division, ICEBERG floating reserve, arrived at Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides from Saipan during September and October 1944. The division was undivided in its opinion that this base was a "hellhole," unfitted for the division's rehabilitation and training because of the island's torrid climate, its topography, and lush, tropical vegetation.<sup>10</sup>

Upon receipt of advance information that it was to take part in the Okinawa assault, the 27th instituted an accelerated combat training program which was calculated to qualify it, by 30 January 1945, for a period of prolonged operations against the enemy. Launched on 23 October, the level of the program advanced progressively from individual schooling to combined company and battalion exercises and, finally, to a two-week stretch of regimental combat team (RCT)<sup>11</sup> maneuvers. During this staging period, in which 2,700 replacements arrived and were assigned, the division stressed training for offensive and defensive night operations.

Most Marines in IIIAC assault divisions had recently been in combat, yet their training programs were stringent and comprehensive. Like all other veteran ICEBERG forces, the Marine divisions were confronted with the need to obtain, integrate, and train replace-

ments. Marine training overall emphasized the development of a tank-infantry-artillery team and focused attention on tactical innovations such as the use of the armored amphibian's 75mm howitzer for supplementary artillery support. While other Tenth Army units were required to undertake amphibious training, General Geiger's troops did not have to, since General Buckner considered his Marine divisions eminently qualified in this aspect of warfare.

Following the Peleliu campaign, General del Valle's 1st Marine Division had returned to Pavuvu for rest and rehabilitation. The division was first based on the island in April 1944, arriving there after completion of the New Britain operation. At that time, and with some difficulty, the Guadalcanal and Cape Gloucester veterans converted the overrun coconut groves into some semblance of a habitable cantonment. Because of its small size, Pavuvu was not particularly suited for training as large a unit as a division; its terrain limited the widespread construction of machine gun and mortar firing ranges.<sup>12</sup> All artillery firing had to be conducted on Guadalcanal.

<sup>10</sup> Capt Edmund G. Love, *The 27th Infantry Division in World War II* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1949), p. 521, hereafter Love, *27th InfDiv Hist*.

<sup>11</sup> An RCT in an amphibious operation was an infantry regiment reinforced by supporting arms, i.e., artillery, tanks, engineers, etc., which made up a balanced team for specific missions and whose services were required for initial operations ashore.

<sup>12</sup> During the division training phase, physical conditioning hikes were made on the shore road which encircled only that part of the island occupied by the division. Both sides of the road were used as units followed one another, the group on the inside track marching in a clockwise direction, while the outer group hiked counterclockwise—both groups passing each other several times as they crowded the limited road net. At mealtime, the unmistakable smell of New Zealand-grown sheep being cooked filled the air, and the Marines, as if one, would curse, "Mutton again, dammit."

After its return from the Palaus, the ranks of the 1st held some 246 officers and 5,600 enlisted Marines who had already served overseas nearly 30 months. Within that time, the division had made three assault landings and it was now to make a fourth. If the division was to go ashore at full strength, it appeared, at first, that it would be necessary for the veterans of Guadalcanal, Cape Gloucester, and Peleliu to fight at Okinawa too. A potentially serious morale problem was alleviated when the division received four replacement drafts by 1 January. These drafts, plus a steady flow of individual replacements, brought officer strength to slightly above the authorized figure and exceeded the authorized enlisted strength figure by more than 10 percent. As a consequence, all eligible enlisted Marines were able to return to the States.

At the same time, an extensive leave program was established for officers who, though eligible, could not be spared for rotation. Fifty-three of them were permitted to take 30 days leave in the United States, after which they were to return to Pavuvu. "In addition, six went to Australia and one to New Zealand. Some fifty key enlisted men [eligible for rotation] also elected to take leave in Australia in order that they could continue to serve in the First Marine Division."<sup>13</sup> By the time the division embarked for Okinawa, approximately one-third of its Marines had been in two invasions, one-third had faced the enemy once, and the remainder were men who had seen no combat whatso-

ever. The majority of the latter were replacements who had arrived at Pavuvu while the 1st was at Peleliu.

As soon as the training cycle of General del Valle's infantry units reached the regimental level and outgrew Pavuvu's facilities, each RCT was rotated to Guadalcanal, about 65 miles to the southeast, for two weeks of more intensive combined-arms training. Special emphasis was given to preparing the division for warfare of a type and on a scale differing in almost every respect from that which it experienced in the tropical jungles of Guadalcanal and New Britain, and on the coral ridges of equatorial Peleliu. As an integral part of a much larger force, this division was to invade, for the first time, a land mass "which contained extensive road nets, large inhabited areas, cities and villages, large numbers of enemy civilians, and types of terrain"<sup>14</sup> not found in the South Pacific. Besides being schooled to fight under the conditions anticipated at Okinawa, the troops were trained to defend against paratroop attack and indoctrinated in the techniques of dealing with hostile civilians.

In commenting on the personnel situation of his regiment during its training period, the former commanding officer of the 11th Marines stated:

The heavy casualties suffered at Peleliu, plus the rotation without immediate replacement of all officers and men with 30 months' service in the Pacific after that battle, posed a severe problem. Only one battalion commander remained of the four who went to Peleliu. There were only eight field officers in the regiment including myself and the [naval gunfire] officer. Fourteen captains with 24 months' Pacific

<sup>13</sup> *1st MarDiv SAR*, chap III (Personnel Anx), pp. 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> *1st MarDiv SAR*, chap IV, p. 1.

service were allowed a month's leave plus travel time in the United States, and they left Pavuvu at the end of November and were not available for the training maneuver at first. I recall that the 4th Battalion (LtCol L. F. Chapman, Jr.) had only 18 officers present including himself. He had no captains whatever. The other battalions and [regimental headquarters] were in very similar shape. The 3d Battalion had to be completely reorganized due to heavy casualties on Peleliu and was the only one with two field [grade] officers. But it had only about 20 officers of all ranks present.<sup>15</sup>

General Shepherd's 6th Marine Division was activated on Guadalcanal in September 1944, and was formed essentially around the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. This unit had taken part in the Guam invasion and had been withdrawn from that island late in August. The infantry components of this new division were, with a few exceptions, veterans of the Pacific fighting. The 4th Marines was made up of the disbanded Marine raider battalions, whose troops had fought on Guadalcanal, New Georgia, and Bougainville; the infantry regiment as a whole had landed on Emirau and Guam. The 22d Marines had participated in the Eniwetok and Guam campaigns, and the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines had augmented the 2d Marine Division for the Saipan assault. After its relief on Saipan, 1/29 was sent to Guadalcanal to await the arrival from the United States of its two sister battalions, and eventual assignment to the 6th Division.

At the time of the 6th Marine Division activation, the division was some 1,800 men understrength and, as was

<sup>15</sup> MajGen Wilburt S. Brown ltr to CMC, dtd 10Oct54, hereafter *Brown ltr*.

the case with other IIIAC units, in very few instances did the classification of the replacements received by General Shepherd correspond to his actual needs. Paralleling other instances, where the composition of stateside-formed replacement drafts did not satisfy critical shortages in specific specialist fields, the 15th Marines was assigned and forced to retrain anti-aircraft artillerymen from disbanded defense battalions whose previous experience and training was not considered the same as that needed by field artillerymen.

Most of the men in the 6th Division had fought in at least one campaign, while others were Pacific combat veterans who were now beginning a second tour of overseas duty. The division was based on Guadalcanal, where kunai grass and steaming tropical jungle provided an excellent environment in which General Shepherd's men could fulfill a rugged training schedule. The program began on 1 October and proceeded from small-unit exercises through large-scale combined-arms problems employing battalion landing teams (BLTs)<sup>16</sup> and RCTs; all training culminated in an eight-day division exercise in January 1945. Anticipating how the division was to be employed on Okinawa, General Shepherd emphasized the execution of large-unit maneuvers, swift movement, and rapid troop deployment.

The IIIAC Artillery faced the same replacement retraining problems that plagued the 15th Marines. When the 6th 155mm Howitzer Battalion and the

<sup>16</sup> The BLT was reinforced for the assault in a manner similar to that of an RCT, but on a lesser scale.

Headquarters Battery, 2d Provisional Field Artillery Group, were formed in October and November 1944, their cadres were withdrawn from existing units of corps artillery. The latter was further drained when 500 combat veterans, mostly valuable noncommissioned officers, were rotated home in November. There were few experienced artillerymen in the group replacing them.

At the same time that rehearsals were being conducted for the coming operations, Brigadier General David I. Nimmer's Corps Artillery battalions were forced to conduct training sessions (retraining classes in the case of radar technicians and antiaircraft artillerymen coming from disbanded defense battalions) in order to ensure that all firing battery personnel would be completely familiar with the weapons to which they were newly assigned. Another matter adversely affecting the artillery training program was the delay, until 15 November and 10 December respectively, in the return of the 3d 155mm Howitzer and the 8th 155mm Gun Battalions from the Palau operation. General Nimmer's organizational and personnel problems were complicated further by the fact that approximately 10 percent of his unit strength joined after active training ended in February, while 78 communicators and 92 field artillerymen did not join until after Corps Artillery had embarked for Okinawa.

VMO-7, the Marine observation squadron assigned to Corps Artillery, did not arrive before General Nimmer's units mounted out, but joined them later at the target. Three days before em-

barkation, the commanding officer of the 2d Provisional Field Artillery Group joined. Despite these hitches to IIIAC Corps Artillery pre-combat preparations, General Nimmer considered all of his embarked artillery units ready, although "both individual and unit proficiency were not up to the standards that could have been obtained under more favorable circumstances."<sup>17</sup>

As soon as General Geiger's staff began planning for the Marine Corps role in ICEBERG, the commanders of the IIIAC Corps Artillery and the 11th and 15th Marines established liaison with one another in order to coordinate their unit training programs. These senior Marine artillery officers "resolved that in this operation we would take advantage of all previous experience, good and bad, and give a superior performance. Accordingly, great care was given to . . . the ability to rapidly mass fires of all available guns at any critical point."<sup>18</sup>

Artillery training was directed toward attaining this capability. General Nimmer's staff devised and wrote the standard operating procedures to be used by all Marine artillery units assigned to ICEBERG. These procedures established the techniques to be used for requesting and the subsequent delivery of reinforcing fires. During the training period, firing batteries constantly put the new doctrine into practice.

With the exception of the 12th Marines, the 2d Marine Division artillery regiment, all other Marine artillery units in the Tenth Army conducted a

<sup>17</sup> IIIAC *Arty AR*, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Col Frederick P. Henderson ltr to CMC, dtd 11Mar55, hereafter *Henderson ltr*.

combined problem on Guadalcanal, 11-13 January. A majority of the firing missions were spotted by aerial observers. Conditions anticipated on Okinawa were simulated as closely as possible, although the large military population and the consequent profusion of various installations on Guadalcanal necessarily limited the size of the artillery ranges available for the big guns. By the end of the combined problem, when a firing mission was called in, the Marines "were able to have all artillery present, laid and ready to fire in an average of five minutes from the time it was reported."<sup>19</sup>

General Watson's 2d Marine Division, reserve for IIIAC and its third major element, was in garrison on Saipan where a division-wide training program was effectively integrated with mopping-up operations against enemy forces remaining at large on the island. More than 8,000 Marine replacements received valuable on-the-job experience routing Japanese holdouts during the first months of the division training program which began 15 September. Saipan's rapid build-up as a supply center and an air base restricted the training efforts of the division, however, and maneuver room and impact areas were soon at a premium.

<sup>19</sup> *Henderson ltr.* After the 11th Marines arrived on Guadalcanal, 15 December 1944, it joined the 15th Marines to train with IIIAC Artillery for seven straight weeks with only one break, Christmas Day. In this joint training effort, great stress was placed on such artillery tactics as proper conduct of fire, with the battalions registering, firing missions, and displacing several times a day "to overcome the improvised jungle methods heretofore used by the division in previous campaigns." *Brown ltr.*

In the course of his inspection trip to Tenth Army units, General Buckner visited the 2d Marine Division. On the morning of 3 February, he trooped the line of the 8th Marines and then inspected the regimental quarters and galleys. It seemed to General Smith that the men of the 2d Division looked very fit, and that they had made a tremendous impression on the Tenth Army commander. Buckner was particularly impressed with the battalion commanders, and told his deputy chief of staff that "he had never before had the privilege of meeting such an alert group. . . ." <sup>20</sup>

A lack of suitable beaches on Saipan confined final division rehearsals to simulated landings only. Because of the indefinite nature of its employment once it had made the feint landings on L-Day and L plus 1, the 2d Division had to select an arbitrary landing scheme of two RCTs abreast for the rehearsal pattern. Bad weather prevented LVT launchings on two days, neither air nor naval gunfire support was available, and, finally, on 19 March—the last day of the exercises—only the naval portion of TG 51.2 (Demonstration Group) was able to participate in the demonstration rehearsal.

On Espiritu Santo, the Tenth Army's other relatively isolated unit—the 27th Infantry Division—conducted rehearsals from 20 to 25 March while its transport squadron was being loaded. This division was in the same position as General Watson's in that it faced a profusion of potential missions. The rehearsals of both reserve divisions were

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 52.

based, therefore, on a number of hypothetical landing assignments.

Satisfactory practice landings were made by all of the other Tenth Army assault divisions. IIIAC rehearsals took place off the Cape Esperance-Doma Cove beaches on Guadalcanal from 2 through 7 March. Although reefs do not exist here, a transfer line was simulated 200 yards from the shore in an attempt to duplicate actual landing conditions in the corps zone on Okinawa. During the six days of rehearsals, Rear Admiral Reifsnider's staff officers made certain that assault wave control was emphasized and that the training of communications elements was intensified at all command levels.

Because naval gunfire and air-support units assigned to ICEBERG were committed elsewhere at this time, the token prelanding bombardment furnished by vessels in the area, and the air support supplied by F6Fs (Hellcats) and TBMs (Avengers), flying in from Henderson Field and nearby carriers, only approximated the tremendous volume of fire to be laid on the Hagushi beaches. Practice landings were made by IIIAC units on 3 March, followed the next day by a critique aboard the TF 53 flagship, USS *Panamint*. Other preliminary landings on the 5th preceded the landing of the entire IIIAC assault echelon on 6 March. Corps and division command posts were set up ashore, a primary communications net was established, and some equipment was unloaded. On 7 March, the reserve regiments—the 1st Marines for the 1st Division and the 29th Marines for the IIIAC—climbed down the nets into invasion craft, which were formed into boat

waves, and then landed on the beaches.

General Geiger's corps artillery units did not participate in these final rehearsal exercises except to land battalion, corps, and group headquarters reconnaissance parties. The shortage of time prevented the landing of any of the artillery pieces which were to go ashore at the target.

Nearly 3,000 miles away from Guadalcanal, in the Philippines, assault elements of XXIV Corps conducted rehearsals in Leyte Gulf from the 15th to the 19th of March under the watchful eyes of Admiral Hall and his attack force staff officers. Because the missions assigned XXIV Corps divisions varied so widely, the nature and conduct of their rehearsals tended to reflect this variance.

The 77th Infantry Division was to make the initial ICEBERG assault, the landing on Kerama Retto. In order to familiarize the troops with conditions at their impending target, practice landings were made in southeastern Leyte's Hinunangan Bay on islands that closely resembled some of those in the Keramas. For two days, 14 and 15 March, adverse weather conditions and heavy swells prevented any landings at all, but adherence to any firm rehearsal schedule was not considered necessary since the mission of the 77th involved several landings independent of each other.

Poor weather on the 15th forced the cancellation of a planned rehearsal for the Ie Shima invasion, while only the division reserve (307th Infantry) made any practice landings on the 16th. Although General Bruce was satisfied with the rehearsals since "all elements

scheduled for a specific mission satisfactorily executed a close approximation of their mission,"<sup>21</sup> Admiral Kiland was not so confident. The Western Islands Attack Group Commander felt that "considering the complexity of the operation and the relative inexperience of naval personnel involved, the curtailment of these exercises by weather conditions made the training provided entirely inadequate."<sup>22</sup>

On 16 March, the 7th and 96th Divisions landed under perfect weather conditions and on the 18th held unit critiques, in which certain basic discrepancies and difficulties discovered in the first exercise were ironed out. The following day, the two divisions landed again. A high-level critique was held on the 21st for the major Army and Navy commanders on Admiral Hall's flagship, USS *Teton*. Also present were Admiral Turner and General Buckner. At this time, all of the XXIV Corps rehearsals were evaluated, and efforts were made to ensure that the actual landing would be better coordinated.

As the normal duties of most of the flying squadrons assigned to TAF constituted their combat training, and since they would not begin operations at Okinawa until after the landing, when the airfields were ready, they were not required to conduct rehearsals for ICEBERG. TAF ground personnel scheduled to travel to the target with the assault echelon, participated in the landing rehearsals that were held at

<sup>21</sup> *77th InfDiv OpRpt*, Kerama Retto, Keise Shima, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> CTG 51.5 AR, Capture of Okinawa Gunto, Phases 1 and 2, 9Mar-2Apr45, dtd 26May45, chap II, p. 2, hereafter *CTG 51.1 AR*.

Guadalcanal and Leyte. Their troop training, for the most part, was conducted aboard ship en route to the staging areas, and consisted of familiarization lectures about the enemy, his tactics, and his equipment.

Like the other Okinawa-bound Tenth Army units mounting from Pearl Harbor, Island Command troops conducted individual and unit training programs which consisted of specialist as well as combat subjects. The Island Command assault echelon was composed chiefly of headquarters personnel who were to initiate the base development plan as soon as practicable after the landing. Within this echelon also were shore party, ordnance, ammunition, supply, signal, quartermaster, truck, and water transportation units, whose support services would be required immediately after the initial assault.

At Fort Ord, California, officers to staff military government teams began assembling in late December 1944. A number of these officers had already received approximately three months of military government training at either Princeton or Columbia Universities. In California and at the staging areas where they joined the assault forces, these Army and Navy officers received instructions pertinent to the ICEBERG military government plan. Many in the Navy enlisted component in the military government section had never received any specialized civil affairs training before they arrived at Fort Ord, where they were assembled just in time to embark with the teams to which they were assigned.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *MilGovt AR*, p. 3.

By 1945, the roll-up of enemy positions in the Pacific had progressed to the point where some Tenth Army units were able to mount and stage on the threshold of Japan. XXIV Corps prepared for Okinawa in the Leyte Gulf area, only 1,000 miles from the Ryukyus, while in the Marianas, just slightly farther away from the target, other ICEBERG forces made ready for the attack. Northern Attack Force units, however, had a considerably longer journey to the Ryukyus as they prepared in the Solomons.

#### *MOUNTING AND STAGING THE ASSAULT*<sup>24</sup>

Each attack force of the Joint Expeditionary Force was organized differently for loading, movement, and unloading at the target. The nine transport divisions in the three transrons of Admiral Hall's Southern Attack Force were reorganized and expanded to number 11 transport divisions (transdivs). Assigned to these two additional transdivs were those ships slated to lift XXIV Corps troops at Leyte and those which were to load Tenth Army and Island Command forces waiting on Oahu. The Northern Attack Force, which was to carry IIIAC troops, was not so augmented. General Geiger was so impressed with how well the reorganization of Admiral Hall's transport force had eased movement control and

increased the efficiency of loading and unloading operations, that he requested the formation of a similar corps shipping group for future IIIAC operations.<sup>25</sup>

The commanding generals of the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions were made responsible for the loading and embarkation of their respective organic and attached units, while IIIAC itself supervised the loading of corps troops. In addition, General Geiger was responsible for embarking Marine Air Group 33 (MAG-33) of TAF, which was based on Espiritu Santo, 555 miles southeast of Guadalcanal.

Although some Northern Attack Force vessels were partially combat-loaded before the rehearsal period, all required additional time off the Guadalcanal, Banika, and Pavuvu beaches to take on vital cargo and to top-off water and fuel tanks. The Northern Tractor Flotilla was the first increment of TF 53 to leave the Solomons for the staging area at Ulithi. Departing on 12 March, the holds and above decks of the landing ships in the convoy were solidly packed with amphibious vehicles, tanks, artillery, and various other combat gear. For this invasion, IIIAC wanted to avoid subjecting assault troops to the crowded conditions and debilitating effects of prolonged confinement aboard LSTs and LSMs.

While APAs were hardly luxurious, their accommodations were far better than those of the landing ships. To ease the first leg of the journey to Okinawa,

<sup>24</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *CTF 51 AR*; *Tenth Army AR*; *TAF AR*; *IIIAC AR*; *XXIV Corps AR*; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *2d MarDiv AR*; *6th MarDiv SAR*; *7th InfDiv OpRpt*; *27th InfDiv OpRpt*; *77th InfDiv OpRpt*, Kerama Retto, Keise Shima; *96th InfDiv AR*.

<sup>25</sup> CNO, Amphibious Operations—Capture of Okinawa, 27Mar-21Jun45 (OpNav 34-P-0700), dtd 22Jan46, chap 7, p. 20, hereafter *CNO Record*.

many assault wave Marines were embarked on the faster attack transports which, together with the rest of the Northern Attack Force transport groups, left from the mounting area on 15 March to join the ICEBERG force gathering at Ulithi.

The immense lagoon at Ulithi Atoll was the westernmost American fleet anchorage, staging base, and repair depot in the Pacific. Midway between the Marianas and the Palaus, Ulithi was captured without opposition in September 1944, and was developed immediately to support naval operations in the western Pacific as well as to serve as an advance base for the Philippines invasion. Once occupied and built up, the islets of the atoll served also as limited recreation areas where personnel of all services could regain their landlegs and participate in a somewhat restricted physical conditioning program.

