UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET AND PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS

JAPANESE PLATOON IN DEFENSE

CINCPAC - CINCPAOA
BULLETIN NO. 182-45
10 AUGUST 1945
Japanese Platoon

In Defense
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INTRODUCTION

Offensive action is the basis of Japanese tactical doctrine. The importance of the advance and the assault has been impressed upon all troops. Thorough training in the more detailed aspects of defense has been inconsistent with the overall Japanese concept of warfare and consequently, when the Japanese found themselves in a defensive role in the Pacific War, they were forced to learn, largely by experience, methods of defense previously neglected.

Japanese defense has been characterized by tenacious holding of positions and by counterattack. Both are in keeping with the basic psychology of the Japanese soldier who abhors dishonor and proudly aspires to die for the Emperor.

As the Allies advanced and as larger land masses presented opportunities to maneuver and employ reserves, the Japanese have altered defensive methods as a result of lessons learned. The defense of PELELIEU marked the first admission by the Japanese of need for a good defense. There they based their plans for defense on enemy capabilities and not on enemy intentions. They had also profited by defense lessons learned from defeats in the MARSHALLS, NEW GUINEA and the MARIANAS. On PELELIEU they were prepared to meet every possible landing attempt. Noticeably absent, as this operation progressed, were the hysterical, almost customary Banzai attacks, except in individual instances.

Previously, the Japanese adopted a defensive role only to gain time and prepare for a new offensive, or to function as a holding force while another unit attacked. This type of defense, an active, mobile defense, characterized by many patrols, feints and displays of power, could not be used in the stagnant island defenses forced upon them. At first they tried a perimeter defense characterized by a relatively thin line of men entrenched around the shore line of an island. This pattern proved unsatisfactory, and they have now developed an all-around defense in depth similar to our own.

DECLASSIFIED
However, the Japanese have not yet mastered the finer points of a defense in depth. They do not mass artillery fire. They continue to employ many automatic weapons not mutually supporting and with narrow, limited fields of fire, although a "fire net" is prepared in a defensive situation.

Any change in Japanese strategy will not affect basically the tactics of a unit as small as a platoon.

ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT

Organization of a Japanese Army unit is flexible and subject to variations depending upon the mission of the unit and the terrain to be defended. Some Platoons, reduced by casualties, will be found to be operating on half or part strength. Our forces have encountered Platoons with squads of only four or five men each although originally they were organized to contain 13 men per squad.

Some new T/O's allow for only seven- or eight-man squads. These have been encountered in the Central Pacific Theater. Enemy infantry units on the MARSHALL Islands were organized on the basis of a seven-man rifle squad and an eight-man grenade discharger squad. These troops were under strength as compared with T/O's from similar units in JAPAN and CHINA. Some units on LEYTE used 12-man squads. It has been found that Platoons with small squads usually have an additional light machine gun squad, making the platoon full-strength in personnel, but with an additional light machine gun.

Below are shown comparative tables of four infantry companies and the table of organization of a "typical" Japanese infantry company. (See Charts I and II). The "typical" company is considered similar to those which will be encountered in future operations and any reference to Japanese organization, tactics and equipment will be on the basis of this unit. This, however, does not preclude the possible employment of any of the other four types of companies.

Although these T/O's call for squads of as many as 13 men, squads of only five men may be encountered. The most recent trend has been toward seven- and eight-man squads. Recently, Japanese Platoons have used an additional rifle squad, making four rifle squads in the "typical" platoon. In this new organization there is no increase in men because the squads are smaller. Firepower, however, is increased with the addition of one LMG.
Particularly noticeable in the four infantry companies are the differences in armament. A company in the amphibious regiment of a streamlined division represents the Japanese Army's hard hitting outfit. This organization has one HMG platoon, one automatic gun platoon (20 mm AT) and an 81 mm mortar platoon. Personnel numbers 197 men.

