



National Archives Photo 127-N-67228B

*Marine communicators had the difficult task of stringing wire in dense jungle terrain while remaining wary of the enemy.*

mortars in a pandemonium of pots, pans, and tea kettles. (Jungle combat had taught the Marines the wisdom of General Turnage's order: Marines go nowhere without a weapon!)

The various, successive objectives for the Marine and Army riflemen were codenamed using the then-current phonetic alphabet: Dog (reached 15 November), Easy (reached 20 November, except for the 9th Marines, slowed by an impassable swamp), Fox (finally reached by the Marines on

28 November) and How (part of it reached by the Army on 23 November since it encountered "no opposition," and the remainder as a goal for the Marines). Thereafter, the Marines were to press on to the Item and Jig objectives "on orders from Corps Headquarters."

One account makes clear the overwhelming difficulties facing the Marine battalions: "water slimy and often waist deep, sometimes to the arm pits..... tangles of thorny vines that inflicted painful

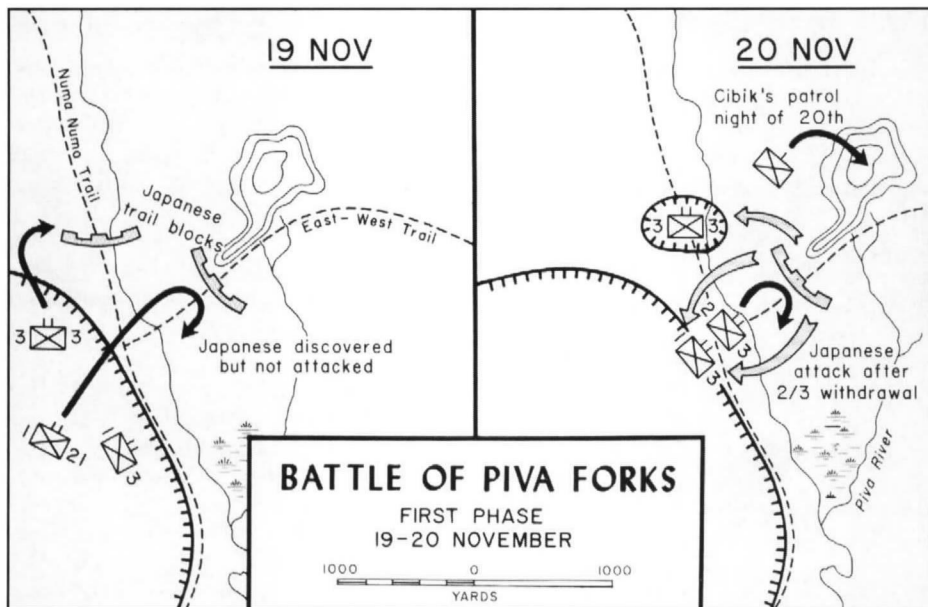
wounds..... men slept setting up in the water . . . sultry heat and stinking muck."

In spite of this, elaborate plans were made to continue the attack from west to east. The "strongly entrenched" Japanese defenses, with 1,200-1,500 men, were oriented to repel an assault from the south. Accordingly, the artillery observers on Cibik Ridge registered their fire on 23 November, in preparation for a thrust by two battalions of the 3d Marines to try to advance 800 yards beyond the east fork of the Piva River. All available tanks and supporting weapons were moved forward. Marine engineers from the 19th Marines joined Seabees under enemy fire in throwing bridges across the Piva River.

On 23 November, as the night fell like a heavy curtain, seven battalions of artillery lined up, some almost hub-to-hub. There were the Army's 155s, 105s, mortars, 90mm AA; and the same array of the 12th Marines' cannons, plus 44 machine guns and even a few Hotchkiss pieces taken from the enemy.

The attack in the morning began with the barrage at 0835, 24 November, Thanksgiving Day; a shuddering burst of flame and thunder, possibly the heaviest such barrage a Marine operation had ever before placed on a target. The shells, 5,600 rounds of them, descended on a narrow 800-foot square box of rain forest, only 100 yards from the Marines, so close that shell splinters and concussion snapped twigs off bushes around them.

Yet, as the two assault battalions moved out, the redoubtable Japanese 23d Infantry crashed in with their own heavy barrage. Their shells left Marines dead, bleeding, and some drowned in the murky Piva River, "the heaviest casualties of the campaign.



Twice the enemy fire walked up and down the attacking Marines with great accuracy." But the 3d Marines came on with a juggernaut of tanks, flame throwers, and machine gun, mortar, and rifle fire.