On 21 March, both the transport group and the tractor flotilla of TF 53 arrived at Ulithi, anchored, and on the following day, APA-borne assault troops were transferred to the landing ships which were to carry them the remaining 1,400 miles to Okinawa. Once the transfer was completed, small boats began ferrying recreation parties ashore. Here the rigors of shipboard confinement were forgotten by a combination of organized athletics and an issue of not-too-cool cokes and beer.

For many of the troops, this stopover on the long voyage towards the unknown was made exciting by the fascinating sight of the constantly shifting fleet groupment whose makeup changed from day-to-day and hour-to-hour as carriers, battleships, cruisers, and

smaller combat vessels departed for strikes against the enemy or returned from completed missions. In the midst of this activity, the scattered elements of the Expeditionary Troops filtered in to join those forces which had arrived earlier.

Despite the relaxing effect of sun, sand, and surf at Ulithi, the nightly alerts to the presence of Japanese snoopers was a continual reminder that a war still existed. This grim fact was brought home to many men in the invasion force on the gloomy, fog-bound Saturday afternoon of 24 March when the battered carrier *Franklin* limped into the anchorage shepherded by the USS *Santa Fe*.

On the next day, a brilliantly sunlit Sunday, the bruised and battered *Franklin* could be seen more clearly as she lay at anchor. Her top rigging, aerials, and radar towers were gone or twisted completely out of shape. Her flight deck was buckled and undulating. These were the external damages wrought by the internal explosions of bombs that had penetrated to lower decks when Japanese suicide planes furiously attacked the carrier on 19 March, during TF 38 strikes against enemy shipping at Kure and Kobe. As the most heavily damaged carrier to be saved in the war, the *Franklin* was able to make the 12,000-mile trip to New York for repairs under her own power, stopping only at Pearl Harbor on the way.

The Northern Tractor Flotilla sortied from the Ulithi anchorage for Okinawa on 25 March and, two days later, the remainder of the assault echelon set forth in its wake. Saipan was the scene,

on the same dates, of the Demonstration Group departure.

Loading operations of the 2d Marine Division were eased by the fact that its lift, Transron 15, had laid over briefly at Saipan in February while en route to Iwo Jima. At that time, division transport quartermasters (TQMs) obtained ships' characteristics data which proved more accurate than the information provided earlier by FMFPac. As a result, the TQMs were better able to plan for a more efficient use of cargo and personnel space.

In addition to the responsibility for loading his reinforced division, General Watson was given the duty of coordinating the loading of all ICEBERG Marine assault and first echelon forces elsewhere in the Marianas and at Roi in the Marshalls.<sup>26</sup>

In preparing for Okinawa, the only real problem confronting General Mulcahy's Marine air units was the coordinated loading of ground and flight elements. According to the logistical planning, planes and pilots were to be lifted to the target on board escort carriers, while ground crews and nonflying units were to make the trip in assault and first echelon shipping. As the organizations comprising the Tactical Air Force were widely dispersed, their loading and embarkation was supervised, of necessity, by local commanders of the areas where the air groups and squadrons were based.

Mounting from Oahu in the TAF

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<sup>26</sup> Units involved were: MAG-31 at Roi; 1st SepEngrBn and 16th AAA Bn at Tinian; Corps EvacHosp No. 2 and 2d AAA Bn at Guam; and 7th FldDep, 1st Prov MP Bn, and LFASCU-1 at Saipan.

assault echelon were the headquarters squadrons of the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing and MAG-43, and Air Warning Squadrons (AWSs) 7 and 8. Headquarters Squadrons 2 and 43 became the headquarters commands of TAF and General Wallace's Air Defense Command, respectively. The TAF transport quartermaster coordinated the mounting out of the Oahu-based units with his opposite numbers on the staffs of the Tenth Army and the 2d MAW. The Marines from AWS-8 and the forward echelons of Mulcahy's and Wallace's headquarters commands left Pearl Harbor on 22 February, while AWS-7 departed Pearl the same month in two increments, one on the 10th and the second on the 21st.

Colonel John C. Munn's MAG-31 embarked from Roi and Namur in the Marshall Islands. The group service squadron and ground personnel of Marine Fighter Squadrons 224, 311, and 441 boarded transport and cargo vessels which, in turn, joined the ICEBERG convoy forming at Saipan. Flight personnel and their planes went aboard the escort carriers *Breton* on the night of 22-23 March, *Sitkoh Bay* on 24 March and were staged through Ulithi where they were joined by Marine Night Fighter Squadron 542.

MAG-33 (Colonel Ward E. Dickey) mounted from Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides. While IIIAC was responsible for the embarkation of the MAG, the group itself supervised the loading of its ground and service elements which joined the Northern Attack Force off Guadalcanal. The pilots of VMF-312, -322, and -323 flew their F4Us (Corsairs) to Manus via

Guadalcanal and Green Island. There they boarded the escort carriers *White Plains* and *Hollandia*. Already on board the latter was VMF(N)-543 which had boarded the vessel at Pearl Harbor on 11 March. Its ground personnel had departed from the same port three weeks earlier.

Outside of the TAF chain of command, but closely related to its combat functions, were Landing Force Air Support Control Units 1, 2, and 3. Two weeks after returning to its Saipan base from the Iwo Jima operation, LFASCU-1 loaded aboard ship for an immediate return engagement with the enemy at Okinawa. The other two LFASCUs were based at Ewa, T. H., where they trained for ICEBERG, and mounted for the invasion in February 1945, later staging for the target through Leyte.

As it had no need for an intermediate staging area, the XXIV Corps departed for Okinawa directly from Leyte. General Bruce's 77th Infantry Division, which was to open the Ryukyus operation with the assault on Kerama Retto, finished loading its landing ships on 18 March and its transports on the 20th, each echelon leaving for the target on the day following. The 7th and 96th Divisions conducted their own loading under the supervision of XXIV Corps TQMs, who spotted Southern Landing Force shipping at the most satisfactory point on the landing beaches. The Southern Tractor Flotilla departed Leyte during the morning hours of 24 March; the transport groups followed three days later.

By the evening of 27 March, all ICEBERG assault elements were at sea,

converging on Okinawa. Soldiers and Marines aboard the transports and landing vessels had already made themselves as comfortable as possible under the crowded conditions and had settled down to shipboard routine. Officers and key NCOs reviewed their unit operation plans, examined maps and terrain models of the landing area, and held daily briefing sessions with their men. At the same time they squared away their combat gear for the invasion, most of the men of Hebrew and Christian faiths also prepared themselves for religious observances of Passover or Good Friday and Easter, all three holidays falling within a few days of each other in 1945.

#### NEUTRALIZING THE ENEMY <sup>27</sup>

After the first carrier strike of 10 October 1944, Naha's fire- and explosion-gutted ruins furnished the Japanese defenders with visual evidence of the effectiveness of American naval air power and served as an ominous portent of the future. One observer, a Japanese soldier, complained in his diary that, "the enemy is brazenly planning to completely destroy every last ship, cut our supply lines, and attack us." <sup>28</sup>

Okinawa was not visited again by Vice Admiral John S. McCain's Fast Carrier Force (TF 38) until 3 and 4

<sup>27</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: CinCPac WarDs Jan-Mar45; CTF 52 AR; Tenth Army AR; War Reports; Okinawa Operations Record; Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*.

<sup>28</sup> "Diary of a radioman, 5th Harbor Base Unit," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 147-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 32, dtd 16Jun45, p. 50.

January 1945, when, in conjunction with a heavy attack on Formosa, the Ryukyu and Sakashima Islands were also struck. Commenting on this raid, a Japanese replacement confided in his diary that "seeing enemy planes for the first time since coming to Okinawa somehow or other gave me the feeling of being in a combat zone."<sup>29</sup> The return of the Navy planes on 22 January reinforced his first impression and further shook his seeming complacency, as that day's diary entry implied resentment. "While some fly around overhead and strafe, the big bastards fly over the airfield and drop bombs. The ferocity of the bombing is terrific. It really makes me furious. It is past 1500 and the raid is still on. At 1800 the last two planes brought the raid to a close. What the hell kind of bastards are they? Bomb from 0600 to 1800!"<sup>30</sup>

During January, TF 38 struck Formosa and the Ryukyus twice, and made some uninvited calls on South China coastal ports, all while covering the Luzon landings. After its last attack, the force retired to Ulithi where reinforcing carriers were waiting to join. On 27 January, the same day that Admiral Nimitz arrived at his new advance headquarters on Guam,<sup>31</sup> the command of the Pacific fleet's striking

force was changed and Admirals Spruance and Mitscher relieved Halsey and McCain. When Mitscher's carriers departed Ulithi on 10 February, it was in the guise of Task Force 58, which was destined to continue the work that TF 38 had begun.

As a diversion for the 19 February Marine landing on Iwo Jima, and to reduce the Japanese capability for launching air attacks against the expeditionary force, Mitscher's Fast Carrier Force struck at the Tokyo area on 16-17 February and again on the 25th. In between these attacks, Mitscher's planes and ships supported the Iwo assault from D-Day until the 23d, at which time they sortied for the 25 February Tokyo strike. As TF 58 retired to Ulithi on 1 March, planes of Task Units 58.1, 58.2, and 58.3 photographed Okinawa, Kerama Retto, Minami Daito, and Amami O Shima, and bombed and strafed targets of opportunity. These three units returned to Ulithi on the 5th.

At the same time that the fast carriers were making their forays, American submarines and naval patrol bombers ranged the western Pacific taking a steadily increasing toll of Japanese shipping. The bottom of the China Sea was littered with the broken hulls and loads of enemy transports and cargo ships which never reached their destinations. Almost complete isolation of the Okinawa garrison was accomplished by mid-February 1945 through the combined efforts of Navy air and submarine forces. It soon became apparent to General Ushijima that his Ryukyus command stood alone since "communications between the mainland

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<sup>29</sup> "Diary of an unidentified superior private, 273d IIB," in *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Because Pearl Harbor was too far from the war area, the recently promoted Fleet Admiral Nimitz transferred his flag to Guam on 2 January in order to direct the Pacific war effort from a vantage point closer to the scene of the fighting.

of Japan and Formosa had been practically severed.”<sup>32</sup>

The neutralization and isolation of Okinawa was furthered by the continuous series of strategic air strikes on the Japanese industrial network by Army Air Forces bombers, which mounted attacks from bases in China, India, the Philippines, the Marianas, and the Palaus. Massive raids on the factories of the main islands as well as on outlying sources of raw materials hindered Japan's ability and will to continue the war. Giant super-fortresses also rose from airfields in the southern Marianas in steadily increasing numbers to hit Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, and Kobe, widening the fire-swept circle around the expanse of previously devastated areas. During the interludes between carrier-plane attacks on the Ryukyus, B-29 appearances over Okinawa became so commonplace that the Japanese defenders referred to their visits as “regular runs.”<sup>33</sup>

With the approach of L-Day, the tempo of covering operations was accelerated throughout the Pacific. For its final strike on Japan prior to the Okinawa landing, TF 58 steamed out of the Ulithi anchorage on 14 March. Four days later, carrier-launched planes interdicted Kyushu's heavily-laden airfields, and attacked installations on Shikoku and Honshu islands on the 19th. The task force did not escape unscathed this time, however, for the enemy was ready and retaliated with heavy counterstrikes during which the Japanese pilots displayed reckless

abandon and a wanton disregard for their lives. Five carriers and other ships in the task force were hit hard. A temporary task group composed of the damaged carriers *Wasp*, *Franklin*, and *Enterprise*, the cruiser *Santa Fe*, and Destroyer Squadron 52 returned to Ulithi for necessary repairs. The ships remaining in TF 58, the carriers, the battleship force, and the protective screen, were reorganized into three task groups of relatively equal strength on 22 March. With this force, Admiral Mitscher then began the final run on Okinawa for the beginning of the pre-invasion bombardments.

#### PREINVASION PREPARATIONS AND THE KERAMA RETTO LANDING<sup>34</sup>

The first elements of the ICEBERG force to appear at the target were the doughty sweepers of Mine Group One, which began operations off Kerama Retto and the southeastern coast of Okinawa on 24 March, just two days before the 77th Infantry Division was to land in the Keramas. After the minecraft cleared a channel outside the 100-fathom curve off the Minatoga beaches, part of Admiral Mitscher's battleship force, temporarily organized as TF 59, steamed through the swept area and bombarded Okinawa while TF 58 planes covered and neutralized enemy shore

<sup>34</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *CinCPOA OPlan 14-44*; *CTF 51 OPlan A1-45*; *CTF 51 AR*; *CTF 52 AR*; *CTG 51.1 AR*; *Tenth Army AR*; *77th InfDiv OpRpt*; *PhibReconBn, FMFPac, AR, Phase I and II, Nansei Shoto Operation, n.d.*, hereafter *PhibReconBn AR*; *War Reports*; *Morison, Victory in the Pacific*.

<sup>32</sup> *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 62.

<sup>33</sup> “Diary of an unidentified superior private, 273d IIB,” *op. cit.*, p. 49.

installations. By late afternoon, as TF 59 withdrew to rejoin the carrier force, the mine vessels finished that day's planned program of preliminary sweeps.

During these operations, the Amphibious Support Force, with elements of the Gunfire and Covering Force (Admiral Deyo serving as Officer in Tactical Command), had completed the run from Ulithi and deployed into approach formation. Two fire support units left TF 54 to begin their respective assignments—one unit to cover the sweep conducted between Tonachi Shima and Kerama Retto, and the other to cover the mine sweepers off Okinawa and to begin bombarding the demonstration beaches.

An important TF 52 element was the Underwater Demolition Flotilla, consisting of 10 underwater demolition teams (UDTs) organized into two groups, Able and Baker. On the afternoon of 24 March, the high speed destroyer transports (APDs) of Group Able and destroyers of TF 54 formed for the next day's UDT and NGF operations at Kerama. The remainder of Admiral Deyo's force was concentrated and ready to repulse all Japanese surface or air attacks.<sup>35</sup>

A carefully planned feature of the ICEBERG operation was this concen-

tration of naval strength. With ample sea room and sufficient fighting power to eliminate any or all of the remnants of the Japanese Navy, TF 58 lay to the east of the Ryukyus in the Pacific Ocean. In the East China Sea, to the west of Okinawa, the majority of the combat ships of the Amphibious Support Force was concentrated, ready to stop any attempt to reinforce or evacuate the garrison. At night, the ships assigned to the bombardment of Okinawa's southeastern coast retired together so that their mission could be resumed without delay the following morning. In the event of any surface action, each of these task groups was able to operate and support itself independently.

As vaster areas surrounding Okinawa were swept clear of mines, destroyers and gunboats began patrol operations and made the beleaguered enemy's isolation a certainty. Shipborne radar picket stations, disposed from 15 to 100 miles offshore, encircled the island to protect the invasion force from the constant threat of surprise enemy air attacks. Aboard the destroyers and destroyer minesweepers serving as picket vessels were fighter-director teams which controlled the combat air patrols (CAPs) of carrier planes which orbited overhead during the hours of daylight. When Japanese flights were detected on picket radar screens, the CAP was vectored out to intercept and destroy the enemy. The bulk of the heavy losses incurred by the Navy during the battle for Okinawa was borne by the vessels comprising the radar picket fleet. The value of their services in protecting the vulnerable transport

<sup>35</sup> The command relationship between Admirals Blandy (CTF 52) and Deyo (CTF 54) requires clarification. Blandy, as a Senior Officer Present Afloat (SOPA), was responsible for the execution of all operations at the target while Deyo, although Blandy's senior, was responsible for the TF 54 movement and approach to the target (and for any TF 52 ships moving with TF 54), for the conduct of surface actions should there be any, and for the night deployments. *CNO Record*, chap 1, pp. 33-34.

and service areas is measured by the large number of Japanese planes shot down before they had reached their objectives.

Although the destructive TF 58 raids on Kyushu had temporarily disrupted enemy plans for air attacks from the home islands, the Japanese managed to mount an increasing number of raids from fields in the Formosa area. Once it became apparent that Okinawa was to be invaded and that Okinawa waters held lucrative targets, forward elements of the *8th Air Division* rose from their fields in the Sakashimas to make their first *Kamikaze* attack on ships standing off Kerama Retto at dawn on 26 March.<sup>36</sup>

Beginning with this first, hour-long enemy air raid, the loss of lives and damage to ships mounted as Japanese bombers and suiciders made sneak attacks on the amphibious force in the dawn and dusk twilight hours.<sup>37</sup> As part of its planned schedule of preliminary operations supporting ICEBERG, Vice Admiral Sir H. Bernard Rawling's British Carrier Force (TF 57) struck Sakashima Gunto on the 26th and 27th. Since the carriers had blocked the use of Sakashima and Kyushu, the Japanese had to use Okinawa-based planes to attack the American invasion forces. The employment in three suicidal forays of all available aircraft, including

<sup>36</sup> *Okinawa Operations Record*, "Record of the 8th AirDiv," Chart 1.

<sup>37</sup> More correctly known as morning and evening nautical twilights, these are the brief periods preceding sunrise and following sunset when general outlines may be visible, although the horizon cannot be distinguished, and approaching aircraft are virtually invisible.

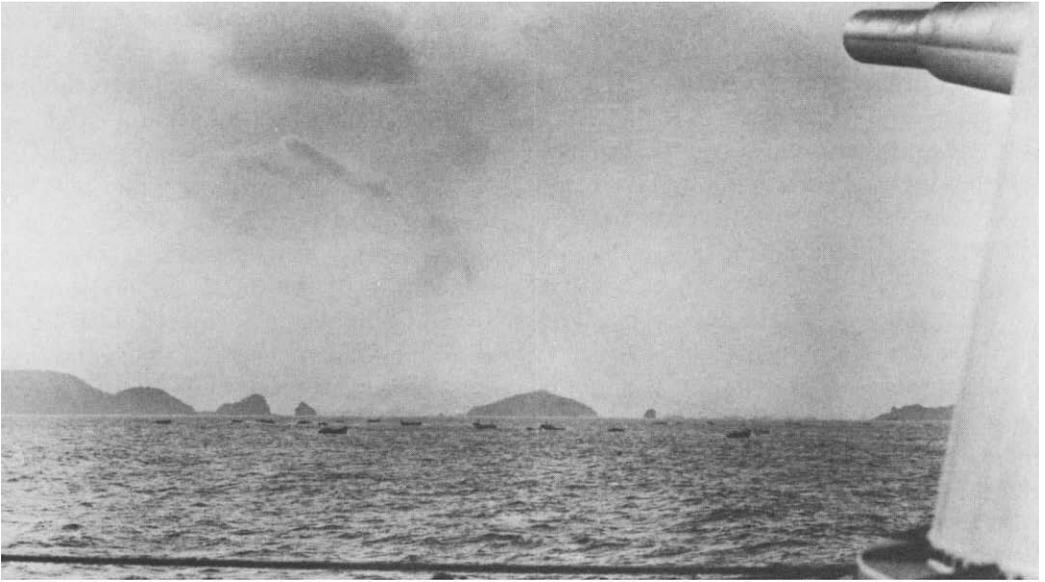
trainers, liaison craft, and planes of a *Special Attack Unit* which managed to fly in from Kyushu, led to the complete elimination of the air strength of the Okinawa garrison by 29 March.<sup>38</sup>

Claims of enemy airmen who survived to return to home bases were grossly exaggerated, but their destructiveness was extensive. A summary of damages to American forces for the period 26 to 31 March reveals that six ships, including Admiral Spruance's flagship *Indianapolis*, were crashed by suicide-bent enemy pilots. Near misses accounted for damage to 10 other vessels, while floating mines sank 2 ships and an encounter with a Japanese torpedo boat gave another American ship minor damage.

Despite costly harassment from Japanese air attacks, Admiral Blandy's force proceeded with its primary task of preparing the target for the assault. Four Group Able UDTs cleared beach approaches in Kerama Retto on 26 March and began blowing Keise Shima reefs the next day. Because Okinawa's offshore waters had not been completely cleared of mines, the reconnaissance and demolition work scheduled for the 28th was delayed a day. Elements of Group Able scouted the demonstration beaches on the 29th, while Group Baker teams reconnoitered the Hagushi beaches.

During this reconnaissance of the west coast landing area, Group Baker swimmers discovered approximately 2,900 wooden posts embedded in the reef near its seaward edge and stretching for some distance on either side of the Bishi Gawa. These posts, which were on the average six inches in

<sup>38</sup> *Okinawa Operations Record*, pp. 65-66.



*LANDING CRAFT form up for the run to Kerama Retto beaches on 26 March 1945. Viewed from USS Minneapolis. (USN 80-G-316830)*



*155MM GUNS of the 420th Field Artillery Group are set up on Keise Shima to shell enemy main defenses prior to the Tenth Army assault landing. (USA SC205503)*

diameter and from four to eight feet in height, were generally aligned five feet apart in rows of three or four. Although some of these obstacles were loose, a few were set in concrete and the rest wedged into the coral. On 30 March they were blown up with hand-placed charges. All but 200 posts were destroyed by L-Day and it was believed that the landing would not be hindered by those that remained.<sup>39</sup>

Accompanying the UDTs during the beach reconnaissance and initial demolitions operations were assault troop observers, who acted as liaison and reconnaissance personnel.<sup>40</sup> Their primary function was to brief the UDTs on the schemes of maneuver and location of the landing areas of their respective assault units, to make certain that specific beaches were cleared, and to obtain current intelligence concerning the beaches and surrounding terrain. As soon as these preinvasion operations had been completed (29 and 30 March), the observers were returned by ship to join their parent organizations in the approaching attack groups. In general, the intelligence reports submitted by the observers favored a successful landing across the entire Tenth Army front.