The infantry company of a regimental combat team has more firepower organically than the "typical" or 6th Division company, but aside from this, differences are minor. The infantry company of the 6th Division and the "typical" company have HMGs and 81 mm mortars allotted to them from the MG company and mortar company of their parent battalion as the situation warrants.

| Chart I |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| COMPARATIVE T/Co of: | Inf Co of Amph Regt Streamlined Div | Inf Co BCT Streamlined Div | Inf Co, 47th Ind Mixed Brigade | Inf Co, 6th Div Typical Inf Co |
| Weapons: | | | | |
| HMG | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0(12 in MG Co) |
| LMG | 12 | 12 | 9 | 9 |
| GD | 12 | 12 | 9 | 9 |
| AUTO GUN | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 81mm Mortar | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0(2 in BN Mortar Co) |
| No. of Platoons: | | | | |
| Rifle Platoons | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| HMG Platoons | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 81mm Mortar Plt | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 5 Plt/Co | 4 Plt/Co | 3 Plt/Co | 3 Plt/Co | 3 Plt/Co |
| No. of Sq/Rifle Platoon: | | | | |
| Rifle Squads | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3-4 |
| GD Squads | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 5 Sq/Plt | 5 Sq/Plt | 4 Sq/Plt | 4 Sq/Plt | *4-5 Sq/Plt |
| Total No. of Men/Company | 197 | 155 | 144 | 181 | 179 |
| Total No. of Men/Platoon | 39 | 39 | 31 | 53 | 54 |
| Total No. of Men/Squad | 7 | 7 | 7 | 13 | 13 |

* When 4 rifle squads are present total No. of men will be 7-8/Sq.
**TYPICAL INFANTRY COMPANY**

**Chart II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPANY HQ</th>
<th>WEAPONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lt. C.O.</td>
<td>9 - LMGs (Perhaps one more in Co HQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt Maj</td>
<td>12 - Grenade Dischargers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCO</td>
<td>146-161 - Rifles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pvt.</td>
<td>30 - Pistols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hand Grenades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smoke Grenades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Land Mines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL STRENGTH**

- 4 - Off
- 20 - NCO
- 155-167 - Pvt.

**1st Platoon**

- 1 - Lt.
- 5 - NCO
- 40 - Pvt.

**2nd Platoon**

- Same

**3rd Platoon**

- Same

**Headquarters**

- 1 - Lt. Ldr.
- 1 - NCO Signal

**1st Squad**

- 1 - NCO
- 12 - Pvt.
- 2 - Pistols
- 1 - LMG
- 11 - Rifles

**2nd Squad**

- Same

**3rd Squad**

- Same

**4th Squad (G.D.)**

- 1 - NCO
- 12 - Pvt.
- 4 - G.D.
- 13 - Rifles

*3 are found more frequently than 4. Squad strength will vary from 5 to 12 men.*

---

**Figure 1:** Weapons of Typical Japanese Infantry Squad.

**Figure 2:** Weapons of Japanese Grenade Discharger Squad.
The weapons used by a Japanese infantry squad of 13 men are shown in Figure 1. The squad leader is armed with a pistol, or Type 38 carbine. The four types of grenades shown are from left to right: the stick grenade, the Type 91, Type 97, and Type 99. The Type 99 grenade also can be fired from the grenade launcher shown in the center.

Weapons of the grenade discharger squad are shown in Figure 2. There are three men on each grenade team, two armed with rifles and one, the ammunition bearer, armed only with a bayonet. The grenades pictured are the Type 91 and Type 89, both of which can be fired from grenade dischargers.

Japanese equipment is considered adequate and satisfactory, although it may not be comparable to that used by United States forces in many respects. Enlisted personnel and non-commissioned officers wear essentially the same uniform and individual equipment with the exception of insignia and pack. (See Figures 3a and 3b).

Figure 3a: Private's equipment.