Where the Army-Marine artillery barrages fell, however, there was desolation. Major Schmuck, a company commander in one of the assault battalions, later remembered:

For 500 yards, the Marines moved in a macabre world of splintered trees and burned-out brush. The very earth was a churned mass of mud and human bodies. The

filthy, stinking streams were cesspools of blasted corpses. Over all hung the stench of decaying flesh and powder and smoke which revolted [even] the toughest. The first line of strong points with their grisly occupants was overrun and the 500-yard phase line was reached.

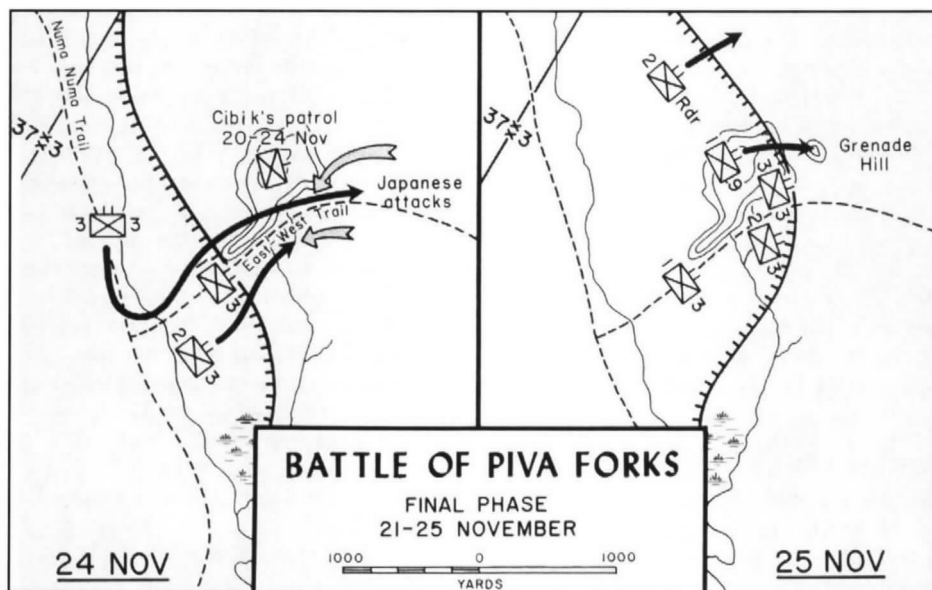
The Japanese were not through. As the Marines moved forward a Nambu machine gun stuttered and the enemy artillery roared, raking the Marine line. A Japanese counterattack hit the Marines' left flank. It was hand-to-hand and tree-



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 78796  
To enable a forward observer to adjust artillery fire, these 3d Defense Battalion Marines used a jury-rigged hoist to lift him to the top of a banyan tree.

to-tree. One company alone suffered 50 casualties, including all its officers. Still the Marines drove forward, finally halting 1,150 yards from their jump-off point, where resistance suddenly ended. The Japanese 23d Infantry had been totally destroyed, with 1,107 men dead on the field. The Marines had incurred 115 dead and wounded. The battle for Piva Forks had ended with a dramatic, hard fought victory which had "broken the back of organized enemy resistance."

There was one final flourish. It had been, after all, Thanksgiving Day, and a tradition had to be observed. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had decreed that all servicemen should get turkey—one way or another. Out there on the line the men got it by "the other." Yet, few Marines of that era would give the Old Corps bad marks for hot chow. If they could get it to the frontline troops, they would. A Marine recalled, "The carrying parties did get the turkey to them. Nature won, though, the turkey had spoiled." Another man was watching the big birds imbedded





National Archives Photo 127-N-69394

*Concealed in the heavy jungle growth, these men of Company E, 2d Battalion, 21st Marines, guard a Numa Numa Trail position in the swamp below Grenade Hill.*

in rice in five gallon containers, "much like home except for baseball and apple pie." For some, however, just before the turkey was served, the word came down, "Prepare to move out!" Those men got their turkey and ate it on the trail . . . on the way to a new engagement, Hand Grenade Hill.

Before that could be assaulted, there was a reorganization on D plus 24. The beat-up 3d Marines was beefed up by the 9th Marines and the 2d Raiders. Since D-Day a total of 2,014 Japanese dead had been counted, but "total enemy casualties must have been at least

three times that figure." And as a portent for the future use of Bougainville as a base for massive air strikes against the Japanese, U.S. planes were now able to use the airstrip right by the Torokina beachhead. With the enemy at last driven east of the Torokina River, Marines now occupied the high ground which controlled the site of the forthcoming Piva bomber airstrip.