Because the waters surrounding Okinawa had been heavily mined,<sup>41</sup> the

<sup>39</sup> CTF 52 AR, pt V, sec G, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> The allocation of Tenth Army observers to the UDTs was based on the assignment of one officer for each battalion in the assault, one for each RCT, division, and corps, and one for the army. *Tenth Army TntvOPlan* 1-45, Anx 4, App A, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> TF 52 estimated that its minecraft swept and reswept over 3,000 square miles in the six days before L-Day. In this period, 257 mines were destroyed.

scheduled NGF bombardment did not begin until 25 March (L minus 7) when TF 54 fire support vessels were able to close to ranges of maximum effectiveness. Carrier air was able to pound Okinawa repeatedly, however, and was met by only ineffectual and desultory fire from enemy anti-aircraft defenses. In the course of the 3,095 sorties that the TF 52 Combat Air Support Control Unit (CASCU) directed against Okinawa prior to L-Day, special attention was given to the destruction of submarine pens, airfields, suicide boat installations, bridges over the roads leading into the landing area, and gun positions. After the pilots were debriefed, each day's strike results were evaluated by the CASCU on board Admiral Blandy's flagship, USS *Estes*, and considered together with damage estimates of ships' guns. The schedule of air missions and the NGF plans were revised and coordinated, and plans for the next day's sorties and shoots were then issued.

Initial target lists compiled by the Tenth Army artillery section and TF 54 intelligence section were constantly revised as analyses, based on aerial observation and photo reconnaissance, were received. As new evaluations were made of the destruction of enemy positions and installations, and new targets tabulated, cards listing the corrected data were delivered to the target information centers (TICs) of IIIAC and XXIV Corps. From the time that the bombardment of Okinawa began until L-Day, General Nimmer's TIC received copies of all dispatches sent from the objective by CTF 54. From these reports, all information relative to the discovery, attack, damage, and destruc-

tion of targets in the IIIAC landing zone was excerpted and used to bring the target map and target file up-to-date.<sup>42</sup>

Although Admiral Blandy's bombardment force expended 27,226 rounds of 5-inch or larger-caliber ammunition on Okinawa, extensive damage was done only to surface installations, especially those in the vicinity of the airfields. As the ground forces were to discover later, the Japanese sustained little destruction of well dug-in defenses, and few losses among the men who manned them. On the day before the landing, as a result of his evaluation of the effect of air and NGF bombardment, CTF 52 could report that "the preparation was sufficient for a successful landing."<sup>43</sup> Admiral Blandy also stated that "we did not conclude from [the enemy's silence] that all defense installations had been destroyed. . . ." <sup>44</sup>

A prerequisite which Admiral Turner felt would guarantee the success of ICEBERG was the seizure of Kerama Retto and Keise Shima prior to L-Day. Because of the advantages to be gained by all ICEBERG assault and support elements, the taking of these islands was made an essential feature of the Tenth Army operation plan. Naval units, particularly, would benefit since the

<sup>42</sup> "At H-Hour on D-Day it is estimated that the TIC files showed about 500 active targets suitable for attack by artillery, naval gunfire, and support aircraft, all located in the III Phib Corps zone of action for Phase One of the operations." LtCol John G. Bouker ltr to CMC, dtd 9Jan48, Subj: Operations of III Amphibious Corps Target Information Center on Okinawa, hereafter *Bouker ltr*.

<sup>43</sup> CTF 52 AR, pt V, sec C, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

Keramas provided a sheltered fleet anchorage in the objective area where emergency repairs, refueling, and rearming operations could be accomplished. Once the envisioned seaplane base was established, Navy patrol bombers could range from Korea to Indochina in search and rescue missions and antisubmarine warfare operations. With the emplacement of XXIV Corps Artillery guns on Keise Shima and their registry on Okinawa, preliminaries for the main assault would be complete.

Even if the Keramas had had no value as an advanced logistics base, they would have been taken. The suspected presence of suicide sea raiding squadrons in the island chain was confirmed when the 77th Infantry Division landed, and captured and destroyed 350 of the squadrons' suicide boats. Their threat to the Okinawa landing was undeniable, for these small craft were to speed from their hideouts in the Keramas' small islands to the American anchorages. Here, "The objective of the attack will be transports, loaded with essential supplies and material and personnel . . .," ordered General Ushijima. "The attack will be carried out by concentrating maximum strength immediately upon the enemy's landing."<sup>45</sup> The surprise thrust into the Keramas frustrated the Japanese plan and undoubtedly eased initial ICEBERG operations at the Hagushi beaches. At the time that the 77th was poised to strike the Keramas, the islands were defended by approximately 975 Japanese troops, of whom only the some 300 boat operators

<sup>45</sup> "Thirty-second Army OperO No. 115, dtd 23Mar45," in Tenth Army Trans No. 231, dtd 6Jul45.

of the sea raiding squadrons had any combat value. The rest of the defense was comprised of about 600 Korean laborers and nearly 100 base troops.

On 26 March, the day following the sweep of Kerama waters by the mine-craft and reconnaissance of its beaches by UDT personnel, Admiral Kiland's Western Islands Attack Group moved into position for the assault. A battleship, two large cruisers, and four destroyers had been assigned to provide NGF support for the landing, but only the 5-inch guns of the destroyers were used extensively. The capital ships were not called on to fire but remained on standby. As LSTs disgorged their cargo of armored amphibians and troop-laden assault tractors for the run to the beaches, carrier planes orbited the transport area to ward off Japanese suicide planes which were beginning to filter through the outer fighter screen. Aircraft bombed the beaches as the assault waves were guided toward the target by LCIs assigned to give close-in support.<sup>46</sup> (See Map 5.)

At 0801, the first of the four assault battalions of the 77th hit its target and in a little over an hour's time the other three had attacked their own objectives. Before noon, General Bruce saw that the rapid progress of his landing teams ashore would permit yet another landing that day, so he directed the 2d Battalion, 307th Infantry, a reserve unit, to take Yakabi Shima. Since this island's

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<sup>46</sup> The Support Craft Flotilla was composed of two mortar, three rocket, and four gunboat divisions. The 42 LCIs and 54 LSMs in this unit were organized into teams of various types and assigned to a specific beach and landing. PhibGru 7 AR, dtd 26May45.

defenders offered little resistance, it was secured by 1341. By the end of the day the 77th had done quite well, having seized three Kerama islands outright and established a firm foothold on two others.

Within a six-day period, 26-31 March, at a cost of 31 killed and 81 wounded, the 77th Infantry Division completely fulfilled its mission as the vanguard of ICEBERG Expeditionary Troops. In the process of removing the threat posed by the Japanese to operations in the Kerama anchorage, General Bruce's troops killed 530 of the enemy, captured 121 more, and rounded up some 1,195 civilians. All of the enemy were not disposed of, however, for scattered Japanese soldiers remained hidden in the hills of the various Kerama islands and even occasionally communicated with units on Okinawa.<sup>47</sup>

Marine participation in pre-L-Day activities was confined to the operations of Major James L. Jones' FMF Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion. For the Keramas invasion, it was split into two tactical groups, one under the battalion commander and the other under his executive officer. Only two companies of the battalion were available for anticipated missions, since Company B had been assigned to the V Amphibious Corps for the Iwo Jima landing and did not return to its parent organization until after L-Day.

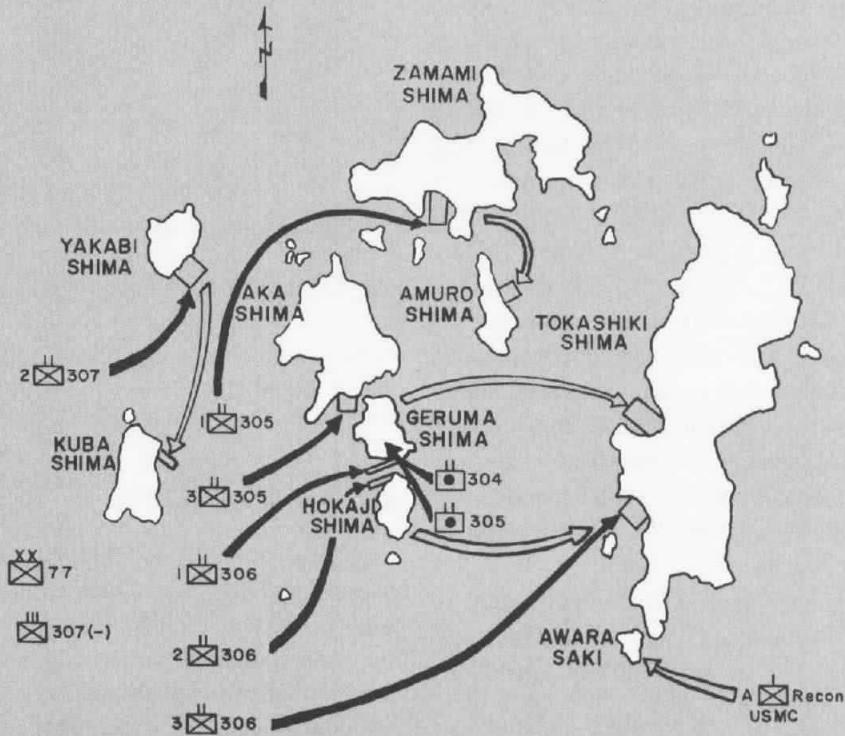
On the night of 26-27 March, while the 77th consolidated its conquests and prepared for the next day's battles, Major Jones' men landed on and reconnoitered the reef islets comprising

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<sup>47</sup> *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 66.

### SEIZURE OF KERAMA RETTO MARCH 1945

→ LANDINGS 26 MARCH  
⇨ LANDINGS 27 MARCH



*EAST CHINA SEA*

MAP 5

T.L. RUSSELL

Keise Shima.<sup>48</sup> When reconnaissance of the small group revealed no trace of the enemy, the Marines reboarded their APDs with information of reef, beach, and terrain conditions. Their findings were then forwarded to the 77th Division intelligence officer for evaluation and distribution to the units which were to land on Keise Shima.

During the night of 27–28 March, scouts from Company A landed on Aware Saki, a small island off the southern tip of Tokashiki Shima. Again there was no evidence of the enemy. The only encounter with the Japanese occurred on 29 March, during early morning landings on Mae and Kuro Shima, two small islands which lie between the Kerama Retto and Keise Shima. At 0630, a suicide boat, apparently manned by only one soldier, was observed heading at high speed for Mae Shima's beach from Tokashiki Shima. The one-man regatta was brought to a speedy and spectacular end as the explosive-laden craft disintegrated under a hail of machine gun fire. A reconnaissance of Kure Shima shortly thereafter indicated no troops or civilians, nor any installations.

In order to remove some of the

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<sup>48</sup> Keise Shima or Keisan Sho (sho, in Japanese, is shoal or reef) is five miles WNW of Naha and consists of three sand-and pebble-islands; Kuefu Shima, Naganna Shima, and Kamiyama Shima, the last-named being two low sandy islands separated by a 100-yard-wide strait. For simplicity, and in keeping with the usage established by action reports and previously written histories of the Okinawa campaign, this small island grouping will be referred to as Keise Shima in this account also.

obstacles to the landing of XXIV Corps Artillery units on Keise Shima on 31 March, UDTs blasted a path through the off-shore coral reefs early that morning, and this completed the work they had begun on the 27th. Then, after 2/306 landed unopposed and determined that no enemy had slipped back to Keise after the Marine reconnaissance, men and equipment of the 420th Field Artillery Group went ashore and immediately set up to fire. By 1935, the group's 155mm guns ("Long Toms") began registering on preselected targets in southern Okinawa. There, the Japanese later reported, they "incessantly obstructed our movements by laying an abundant quantity of fire inside our positions, the fire being directed mainly to cut off our communications."<sup>49</sup> Also landing on Keise were part of a team from an Army air warning squadron and an AAA (automatic weapons) platoon which, when ashore and set up, became part of the area anti-aircraft defense system.

Already beset by American carrier-based strikes and by ships' gunfire which blasted Okinawa in a precise and businesslike manner, the Japanese felt that the artillery fire from Keise was overdoing it a bit. A special attack unit was formed to raid the island artillery emplacements, and the *5th Artillery Command's* 15cm guns were ordered to conduct counterbattery fire in an attempt to destroy the American Long Toms. Neither measure attained success, and the *Thirty-second Army* was never able to enforce its order to "stop

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<sup>49</sup> *Okinawa Operations Record*, pp. 66–67.

the use of enemy artillery on Keise Shima.”<sup>50</sup>

Before L-Day, the floating naval base in the Kerama Retto was functioning at a high pitch. From watery take-off lanes, seaplanes rose to harass enemy submarines and shipping in the China Sea. *Kamikaze*-damaged vessels were salvaged and repaired on an around-the-clock schedule, while the rearming, refueling, and revictualling of healthy ships kept pace. Without this frontline logistical facility, “many more ships and personnel of the service force than were available in the Okinawa area would have been required at sea to make replenishment an accomplished fact for all fleet forces.”<sup>51</sup>

In contrast to the conspicuous pre-landing operations of ICEBERG forces in the target area, the *Thirty-second Army* was able to surround its tactical dispositions with a greater degree of secrecy. Not until after the landing on Okinawa and relentless probing by the assault forces did the Tenth Army learn what the strength of the enemy was and where his positions were. Before L-Day, American knowledge of enemy dispositions was sketchy, and as late as L minus 1 (31 March), the G-3 of the

6th Marine Division was told that “the Hagushi beaches were held in great strength.”<sup>52</sup>

The factor which tipped the scales in favor of an unopposed Allied landing on the Hagushi beaches was General Ushijima’s decision to defend the south-east coast of Okinawa in strength. When the 2d Marine Division made its feint landings on D-Day and D plus 1, the Japanese commander’s staff believed its earlier estimate that “powerful elements might attempt a landing [on the Minatoga beaches]” was fully justified.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, a substantial portion of the artillery and infantry strength of the *Thirty-second Army* was immobilized in face of a threat in the southeast that never materialized.

Although Ushijima’s command had prepared for an American landing elsewhere, from the Japanese point of view the Hagushi beaches remained the most obvious target. Even while propaganda reports—mostly untrue—of successful *Kamikaze* attacks against the invasion fleet bolstered Japanese morale, the commander of a scratch force formed from airfield personnel on the island warned his men not “to draw the hasty conclusion that we had been able to destroy the enemy’s plan of landing on Okinawa Jima.”<sup>54</sup> The commander of

<sup>50</sup> “32d Army OperO A #127, dtd 6Apr45,” in *CICAS Trans No. 266*. Although this order directed the CO of the shipping engineers to organize a raiding unit and attack Keise on the night of 6 April 1945, no contemporary records show that this operation was carried through.

<sup>51</sup> RAdm Worrall R. Carter, *Beans, Bullets, and Black Oil* (Washington: GPO, 1953), p. 353, hereafter Carter, *Beans, Bullets, and Black Oil*.

<sup>52</sup> Capt Edward F. Townley, Jr., ltr to Asst G-3, HQMC, dtd 4Dec65.

<sup>53</sup> *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 67.

<sup>54</sup> “1st Specially Established Regt OperO No. 1, dtd 30Mar45,” in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 107-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 28 dtd 14May45.

the *1st Specially Established Regiment*, Lieutenant Colonel Tokio Aoyangai, proved himself clairvoyant, for in less than 24 hours after his message had been distributed, the Northern and Southern Attack Forces were moving into their transport areas ready to launch the assault.

# The First Days Ashore

## SEIZURE OF THE BEACHHEAD <sup>1</sup>

Optimum weather conditions for an amphibious landing prevailed at the target on L-Day when the Central Pacific Task Forces launched the attack against Okinawa on 1 April 1945, Easter Sunday. The coming of dawn revealed cloudy to clear skies and a calm sea with but a negligible surf at the shore. Moderate easterly to northeasterly winds were blowing offshore, just enough to carry the smoke away from the beaches. To the many veteran jungle fighters among the invading troops, the 75-degree temperature seemed comfortably cool.

At the target, the major naval lift and support elements moved into their assigned areas off the Hagushi beaches. Once in position, the ships prepared to

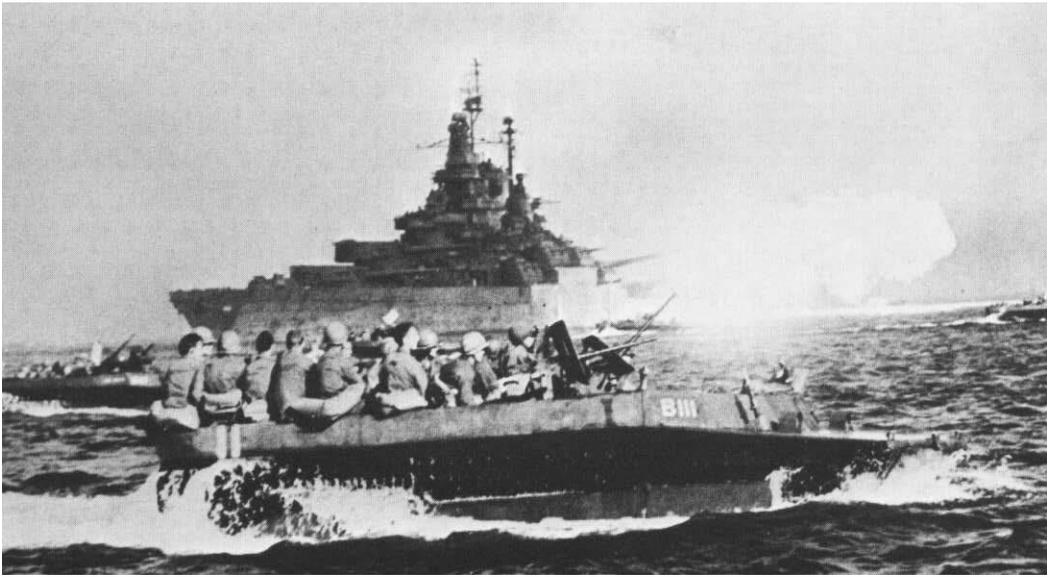
debark troops. Off the Minatoga beaches on the other side of the island, the same preparations were conducted concurrently by the shipping that carried the 2d Marine Division.

Admiral Turner unleashed his forces at 0406 with the traditional order, "Land the Landing Force," <sup>2</sup> and Okinawa's ordeal began with a percussive overture of naval gunfire. (See Map 6.) The enemy reacted to the landing shortly after dawn as he mounted scattered air attacks on the convoys. In the continuing belief that the main effort was directed at the Minatoga area, the few Japanese aircraft not destroyed by American carrier air or ships' anti-aircraft guns disregarded the more lucrative targets off Hagushi and concentrated on Demonstration Group shipping. *Kamikazes* struck the transport *Hinsdale* and LST 884 as troops, mostly from the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines <sup>3</sup> and its reinforcing elements, were disembarking for the feint run into the beaches. Reported killed were 8 Marines; 37 were wounded, and 8 were

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *CTF 51 AR*; *Tenth Army AR*; *XXIV Corps AR*; *IIIAC AR*; *1st MarDiv SAR*; 1st MarDiv G-3 Jnl, 28Feb-13Jul45, hereafter *1st MarDiv G-3 Jnl*, with appropriate date; 1st Mar SAR, Nansei Shoto, dtd 25Jul45, hereafter *1st Mar SAR*; 5th Mar S-3 Jnl, 15Jan-26Jul45, hereafter *5th Mar S-3 Jnl*, with appropriate date; 7th Mar SAR, Phase I and II, dtd 1May45, and Phase III, dtd 11Jul45, hereafter *7th Mar SAR*; *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph I&II*; 6th MarDiv Unit Jnl, Phase I and II, 1-22Apr45, hereafter *6th MarDiv Jnl, Ph I&II*, with appropriate date. The action reports of the major component units of the 6th Marine Division are included as annexes to the division SAR and will be cited separately as *4th Mar SAR, Ph I&II*; *1/4 SAR, Ph I&II*; *6th TkbN SAR, Ph I&II*; etc.

<sup>2</sup> *CTF 53 AR*, pt III, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this campaign narrative, the designation "3d Battalion, 1st Marines" will be used interchangeably with "3/1" or "BLT 3/1," the latter number depending upon which regimental unit is involved. Also, 4th Marines or 5th Marines is synonymous with RCT 4 or RCT 5. Reinforcing troops which make an infantry regiment an RCT are considered to be included in the RCT designation. A BLT's reinforcement is likewise to be included in the BLT designation.



*MAIN BATTERIES of USS Tennessee hurl tons of high explosives at Okinawa as assault amtracs head for the beachhead. (USN 80-G-319325)*



*AERIAL VIEW of the Hagushi anchorage and Yontan airfield on L plus 2, looking southeast from Zampa Misaki. (USN 80-G-339242)*

listed as missing in action.<sup>4</sup> It is somewhat ironic that units not even scheduled to land on Okinawa on L-Day sustained the first troop casualties.

Air support arrived over the target in force at 0650<sup>5</sup> and the assault forces began to debark ten minutes later. The transport areas became the scenes of purposeful activity as troops climbed down landing nets into waiting landing craft, while armored amphibians, and amphibian tractors preloaded with troops and equipment, spewed forth from the open jaws of LSTs. At the same time, tank-carrying LCMs (landing craft, mechanized) floated from the flooded well decks of LSDs (landing ships, dock). Other tanks, rigged with T-6 flotation equipment, debarked from LSTs to form up into waves and make their own way onto the beaches.<sup>6</sup>

In reply to the murderous pounding of the Hagushi beaches by 10 battleships, 9 cruisers, 23 destroyers, and 177 gunboats, the Japanese returned only desultory and light artillery and mortar fire. Even though the assault waves formed up in assembly areas within

<sup>4</sup> *2d MarDiv AR*, Anx A-N. In the same attack, ships' crews sustained casualties of 1 killed, 34 wounded and 10 missing.