Figure 3b: NCO's equipment.
The average Japanese soldier in a temperate climate and not a specialist (paratrooper or ski trooper) is equipped as follows:

1 Helmet, steel  
1 Cap, cloth  
1 Shirt, collarless, long sleeves  
1 Blouse, M1938  
1 Pr. Breeches  
1 Pr. Leggings, wrap around  
1 Pr. Shoes, service, pigskin  
1 Raincoat, w/hood  
2 Pouches, ammo, 30 rounds  
1 Pouch, ammo, 70 rounds  
1 Belt, cartridge  
1 Gas mask  
1 Canteen  
1 Foodbag  
1 Carrier, grenade, M89  
1 Haversack (NCO’s carry a smaller pack with D-ring attachments for a blanket roll instead of tie straps on EM pack, but contents are same):  
  1 Set Underwear  
  2 Pr. Socks  
  1 Pr. Gloves  
  1 Collar  
  1 Housewife  
  1 Mess Tin (attached to outside of pack)  
  1 Pr. Tabi  
  1 Kit, for cleaning rifle  
  Toilet articles  
  1 Breechcloth  
  2 Days’ rations  
1 Blanket  
1 Shelterhalf, with pole, pins and rope (shelterhalf usually used as a protective cover for blanket roll and pole, pins and rope are carried inside pack.)  
1 Rifle  
1 Bayonet, with frog  
NCO’s usually carry a saber, cavalry type, pistol, or carbine.  
1 Set Identification tags.

Optional Issue: Headnet  
Net, camouflaged, individual  
Mittens, Mosquito  
1 Set shirt and shorts
FOUR VIEWS OF JAPANESE SOLDIER WITH FULL FIELD EQUIPMENT

Figure 4a

Figure 4b

Figure 4c

Figure 4d
In addition to the above, a squad may have shovels and picks. In jungle terrain, this equipment often is augmented by several sickles and saws. The squad leader carries a telescope and a compass. The light machine gunner and grenadiers carry no intrenching tools. (See Figures 4a, b, c, d).

In combat, the Japanese soldier may have various types of equipment, depending upon what was originally issued, how much equipment he has lost or worn out, and how near he is to his base of supplies. The individual soldier is much more careful with his equipment than is the United States soldier, and in many instances receives severe punishment for loss or misuse of issued clothing and equipment. Although not so elaborately equipped and clothed as the United States soldier, the enemy has every item necessary for a soldier in the field.

The Japanese soldier takes extremely good care of his rifle, for he considers it a gift from the Emperor with an aura of divine origin. Most Japanese troops are now equipped with Type 99 bolt action 7.7 mm rifles. This has largely replaced the Type 38 (1905) 6.5 mm rifle, although the older weapon is still encountered.

Because the Japanese rifle is a bolt operated weapon not capable of a rapid rate of fire it is inferior to that used by United States forces. In addition the sight is not adjustable for deflection.

Every Japanese soldier is armed with a bayonet. Sometimes, service troops and ammunition carriers are armed with a bayonet only.

Japanese defense tactics are characterized by: skillful use of terrain and subsequent tenacious holding of position in the face of assault; liberal use of camouflage and strict enforcement of camouflage discipline; continual efforts to launch surprise actions; determined counter-attacks; indomitable spirit which prolongs resistance to the death. The effectiveness of these tactics is weakened by faulty estimate of the capabilities and limitations of their weapons.

Machine guns and light artillery are employed well forward. The latter is used consistently for direct observed fire. Machine guns often are sited with narrow, limited fields of fire; they seldom search or traverse. At times, automatic weapons are emplaced on hill crests from which long-range plunging fire is delivered. Riflemen, usually in positions to protect the heavier weapons, take as primary targets United States unit leaders and automatic weapons. Fire discipline is excellent and fire of wea-
pons often is held until the range is less than 100 yards. Fire of grenade dischargers, mortars and artillery is frequently tied in with the forward gun positions and overhead fire may be brought down in front of those positions if they are attacked.

Terrain is utilized skillfully by organizing and occupying commanding ground. Given time, the Japanese prepare strong positions, including alternate and supplementary positions for all men and weapons. These positions often are organized in depth and include emplacements which allow fire to the flanks and rear.