### *Hand Grenade Hill*

The lead for the next assault on 25 November was given to the

fresh troops of Lieutenant Colonel Carey A. Randall, who had just taken over the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines. They were joined by the 2d Raider Battalion under Major Richard T. Washburn. Randall could almost see his next objective from the prime high ground of Cibik Ridge. Just ahead rose another knoll, like the ridge it would be the devil to take, for the Japanese would hold it like a fortress. It would soon be called "Hand Grenade Hill" for good reason. Two of Randall's companies went at it with Washburn's raiders. But the Japanese gave a good account of themselves. Some 70 of them slowed the Marine attack, but one company got close to the top. The Marines were from five to 50 yards away from the Japanese, battling with small arms, automatic weapons, and hand grenades. The enemy resisted fiercely, and the Marines were thrown back by a shower of hand grenades. One Marine observed that the hill must be the grenade storehouse for the entire Solomon Islands.

It was on Hand Grenade Hill that Lieutenant Howell T. Heflin, big, memorable, one of Alabama's favorites, son of a Methodist minister, snatched up a BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) and sprayed the Japanese positions. He pried open a way for his platoon almost to the hilltop, but could not hold there. He was awarded the Silver Star Medal, and later he went on to become Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court and then the senior U.S. Senator from Alabama.

At the end of the action-filled day, the Marines were stalled. In the morning of 26 November surprised scouts found that the Japanese had pulled out in the darkness. Now all of the wet, smelly, churned-up terrain around the Piva Forks, including the



National Archives Photo 127-N-71380

*Evacuation of the wounded was always difficult. These men are carrying out a casualty from the fighting on Hill 1000.*

strategic ridgeline blocking the East-West Trail, was in Marine hands.

There now occurred a shuffling of units which resulted in the following line-up: 148th and 129th Infantry Regiments on line in the 37th Division sector on the left of the perimeter. 9th Marines, 21st Marines, and 3d Marines, running from left to right, in the Marine sector.

### *The Koiari Raid*

As a kind of final security measure, IMAC was concerned about a last ridge of hills, some 2,000 yards to the front, and really still dominating too much of the perimeter. Accordingly, on 28 November, General Geiger ordered an advance to reach Inland Defense Line Fox. As a preliminary, to protect this general advance from a surprise Japanese attack on the far right flank, a raid was planned to detect any enemy troop movements, destroy their supplies, and disrupt their com-

munications at a place called Koiari, 10 miles down the coast from Cape Torokina. The 1st Parachute Battalion, just in from Vella Levella under Major Richard Fagan, drew the assignment, with a company of the 3d Raider Battalion attached. While it had never made a jump in combat, the parachute battalion had been seasoned in the Guadalcanal campaign.

Carried by a U.S. Navy landing craft, the men in the raid were put ashore at 0400, 29 November, almost in the middle of a Japanese supply dump. Total surprise all around! The Marines hastily dug in, while the enemy responded quickly with a "furious hail" of mortar fire, meanwhile lashing the beachhead with machine gun and rifle fire. Then came the Japanese attacks, and Marine casualties mounted "alarmingly." They would have been worse except for a protective curtain of fire from the 155mm guns of the 3d Defense Battalion back at Cape Torokina. With an estimated 1,200

enemy pressing in on the Marines, it was painfully clear that the raiding group faced disaster. Two attempts to extricate them by their landing craft were halted by heavy Japanese artillery fire. Now the Marines had their backs to the sea and were almost out of ammunition. Then, about 1800, three U.S. destroyers raced in close to the beach, firing all guns. They had come in response to a frantic radio signal from IMAC, where the group's perilous situation was well understood. Now a wall of shellfire from the destroyers and the 155s allowed two rescue craft to dash for the beach and lift off the raiding group safely. With none of the original objectives achieved, the raid had been a costly failure, even though it had left at least 145 Japanese dead.

### *Hellzapoppin Ridge*

Now the action shifted to the final targets of the 3d Marine Division: that mass of hills 2,000 yards away. Once captured, they would block the East-West Trail where it crossed the Torokina River, and they would greatly strengthen the Final Inland Defense Line that was the Marines' ultimate objective. A supply base, called Evansville, was built up for the attack in the rear of Hill 600 for the forthcoming attacks.

The 1st Marine Parachute Regiment, under Lieutenant Colonel Robert H. Williams, was informed, two days after its arrival on Bougainville, that General Turnage had assigned it to occupy those hills which IMAC felt still dominated much of the Marine ground. That ridgeline included Hill 1000 with its spur soon to be called Hellzapoppin Ridge (named after "Hellzapoppin," a long-running Broadway show), Hill 600, and Hill 600A. To

take the terrain Williams got the support of elements of the 3d, 9th, and 21st Marines (which had established on 27 November its own independent outpost on Hill 600). By 5 December, the 1st Parachute Regiment had won a general outpost line that stretched from Hill 1000 to the junction of the East-West Trail and the Torokina River.