<sup>5</sup> More than 500 planes of the Fifth Fleet were engaged in troop support missions between 0700 and 1000 on L-Day.

<sup>6</sup> Medium tanks fitted with T-6 flotation devices were able to proceed to the beach under their own power, utilizing their tracks for propulsion. The equipment consisted of flotation tanks welded to the outside of the armored vehicle, an improvised steering device, electrical bilge pumps, and electrically detonated charges to jettison the flotation tanks when they were no longer required and once the beach was reached. *6th TkBn SAR*, *Ph I&II*, pp. 39-41.

range of this fire, neither troops nor invasion craft were hit. During the early morning hours, the two battalions of the 420th Field Artillery Group on Keise Shima received heavy enemy counter-battery fire, which stopped American unloading operations on the reef for four hours but caused no damage.

Lying off each Okinawa invasion beach were control vessels marking the lines of departure (LD). Landing vehicles quickly formed into waves behind the LD and at 0800, when the signal pennants fluttering from the masts of the control vessels were hauled down, the first wave, composed of LVT(A)s (landing vehicle, tracked (armored)), moved forward to the beaches in an orderly manner behind a line of support craft. Following on schedule, hundreds of troop-carrying LVTs, disposed in five to seven waves, crossed the lines of departure at regular intervals and moved determinedly towards the shore.

Despite the ferocity of the prelanding bombardment, enemy artillery and mortars continued scattered but ineffectual fire on the invasion waves as they made the 4,000-yard run to the beach. On approaching the shoreline, the LVT(A)s fired upon suspected targets, while naval gunfire lifted from the beach area to hit inland targets. Carrier fighters that had been orbiting lazily over the two flanks of the beachhead began diving over the landing area and neutralized it with repeated strafing, bombing, and napalming runs.

As the assault waves hit the beaches, smoke was laid down on the hills east of Yontan to prevent enemy observation of the landing zone. On the other side of the island, Demonstration Group

landing craft raced toward the Minatoga beaches only to reverse their course and retire to the transport area behind a smoke screen as the fourth wave crossed the line of departure.

Neither the reef fringing the beaches nor enemy mortar fire on the beaches themselves interfered with the successful XXIV Corps landing south of the Bishi Gawa. The eight Army assault battalions were landed by six successive waves of LVTs and moved forward without opposition.

The sea wall, which had caused some concern to XXIV Corps planners, had been breached by naval gunfire. In anticipation of the early build-up ashore, engineers, landing in the first waves, blasted additional beach exits in those portions of the wall which remained standing. Upon landing, the LVT(A)s poured through these breaches, hard on the heels of the infantry, and moved to protect the flanks, while amphibious trucks (DUKWs), preloaded with 4.2-inch mortars, and tanks rolled inland.

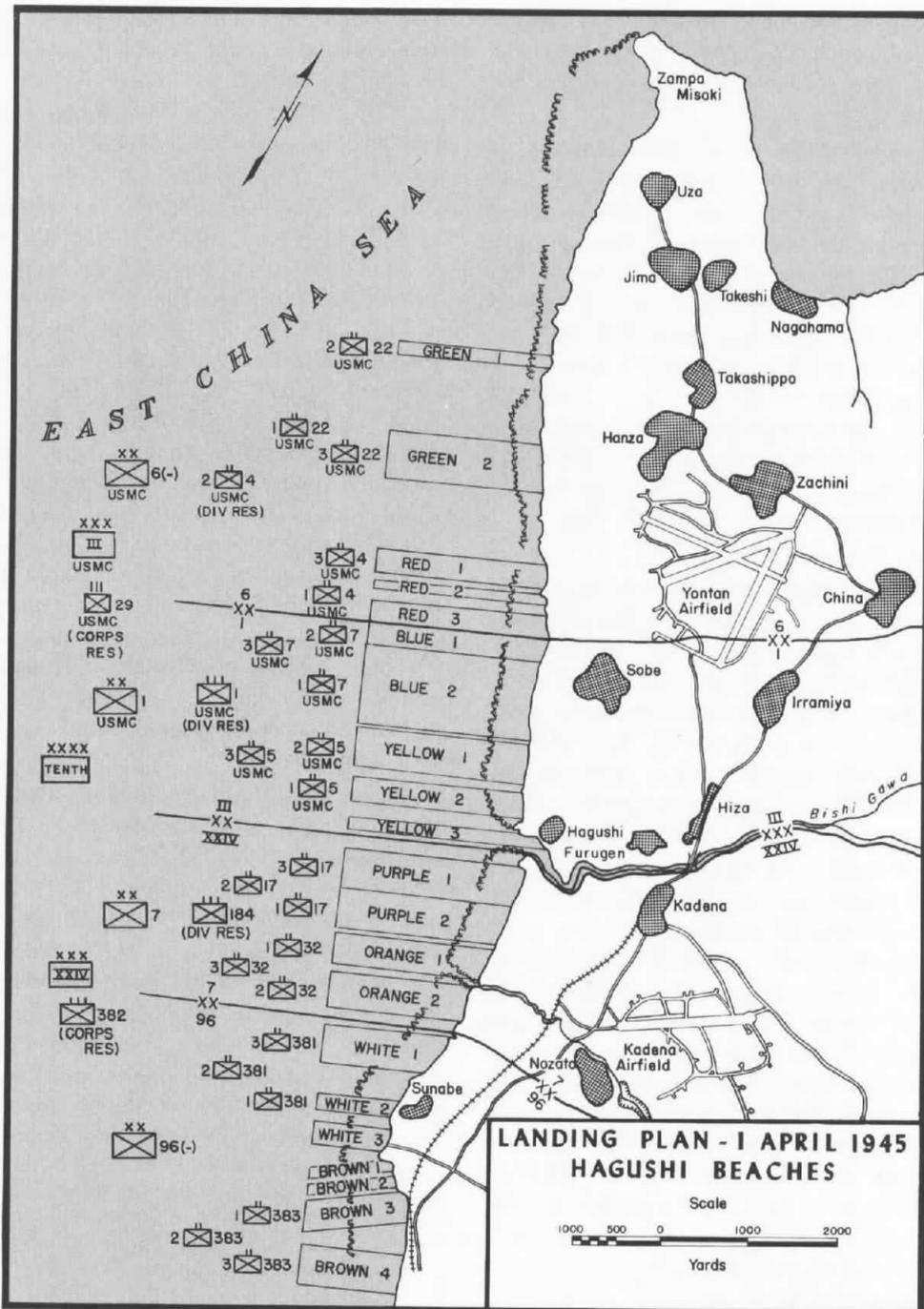
Off the Marine landing zone, north of the Bishi Gawa, the reef was raggedly fissured and became smoother only as it neared the beach. A rising tide floated the landing vehicles over a large portion of the reef and the boulders which fringed it. On the northern flank of the 1st Marine Division, however, the large circular section of the reef off the Blue Beaches presented difficulties to the tractors attempting to cross at that point, and delayed their arrival at the beach.

During the approach of IIIAC assault waves to assigned beaches, several instances occurred when inexperienced

wave guide officers failed to follow correct compass courses or when they did not guide by clearly recognizable terrain features on the shore. Some troops were thus landed out of position. For example, Lieutenant Colonel Bruno A. Hochmuth's 3d Battalion, 4th Marines—assigned to Red Beach 1—was landed on the right half of Green 2 in the zone of the 22d Marines (Colonel Merlin F. Schneider), and on the rocky coast line between Green 2 and Red 1. (See Map 6.)

Elements of Colonel Edward W. Snedeker's 7th Marines were landed in relatively insignificant numbers on the beach of the 4th Marines (Colonel Alan Shapley). On the extreme right flank of the 1st Marine Division, however, the fourth wave of RCT-5 was diverted across the corps boundary and landed on the right flank of the 7th Infantry Division. The Marine wave consisted principally of Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Shelburne's 1/5 reserve—Company B—and part of the battalion command post group. By 0930, a sufficient number of LVTs had been sent to pick up all but one lieutenant and two squads, who did not rejoin their parent unit until L plus 3.<sup>7</sup> The fifth and sixth waves of the 5th Marines landed on

<sup>7</sup> 1/5 SAR, Ph I&II, dtd 29Apr45, p. 5, and Ph III, dtd 9Jul45, hereafter 1/5 SAR. Relating to this mixup in landing beaches, the 1st Division Shore Party Officer wrote, "there is a point here which should not be missed. 1st MarDiv beaches were designated Blue and Yellow and 7th Div's were Purple and Orange from left to right as you came in from the sea. Some of the ships mounting out the 7th Div did not have Purple and Orange bunting and substituted Blue and Yellow." Col Robert G. Ballance ltr to CMC, dtd 22Mar55, hereafter *Ballance ltr*.



MAP 6

T. L. RUSSELL

their assigned beaches after the guide officers of these waves corrected the faulty course heading followed by the fourth wave.

Despite these unexpected deviations from the landing plan, all the LVT(A)s spearheading the IIIAC attack reached the beach by 0830 and all eight assault battalions were ashore by 0900. The beaches had not been mined and opposition to the landing consisted only of sporadic mortar and small arms fire. This resulted in but few casualties and caused no damage to the LVTs. "With utter consternation and bewilderment and with a great deal of relief the assault wave landed against practically no opposition."<sup>8</sup>

As the assault troops surged up the terraced slopes behind the beaches and sped inland, the center of invasion activity shifted from the line of departure to the transfer line at the edge of the reef. There, small boat, LVT, and DUKW control was established to unload support troops and artillery units on call. Supporting units continued to pour ashore during the morning as the attack progressed against only slight resistance. At the transfer line, reserve infantry elements shifted from ships' boats into the LVTs which had landed assault troops earlier. Flotation-equipped tanks made the beaches under their own power, others were landed at high tide from LCMs, and the remainder were discharged directly onto the reef from LSMs and LSTs. DUKWs brought the 75mm and 105mm howitzers of the light field artillery battalions directly ashore.

<sup>8</sup> *4th Mar SAR, Ph I&II*, pp. 6-7.

All tanks in the 1st Division assault wave, landing from LCMs and LCTs, were on the beach by noon. One exception was a tank that foundered in a reef pothole. The captain of LST 628, carrying the six T-6 flotation-equipped tanks of the 1st Tank Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Arthur J. Stuart), disregarded the operation plan and refused to allow them to launch until H plus 60 minutes.<sup>9</sup> At that time, he set them in the water 10 miles off the landing beaches. These tanks finally reached shore after being afloat for more than five hours, but two of them were hung up on the reef because of the ebbing tide. Because the LSMs carrying Lieutenant Colonel Stuart's reserve tanks had great difficulty in grounding on the reef on L-Day, the first tracked vehicle off the ramp of one was lost in an unseen pothole. Of the four LSMs employed, two finally landed their cargo late on L-Day, another at noon on L plus 1, and the last on 3 April.

Tanks were landed early in the 6th Division zone, where each of the three companies of the 6th Tank Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Robert L. Denig, Jr.) employed a different landing procedure. Tanks equipped with flotation gear swam to the reef, easily negotiated the rugged coral, continued on to the beaches, where they jettisoned their pontoons and became operational by H plus 29 minutes. The company in LCMs

<sup>9</sup> In his action report, the LST captain stated that he did not hold a complete copy of the basic Fifth Fleet plan. He also commented that the plans held aboard his ship were distributed so late that there was insufficient time for "adequate planning, preparation and training." *Dir, Naval Hist ltr I*.

came in at high tide (0930) and landed without incident. The third company successfully landed directly from the LSMs grounded on the reef but forded the deep water between the grounding point and the shore with difficulty.<sup>10</sup>

Soon after landing, the accelerated pace of the 6th Division assault to the north overextended Colonel Schneider's 22d Marines. Troops were taken from his left battalion, 2/22 (Lieutenant Colonel Horatio W. Woodhouse, Jr.), to guard the exposed flank. This, in turn, weakened the 22d attack echelon and gave it a larger front than it could adequately cover. Consequently, a considerable gap developed between the 2d Battalion and the 3d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Malcolm "O" Donohoo), advancing on the right. In less than 20 minutes after the landing, Colonel Schneider ordered his reserve, 1/22 (Major Thomas J. Myers), ashore. Upon landing, the 1st Battalion (less Company C, remaining afloat as regimental reserve) was committed in the center of the regimental zone.

Still meeting no opposition while it continued the rapid move inland, by 1000 the 22d Marines found its left flank unit stretched dangerously thin. As he pressed the division attack to exploit initial success, General Shepherd anticipated Schneider's request for reinforcements to cover the exposed flank, and asked corps to release one BLT of the 29th Marines.

During the unopposed 22d Marines advance on Hanza, the 4th Marines moved on Yontan airfield against light to moderate resistance. Isolated enemy

pockets, built around light machine guns, slowed the regiment only slightly as it penetrated several hundred yards inland and made contact on its right with the 7th Marines at the division boundary. By midmorning, the 4th reached the airfield and found it unguarded.

Only intermittent sniper fire coming from beyond the field opposed the 4th Marines as it swept across the air facility and secured its objective by 1300. The airfield was found to be essentially intact, but all buildings had been stripped and the antiaircraft emplacements contained only dummy guns.

As this rush carried Colonel Shapley's regiment beyond adjacent units, a wide gap developed between its left flank and the right of the 22d Marines, then in the vicinity of Hanza. Shapley's regiment jumped off again at 1330 against only light resistance on its left. Tanks were called in to reduce several cave positions in this area. After these positions were neutralized, the attack continued slowly through rugged, wooded terrain. In order to maintain contact with the 7th Marines and to rectify the overextended condition of the 4th, 2/4 was released from division reserve at 1500 and immediately committed on the regiment's left to establish contact with the 22d Marines.

Because the division left flank was still dangerously exposed, General Shepherd regained 1/29 (Lieutenant Colonel Jean W. Moreau) from corps. Released by IIIAC at 1300, the battalion landed at 1500 and, with its left flank anchored on Green Beach 1, completed tying in with 22d Marines at 1700.

The 1st Marine Division, to the south of the 6th, met with the same sur-

<sup>10</sup> *6th TkbN SAR, Ph I&II*, pp. 15-16, 39-41.

prising lack of resistance. By 0945 on the division left, Colonel Snedeker's 7th Marines had advanced through the village of Sobe, a first priority objective, and the 5th Marines (Colonel John H. Griebel) was 1,000 yards inland standing up. With the beaches clear, and in order to avoid losing any troops as a result of anticipated enemy air attacks against the congested transport area, the division reserve was then ordered ashore. Colonel Kenneth B. Chappell's 1st Marines embarked two BLTs, and the third was to land as soon as transportation became available.

Reserve battalions of both assault regiments were picked up by LVTs at the transfer line and shuttled to the beach before noon. The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines (Lieutenant Colonel Edward H. Hurst), landed in the center of the regimental zone of action and then moved to the rear of Lieutenant Colonel Spencer S. Berger's 2/7, the left flank unit. At 1400, 3/5 was positioned 400 yards behind 1/5 on the division right boundary. When the 5th Marines reserve was moved up behind the assault battalions, the commanding officer of 3/5, Major John A. Gustafson, went forward to reconnoiter. An hour later, at 1500, his group was fired on by a small bypassed enemy pocket and Gustafson was wounded and evacuated. His executive officer, Major Martin C. Roth, took over temporarily until 4 April, when Lieutenant Colonel John C. Miller, Jr., assumed command.<sup>11</sup>

Thus disposed in depth with its reserve elements echeloned to guard the

<sup>11</sup> 3d Bn, 5th Mar SAR, 1-21Apr45, dtd 30Apr45, and 22Apr-22Jun45, dtd 10Jul45, hereafter 3/5 SAR.

flanks, the 1st Division continued its steady advance over the rolling checker-board terrain. In addition to having developed the numerous caves that honey-combed the many hillsides in the zone, the Japanese had begun to organize other positions throughout the area and the Marines encountered innumerable field fortifications in varying stages of development. These defenses, however, were only held by small, scattered groups of service troops and home guards. According to a postwar Japanese source, these troops comprised "... a hastily organized motley unit ... facing extreme hardship in trying to achieve an orderly formation."<sup>12</sup>

The principal bridge over the Bishi Gawa below Hiza was undamaged and standing,<sup>13</sup> and local defense forces had made little or no effort to destroy the narrow bridges that spanned lesser streams. What proved a greater hindrance to the advance than the desultory enemy attempts at halting it was what one observer described as "an excellent network of very poor roads."<sup>14</sup>

By 1530, the majority of IIIAC supporting troops and artillery was ashore. One howitzer of Colonel Robert B. Luckey's 15th Marines and three of the 11th Marines (Colonel Wilburt S. Brown) were lost when the DUKWs carrying them foundered on the reef, but the remaining divisional artillery of IIIAC was landed successfully. Even

<sup>12</sup> *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 69.

<sup>13</sup> In commenting on this section, Brigadier General Robert G. Ballance, the shore party officer of the 1st Marine Division, noted that the "bridge was a stone arch affair, dating back around 1200 A.D." *Ballance ltr.*

<sup>14</sup> *1st MarDiv SAR*, pt VII, pp. 1-2.

though the artillery arrived early, a combination of the rapid infantry advance and the resulting strain on communications made it difficult for forward observers to register their battalions. Corps artillery reconnaissance parties began landing at 1300, and found that "selection of position areas from map and photo study proved suitable in every case."<sup>15</sup>

The advance was halted between 1600 and 1700, and the attacking infantry dug in, established contact all along the IIIAC line, and carried out extensive patrolling to the front. To maintain the impetus of the attack of his division on L-Day, General Shepherd had committed his entire reserve early. The 6th Marine Division remained in good shape and was well disposed to resume the advance on the 2d. Both the 4th and 22d Marines still maintained a company in reserve, while the corps reserve (29th Marines, less 1/29) was located northwest of Yontan airfield, in the vicinity of Hanza, after its landing at 1535.

General del Valle's division was unable to close the gap on the corps boundary before dark and halted some 600 yards to the rear of the 7th Infantry Division on the right.<sup>16</sup> A company was taken from the reserve battalion of the 5th Marines and put into a

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<sup>15</sup> *Henderson ltr.* The same source stated: "The [Japanese] failure to fight for the beachhead never gave us a chance to see how well the artillery would have performed in the assault phase. I am convinced however that it would have been the best field artillery support of the war."

<sup>16</sup> LtCol John D. Muncie ltr to CMC, dtd 27Mar47.

blocking position to close the open flank. Two 1st Marines battalions, 1/1 and 2/1 (commanded by Lieutenant Colonels James C. Murray, Jr., and James C. Magee, Jr., respectively), landed at 1757. Lieutenant Colonel Stephen V. Sabol's 3d Battalion was on the transfer line at 1800 but, unable to obtain LVTs, remained in the boats all night. The 1st Battalion was attached to the 5th Marines for administrative control and moved inland to Furugen, while 2/1, similarly attached to the 7th Marines, dug in east of Sobe by 1845.<sup>17</sup>

Artillery support for the Marine infantry was readily available by nightfall. The 15th Marines had established its fire direction center (FDC) by 1700, and its batteries were registered by 1830. All of Colonel Brown's artillery battalions were prepared to fire night defensive missions, though two of the 11th Marines battalions did not complete their registration because of the late arrival of spotter planes. Since enemy action was confined to unsuccessful attempts at infiltration of the lines and to intermittent mortar and machine gun fire in the 4th Marines sector, there were relatively few requirements for artillery support that first night on Okinawa.

ICEBERG's L-Day had been successful beyond all expectations. In conjunction with the extended initial advance of IIIAC, XXIV Corps had captured Kadena airfield by 1000, driven inland to an average depth of 3,500 yards, and advanced south along the east coast to the vicinity of Chatan. On 1 April, the

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<sup>17</sup> Col Russell E. Honsowetz ltr to CMC, dtd 9Oct54, hereafter *Honsowetz ltr.*

Tenth Army had landed an estimated 50,000 troops in less than eight hours and established a beachhead that was 15,000 yards wide and varied from 4,000-5,000 yards in depth. (See Map 7.) For the entire day's operations by four assault divisions, casualties were reported to Admiral Turner as 28 killed, 104 wounded, and 27 missing.

### *PROGRESS INLAND*

Following a relatively quiet night, which was punctuated only by sporadic sniper, machine gun, and mortar fire, Tenth Army units resumed the attack on L plus 1 at 0730. Perfect weather again prevailed, as the early morning was cool and a bright sun soon dispelled the ground fog and haze to provide unlimited visibility. While no artillery preparation preceded the jump off on the second day, all guns were available on call for support fires, and registration of all battalions, including those of the 11th Marines, had been completed. Carrier planes were on station at 0600 before the attack began.