Attacking troops frequently are permitted to penetrate front line positions where they are caught in fire laid down from the secondary positions. Obstacles made from indigenous material are used extensively. When terrain permits, many caves and tunnels are constructed.

Camouflage of positions, weapons and individuals is stressed in all situations, making it possible for the units to utilize their fire discipline to the greatest advantage.

Taking advantage of terrain, camouflage and Allied characteristics of which they are aware, the Japanese plan and execute innumerable ruses and surprise actions. Counterattacks are intended to dislodge the assault force from captured positions before it can reorganize. If time is necessary to prepare for counterattack, small groups infiltrate our positions to destroy or disrupt communications.

The Japanese "spirit" or "Bushido", inspires the soldier to endure extreme hardship without thought of surrender. Although his morale is not likely to deteriorate, his overall efficiency as a fighter diminishes under severe battle conditions.

Mission and Occupation of Ground

Selection of a defensive position is dictated by the terrain. Positions are chosen with care, especially when heavy weapons are incorporated in the system. In order to obtain the greatest concealment, weapons are often sited in positions of extreme inaccessibility, even at the sacrifice of wide fields of fire. In areas such as flat coral atolls where high ground does not exist, positions are chosen as close as possible to the high water line.

A noteworthy feature of all Japanese defensive positions is that high ground is sought and the Japanese have no qualms about occupying the crest of a hill or its reverse slope. The usual procedure is to organize the terrain into scattered and frequently isolated strong points, loosely tied together with supporting fires. However, it is evident that the enemy does not mean to
remain static in his defensive tactics as shown by the defensive system at IWO JIMA. There the organization of ground defenses took more advantage of natural terrain features than had been true elsewhere. Each strongpoint became part of a mutually supporting system with positions organized in the greatest possible depth. Caves and caverns were effectively utilized on a large scale.

From OKINAWA comes this report:

"Japanese positions deeply dug in on the hills to the division front are mutually supporting on both forward and reverse slopes, and all avenues of approach are covered by machine gun and small arms fire."

The IWO JIMA and OKINAWA reports show that the Japanese are now capable of using the available terrain as the base for a well-integrated plan of defense.

A platoon in defense has the mission of repelling the enemy by fire. If the platoon's positions are overrun it must repel the enemy with grenades, bayonets, and hand-to-hand attacks. The platoon is the basic unit within a company's defensive positions.

In deploying his unit, the company commander assembles his platoon leaders, assigns definite zones of responsibility to each platoon, and points out possible avenues of approach. He may direct the general disposition of units within the platoon and indicate the disposition of HMGs, if they are in his zone of responsibility.

Each platoon leader then reconnoiters within his zone of responsibility. The liaison NCO and one or more runners accompany him to assist in reconnaissance and to relay any messages. If necessary, the leader takes along surveying instruments and at times a surveyor. The runners act as observers and provide protection for the platoon leader. During this reconnaissance, the platoon leader notes prominent terrain features and determines locations of rifle squads and the grenade discharger squad.

Factors considered in selecting the platoon position are:

1. Commanding ground or key positions of the terrain.
2. Observation.
3. Fields of fire.
4. Obstacles.
5. Cover and concealment.
6. Communications.
7. Dead spaces.
If conditions permit a detailed reconnaissance, the platoon leader studies his positions as they will appear to opposing forces with particular attention to the following:

1. Details of platoon fire nets, particularly the degree of concentration.

2. Attack areas and positions to be occupied by the various squads.
   a. For the squads in general, and for the squads covering the flanks in particular, several positions are established and distributed so as to cover the targets and conceal the location of the positions.
   b. Regarding the construction of the fire net system when it is unavoidable because of terrain conditions, etc., squads may be divided and disposed in depth or in line, or the LMGs may be detached and assigned to guard the flanks. Squads are not divided unless absolutely necessary.