Then on 7 December, Major Robert T. Vance on Hill 1000 with his 3d Parachute Battalion walked the ridge spine to locate enemy positions on the adjacent spur that had been abandoned. The spur was fortified by nature: matted jungle for concealment, gullies to impair passage, steep slopes to discourage everything. That particular hump, which would get the apt name of Hellzapoppin Ridge, was some 280 feet high, 40 feet across at the top, and 650 feet long, and ideal position for over-all defense.

Jumping off from Hill 1000 on the morning of 9 December to occupy the spur, Vance's men were hit by a fusillade of fire. The Japanese had come back, 235 of them of the 23d Infantry. The parachutists attacked again and again, without success. Artillery fire was called in, but the Japanese found protective concealment on the

reverse slopes. Marine shells burst high in the banyan trees, up and away from the dug-in enemy. As a result, the parachutists were hit hard. "Ill-equipped and under-strength," they were pulled back on 10 December to Hill 1000. Two battalions of the 21st Marines, with a battalion of the 9th Marines guarding their left flank, continued the attack. It would go on for six gruelling days.

Scrambling up the slopes, the new attacking Marines would pass the bodies of the parachutists. John W. Yager, a first lieutenant in the 21st recalled, "The para-Marines made the first contact and had left their dead there. After a few days, they had become very unpleasant reminders of what faced us as we crawled forward, in many instances right next to them."

Sergeant John F. Pelletier, also in the 21st, was a lead scout. Trying to cross the ridge spine over to the Hellzapoppin spur, he found dead paratroopers all over the hill. There were dead Japanese soldiers still hanging from trees, and it seemed to him that no Marine had been able to cross to the crest and live to tell about it.

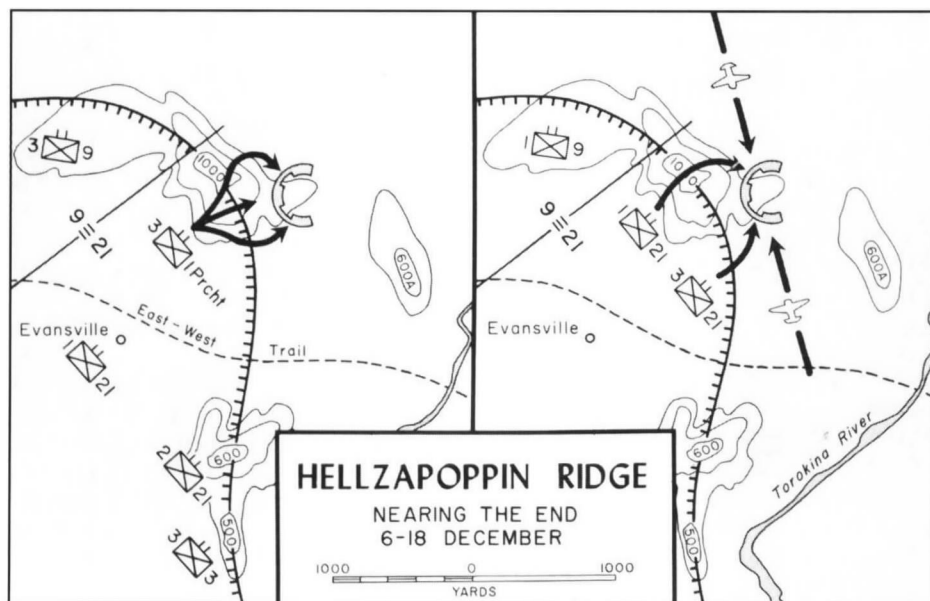
Pelletier described what happened next:

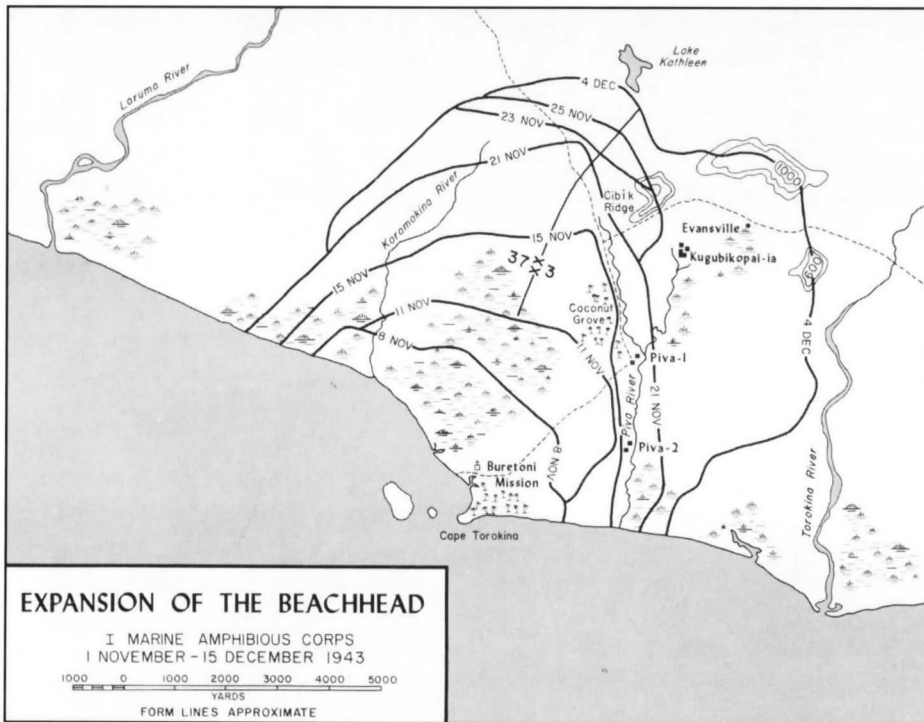
The next morning Serge-

ant Oliver [my squad leader] told me to advance down the ridge as we were going to secure the point. That point was to become our most costly battle. We moved down the center until we were within 20 feet of the point. The Japs hit us with machine gun, rifle, and mortar fire. They popped out of spider holes. We were in a horse-shoe-shaped ambush. We were firing as fast as we could when Sergeant Oliver pulled me back. He gave me the order to pull back up the ridge. He didn't make it.

When artillery fire proved ineffective in battering the Japanese so deeply dug in on Hellzapoppin Ridge, Geiger called on 13 December for air attacks. Six Marine planes had just landed at the newly completed Torokina airstrip. They came in with 100-pound bombs, guided to their targets by smoke shells beyond the Marine lines. But the Japanese were close, very close. Dozens of the bombs were dropped 75 yards from the Marines. With additional planes, there were four bombing and strafing strikes over several days. A Marine on the ground never forgot the bombers roaring in right over the brush, the ridge, and the heads of the Marines to drop their load, "It seemed right on top of us." (This delivery technique was necessary to put the bombs on the reverse slope among the Japanese.)

Helping to control these early strikes and achieve pinpoint accuracy was Lieutenant Colonel William K. Pottinger, G-3 (Operations Officer) of the Forward Echelon, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. He had taken a radio out of a grounded plane, moved to the frontlines, and helped control the attacking Marine planes on the spot. (This





technique was an improvised forerunner of the finely tuned procedures that Marine dive bombers would use later to achieve remarkable results in close air support of ground troops.)

The 3d Marine Division's history was pithy in its evaluation, "It was the air attacks which proved to be the most effective factor in the taking of the ridge . . . the most successful examples of close air support thus far in the Pacific War."

Geiger wasn't through. He had a battery of the Army's 155mm howitzers moved by landing craft to new firing positions near the mouth of the Torokina River. Now the artillery could pour it on the enemy positions on the reverse slopes.

In one of the daily Marine assaults, one company went up the ridge for two attacks against Japanese who would jump into holes they had dug on the reverse slope to escape bombardment. The Japanese finally were tricked when another company, relieving the first one, jumped into the enemy foxholes before their rightful owners. It cost the Japanese

heavily to try to return.

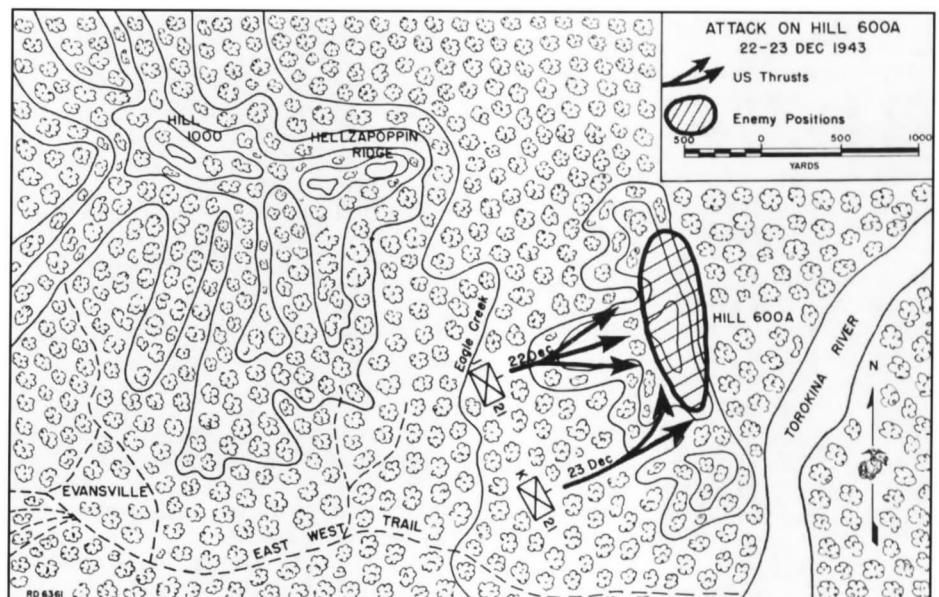
In a final assault on 18 December, the two battalions of the 21st moved from Hill 1000 to the spur in a pincer and double envelopment. But the artillery and bombs had done their work. The Japanese and their fortress were shattered. Stunned defenders were easily eliminated.