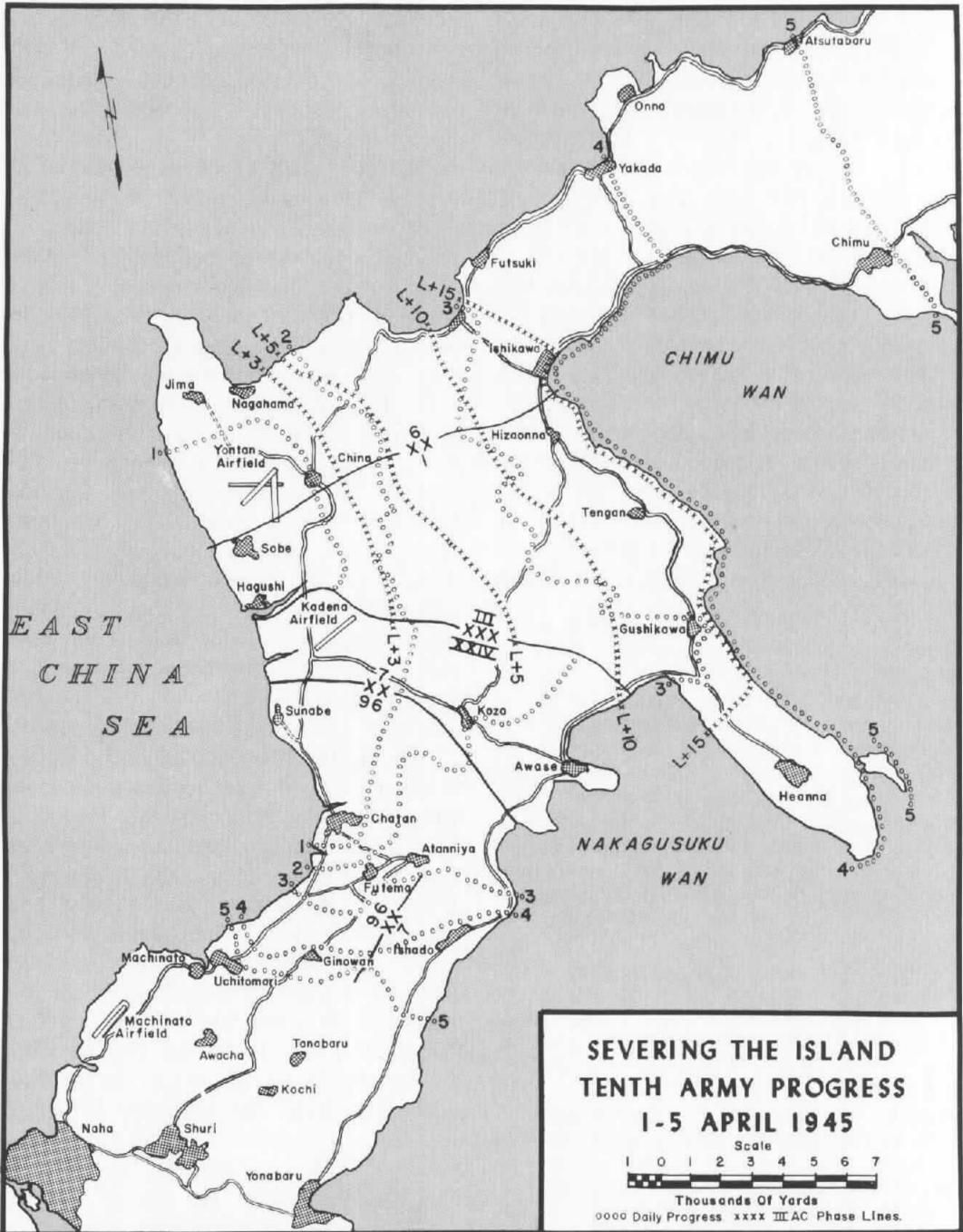
With the resumption of the advance, the 6th Marine Division continued to the east, while its left flank unit, 1/29, began clearing operations to Zampa Misaki. Admiral Turner wanted the point captured as a site for a radar station. He also wanted the Black Beaches uncovered so that unloading operations could begin. Throughout the day, the 22d Marines and 1/29 advanced rapidly against light resistance. By 1025, the latter unit had seized Zampa Misaki and found that the beaches there were unsuitable for use by IIIAC.

Major Anthony Walker's 6th Reconnaissance Company was then ordered to reconnoiter the beaches on the north coast of Zampa and the villages of Nagahama and Maeta Saki. Walker's scouts accomplished this mission before noon without opposition, and while doing so, encountered 50 civilians, who were taken into custody and transferred to stockades. The Nagahama beach was reported satisfactory for landing supplies.

On the 6th Division right, the 4th Marines advanced through rugged terrain, meeting intermittent enemy reaction. As the day wore on, however, pockets of stiff resistance were increasingly encountered, and at 1100, 3/4 came up against strong enemy positions, consisting of mutually supporting caves on both sides of a steep ravine. When the leading platoon entered the draw, it was met by a hail of small arms fire so heavy that the Marines could not bring out their 12 wounded until four hours later. "Every means of painlessly destroying the strongpoint was unsuccessfully tried and it was finally taken by a typical 'Banzai' charge with one platoon entering the mouth of the draw and one platoon coming down one side of the two noses that formed the pocket."<sup>18</sup>

The speed of the second day's advance again caused the assault units to become overextended. About midmorning, Colonel Shapley reported that there was a gap between his regiment and the 7th Marines, which he believed to be some 1,000 yards south of the division bound-

<sup>18</sup> *4th Mar SAR, Ph I&II*, p. 8.



MAP 7

T.L. RUSSELL

ary,<sup>19</sup> and an adjustment was requested by Shepherd. The 7th was ordered to cover the gap, a movement that placed it ahead of 1/4. In sideslipping back to its own zone, 1/4 met with stiff opposition from strongly entrenched enemy forces similar to those that had held up 3/4. With the aid of a platoon of tanks, this position was finally reduced. The two battalions killed some 250 Japanese in the course of the day's operations before the 4th Marines attack ceased at 1830, some 1,000 yards ahead of the L plus 3 line.

During the day, Major Paul F. Sackett's 6th Engineer Battalion repaired the strips on Yontan and placed one taxiway in good enough condition to permit a VMO-6 spotter plane to land at 1500. By 4 April, all three Yontan

<sup>19</sup> "Lack of readily identifiable terrain features made it impossible to quickly identify the boundaries of zones of action in the rapid advance. Maps at this time were also poor and difficult to follow. Hill 165 [3,600 yards west of Yontan airfield] and certain towns, however, were unmistakable. [The] 7th Marines ZA was approximately 2,000 yards wide. While there was some slippage to the right all along the front, I know that 2/7 on the left and 1/7 on the right substantially covered their [zone of action]. My opinion is that the left flank of the 7th was not over 400 yards from the division boundary at any time. The slant distance from the actual right flank of the 4th Marines and the left flank of the 7th Marines may have been greater as the attacks of the two regiments were not at an even rate." BGen Edward W. Snedeker ltr to CMC, dtd 18Oct54, hereafter *Snedeker ltr I*. "The maps were not accurate. The 7th felt that they were on the boundary and so did the 4th. Who was right was never determined." *Honsowetz ltr*. "There was a gap, but it never was determined how much or in what area. In any case it was not a serious gap for a maneuvering assault." *Snedeker ltr 1965*.

runways were ready for emergency landings.

Spearheaded by extensive advance patrolling, the 1st Marine Division moved out on L plus 1 unopposed except for the slight interference presented by local defense units, which were part of a force officially designated the *1st Specially Established Regiment*. Activated by the *Thirty-second Army* on L minus 4, it was composed of 3,473 airfield service troops and *Boeitai*, less than half of whom were armed with rifles. In addition, the equipment of this regiment consisted of 55 light machine guns, and 18 grenade launchers. The heaviest weapons of this unit were 10 heavy machine guns and 5 20mm dual-purpose machine cannon. For the most part, the troops were completely untrained, and even the regular Army service troops had not been given such basic infantry training as firing a machine gun.

When Ushijima pulled his combat troops south, the *1st Specially Established Regiment* had been assigned the mission of servicing final air traffic on the Yontan and Kadena fields. The regiment was to destroy those fields on order after the Americans had landed and then to retire to positions from which it could deny their use to the invaders. The *1st Battalion* was located in the 6th Division zone; the *2d* and part of the *3d Battalion* in the 1st Marine Division area; the remainder of the *3d Battalion* faced the 7th Infantry Division; and the *5th Company* of the *12th Independent Infantry Battalion* was assembled in regimental reserve at Hanza. Uniquely enough, upon interrogation of some troops captured from these organ-

izations, it was found that not one knew that he was in this paper organization, and only one had ever heard of it. Without exception, the prisoners gave as their unit the service or home guard element with which they had served at the airfields.

Despite their motley makeup, their commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Tokio Aoyanagi, determined to employ them in slowing the advance of the invaders. At 1400 on L-Day, he issued an order directing all of his battalions to hold every strongpoint, to carry out night raids, to destroy all bridges, and to construct tank obstacles. The colonel pleaded for "each and every one [to] carry out his duty with the conviction of certain victory."<sup>20</sup>

His men were poorly armed and mostly leaderless. Moreover, they lacked communications. When the escape routes to the organized forces in the south were cut off, therefore, this haphazardly organized group collapsed. The greater portion of these troops apparently fled to the northern hills, while a few, undoubtedly, escaped to the south; 26 were captured and 663 killed by the 1st Marine Division alone. Most of those who remained in the combat area quickly divorced themselves from the military, but other operated as snipers or guerrillas dressed in civilian attire.

Reliable intelligence was meager and hard to come by owing to the lack of contact with the enemy regular forces. As tactical operations developed rapidly

against light opposition, hundreds of dazed civilians filtered through the lines and into the paths of the assault forces. When the Marines met these Okinawans, they interrogated, screened, and sent natives back to division stockades. Attempts to obtain information of the enemy from the older inhabitants were stymied because of the difficulties imposed in translating the Okinawan dialect. Younger natives of high school age, who had been forced to learn Japanese by the Nipponese overlords, proved to be a lucrative source of information, however.

Even though most civilians were cooperative with the Americans, they could provide very little information of immediate tactical importance. Nonetheless, the Okinawans confirmed the picture of the Japanese withdrawal to the south, clarified the presence or absence of units suspected of being in the area, aided in establishing an order of battle, and revealed the general and specific areas to which the rest of the civilian population had fled.

Military government personnel soon discovered that local inhabitants had moved with all their belongings to caves dug near their homes to escape from the path of war. Although interpreters roving the area in trucks mounted with loudspeakers assured the natives that they would be saved and induced them to leave their refuges voluntarily, other Okinawans continued to believe Japanese propaganda and viewed the American "devils" as barbarians and cutthroats. In many cases, particularly in isolated regions, it was necessary for language and civil affairs personnel "to enter the caves and verbally pry the

<sup>20</sup> "1st Specially Established Regiment OperO A2, dtd 1Apr45," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 107-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 28, dtd 14May45, pp. 12-13.

dwellers loose.”<sup>21</sup> Sometimes this resulted in troops coming upon a tragic scene of self-destruction, where a father, fearing for the lives of his family and himself at the hands of the invaders, had killed his wife and children and then had committed suicide. Fortunately, there were no instances of mass suicide as there had been on Saipan or in the Keramas.<sup>22</sup>

Specifically organized patrols were dispatched to round up civilians and transfer them to stockades in areas pre-designated in military government plans. These patrols were often accompanied by language officers searching for documents, but most of the material found was of no military value. When a rewarding find was made, pertinent information was orally translated to the regimental S-2, who took down matters of local significance. The paper was then sent to the division G-2 language section.

The 1st Division learned from documents captured in its zone that the Japanese authorities had actively conscripted Okinawan males between the ages of 17 and 45 since the bombings of 10 October 1944. After their induction, these men were placed into three types of organizations; regular *Thirty-Second Army* units, specially organized engineer units, and labor forces. In order to neutralize the effects that might result from the presence of such a large hostile group in its midst, the Tenth Army de-

creed that all able-bodied males between the ages of 15 and 45 years were to be detained for further screening together with bona fide prisoners of war.<sup>23</sup>

Special agents from Army Counter-intelligence Corps detachments assigned the division assisted the Marines in interrogating and screening each male Okinawan detainee. Eventually, after their clearance by the American agents, cooperative and intelligent natives were enlisted to aid in the interrogations. Specially qualified Okinawans were moved to liberated villages and districts to serve as informants for the Island Command.

Even more of a problem than the inability of the Marines to come to grips with the enemy or their difficulty in obtaining usable intelligence was the dislocation of the logistical plan and the subsequent strain on supporting units that resulted from the unopposed and rapid troop advance. The logistics annex of the operation plan had been based on the premise that the landings would be stubbornly contested, and unloading priorities were assigned accordingly. When the uncontested landing permitted the immediate debarkation of troops who had not been scheduled ashore until 2 or 3 April, landing craft originally allocated to move cargo were diverted for this troop movement. As a result, the unloading of supplies was delayed on L-Day.

Because the road net ranged in degree from primitive to nonexistent and in

<sup>21</sup> *1st MarDiv SAR*, pt VIII, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> For examples of Japanese-induced mass hysteria among civilians see: Appleman, *et. al.*, *Okinawa Battle*, p. 58; Maj Carl W. Hoffman, *Saipan: The Beginning of the End* (Washington: HistDiv, HQMC, 1950), p. 245.

<sup>23</sup> “The wisdom of these precautions was illustrated by several incidents which confirmed our suspicions. Many a Kimono hid a uniform, and a number of civilians were found to be armed.” *1st MarDiv SAR*, pt VIII, p. 7.

order to prevent traffic congestion, LVTs were not sent too far inland. The front lines were supplied, therefore, by individual jeeps, jeep trailers, weasels, and carrying parties, or a combination of all four. As forward assault elements moved farther inland, the motor transport requirement became critical and a realignment of unloading priorities was necessary. As a consequence, the unloading of trucks from AKAs and APAs was given the highest priority.

By the night of L plus 1, all of the units supported by the 11th Marines had moved beyond artillery range, and Colonel Brown's regiment had to displace forward. The movement of 1/11 (Lieutenant Colonel Richard W. Wallace), in particular, was long overdue. Artillery displacements were not yet possible, however, since organic regimental transportation had not landed and no other prime movers were available. Two battalions were moved forward on L plus 2 by shuttle movements and an increased transportation capability, which resulted when more trucks came ashore and were made available. The other two battalions moved up on the 4th. Although it had been planned to have the bulk of Corps Artillery on the island by the end of L plus 1, and all by the end of L plus 2, it was not until 10 April that General Nimmer's force was completely unloaded. "This melee resulted from the drastic change in unloading priorities."<sup>24</sup> Fortunately, unloading operations were improved by L plus 2.

Engineer battalions organic to the Marine divisions were generally re-

lieved of mine removal tasks by the unfinished state of Japanese defenses, but there was no letup in their workload. Owing to the accelerated movement forward, the "narrow and impassable stretches of roads [and] lack of roads leading into areas in which operations against the enemy were being conducted, the engineers were called upon more than any other supporting unit."<sup>25</sup> A priority mission assigned to the engineers was the rehabilitation of the airfields after they had been captured. Their early seizure permitted work to begin almost immediately, and after the engineers had reconditioned Yontan airfield beyond merely emergency requirements, the first four-engine transports arrived from Guam on 8 April to begin evacuating the wounded.<sup>26</sup>

The only real problem facing General del Valle's units during the second day ashore, and one that tended to check a more rapid advance, was "the difficulty of supply created by the speed with which our units were moving and by lack of good roads into the increasing rough terrain."<sup>27</sup> In viewing the lack of any formidable resistance to either one of his assault divisions, General Geiger gave both of them permission to advance beyond the L plus 5 line without further orders from him.

<sup>25</sup> *4th Mar SAR*, Ph I&II, p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> *Blakelock ltr.* This source continues: "These planes were required to make the return flight to Guam without refueling at Okinawa due to the shortage of AvGas ashore to refuel the planes. Okinawa had five flights daily from Guam on a nonfueling basis until 12 April, when 500 gal/plane was furnished for the return flight."

<sup>27</sup> *1st MarDiv SAR*, chap VII, OpAnx, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Henderson ltr.*



**BEWILDERED CIVILIANS** wait to be taken to military government camps in the wake of the swift American advance across the island. (USMC 117288)



**TWO MARINES** of the 6th Division safeguard a young Okinawan until he can be reunited with his family. (USMC 118933)

By 1500 of L plus 1, the progress of the 5th Marines had caused its zone of action to become wider, and in order to secure the division right flank and maintain contact with the 7th Infantry Division, the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 1st Marines were echeloned one behind the other on the corps boundary. Upon landing that morning, 3/1 moved inland to a point east of Sobe and remained there in division reserve.

As the 1st Marine Division had not yet located the center of the enemy defenses or determined his strength, "the weakness of the resistance . . . [remained] a source of astonishment" to General del Valle.<sup>28</sup> During the day, attempts at infiltration and the occasional ambushing of patrols by small hostile groups had little effect on the tactical situation. When the troops dug in at 1600, the division position was stabilized for the night on a line generally conforming to the L plus 5 line in the 7th Marines zone, while the 5th was slightly short of it.

To search out enemy positions, the 1st Reconnaissance Company (1st Lieutenant Robert J. Powell) was ordered to scout the division zone on 3 April, taking a route that followed along the corps boundary to the base of the Katchin Peninsula on the east coast. On this same day, the assault regiments were to continue the attack with an advance to the L plus 10 line. Because there had been only slight activity on the 1st Division front during L plus 1, the 11th Marines fired only five missions. While night defensive fires were

planned for the second night ashore, they were not called for.

On this day in the XXIV Corps zone, the Army divisions also were able to exploit unexpectedly light resistance. The 7th Infantry Division had reached the east coast at Tobaru overlooking Katsuren Wan (Bay), effectively cutting the island in half and severing the enemy line of communications. Units of the 96th Division had advanced to the east and south, and succeeded in penetrating irregularly defended positions, some of which consisted merely of road mines and booby-trapped obstacles. At the end of L plus 1, General Bradley's front lines extended from the vicinity of Futema on the west coast to approximately one mile west of Unjo in the east.

By the close of 2 April, all assault division command posts had been established ashore, and the beachhead and the bulk of the high ground behind the landing beaches firmly secured. Enemy observation of Tenth Army movement and dispositions was thus limited, and any land-based threat to unloading operations removed.

Commenting on the conduct of Marine operations for the two days, General Buckner signalled General Geiger:

I congratulate you and your command on a splendidly executed landing and substantial gains in enemy territory. I have full confidence that your fighting Marines will meet every requirement of this campaign with characteristic courage, spirit, and efficiency.<sup>29</sup>

During the night of 2-3 April, enemy activity was confined to sporadic sniper,

<sup>28</sup> LtGen Pedro A. del Valle ltr to CMC, dtd 29Sep54, hereafter *del Valle ltr*.

<sup>29</sup> *6th MarDiv Jnl, Ph I&II, 3Apr45.*

machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire, and intermittent infiltration attempts by individuals and small groups. Undeterred by this harassment, General Geiger's corps jumped off at 0730 on the 3d and again found slight opposition to the attack.

The 6th Marine Division resumed the offense in the same lineup with which it had ended the previous day. (See Map 7.) Both the 4th and 22d Marines advanced an average of more than 7,000 yards through difficult and heavily broken terrain to seize the dominating Yontan hill mass and the division objective beyond. While the 22d Marines moved forward, 1/29 patrols covered the entire Zampa Misaki without discovering any enemy troops on the peninsula. There was no repetition of the fierce clashes experienced by the 4th Marines the preceding two days. Throughout the day, the division was supported by tanks, which operated along the hazardous narrow trails existing on the precipitous ridge tops to the front.

By midmorning, the axis of advance of the 6th Division began to swing to the north as the towns of Kurawa and Terabaru were gained. Scattered rear-guard action from withdrawing enemy troops was the only resistance encountered by the 22d Marines advancing on Nakadomori. In order to develop the situation on the division front and to determine the nature of Japanese defenses in the Ishikawa Isthmus, General Shepherd ordered his reconnaissance company to scout the coastal road from Kurawa to Nakadomori, and, at that point, to cross the isthmus to Ishikawa. Supported and transported

by a reinforced platoon from the 6th Tank Battalion, the tank-infantry reconnaissance force completed the assignment and returned to its lines before nightfall. In the course of the patrol, the Marines made no enemy contacts and were fired upon only once from the vicinity of Ishikawa.

While 1/4, the right battalion, had relatively easy going most of the day, 3/4 on the left lagged behind because of the increasingly difficult terrain. When the division attack ceased at 1700, General Shepherd's troops were tied in with the 1st Division nearly a mile northeast of Kubo.

Following its sweep of Zampa Misaki, Lieutenant Colonel Moreau's 1/29 occupied new reserve positions east of Yontan airfield from which it could support either division assault regiment. At 2000, when IIIAC warned of an imminent enemy airborne attack, Moreau was reinforced with a tank company, which was deployed to defend the airfield by 2300; no Japanese paratroops or airborne infantry landed that night.

The only notable enemy activity experienced by the 1st Division during the hours of darkness, 2-3 April, occurred in the 7th Marines sector where the Japanese attempted extensive infiltration. In the fire fight that ensued, 7 Marines were killed and 7 wounded, while approximately 20-25 of the would-be infiltrators perished.

This brief flurry was not an indication of an imminent major engagement, for when del Valle's three combat teams pushed forward on 3 April they met only light opposition on the left and virtually none on the right. "Our ever-widening zone of action prohibited the

'hand-in-hand' advance of some small island operations and our units were able to maintain contact and clear their areas only by patrolling to the flanks and front."<sup>30</sup> With the resumption of the advance, motorized units of the 1st Reconnaissance Company began a series of patrols which were to encompass almost all of the division zone of action. In the morning, the Ikebaru-Napunja area was reconnoitered, after which the company was ordered to proceed down the Katchin Peninsula. Completing this mission by 1300, Lieutenant Powell's scouts were ordered up the east coast to Hizaonna and to return to division lines before dark. During the entire trip the only sign of enemy activity was a lightly held tank trap.

All units of the division were ordered to halt at 1700 on ground most favorable for defense. On the left, the 7th Marines had pushed forward against moderate opposition over increasingly difficult terrain. As the regimental commander later stated:

The movement from the west coast landing beaches of Okinawa across the island to the east coast was most difficult because of the rugged terrain crossed. It was physically exhausting for personnel who had been on transports for a long time. It also presented initially an almost impossible supply problem in the Seventh's zone of action because of the lack of roads.<sup>31</sup>

Despite these hardships, Snedeker's troops gained 2,700 yards of enemy territory and dug in for the night after overrunning a strongpoint from which heavy mortar, 20mm, and small arms

fire had been received. Shortly thereafter, Colonel Snedeker received permission to exploit what appeared to be an apparent enemy weakness and to continue the attack after the rest of the division had ended it for the day. He then ordered his reserve battalion to pass between 1/7 and 2/7 and advance towards the village of Hizaonna, on the high ground overlooking the east coast.<sup>32</sup>

The major fighting in this advance occurred when the 81mm mortar platoon was unable to keep up with the rest of 3/7. Company K, following the mortars, became separated from the main body upon reaching a road fork near Inubi after night had fallen. When he became aware of the situation, Lieutenant Colonel Hurst radioed the company to remain where it was and to dig in after its repeated attempts to rejoin the battalion were defeated by darkness and unfamiliar terrain. An estimated platoon-sized enemy group then engaged the Marines in a heavy fire fight, which continued through the night as

<sup>30</sup> *1st MarDiv G-3 Jnl*, 3Apr45; Col Edward H. Hurst, interview with HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, dtd 3Mar55. "The forced march of over three miles of the Third Battalion, Seventh Marines to Hizaonna, late on 3 April is noteworthy. Orders for the march were not issued until about 1430 on that date. Information received from the Division Reconnaissance Company indicated no substantial enemy strength on the east coast in the Seventh's zone. What might be encountered from the front line to the east coast was unknown. The march was made over rugged unfamiliar terrain, with the probable expectancy of meeting enemy forces at any time, and it resulted in advance elements, including the battalion CO reaching Hizaonna at 1830, 3 April. Hizaonna was at that time well beyond our front lines. . . ." *Snedeker ltr 1947*.

<sup>30</sup> *1st MarDiv SAR*, chap VII, OpAnx, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Col Edward W. Snedeker ltr to CMC, dtd 27Mar47, hereafter *Snedeker ltr 1947*.

the Japanese effectively employed mortars, machine guns, and grenades against the isolated unit. By noon on 4 April, a rescue team from 3/7 was able to bring the situation under control and the company was withdrawn after having sustained 3 killed and 24 wounded.<sup>33</sup>

With its right flank anchored on Nakagusuku Wan, 1/1 held a line sealing off two-thirds of the Katchin Peninsula. The 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, meeting negligible resistance from armed civilians, occupied the high ground immediately west of Gushikawa, where the eastern shore could be covered by fire. During the day's gains, "supply had been almost nonexistent and the troops were without water and still depending on the food they landed with."<sup>34</sup>

The advance of the 5th Marines gained momentum throughout the day, the troops having met only a four-man enemy patrol. The 1st Battalion reached Agina, where 3/5 was committed on the right to contact 2/1. One thousand yards away, on the left of the regiment 2/5 occupied the village of Tengan and then advanced to the east coast of Okinawa.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Hurst interview, *op. cit.*; 1st MarDiv Interviews, Co K, 7th Mar. This last source consists of a series of interviews conducted by Sergeants Kenneth A. Shutts and Paul Trilling, historians assigned to the 1st Marine Division for the Okinawa operation. These interviews form a valuable record of the important actions of the campaign at the small-unit level.

<sup>34</sup> *1st Mar SAR*, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> "This was accomplished by 1700 on 3 April. 2/5, commanded by LtCol W. E. Benedict, had marched approximately eight miles over hilly country since 0800 when they left their 2 April position near Ishimine." Col John H. Griebel ltr to CMC, dtd 18Oct54.

By the end of L plus 2, the 1st Marine Division had driven to the coast, advancing 3,000–5,000 yards, and thus placed its lines 8–13 days ahead of the ICEBERG schedule. The 6th Division, meanwhile, had moved through difficult and heavily broken terrain honey-combed with numerous caves to gain 3,500–7,000 yards of enemy ground in its zone.

At dark on 3 April, the 6th Division left flank was anchored at the base of the Ishikawa Isthmus, thereby placing the Tenth Army 12 days ahead of schedule in this area. During this same day, the XXIV Corps had reached the eastern coast in force and its units had begun reorganizing and regrouping for the attack to the south. The 7th Infantry Division had secured the Awashi Peninsula, and pivoting southward in a coordinated move with the 96th Division, secured an additional 3,000 yards before the end of the day. In the vicinity of Kuba-saki, the 32d Infantry came up against its first real opposition on Okinawa, when it made contact with an enemy force estimated at 385 men. The regiment overran the enemy position and finally took Kuba-saki. After completing the wheel to the right, the 96th Division reorganized its front lines, putting its units in position for the southerly drive.

While observation planes, OYs (Consolidated-Vultee Sentinels), operated from Yontan airfield during the day, the 6th Engineer Battalion and the 58th Seabees continued working on the field. An F6F (Grumman Hellcat) from the carrier *Hancock* made an emergency landing at 1110, and the pilot reported that, in his opinion, the runway could

satisfactorily accommodate all types of carrier planes. The other runways were expected to be operational for fighter-type aircraft by noon on the 4th.

Because of the very favorable situation that had developed during the day, General Buckner removed all restrictions he had placed on movement past the L plus 10 line and ordered IIIAC to seize the L plus 25 line at the earliest possible time. Geiger then ordered the 6th Marine Division to continue the attack on 4 April and to take the L plus 15 line, prepared to continue the advance to the L plus 20 line. General del Valle's division was ordered to advance to the L plus 20 line. (See Map 7.)

The continuing cool and clear weather on 4 April again served as a welcome change from the torrid humidity of the Philippines and the Solomons. Following a quiet night, broken only by the fighting in the Inubi area, the IIIAC jumped off on schedule at 0730 on L plus 3.

As the 6th Division pushed forward, no enemy hindered the 4th and 22d Marines advance to the L plus 15 line. General Geiger's reserve, the 29th Marines (Colonel Victor F. Bleasdale), less its 1st Battalion, had reverted to division control earlier, and Shepherd assigned it as his reserve. When it became apparent that the day's objectives would be reached by noon, the assault regiments were ordered to continue beyond the L plus 15 line to additionally assigned division objectives.

With all three battalions in the assault, the 22d Marines reached their Phase I objective at 1250. Organized as a fast tank-infantry column, Lieutenant Colonel Woodhouse's 2/22 sped up the

west coastal road. All the while, he sent patrols inland along the route to maintain contact with 1/22 patrol columns in the interior of the regimental attack zone. On the right, the 3d Battalion reached Ishikawa before noon, having gradually pinched out the 4th Marines when that regiment reached the coast at about the same time. Colonel Shapley was then ordered to reconsolidate his unit in the Ishikawa area, and to prepare to support either division flank unit in the attack northward. In the course of the morning operations, exceedingly rough terrain, and the logistical support problems it posed, created greater obstacles to the advance than did the enemy.

At 1300, the attack up the Ishikawa Isthmus was resumed, with RCT-22 and 1/29 attached<sup>36</sup> taking over the entire division front from the west to the east coast. Advance was rapid in the afternoon as patrols met only scattered resistance until 1730, when a Japanese strongpoint, built around several heavy machine guns, fired upon a 3/22 patrol north of Yaka. Night defenses were not taken up until after this obstacle was reduced by units of Donohoo's 3/22 and Moreau's 1/29, the latter having assumed the 1/22 sector when Major Myers' unit was placed in regimental reserve.

When the 6th halted for the day, its Marines had advanced over 7,500 yards and held a line that stretched across the isthmus from a point just south of Yakada on the west coast to Yaka on

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<sup>36</sup> After being relieved of its Yontan airfield defense mission, 1/29 moved to Nakadomari in the morning and was attached to the 22d Marines at 1155, when it moved up to the lines.

the east. In this day's fighting, the increasingly rugged terrain forecast the difficulties to be faced during the march northward. Supply lines were strained almost to their limit as they were extended across numerous ravines and steep valleys in the mountainous interior. Despite this, the troops were fed and logistical replenishment continued as the division prepared to continue the advance the next day.

With the exception of the few enemy positions encountered in its push to the east coast, the 1st Marine Division still did not have a clear picture of what Japanese defenses lay ahead on 4 April. As on the day before, the attack jumped off without artillery preparation. Rapid progress with little resistance was the general order, except on the left where the 7th Marines was still busy with the enemy in the vicinity of Inubi. The 2d Battalion reached the east coast by 1130 and, shortly thereafter, made firm contact with the 4th Marines. On the extreme right of the regiment, light but stubborn enemy fire enfladed the 1/7 right flank, and delayed its arrival at the coast until 1700. Because of the rapid advance of the regiment over a roadless terrain, Colonel Snedeker requested supply airdrops during the day. The first drop was made at Hizaonna at 1400, about the same time that General del Valle's new CP was opening at a point between Ikebaru and Napunja.

After dark, when the 7th Marines was consolidating its positions on the L plus 15 line, the enemy began numerous attempts at infiltrating American lines. Although 45 Japanese were killed as they probed the regimental positions, it was difficult to obtain any information

regarding the units represented by these men, who employed rifles, grenades, bayonets, and sharply pointed bamboo spears, which the Marines promptly dubbed "idiot sticks."<sup>37</sup>

In the center of the division line, the 5th Marines reached the shores of Kimmu Wan by early afternoon, when the battalions consolidated their positions and established firm contact with all flanking units. The same day, the 1st Marines occupied Katchin Peninsula in orderly fashion by noon and set up its defenses. Once these two regiments were in position on the L plus 15 line, they initiated patrolling to the rear to eliminate bypassed positions, a task in which the reconnaissance company and the division reserve (3/1) also participated.

That evening, 3/1 was ordered to take over the defense of Yontan airfield from the 29th Marines on 5 April. Tentative plans were formulated to release the 7th Marines to IIIAC in order to assist the 6th Division in its drive north. The next day, the 7th Marines (less Hurst's 3/7, which was attached to the 5th Marines) went into IIIAC reserve with orders to occupy and defend the village of Ishikawa, pending further tactical developments.<sup>38</sup>

In the course of its four-day drive across Okinawa, the 1st Marine Division found only negligible resistance, and this from Japanese units of undetermined strength employing delaying or rearguard tactics. The question remained: Where was the enemy? The division had killed 79 Japanese, cap-

<sup>37</sup> *1st MarDiv SAR*, chap. VII, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> "A History of the 7th Marines on Okinawa Shima," p. 7, encl A to *Snedeker ltr 1947*, hereafter *7th Mar Hist*.

tured 2 prisoners of war (POWs), and encountered 500-600 civilians, who were quickly interned.

To the south of the 1st Division, the tactical situation in the XXIV Corps zone had been undergoing radical change. (See Map 7.) Army assault divisions had aggressively exploited the initial lack of enemy resistance. During the same time, they were hampered less by supply difficulties than the Marine divisions had been. Once General Hodge's divisions had wheeled to the right on 3 April for the drive southward, the lines were reorganized and preparations made for fresh assault units to effect passage of the lines the next day. The corps was now ready for the Phase I southern drive.

The 7th Division pushed forward on 4 April only to meet stiffening resistance from hostile artillery-supported infantry at Hill 165.<sup>39</sup> After a day's fighting, the division drove the Japanese from this dominant piece of terrain and continued forward to net approximately 1,000 yards for the day. Meanwhile, in the 96th Division zone, Army infantry battalions were held up by reinforced enemy company strongpoints several times during the day. Heavy Japanese machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire impeded the advance, but by the night of 4 April, the XXIV Corps had seized the L plus 10 line, which had been originally designated the southernmost limit of the Tenth Army beachhead.

<sup>39</sup> The reader should keep in mind the fact that elevation was expressed in meters on the basic 1:25,000 map used for Okinawa. When Hill 165's metric height is converted to feet, 544, it becomes a sizable hill.

An increasing volume of enemy defensive fires was placed on the Army divisions as they moved out for their fifth day of ground action. On the XXIV Corps left flank, resistance came mainly from small, scattered enemy groups in the hills and ridges bordering the east coast. In the 96th Division zone to the right, both assault regiments became heavily engaged with Japanese outpost strongpoints during L plus 4. About noon, an enemy counterattack was broken up by tank-artillery supported infantry action just when the right flank regiment of the 96th, the 383d Infantry, drove unsuccessfully against the first of a series of prepared ridge positions guarding the approaches to Kakazu. Four tanks were lost during the day's fighting, one to a mine and the others to enemy antitank fire. Compared to the long advances of the previous four days of ground action, the 96th Division was able to take only 400 yards on L plus 4.

#### *THE SWING NORTH*<sup>40</sup>

Although the Japanese forces in the south offered an increasingly stiff defense as their positions were uncovered, the exact whereabouts of the main enemy strength in the northern part of the island remained as clouded as was his order of battle. Even though Phase I of the ICEBERG plan did not specify any action beyond isolation of the area

<sup>40</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *CTF 51 AR*; *Tenth Army AR*; *IIIAC AR*; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *1st MarDiv G-3 Jnl*; *1st Mar SAR*; *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph I&II*; *6th MarDiv Jnl, Ph I&II*; *4th Mar SAR, Ph I&II*; *22d Mar SAR, Ph I&II*; *29th Mar SAR, Ph I&II*.

above the Ishikawa Isthmus for the IIIAC, General Buckner believed that it would be profitable to exploit initial Marine successes. As a result, on 5 April he ordered IIIAC to reconnoiter Yabuchi Shima, to conduct a vigorous reconnaissance northwards to the Motobu Peninsula, and to initiate preparations for the early completion of Phase II. (See Map II, Map Section.)

At the same time that the 6th Division conducted its reconnaissance up the isthmus, the 1st Division entered a period devoted primarily to defensive activity. Supplies were brought up from the rear, positions were improved and camouflaged, and all units began heavy patrolling to the rear. At noon on L plus 4, a 1st Marines patrol waded across the reef to Yabuchi Shima from the Katchin Peninsula, captured five *Boeitai*, and reported the presence of some 350 civilians.

The nearly perfect weather which had prevailed since L-Day, deteriorated with light rain over scattered areas in the early evening of the 5th. Although there was no evidence that it was organized, enemy activity behind the lines increased during the day but only from small separated groups apparently operating independently of each other. Of this period, a regimental commander noted:

There [were] almost daily patrol contacts with well-armed enemy groups. . . . Some of these groups were wandering aimlessly about while others occupied well defended, organized, and concealed positions. These patrol operations were extremely valuable in giving to the officers and men of the regiment added confidence in each other and helped all to reach a peak of physical perfection . . . independent

patrols . . . often under fire, added greatly to the ability of the leaders of small units.<sup>41</sup>

Because it was necessary to move supplies forward to support the advance, the 6th Division delayed H-Hour on the 5th until 0900. At that time, armor-supported infantry columns were dispatched on deep reconnaissances up both sides of the isthmus, the 6th Reconnaissance Company on the left (west) flank and Company F, 4th Marines on the right. The latter advanced 14 miles before turning back in the late afternoon. During the day, the patrol had been delayed three times by undefended roadblocks but met no opposition until the tanks entered Chimu, where two of the enemy encountered were killed and a Japanese fuel truck was destroyed. The drive up the other side of the island was unopposed, but the tanks could not bypass a destroyed bridge at Onna. The reconnaissance company, forced to continue on to Nakama by foot, returned to the lines that evening.

While 6th Division mobile covering forces searched out routes of advance, the assault battalions rapidly moved forward, detaching companies as necessary to reduce bypassed enemy pockets of resistance inland. Although the terrain had become more difficult to negotiate and the enemy increasingly active, the division gained another 7,000 yards. The 22d Marines held the general line Atsutabaru-Chimu, with the 4th Marines (less 1/4 bivouacked at Ishikawa)<sup>42</sup> located in assembly areas just behind the front line, prepared to pass through early the next day. At 1000 on

<sup>41</sup> *Snedeker ltr 1947.*

<sup>42</sup> *1/4 SAR, Ph I&II, p. 7.*



*HEAVY UNDERGROWTH on the Ishikawa Isthmus hinders the progress of a 4th Marines patrol advancing to the north of Okinawa. (USMC 116527)*



*GRINNING TROOPS of the 29th Marines in M-7s heading for Chuta in their drive towards Motobu Peninsula. (USMC 117507)*

the 5th, the 29th Marines were released to parent control by IIIAC and moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Onna.

As the 6th Division began its dash up the isthmus on 6 April, the 7th Marines in corps reserve patrolled the division zone south of the Nakadomari-Ishikawa line<sup>43</sup> while the 6th Reconnaissance Company mopped up enemy remnants from this boundary north to the Yakada-Yaka line. After its lines had been passed by the 29th Marines on the left and the 4th Marines on the right, the 22d reverted to division reserve and began patrolling back to the area of responsibility of the reconnaissance company.

Because there were only a few roads inland, Colonel Shapley planned to move rapidly up the main road along the shore, detaching patrols from the advance guard to reconnoiter to their source all roads and trails into the mountainous and generally uninhabited interior. In order to maintain control during the anticipated rapid advance, the regimental march CP moved out in a jeep convoy at the head of the main body. By 1300, 2/4 had been used up by the detachment of small patrols, and the 3d Battalion then passed through in accordance with the prearranged plan of leapfrogging the battalions. When the regiment halted for the day at 1600, it had advanced seven miles, encountering only scattered enemy stragglers. The supply operations of the 4th Marines on L plus 5 were hampered more than

usual by the fact that three bridges along the route had been bombed out earlier by friendly air.

The 4th Marines resumed operations the next morning deployed in the same manner in which it had halted the night before—3/4, 1/4, and 2/4 in that order. The advance on L plus 6 was virtually a repeat of the previous day as the regiment continued the push up the east coast, the lead battalion dissipating its strength with the dispatch of patrols into the interior. As a result, the 1st Battalion (Major Bernard W. Green) passed the 3d at noon and led the way to the regimental objective, opposed only by the difficult terrain, poor roads, and fumbling enemy defense measures.

Nearly all such efforts failed, however, for in very few instances was the 6th Division drive slowed. Enemy defensive engineering efforts were almost amateurish, for abatis, with neither mines nor booby traps attached or wired in place, were pushed aside easily by tank-dozers or bulldozers. Even basic defensive combat engineering principles were violated by the Japanese, who did not distribute their mines in roads and defiles in depth. They even failed to cover with either infantry fire or wire what they had placed. On the whole, the mines were little more than a nuisance and caused but few casualties.<sup>44</sup> Bridges were often incompletely destroyed by Japanese demolitions, and Marine engineers were able to save valuable time by utilizing the remaining structural members as foundations for new spans in hasty bridge construction.

<sup>43</sup> Effective at 0600 on 7 April, the rear boundary of the 6th Division was readjusted to exclude the area south of this line. IIIAC OperO 2-45, dtd 6Apr45.

<sup>44</sup> *6th EngrBn SAR, Ph I&II*, chap VIII, p. 3.

When the 6th Division drive towards the north began, each assault regiment was assigned one company of the 6th Engineer Battalion in direct support. A platoon from each of these companies was attached to advance guards to clear roadblocks, remove mines, and build by-passes for combat vehicles around demolished bridges. The remainder of each company followed up the advance, repairing and replacing bridges and widening narrow thoroughfares wherever possible to accommodate two-way traffic. Following closely in the wake of the assault regiments, the third company of the engineer battalion further improved roads and bridges.

At the end of the Ishikawa Isthmus, where the mountains came down to the sea, engineer services were in even greater demand as they were required to widen roads that were little more than trails.<sup>45</sup> The infantry advance was slowed by the terrain as well as by the near-physical exhaustion of the patrolling Marines, who had been going up and down the thickly covered broken ground. Despite this tortuous journey, the 4th Marines had made another seven miles by the late afternoon of 7 April. Then, just north of Ora, the 1st Battalion set up a perimeter defense with its flanks secured on the coast. Colonel Shapley's CP and weapons company were located in the village itself, while 3/4 and 2/4 were deployed in defensive perimeters at 1,000-yard intervals down the road.

On the west coast, the 29th Marines had seized its next objective on 7

April, again with little difficulty. Advance armored reconnaissance elements reached Nago at noon to find the town leveled by naval gunfire, air, and artillery. Before dark, the regiment had cleared the ruins and organized positions on its outskirts.

As the advance northwards continued, the difficult road situation had made it imperative to locate forward unloading beaches from which the 6th Division could be supplied. (See Map II, Map Section.) When Nago was uncovered, it was found suitable for this purpose, and IIIAC requested the dispatch to this point of Marine maintenance shipping from the Hagushi anchorage. On 9 April, cargo was discharged for the first time at Nago, relieving the traffic congestion on the supply route up the coast from Hagushi.<sup>46</sup>

When planning for ICEBERG, General Shepherd had determined that Major Walker's company would be employed only in the reconnaissance mission for which it was best fitted and trained. In effect, the unit was intended to serve as the commanding general's mobile information agency. Pursuant to this decision, the reconnaissance company, supported and transported by tanks, was dispatched up the west coast road ahead of the 29th Marines in an effort to ascertain the character of Japanese strength on Motobu. After the company scouted Nago, it swung up the coastal road to Awa, and then, after retracing its steps to Nago, crossed the base of the peninsula in a northeasterly

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

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<sup>46</sup> *Blakelock ltr 1965.*

direction to Nakaoshi.<sup>47</sup> Before returning to Nago for the night, the patrol uncovered much more enemy activity than had been previously revealed in the division zone of action and had met several enemy groups that were either destroyed or scattered.