Patrick O'Sheel, a Marine combat correspondent, summed up the bitter battle, "No one knows how many Japs were killed. Some 30 bodies were found. Another

dozen might have been put together from arms, legs, and torsos." The 21st suffered 12 killed and 23 wounded.

With Hellzapoppin finally behind them, Marines could count what blessings they could find and recount how rotten their holidays were. There had been a Thanksgiving Day spent on the trail while gnawing a drumstick on the way to another engagement at Piva Forks. And now, on 21 December, four days until Christmas, and the troops still had Hill 600A to "square away."

Reconnaissance found 14-18 Japanese on that hill, down by the Torokina River. A combat patrol from the 21st Marines moved to drive the Japanese off the knob. It wasn't hard, but it cost the life of one Marine and one was wounded. But IMAC wanted a permanent outpost on the hill, and the 3d Battalion, 21st, drew the assignment. It began with one rifle platoon and a platoon of heavy machine guns on 22 December. Hill 600A was a repeat of past enemy tactics. The Japanese had come back to occupy it. They held against all efforts, even against a two-pronged attack. A full company came up and made three assaults. That did-







National Archives Photo 80-G-250368

*The Piva airfields (shown here in February 1944 photograph) became key bomber and fighter strips in the aerial offensive against Rabaul.*

n't help either. Late on the 23d, the Marines held for the night, preparing to mount another attack in the morning. That morning was Christmas Eve, 1943. Scouts went up to look. The Japanese had gone. Christmas wasn't merry, but it was better. For the 3d Marine Division, the war was over on Bougainville.

The landing force had seized the beachhead, destroyed or overcome the enemy, and won the ground for the vital airfields. Now they prepared to leave, as the airfields were being readied to reduce Rabaul and its environs.

Since 10 December, F4U Vought Corsairs of Marine Fighting Squadron (VMF) 216 (1st Marine Aircraft Wing) had settled on the new strip on Torokina, almost washed by the sea. The fighter planes would be the key to the successful prosecution of the AirSols (Air Solomons) offensive against Rabaul, for, as escorts, they made large-scale bombing raids feasible. Major General Ralph J. Mitchell, USMC, had become head of AirSols on 20 November 1943. By 9 January 1944, both the fighter and bomber aircraft were operating from the Piva strips. Following Bougainville, Mitchell would have twice

the airpower and facilities that the Japanese had in all of the Southwest Pacific area.

The campaign had cost the Marines 423 killed and 1,418 wounded. Enemy dead were estimated at 2,458, with only 23 prisoners captured.

It was now time for the 3d Marine Division to go home to Guadalcanal, with a "well done" from Halsey. (In the Admiral's colorful language, a message to Geiger said, "You have literally succeeded in setting up and opening for business a shop in the Japs' front yard.") Now there would be plenty of papayas and Lister bags, as well as a PX, a post office, and

*A chaplain reads prayers for the burial of the dead, while their friends bow their heads in sorrow at the losses.*

From the Leach File. MCHC Archives



some sports and movies. General Turnage was relieved on 28 December by Major General John R. Hodge of the Americal Division, which took over the eastern sector. The 37th Infantry Division kept its responsibility for the western section of the Bougainville perimeter. Admiral Halsey directed the Commanding General, XIV Corps, Major General Oscar W. Griswold, to relieve General Geiger, Commanding General, IMAC. The Army assumed control of the beachhead as of 15 December. The 3d Marines left Bougainville on Christmas Day. The 9th left on 28 December, and had a party with two cans of beer per man. The 21st, last to arrive on the island, was the division's last rifle regiment to leave, on 9 January 1944.

Every man in those regiments knew full well the crucial role that the supporting battalions had played. The 19th Marines' pioneers and engineers had labored ceaselessly to build the bridges and trails that brought the vital water, food, and ammunition to the front lines through seemingly impassable swamps, jungle, and water, water everywhere.

And the amtracs of the 3d Amphibian Tractor Battalion had proven essential in getting 22,922



tons of those supplies to the riflemen. They were "the most important link in the all-important supply chain."

Working behind the amtracs were the unsung men of the 3d Service Battalion who, under the division quartermaster, Colonel William C. Hall, brought order and efficiency from the original, chaotic pile-up of supplies on the beach. As roads were slowly built, the 6x6 trucks of the 3d Motor Transport Battalion moved the supplies to advance dumps for the amtracs to pick up.