From the very beginning of the drive to the base of the Motobu Peninsula, the 15th Marines was employed so that each assault regiment had one artillery battalion in direct support and one in general support. The rapidity of the 6th Division advance during this phase of the campaign forced the artillery regiment to displace frequently, averaging one move a day for each battalion and the regimental headquarters. To keep up with the fast moving infantry, the artillerymen were forced to strip their combat equipment to a bare minimum; they substituted radio for wire communications and by leapfrogging units, managed to keep at least one artillery battalion in direct support of each assault infantry regiment throughout the advance up the isthmus.<sup>48</sup>

Augmenting the 15th Marines, 6th Division artillery support was reinforced by the 2d Provisional Field Artillery Group (Lieutenant Colonel Custis Burton, Jr.) which displaced to positions north of Nakadomari on the eve

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<sup>47</sup> It was later revealed that, as the 6th Reconnaissance Company moved westward toward Awa, the Japanese were close on the company's northern flank, observing its movement, and holding fire. CMC [Gen Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr.] memo to Head, HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, dtd 2Mar55, hereafter *Shepherd memo II*; LtCol Anthony Walker ltr to CMC, dtd 3Jun55.

<sup>48</sup> *15th Mar SAR, Ph I&II*, chap VII, n.p.

of the drive up the Ishikawa Isthmus. Four days later, when resistance on Motobu Peninsula began to stiffen, the 15th Marines was reinforced further by the attachment of the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion as artillery. The following day, the corps artillery supporting the advance was moved to Besena Misaki, a promontory at the southern extremity of Nago Wan, where it remained throughout the period of Marine operations in the north.<sup>49</sup>

### MOTOBU UNCOVERED

Owing to the lack of intelligence about the location of the enemy, and a Tenth Army order to avoid unwarranted destruction of civilian installations unless there was a clear indication or confirmation of enemy presence, naval gunfire support was not used extensively in the drive up the Ishikawa Isthmus. After 5 April, however, all IIIAC naval fire support was diverted to the 6th Division zone of action. As the Marines moved north, these ships kept pace, firing up the numerous ravines leading down to the beach. Each assault battalion was furnished a call-fire ship during the day, and each regiment was furnished a ship to fire illumination at night.<sup>50</sup>

The Tenth Army gained land-based air support when TAF squadrons from MAG-31 and -33 arrived ashore on 7

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<sup>49</sup> *IIIAC Arty AR*, pp. 20-21. At this time, LtCol Burton's group consisted of only the Headquarters Battery and the 7th 155mm Gun Battalion, as the remainder of the IIIAC Artillery gun and howitzer battalions had passed to XXIV Corps control on 7 April. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.



*JAPANESE 105MM GUN captured in the heart of Mount Yae Take had previously commanded the entire coastal road along southern Motobu Peninsula. (USMC 122207)*



*SUICIDE BOATS found at Unten Ko on 10 April by Marines of 2/29. Note warning that boats had been booby trapped. (USMC 127905)*

and 9 April.<sup>51</sup> The 6th Division did not need them immediately during the first two weeks in the north, however, for the division advance had been rapid and suitable targets scarce. Daylight combat air patrols were flown almost as soon as the squadrons landed, but strikes in support of ground operations did not begin until L plus 12, and then they were directed at Japanese targets in the XXIV Corps zone in the south. As enemy resistance stiffened on Motobu Peninsula, Marine air was called upon to destroy emplacements, observation posts, and troop concentrations.<sup>52</sup>

After the division had gained the base of the Motobu Peninsula and had begun extending reconnaissance operations to the west on 8 April, aerial observation and photo studies confirmed the fact that the enemy had chosen to make his final stand in the rugged mountains of the peninsula. In order to reduce this Japanese bastion, and at the same time maintain flank security and continue the drive to the northernmost tip of Okinawa, General Shepherd needed to reorient the axis of operations and re-deploy his forces. Consequently, the 22d Marines was taken out of division reserve and set up on a line across the island from Nakaoshi to Ora to cover the right and rear of the 29th Marines attacking to the west. Assembled near Ora, also, was the 4th Marines, which was positioned to support either the 29th Marines on Motobu or the 22d in the north.

<sup>51</sup> TAF WarD, Apr45.

<sup>52</sup> *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph I&II*, chap VII, p. 14. The 6th Division received its first TAF support missions of the campaign on L plus 16. TAF Periodic Rpt No. 2, dtd 20Apr45, p. 3.

During the next five days, the 4th and 22d Marines combed the interior and patrolled in the north, while the 29th probed westward to uncover the enemy defense.<sup>53</sup> On L plus 7, 2/29 moved northeast from Nago to occupy the small village of Gagusuku. The 1st Battalion, initially in reserve, was ordered to send one company to secure the village of Yamadadobaru, a mission accomplished by Company C at 0900. An hour later, the battalion as a whole was ordered to the aid of Company H, 3/29,<sup>54</sup> which had encountered heavy resistance in the vicinity of Narashido. By 1500, 1/29 had converged on this point and, despite heavy enemy machine gun and rifle fire, had reduced two strongpoints, after

<sup>53</sup> In this five-day sparring period "the 29th had a platoon of war dogs attached. These dogs gave an excellent account of themselves. Twenty-nine alerts were noted by the regimental S-3 section. All [alerts] enabled the Marine patrol involved to avoid a Japanese ambush. In one instance a patrol leader chose to ignore the dogs and was badly wounded." LtCol Angus M. Fraser ltr to CMC, dtd 24Mar55, hereafter *Fraser ltr. 2/29 SAR, Ph I&II*, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> "Prior to a reorganization of Marine divisions in the spring of 1944, each infantry battalion had five companies: headquarters, weapons, and three rifle companies. When the weapons companies (D, H, and M) were absorbed [by their respective battalions], the rifle companies retained their original alphabetical designations, so that the three battalions of a regiment had companies lettered: 1st Bn, A, B, and C; 2d Bn, E, F, and G; 3d Bn, I, K, and L. The 2d and 3d Bns of the 29th Mar, formed after this reorganization took place, were lettered straight through in sequence after 1/29. Therefore, the rifle companies of the 29th Mar were A, B, and C in the 1st Bn, D, E, and F in the 2d Bn, and G, H, and I in the 3d Bn." Nichols and Shaw, *Okinawa Victory*, p. 94n.

which Lieutenant Colonel Moreau's men dug in for the night.

Intending to locate the main enemy force on Motobu, the 29th Marines moved out on 9 April in three columns; the 3d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Erma A. Wright) on the left flank, the 2d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel William G. Robb) on the right flank, and Moreau's 1st Battalion up the mountainous center of the peninsula. All three columns encountered opposition almost immediately. This was an indication that the division may have at last hit the major enemy resistance in the north, and it was located in the area from Itomi west to Toguchi.

In the 3/29 zone on the left, roads were found to be virtually impassable as a result of effective enemy use of roadblocks, mines, and demolitions. The 6th Engineer Battalion reported that from Nago westward on the Motobu Peninsula the enemy had been even more destructive. They had demolished every bridge and blasted numerous tank traps in the roads. The Japanese had been careful to place these obstacles at points where no tank bypass could be constructed. Traps that had been made in the narrow coastal roads were put at the foot of cliffs where back fill was unavailable. Those in the valleys were always located where the road passed through rice paddies. When the crater was in a cliff road, trucks had to travel long distances to obtain fill for the hole.<sup>55</sup>

In the center, 1/29 was to occupy and defend Itomi before nightfall; about 600 yards short of the objective, however, the battalion was met by a strong

enemy force and compelled to dig in for the night in place. The north coast was patrolled as far as Nakasoni by Robb's 2d Battalion, which destroyed supply dumps and vehicles and dispersed small enemy groups. The battalion also scouted Yagachi Shima with negative results.

The next day, L plus 9, Robb's men seized Unten and its harbor, where the Japanese had established a midget submarine and torpedo boat base. The base had been abandoned and large amounts of equipment and supplies were left behind by approximately 150 Japanese naval personnel, who were reported to have fled inland to the mountains. Toguchi, on the other side of the peninsula, was captured by 3/29, which sent patrols inland to Manna. On 10 April, 1/29 pushed forward through Itomi, and on the high ground north of the town it uncovered numerous well-prepared positions from which the enemy had fled.

During the first two days of the drive to clear Motobu Peninsula, frequent enemy contacts were made in the difficult terrain northwest and southwest of Itomi. Night counterattacks increased in intensity; one particularly strong attack, supported by artillery, mortars, machine guns, and 20mm dual-purpose cannon, struck the 1/29 defense perimeter on the night of 10-11 April and was not broken up until dawn.

Patrols from 2/29 were sent out on 11 April to make contact with 1/29 near Itomi. They met little opposition but substantiated previous intelligence estimates locating the main Japanese battle position in an area between Itomi and Toguchi. As a result of this verification, 2/29 (less Company F) was recalled from the north coast and ordered to set

<sup>55</sup> 6th EngrBn SAR, Ph I&II, pt VII, p. 4.

up defensive installations and tie them in with 1/29 on the high ground near Itomi. Company F continued patrolling. During the day, 1/29 patrols scouted just to the north and northeast of Itomi and met only light resistance. On the other hand, 3/29, moving inland to contact the 1st Battalion, ran into heavily defended enemy positions at Manna and was forced to withdraw under fire to Toguchi.

In compliance with Admiral Turner's expressed desire that Bise Saki was to be captured early for use as a radar site, the 6th Reconnaissance Company was ordered to explore the cape area on 12 April, and to seize and hold the point unless opposed by overwhelming force. As anticipated, resistance was light, and the area was captured and held. That evening, Company F, 29th Marines, reinforced the division scouts. Overall command of this provisional force was then assumed by the reconnaissance company commander.<sup>56</sup>

In order to fix more definitely the hostile battle position, the 29th Marines continued probing operations. On the 12th, the 1st and 2d Battalions were disposed in positions near Itomi, and 3/29 was located in the vicinity of Toguchi. (See Map 8.) Company G was sent north to contact the reinforced division reconnaissance company and to meet 2/29 at Imadomari. Company H was ordered east to meet 1/29 at Manna, and Company I was ordered to patrol to the high ground south and east of Toguchi and to remain there overnight. As these last two companies pro-

ceeded on their missions, they came under intense fire that prevented the completion of their assignments unless they were to risk sustaining unacceptable casualties. Under cover of prompt call fires from the destroyer *Preston*, LVT(A) fire, and an 81mm mortar barrage, Company I was withdrawn while Company H served as rear guard. Both companies had organized a perimeter defense at Toguchi by midafternoon when the battalion CP received considerable artillery and mortar fire. The day's action cost the battalion 9 killed and 34 wounded.<sup>57</sup>

Because of this significant enemy reaction in the Toguchi area, Company G, upon its arrival at Imadomari at 1415, was recalled by the battalion. When Company H had been hit in the morning, 3/22 was alerted for possible commitment, and in the afternoon it was ordered to assemble in division reserve at Awa. Battalion headquarters and Companies I and K completed the motorized move after 1700, and L arrived at 0900 the following morning.

By the night of 12 April, General Shepherd's division was confronted with a fourfold task: to continue occupation and defense of the Bise area; to secure the line Kawada Wan-Shana Wan and prevent enemy movement through that area; to seize, occupy, and defend Hedo Misaki, the northernmost tip of Okinawa; and to destroy the Japanese forces on Motobu Peninsula.<sup>58</sup> On 10 April, 1/22 had established a perimeter defense at Shana Wan from which it

<sup>56</sup> 6th MarDiv Jnl, Ph I&II, 12Apr45.

<sup>57</sup> 3/29 SAR, Ph I&II, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> IIIAC OperO 4-45, dtd 12 Apr45.

conducted vigorous patrolling eastward to the coast and north towards Hedo Misaki. By the 12th, battalion patrols had contacted the 4th Marines on the east coast; 3/4 was ordered to move to Kawada the next day.

During the period 8–12 April, the 4th Marines, located near Ora, patrolled all areas within a 3,000-yard radius of the regimental bivouac. On the 10th, Company K was sent north along the east coast on extended patrol after which it was to rejoin its battalion at Kawada. While in the field, the company relied on LVTs for daily support and evacuation. In a week's time, the patrol had travelled 28 miles up the coast.

Assigned the capture and defense of Hedo Misaki, Woodhouse's 2/22 moved rapidly up the west coast on 13 April in a tank- and truck-mounted infantry column, "beating down scattered and ineffective resistance."<sup>59</sup> At 2110, the 2/22 commander reported that a patrol had entered Hedo by way of the coastal road and that the entry had been opposed only by 10 *Boeitai*.<sup>60</sup> As soon as the rest of the battalion arrived, a base was set up and patrols were sent out to make contact with the 4th Marines advancing up the east coast.

At the end of the second week on Okinawa, on Friday, 13 April (12 April in the States), ICEBERG forces learned of the death that day of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Memorial serv-

ices were held on board American vessels and behind Tenth Army lines; those who could attend these services did so if the fighting permitted. One senior officer of the 1st Marine Division said later:

It was amazing and very striking how the men reacted. We held services, but services did not seem enough. The men were peculiarly sober and quiet all that day and the next. Plainly each of them was carrying an intimate sorrow of the deepest kind, for they paid it their highest tribute, the tribute of being unwilling to talk about it, of leaving how they felt unsaid.<sup>61</sup>

### THE BATTLE FOR YAE TAKE

While three of its four assigned missions in the north were being accomplished by extensive patrolling against little or no opposition, the 6th Marine Division found that destroying the firmly entrenched bulk of the enemy was becoming an increasingly difficult problem. Company I had apparently touched a sensitive nerve during its probings near Toguchi, judging by the immediate enemy reaction. This assumption was confirmed on the night of 12–13 April, when the 29th Marines encountered some English-speaking Okinawans, who had at one time lived in Hawaii.

The Marines were told that there was a concentration of 1,000 Japanese on the high ground overlooking the Manna-Toguchi road south of the Manna River. The civilians said further that the enemy force was commanded by a Colonel Udo, and that it contained an artillery unit under a Captain Kiruyama.<sup>62</sup> Previous

<sup>59</sup> Cass, *6th MarDivHist*, p. 57. General Buckner wanted this area captured early to gain a radar and fighter-director site. *CTF 51 AR*, pt III, p. 37.

<sup>60</sup> *6th MarDiv Jnl*, Ph I&II, 13Apr45.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in McMillan, *The Old Breed*, p. 368.

<sup>62</sup> *6th MarDiv Jnl*, Ph I&II, 13Apr45.

reports of enemy order of battle were corroborated by the operations of strong combat patrols; the 6th Division now firmly fixed the Japanese defenses in an area some six by eight miles surrounding the rugged and dominating Mount Yae Take.<sup>63</sup> (See Map 8.)

The ground around this towering 1,200-foot-high peak prohibited extensive maneuvering and completely favored the defense. Yae Take was the peninsula's key terrain feature and its heights commanded the nearby landscape, the outlying islands, and all of Nago Wan. The steep and broken approaches to the mountain would deny an attacker any armor support. Infantry was sure to find the going difficult over the nearly impassable terrain. The Japanese defenses had been intelligently selected and thoroughly organized over an obviously long period. All natural or likely avenues of approach were heavily mined and covered by fire.

It was soon concluded that approximately 1,500 men were defending the area and that the garrison, named the *Udo Force* after its commander, was built around elements of the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade*. Included in this group were infantry, machine gun units, light and medium artillery, Okinawan conscripts, and naval personnel from Unten Ko. In addition to 75mm and 150mm artillery pieces, there were two 6-inch naval guns capable of bearing on the coastal road for 10 miles south of

<sup>63</sup> Since "take" translated is mountain, *Mount Yae Take* is redundant, but was commonly used by participants of the battle.

Motobu, on Ie Shima, and all of Nago Wan.<sup>64</sup>

General Shepherd's estimate of the situation indicated that reduction of the Yae Take redoubt was beyond the capabilities of a single reinforced infantry regiment. In face of this conclusion, the 4th Marines (less 3/4) was ordered to move from the east coast to Yofuke. The 29th Marines was ordered to continue developing the enemy positions by vigorous patrolling on 13 April and to deploy for an early morning attack on the next day.<sup>65</sup>

Complying with General Shepherd's orders, Colonel Bleasdale again attempted to clear the Itomi-Toguchi road<sup>66</sup> and join his 1st and 3d Battalions. As elements of 1/29 moved out of Itomi towards Manna, they were ambushed and hit hard again by the 20mm cannon fire coming from the commanding heights. Probing north from Awa, 3/22 patrols also came under fire. Before these patrols could withdraw under the cover of their battalion 81mm mortars, an hour-long fire fight ensued. Adding to the general harassment from the enemy, artillery fire was placed on 3/22 positions in the afternoon.

At this same time, Japanese counter-battery fire was delivered against the

<sup>64</sup> "The 77th Infantry Division on Ie Shima was pleased when 'Mt. Yae Take' was captured with its two 6-inch naval guns." LtGen Andrew D. Bruce ltr to Asst G-3, HQMC, dtd 28Oct65, hereafter *Bruce ltr 1965*. At the time that the battle for Yae Take was shaping up, the 77th was fully involved with landing operations on Ie Shima.

<sup>65</sup> *6th MarDiv Jnl, Ph I&II*, 13Apr45.

<sup>66</sup> MajGen Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., memo for the OIC, HistDiv, HQMC, dtd 3Oct47.



emplaced artillery of 2/15 (Major Nat M. Pace). This heavy bombardment inflicted 32 casualties, including two battery commanders and the executive officer of a third battery, and destroyed the battalion ammunition dump and two 105mm howitzers.<sup>67</sup> Air strikes were called in on the suspected sources of the fire and 3/22 dispatched patrols in an attempt to locate the enemy mortar batteries. Fires and exploding ammunition made the Marine artillery position untenable, so Pace's men withdrew to alternate positions.<sup>68</sup>

Earlier in the day, the 4th Marines (less 3/4) began its move to Yofuke with Hayden's 2d Battalion in the lead. The west coast was gained after a difficult hike over primitive roads, but Hayden was ordered to continue the march to a point on the southwest corner of the peninsula just below Toguchi, and the battalion arrived there at 1700. Green's 1st Battalion arrived at Yofuke at 1630 and, while digging in for the night, was ordered to move to a position just west of Awa. This displacement was accomplished just prior to darkness by shutting the battalion by truck, a company at a time. When nightfall came, the 4th Marines was disposed with the 1st and 2d Battalions in perimeter defense, a little less than three miles apart on the southwest coast of Motobu; the 3d Battalion was 20 miles away on the east coast; and regimental headquarters was set up at Yofuke with the Weapons Company.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> *15th Mar SAR, Ph I&II*, chap X, n.p.; LtCol Nat M. Pace ltr to CMC, dtd 22Mar55.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Maj Orville V. Bergren ltr to CMC, dtd 6Feb48, hereafter *Bergren ltr.*

Based on his original estimate of the situation, General Shepherd planned a coordinated attack for 14 April when the 4th Marines, with 3/29 attached, would advance inland to the east. At the same time, the 29th Marines (less 3/29) would drive to the west and southwest from the center of the peninsula. In effect, this was a situation where two assault regiments attacked a target from directly opposing positions. The danger of overlapping supporting fires was lessened, in this case, by the intervention of the high Yae Take mass. Nevertheless, success of this rare maneuver required close and careful coordination of all supporting arms. (See Map 8.)

In the 4th Marines zone of action, Colonel Shapley's troops were ordered initially to seize a 700-foot-high ridge about 1,200 yards inland and dominating the west coast and its road. It was immediately behind this ridge that Company I of 3/29 had been mauled on the 12th. Intermittent machine gun fire had been received from this area since that time.

The attack jumped off at 0830 on the 14th with 3/29 on the left, 2/4 on the right, and 1/4 initially in regimental reserve. Preceded by an intense artillery, aerial, and naval bombardment, the Marines advanced against surprisingly light resistance. Disregarding scattered Japanese machine gun, mortar, and light artillery fire, the Marines gained the ridge before noon with the left flank of 3/29 anchored to a very steep slope.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> *4th Mar SAR, Ph I&II*, p. 12; *2/4 SAR, Ph I&II*, p. 7; *3/29 SAR, Ph I&II*, p. 4.

In order to protect his open right flank, Colonel Shapley moved 1/4 up to an assembly area to the right rear of 2/4. Company C was ordered to take a dominating ridge 1,000 yards to the right front of the 2d Battalion. By noon the company made contact with small enemy groups and soon thereafter began receiving mortar and machine gun fire. Company A was then committed on the left of Company C and the advance was continued.

At the same time, 2/4 and 3/29 resumed the attack to seize the next objective, another ridge 1,000 yards to the front. As the troops headed into the low ground approaching the height, enemy resistance began to stiffen appreciably even though the advance was again preceded by heavy naval gunfire and artillery barrages, and two air strikes. The ground, ideally suited for defense, consisted of broken terrain covered with scrub conifers and tangled underbrush, and the Japanese exploited this advantage to the utmost.

The enemy defense was comprised of small, concealed groups which formed covering screens to the main positions. The Japanese employed every possible stratagem to delay and disorganize the advance, and to mislead the attackers as to the location of the main battle position. Enemy soldiers would lie in a concealed position with their weapons zeroed in on a portion of the trail over which the Marines would have to pass. After allowing a sizable force to pass without interference, the enemy would open up on what they considered a choice target. When a company commander passed the ambush point with

his headquarters section, the machine guns opened up, killing him and several other nearby Marines. There were many officer casualties. It was in this manner that the commander of 1/4 was killed in an area where there had been no firing for over half an hour. No one else was hurt, though Major Green's operations and intelligence officers were standing on either side of him. Lieutenant Colonel Fred D. Beans, regimental executive officer, assumed command of the battalion.

Although the hills and ravines were apparently swarming with Japanese, it was difficult to close with them. "It was like fighting a phantom enemy," stated one Marine officer.<sup>71</sup> The small enemy groups, usually armed with a heavy Hotchkiss machine gun and several light Nambu machine guns, frequently changed positions in the dense undergrowth. When fired upon, furious Marines raked the area from where the volleys had come. After laboriously working their way to the suspected enemy position, the Marines came upon only an occasional bloodstain on the ground; they found neither live nor dead Japanese.