The 12th Marines and Army artillery had given barrage after barrage of preparatory fire—72,643 rounds in all.

The invaluable role of Marine aviation, as previously mentioned, was symbolized by General Turnage's repeated requests for close air support, 10 strikes in all.

The Seabees, working at a "feverish rate," had miraculously carved three airfields out of the unbelievable morass that characterized the area. And it was from those bases that the long-range, strategic effects of Bougainville would be felt by the enemy.

The 3d Medical Battalion had taken care of the wounded. With omnipresent corpsmen on the front lines in every battle and aid stations and field hospitals right behind, the riflemen knew they

had been well tended.

General Turnage summarized the campaign well, "Seldom have troops experienced a more difficult combination of combat, supply, and evacuation. From its very inception, it was a bold and hazardous operation. Its success was due to the planning of all echelons and the indomitable will, courage, and devotion to duty of all members of all organizations participating."

Thus it was that the capture of Bougainville marked the top of the ladder, after the long climb up the chain of the Solomon Islands.

### Epilogue

There were, however, two minor land operations to complete the isolation of Rabaul. The first was at Green Island, just 37 miles north of Bougainville. It was a crusty, eight-mile-long (four-mile-wide) oval ring, three islands of sand and coral around a sleepy lagoon, and only 117 miles from Rabaul. To General Douglas MacArthur, it was the last step of the Solomon Islands campaign.

The task of taking the island fell to the 5,800 men of the 3d New Zealand Division under Major General H. E. Barrowclough, less the 8th Brigade which had been used in the Treasuries operation. There was also a contingent of American soldiers, Seabees, and engineers, and cover from AirSol

Marine planes under Brigadier General Field Harris. Rear Admiral Wilkinson had Task Force 31, whose warships would wait for targets (although Green Island would get no preinvasion bombardment). The atoll ring was too narrow and bombardment would pose a danger to island inhabitants.

Late in January 1944, 300 men of the 30th New Zealand Battalion and Seabees and engineer specialists went ashore, measured and sized up the island's potential, found spots for an airfield, checked lagoon depths, and sought accommodations for a boat basin.

All of this warned the Japanese, but it was too late for them to do anything. Then, on 14 February, Japanese scout planes warned the 102 defenders on Green Island that a large Allied convoy was on the way, shepherded by destroyers and cruisers. Japanese aircraft from Rabaul and Kavieng attacked the convoy by moonlight, but at 0641, the landing craft had crossed the line of departure unscathed and were almost to the beach. Within two hours, all were ashore, unopposed. Then Japanese dive bombers came roaring in, but the Allied anti-aircraft fire and Marine fighter planes (VMF-212) were enough to prevent hits on the transports or beach supplies. New Zealand patrols got only slight resistance, a few brief firefights. By 19 February, the 33d, 37th, and 93d Seabees were laying an airfield on the island.

By 4 March, a heavy B-24 bomber was able to make an emergency landing on the Green Island strip. Three days later, AirSols planes were staging there, giving the strip the name "Green." Soon B-24s were there to strike the vast Japanese base at Truk.

The second operation saw the

*Heavy, constant artillery support for the riflemen required a regular flow of ammunition. Here shells are being unloaded from a LST (Landing Ship, Tank).*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 71180 by PFC Philip Scheer



seizure of Emirau Island. It was well north of Green Island, 75 miles northwest of the New Ireland enemy fortress of Kavieng. Actually, Kavieng had been considered as a target to be invaded by the 3d Marine Division, but higher authorities decided the cost would be too high. Better to let Kavieng die on the vine. Taking Emirau and setting up air and naval bases there would effectively cut off the Solomon Islands and the Bismarck Archipelago from the Japanese. It would be a small investment with big results.

Emirau is an irregularly shaped island in the St. Matthias Group, eight miles long, four miles wide, with much jungle and many hills, but with room for boat basins and airstrips. The natives said there had been no Japanese there since January, and air reconnaissance could find none.

The unit selected for the landing bore a famous name in the lore of the Corps: the 4th Marines. The original regiment had been the storied "China Marines," and had then been part of the desperate defense of Bataan and the subsequent surrender at Corregidor in the Philippines. Now it had been reborn as a new, independent regiment, composed of the tough and battle-hardened veterans of the raider battalions.

The 4th Marines arrived at Emirau shortly after 0600 on 20 March 1944. The Marines and sailors fired a few shots at nothing; then the amphibian tractors opened up, wounding one of the Marines. The Seabees got right to work on the airfields, even before the island was secured. In no time they laid out a 7,000-foot bomber strip and a 5,000-foot stretch for fighters.