Company G of 2/4 made the first strong contact with the enemy at 1350 when it came under rifle, machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire. Less than five minutes later, Company E began receiving similar treatment. After being spotted, a Japanese artillery piece was silenced by naval gunfire and artillery

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<sup>71</sup> Maj Orville V. Bergren, "School Solutions on Motobu," *Marine Corps Gazette*, v. 29, no. 12 (Dec45), p. 3, hereafter Bergren, "School Solutions."

brought to bear on it.<sup>72</sup> Despite heavy casualties in Company G and stubborn enemy delaying tactics, Hayden's battalion drove the covering forces back and took the ridge with a frontal attack combined with an envelopment from the right. By 1630, the attack had halted with both 3/29 and 2/4 on the regimental objective and 1/4 on the high ground to the right. Contact was then established all along the line.

East of Yae Take, the 29th Marines jumped off from Itomi in a column of battalions to clear the Itomi-Toguchi road and to eliminate the strongpoints that patrols had discovered the previous four days. (See Map 8.) As the attack developed, it became apparent that an advance in a westerly direction would be both difficult and costly. The axis of the attack was reoriented, therefore, to the southwest in order to take advantage of the high ground. With Lieutenant Colonel Moreau's 1st Battalion leading, the 29th Marines advanced 800 yards up steep slopes against determined enemy resistance. By late afternoon, 1/29 had become pinned down by overwhelming fire from the high ground to its front. The 2d Battalion was committed on the left flank to strengthen the defense and the troops dug in for the night.

When it was relieved during the day by 1/22, 3/4 made a motor march from its east coast position to relieve 3/22 in division reserve. The latter then re-

turned to its patrol base at Majiia.

The following day, L plus 14, Colonel William J. Whaling assumed command of the 29th Marines from Colonel Bleasdale, and the regimental CP displaced to Itomi.<sup>73</sup> During the day, the regiment consolidated its position and organized defensive positions on the high ground. (See Map 9.) Constant pressure in the rear of Yae Take was maintained by vigorous patrolling which assisted the 4th Marines on the other side of the mountain. At 1600, heavy 20mm cannon fire began raining down on the battalion command posts<sup>74</sup> and, about the same time, enemy forces unsuccessfully attempted to infiltrate 2/29 lines under the cover of grenade, rifle, and mortar fire. By 1700, 2/29 had tied in with the 1st Battalion, and shortly after was able to stem the forces of the attack, but not before 35 Marines had become casualties.<sup>75</sup> Artillery and mortar fire, and naval gunfire from the main and secondary batteries of the *Colorado* were placed on the suspected 20mm cannon emplacements and silenced them for a time.<sup>76</sup>

When the 4th Marines began its attack at 0700 on the 15th, it was in the same formation in which it had halted the previous night. The advance was resisted by small scattered groups such as those that opposed the Marines the day before. At noon, as the regiment approached the half-way mark to that day's objective, Japanese resistance be-

<sup>72</sup> The piece, however, was not destroyed as the Japanese had employed their familiar tactic of firing three or four rounds from a position at the mouth of a cave, and then withdrawing the weapon back into the tunnel, where counter-battery fire could not reach it. *2/4 SAR, Ph I&II*, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> Col William J. Whaling ltr to CMC, dtd 16Dec47, hereafter *Whaling ltr.*

<sup>74</sup> *29th Mar SAR, Ph I&II*, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> CO, USS *Colorado* (BB-45) Rpt, ser 002, dtd 6Jun45, p. 29 (OAB, NHD).



came markedly stiffer. From caves and pillboxes emplaced in dominating terrain, the enemy poured down effective fire as the assaulting units climbed the steep mountainside. (See Map 9.)

As 3/29 pushed forward some 900 yards to the east and south, it engaged in numerous fire fights while it received intense machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire. An enemy strongpoint on Hill 210, 500 yards to the battalion right front, held up the advance. In addition to well-dug-in machine guns and mortars, the position also contained the mountain gun that had been pinpointed the day before. For the second day, attempts were made to destroy this devastating weapon with naval gunfire and artillery, as well as air strikes which employed 500-pound bombs and napalm. Despite these efforts, the piece continued functioning and causing considerable damage.

All along the line, bitter fighting ensued as 2/4 again bore the brunt of the rugged going in attempting to capture the high ground dominating the right flank. Although it jumped off with three companies abreast (less one platoon in battalion reserve), 2/4 was able to make only small gains against intense small arms fire. After a day's fighting, the battalion managed to place two companies on Hill 200, while the third one, despite severe casualties (65, including 3 company commanders), eventually advanced three-fourths of the way up a hill to the right of 200. In order to establish a better position, Company G withdrew partway down the hill where it tied in with Company F. On the right of the regimental line, a 200-yard gap between the 2d and 1st Battalions was

covered by fire. In the late afternoon, in the area immediately southwest of Yae Take, 1/4 finally seized a key hill mass from which it had been driven back earlier in the day.

When the attack ceased at 1630, the center and right battalions were on their objectives and 3/29 was slightly behind them, organizing ground favorable for defense. During the day, resupply operations and the evacuation of the mounting number of casualties over the tortuous terrain became more and more difficult, and the troops had become very tired. Nonetheless, many caves had been sealed and there were 1,120 enemy dead counted. Colonel Udo apparently foresaw defeat; that night he decided to resort to guerrilla operations and also to move his command to the mountain strongholds of northern Okinawa by way of Itomi.<sup>77</sup>

The 4th Marines knew by this time that it was attacking a force of at least two companies which had organized the terrain to their best possible advantage. Moreover, it became apparent that the Japanese had oriented their defenses to face the anticipated direction of the attack. Owing to these circumstances, and since the advance was still toward friendly troops and artillery, it was decided to contain Udo's mountain force and envelop his defenses by a flanking

<sup>77</sup> *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 138. "During the period 16-19 April while pressure was being applied to the Udo force on Mt. Yae Take a considerable number of the enemy either were directed to disband and directed to infiltrate through our lines or were cut off by our columns. They followed the natural line of drift, were engaged by our CP at Itomi, particularly at night. Many were killed at our perimeter defenses." *Whaling ltr.*

action from the south; this shifted the direction of the main Marine effort to the north. Implementing these decisions, 3/4 reverted to regimental control and was to be committed in the attack the next day, and 1/22 was ordered into division reserve at Awa.

On 16 April, the 6th Marine Division was deployed to wage a full-scale attack on the enemy from three sides. (See Map 9.) As the 29th Marines continued pressuring in from the east, the 4th Marines with 3/29 would complete the squeeze play from the west and south-west. A juncture between the 4th and 29th Marines would be effected when 1/22 sent strong patrols north into the gap between the two regiments. Each of these three principal assault elements was assigned an artillery battalion in direct support. The artillery was so deployed that the fires of two battalions of the 15th Marines, one company of the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion, and a battery of the 7th 155mm Gun Battalion could be placed in any of the three zones of action.<sup>78</sup>

In the 4th Marines zone, 3/29 was to seize the high ground 500 yards to its front, including the redoubtable Hill 210. To the right of this battalion, 2/4 was to remain in position and support the attacks of Wright's 3/29 and Beans' 1/4 by fire, while units on the right flank of 1/4 wheeled to the north. The 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, was to attack to seize the division objective, establish contact with 1/4 on the left, and to protect the right flank until 1/22 drew abreast of the line. Weapons Company, 4th Marines, organized as an infantry

company,<sup>79</sup> was ordered to patrol thoroughly the right rear of Beans' and Wright's battalions, since 1/22 was not scheduled to start from Majiya until first light.

Because of resupply difficulties,<sup>80</sup> the attack did not resume until 0900 on the 16th. By 1200, 3/29 had seized its objective with a perfectly executed basic maneuver, a single envelopment. As the attack began, Company H, on the 3/29 right flank, faced Hill 210 frontally. Company G in the center was ordered to break contact with Company I on its left and to make an end-around play assaulting the enemy from the south. A Company H support platoon moved into the gap left by G and supported that company by fire, as did 2/4 from its commanding position on the right.

Supporting fires effectively neutralized the Japanese defenders and kept their heads down until Company G Marines had gained the top of 210 and swarmed over the forward slope. Grenades and demolitions blasted the shocked enemy from their caves and

<sup>79</sup> *4th Mar SAR, Ph I&II*, p. 14.

<sup>80</sup> "Supply and evacuation soon became a difficult problem. The road net was far from adequate, and engineers were working feverishly to build new roads where necessary. However, the rugged terrain prevented them from catching up with the infantry, and usually the last 500 to 1,500 yards of the trip of the chow, ammunition, and water from the forward dumps to the front lines could be negotiated by no other means than manpower. For the next three days this was the case. Division sent up as many replacements from the division pool as could be spared. Battalion headquarters companies were used. Support platoons were used. Evacuation of wounded men was equally difficult if not more so." *4th Mar SAR, Ph I&II*, p. 13.

<sup>78</sup> *15th Mar SAR, Ph I&II*, chap VII, n.p.

they retreated hastily, pursued all the while by effective fire from both the assault and support units. In capturing this objective, the Marines had silenced the troublesome mountain gun and killed 147 of the enemy. The positions of Companies H and G were now inverted, with Company H in the center of the line and G on the right flank firmly holding Hill 210.

While 3/29 was securing its objective, 1/4 completed its pivot northwards and had established contact with 3/4. Well to the rear, Myers' 1/22 advanced to cover the open 4th Marines flank. With 3/29 and 2/4 solidly established as landlords of the high ground facing east, 1/4 and 3/4 looked north in positions at a right angle to the other two battalions. When the attack resumed a half-hour later, 3/29 and 2/4 remained in position providing fire support to the advancing 1/4 and 3/4. At this time, the formidable Mount Yae Take was in the 1/4 zone.

The 1st Battalion moved out with Company A on the left attacking frontally up one nose, and Company C working up a draw on the right. Progress up the steep slope was arduous and not helped by enemy small arms fire, light and scattered though it was. As Company A reached the crest, the Japanese met it with withering fire at very close range. In the face of the rifle, machine gun, grenade, and knee mortar<sup>81</sup> drumfire, the Marines withdrew below the summit, and in turn, employed their own 60mm mortars and grenades against the enemy entrenched on the

reverse (north) slope. The battle waged fiercely at close quarters as neither side was able to hold the height for long. At last the tide turned in the Marines' favor, helped mainly by supporting fires of 2/4 coming from the high ground overlooking the enemy.

The victory was not bought cheaply; even though the two companies possessed Yae Take, the situation was critical. Over 50 Marine casualties had been sustained in the assault and the ammunition supply was nearly spent. It also appeared that the Japanese were regrouping for a counterattack. Fortunately, effective 15th Marines artillery fire and the excellent mortar and machine gun support of 2/4 held the enemy in check until ammunition could be brought up.

Recalling this phase of the battle for Mount Yae Take, the operations officer of the 4th Marines wrote:

If the supply problem was difficult before, it was a killer now. That 1,200-foot hill looked like Pike's Peak to the tired, sweaty men who started packing up ammunition and water on their backs. Practically everyone in the 1st Bn headquarters company grabbed as much ammunition as he could carry. A man would walk by carrying a five-gallon water can on his shoulder and the battalion commander would throw a couple of bandoleers of ammunition over the other! . . . The Battalion commander, on his way up to the front lines to get a closer look at the situation, packed a water can on his way up. Stretchers also had to be carried up, and all hands coming down the hill were employed as stretcher bearers.<sup>82</sup>

Additional assistance in resupply and evacuation was afforded the 1st Bat-

<sup>81</sup> "Knee mortar" was a misnomer Americans commonly applied to the Japanese grenade launcher.

<sup>82</sup> Bergren, "School Solutions," p. 6.

talion when Company K, coming up from the rear in late afternoon to revert to the control of 3/4, took out the 1/4 wounded and returned with water and ammunition. The resupply of the 1st Battalion occurred just in time, for at 1830, an hour after Yae Take had been seized, the enemy reacted with a fanatic *Banzai* charge across the battalion front. An estimated 75 Japanese made up the wildly attacking group, but again the supporting fires of artillery and 2/4 stemmed the rush and virtually annihilated the force. As the Marines dug in for the night, Mount Yae Take was held securely.

Lieutenant Colonel Beans' battalion consolidated its holdings in the afternoon while receiving small arms and mortar fire. On the left, Company B was committed to tie in 3/4 with the 1st Battalion. Because its progress was slowed more by the terrain than the enemy, 1/22 on the right was unable to gain contact with either the 4th or the 29th and established a defense perimeter for the night.

While the 4th Marines was storming Yae Take, Colonel Whaling's regiment maintained unrelenting pressure against the enemy's rear positions. As the attack rolled forward, the Japanese resisted stubbornly from log-revetted bunkers and occasional concrete emplacements, and from machine gun, mortar, and artillery positions concealed in ravines and in caves on the heights.

In this phase of the 6th Division's northern campaign, the Japanese exhibited their well-known ability to exploit the terrain and gain maximum benefit from weapons emplaced in caves

and pits and concealed by natural camouflage. Of all the weapons that the enemy employed effectively, his use of the 20mm dual-purpose cannon was most noteworthy. Marine battalion CPs received a daily ration of fire from these weapons, and all roads and natural avenues of approach were covered. Any Marine attempt to move over these easier routes often proved disastrous.

Since there was no alternative, "the method of reducing the enemy positions followed a pattern of 'ridge-hopping,'" <sup>83</sup> in which all supporting arms covered the attacking force as it enveloped hostile defenses and reduced them in detail. In some cases, the 29th discovered abandoned positions and weapons, suggesting that the Japanese determination to resist was considerably diminished when attacked on the flank. The action in the 29th Marines zone was characterized by simultaneous attacks which, in effect, consisted of a series of local patrol actions to seize critical positions, followed by mopping-up activity within the area.

A heavier-than-usual artillery preparation was laid down before the jump off on the morning of 17 April. (See Map 10.) At 0800, the 29th Marines began an advance to join up with the 4th Marines along the Itomi-Toguchi road. From here, the two regiments would then sweep northward abreast of each other. Moving out over difficult terrain against light resistance, 1/29 made slow progress, but by 1300 had secured its objective, the highest hill in its area.

The enemy positions which confronted 1/29 were on the crest and face of this

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<sup>83</sup> 29th Mar SAR, Ph I&II, pt VII, p. 5.

hill and presented a problem in precision naval gunnery to the *Tennessee*, whose line of supporting fire was almost parallel to the target. As troops rapidly advanced, the ship's main and secondary batteries delivered such an intense bombardment that the hill was taken without Marine casualties. On the way to the top, the infantry killed 8 Japanese and 32 more on the crest itself, but the huge craters produced by the *Tennessee's* guns contained in excess of 100 more enemy dead.<sup>84</sup>

Within an hour after 2/29 had resumed its attack, some 50 enemy troops had been flushed out and were observed fleeing to the northwest. Shortly after, the battalion was able to move forward against negligible opposition, stopping only to destroy large enemy stores of equipment, ammunition, and supplies. Before noon, physical contact had been established with 1/22, which had reduced the positions met in its zone and had captured a considerable amount of enemy clothing and ammunition. After having made contact with the 4th Marines on its left, 1/22 was pinched out of the line and withdrew to Awa, where it set up defenses for the night.

The first missions flown by TAF squadrons in support of Marine ground forces during the Motobu campaign struck enemy targets early in the morning of the 17th. At 1000, eight VMF-322 aircraft attacked and destroyed

<sup>84</sup> In appreciation of this naval gunfire support, General Shepherd sent to the Commander, Northern Attack Force, a message, which stated in part: ". . . the effectiveness of your gunfire support was measured by the large number of Japanese encountered. Dead ones." Quoted in VAdm Lawrence F. Reifsnider ltr to CMC, dtd 21Mar55.

Manna. Upon completion of that mission, the flight was radioed by the ground commander that "the town was wiped out. One hundred per cent of bombs and rockets hit target area."<sup>85</sup> VMF-312, -322, and -323 flew a total of 47 sorties during the day. In the afternoon, one mission of eight planes was cancelled when the assigned target was overrun by Marine infantry.<sup>86</sup>

As it still faced a critical supply shortage on the 17th, the 4th Marines did not launch its attack until 1200, after replenishment. Then the advance toward the Itomi-Toguchi road was resumed with the 1st and 3d Battalions on the right. In reverse of the previous day's situation, 2/4 and 3/29 on the left faced east at a right angle to the front of the other two battalions in assault. They were, therefore, ordered to remain in place and to support the assault from present positions until the attacking units masked their fires.

The attacking element made rapid progress as their downhill path was blocked only by isolated enemy stragglers. Without too great an effort, the Marines overran elaborately fortified positions, intricate communications systems, and bivouac areas. The hastily departing enemy left behind a scene of an undisciplined retreat—for dead bodies and military paraphernalia were strewn all over the area. Large stores of equipment, food, weapons, and clothing were either captured or destroyed. As 1/4 swept across the 3/29 front, 2 8-inch naval guns, 5 artillery

<sup>85</sup> ADC Daily Intel Sum, 161800 to 171800, dtd 17Apr45, hereafter *ADC IntelSum* with date.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*



pieces, 8 caves full of ammunition, and over 300 dead Japanese were found before the Company G position on Hill 210.<sup>87</sup> Although the 1st Battalion met but few of the enemy during the day, Hochmuth's 3d Battalion killed 56 without losing a Marine.<sup>88</sup>

After their attack axes had shifted northward, the 4th and 29th Marines made contact with each other in late afternoon on the high ground overlooking the Itomi-Toguchi road. At that time, 2/29 was withdrawn from the line to clear out any bypassed enemy pockets in the regimental zone. By the end of 17 April, a review of that day's operations indicated that the enemy was unable to maintain his position and was, in fact, attempting to retreat in order to escape annihilation. There was little doubt that the 6th Marine Division had broken the back of enemy resistance on the peninsula, an assumption that was confirmed when an enemy map captured by the 4th Marines showed that the Yae Take position was the only organized Japanese defense on Motobu.

After four days of vigorous fighting, activities on the 18th were confined to reorganizing, resupplying, and consolidating the gains of the previous day, and patrolling the Itomi-Toguchi road. (See Map 10.) In an attempt to prevent the further escape of any of the enemy and to destroy his trenches and camouflaged emplacements in front of the lines, at 0750, four VMF-312 planes attacked targets with general purpose (GP) and napalm bombs, rockets, and then strafed the smoking positions. The

<sup>87</sup> 3/29 SAR, *Ph I&II*, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> 1/4 SAR, *Ph I&II*, p. 6; 3/4 SAR, *Ph I&II*, p. 7.

ground troops later reported that all of the hits were in the target area and the enemy trenches were completely destroyed. During the rest of the day, VMF-312 and -322 flew 12 additional sorties in support of General Shepherd's troops.<sup>89</sup>

The now-bypassed 3/29 was detached from the 4th Marines and moved around the base of the peninsula by truck to rejoin its parent organization at Itomi. In the same way, 1/22 rejoined its regiment at Majiya. In the 4th Marines area, the 1st Battalion went into reserve, bivouacking near Manna. Upon its reversion to regimental control, 3/29 took up blocking positions on the right flank, north of Itomi, to prevent any enemy escaping to the east. The 29th Marines left flank was pushed northward to straighten out the division lines. As 3/4 conducted local patrols, the 2d Battalion patrolled the area through which the 1st and 3d Battalions had attacked the previous day. Resupplying the assault regiments continued to be difficult for the enemy had thoroughly mined the area now held by the division and had denied the Marines use of the Itomi-Toguchi road by digging tank traps there. In addition, many trees had been felled across the road, which was pockmarked with numerous shell craters.

On L plus 18, the final drive to the northern coast of the peninsula began with the 4th and 29th Marines abreast. (See Map 10.) Preceding the 0800 jump off, four Corsairs from VMF-312 struck at a hillside containing gun emplacements and strongpoints that opposed the ground attack. Again napalm, GP

<sup>89</sup> ADC *IntelSum*, 18Apr45.

bombs, rockets, and strafing attacks were employed to ease the infantry advance. When the Marines pushed forward against negligible resistance, they came across elaborate cave and trench systems filled with numerous enemy dead, undoubtedly the victims of the artillery, naval gunfire, and air bombardments. All organized resistance ended on Motobu Peninsula when the 4th and 29th Marines gained the north coast on 20 April. General Shepherd assigned garrison and patrol sectors to his units on Motobu;<sup>90</sup> at the same time, mopping-up operations continued in the rest of the IIIAC zone.

In the course of the fighting for the peninsula, the 6th Marine Division had sustained casualties amounting to 207

killed, 757 wounded, and 6 missing in action. The Marines counted over 2,000 Japanese dead, men who had forfeited their lives while defending their positions with a tenacity that was characteristic.

Of the 6th Division drive up the isthmus and into the peninsula, Brigadier General Oliver P. Smith noted:

The campaign in the north should dispel the belief held by some that Marines are beach-bound and are not capable of rapid movement. Troops moved rapidly over rugged terrain, repaired roads and blown bridges, successively opened new unloading points, and reached the northern tip of the island, some 55 miles from the original landing beaches, in 14 days. This was followed by a mountain campaign of 7 days' duration to clear the Motobu Peninsula.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> 6th MarDiv OperO 41-45, dtd 20Apr45.

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<sup>91</sup> Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 82.



*USS ENTERPRISE is hit on 14 May 1945 by a Kamikaze which dove out of low cloud cover. (USN 80-G-331011)*



*TRACERS fill the sky as AAA gunners repulse a Japanese raid over Yontan Airfield. (USMC 118775)*