All was secured until attention fell on a little neighboring island with a Japanese fuel and ration

dump. Destroyers blew it all to debris . . . then spied at sea a large canoe escaping with some of the enemy. Hardly bloodthirsty after this placid operation, the destroyer casually pulled in close. The Japanese chose to fire a machine gun. It was folly. The destroyer was forced to respond. The canoe didn't sink and was brought alongside with the body of a Japanese officer and 26 living enlisted men—who may have privately questioned their officer's judgement.

### *Bougainville Finale*

These were small affairs compared to the finale on Bougainville. With the withdrawal of the 3d Marine Division at the end of 1943, after it had successfully fought its way to the final defensive line, the two Army divisions, the 37th Infantry and the Americal, took over and extended the perimeter with only sporadic brushes with the Japanese.

Then, in late February and early March 1944, patrols began making "almost continuous" contact with the enemy. It appeared that the Japanese were concentrating for a serious counterattack. On 8 March, the 145th Infantry (of the 37th) was hit by artillery fire. Then the 6th Division, parent of the old enemy, the 23d Infantry, attacked hard. It took five days of "very severe" fighting, with support from a battalion of the 148th Infantry, combined with heavy artillery fire and air strikes, to drive the determined Japanese back. Meanwhile, the 129th Infantry had also been "heavily attacked." The enemy kept coming and coming, and it was a full nine days before there was a lull on 17 March.

On 24 March the Japanese, after reorganizing, launched another series of assaults "with even greater pressure." This time they

also threw in three regiments of their 17th Division. The artillery of both American divisions, guided by Cub spotter planes, fired "the heaviest support mission ever to be put down in the South Pacific Area." That broke the back of the enemy attackers, and the battle finally was over on 25 March.

Major General Griswold, the corps commander, after eight major enemy attacks, wrote in a letter four days later:

I am absolutely convinced that nowhere on earth does there exist a more determined will and offensive spirit in the attack than that the Japs exhibited here. They come in hard, walking on their own dead, usually on a front not to exceed 100 yards. They try to effect a breakthrough which they exploit like water running from a hose. When stopped, they dig in like termites and fight to the death. They crawl up even the most insignificant fold in the ground like ants. And they use all their weapons with spirit and boldness . . . . Difficult terrain or physical difficulties have no meaning for them.

The Americal Division had advanced along with the 37th in the March-April period with its last action 13-14 April. This ended the serious offensive action for the two Army divisions; the enemy had been driven well out of artillery range of the air strips, 12,000 yards away.

For Americans this marked the end of the Bougainville saga: a tale of well-trained units, filled with, determined, skillful men, who fought their way to a resounding victory. The 3d Marine Division had led the way in securing a vital island base with the crucial isolation of Rabaul thus ensured.

## Sources

The author owes a substantial debt to Cyril J. O'Brien who was a Marine Combat Correspondent on Bougainville. A draft he prepared describing this operation used U.S. Army, Coast Guard, and New Zealand as well as Marine Corps sources, and contained a variety of colorful vignettes and personal interviews, with some photographs not in official USMC files, all gratefully acknowledged.

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The final draft was approved by a group of 3d Division officers . . ." The book is: 1stLt Robert A. Aurthur, USMCR, and 1stLt Kenneth Cohlmia, USMCR, edited by LtCol Robert T. Vance, USMC, *The Third Marine Division* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948).

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Personal Papers and Oral Histories files at the Marine Corps Historical Center were unproductive, but the biographical and photographic files were most helpful. The staff of the Marine Corps Historical Center was always cooperative, in particular Catherine Kerns, who prepared my manuscript copy.



## About the Author

Captain John C. Chapin earned a bachelor of arts degree with honors in history from Yale University in 1942 and was commissioned later that year. He served as a rifle platoon leader in the 24th Marines, 4th Marine Division, and was wounded in action during assault landings on Roi-Namur and Saipan.

Transferred to duty at the Historical Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, he wrote the first official histories of the 4th and

5th Marine Divisions. Moving to Reserve status at the end of World War II, he earned a master's degree in history at George Washington University with a thesis on "The Marine Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1922."

Now a captain in retired status, he has been a volunteer at the Marine Corps Historical Center for 12 years. During that time he wrote *History of Marine Fighter-Attack (VMFA) Squadron 115*. With support from the Historical Center and the Marine Corps Historical Foundation, he then spent some years researching and interviewing for the writing of a new book, *Uncommon Men: The Sergeants Major of the Marine Corps*, published in 1992 by the White Mane Publishing Company.

Subsequently, he wrote four monographs for this series of historical pamphlets, commemorating the campaigns for the Marshalls, Saipan, Bougainville, and Marine Aviation in the Philippines operations.



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