3. Antitank dispositions. Disposition of closequarters combat teams.


   A sufficient force of riflemen is kept in reserve for use in counterattacks, firing replacements, or in any other way the battle situation requires. The force in reserve may be drawn from all squads, depending on the battle situation. Drawing reserves from squads in important positions is avoided as far as possible.

5. Dispositions made as battle situation changes.

   Dispositions are planned in case of oblique or flanking fire, disadvantageous battle situations of adjacent positions, enemy penetration of part of the platoon positions, or the enemy attacking from the flank or rear.


   After reconnaissance, cooperation is effected with units holding adjacent positions, and heavy weapons in the vicinity, with regard to the following aspects of the local situation:

   a. Mutually connected positions, especially on the flanks, and location of heavy weapons.
b. Mutual relations regarding fire control.

The platoon leader then calls his squad leaders together, or meets them at a predesignated location, and gives them orders for employment of their zones of responsibility. His orders may contain the following points:

1. Matters common to all squads.
   a. Own plans.
   b. Relation with adjacent units.
   c. Relative position of various squads.
   d. Defense works and camouflage.
   e. The main line of resistance and the final protective line.

2. Matters to be disseminated when squads have reached assigned positions:
   a. Squad firing and position to be occupied.
   b. Points on which "surprise fire" is to be concentrated, and fire power directed at them.
   c. Firing preparations against oblique and flanking fire and in other necessary directions outside the firing area.
   d. Preparations for sniper fire outside fire net.

The platoon leader also takes into consideration matters that may arise, such as the following:

1. Installations around platoon leader's positions for force in reserve, observation, etc.

2. Dispositions and necessary additions and revisions.


5. Antiaircraft, antitank, and antigas preparations.

6. Matters relating to work.
He assigns a priority to the work to be accomplished, usually in the following order:

1. Siting of weapons.
2. Clearing fields of fire.
4. Camouflage.
5. Improvement of positions.

These factors properly used, aid in establishing effective fire for weapons and tend to minimize effects of enemy fire.

In addition to assigning a section of the front to each squad, the platoon leader combines the fire power of oblique and flanking fire and of grenade dischargers within the firing area, according to the amount of fire power necessary to secure the greatest density at important parts of the platoon fire nets. In doing this he makes the following dispositions:

1. Assignment of squad fighting area. These are so assigned that the firing areas of all squads are thoroughly covered in addition to having concentrations of fire power at important points. Markers may be set up in front of positions to indicate the firing area. When front boundaries of firing areas of the various squads differ, or the front boundary of the firing area is not clear, the limit of range is indicated.

2. Prearranged fire is ordered. Points on which prearranged fire is to be concentrated are indicated according to orders of the company commander, and fire power to be directed at these points is determined.

In addition to the platoon commander's personal observation of the enemy, he employs the liaison NCOs or lookouts as assistants. He chooses important points for lookouts, assigns them, and instructs personnel in the essentials of observation. If the company commander so orders, the platoon leader conducts observation by stationing lookouts, observation units, or by dispatching patrols.

The platoon leader makes complete antitank disposition. If defense facilities permit, each squad is assigned a place for closequarters antitank combat.
Figure 5: Individual foxholes and Communication trench.

Figure 6: Individual shelter.

Figure 7: MG Emplacement.
Figure 8: Individual Light Machine Gunner's Position

Figure 9: Individual Rifleman's Position
The platoon leader always arranges signals for command liaison between himself and the squad leaders while under gas attack, and sees that all personnel are familiar with the signals. One chemical warfare soldier is always near the platoon leader's position.

As the work assigned to his squads progresses, the platoon leader makes sufficient inspections to insure that weapons are properly sited, that individual emplacements are adequate, and that each squad makes proper use of the terrain and is capable of fulfilling its mission. (See Figures 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 for details of individual foxholes and communication trenches). The platoon leader supervises the installation of protective and tactical wire, and other obstacles, in accordance with orders of the company commander.

The platoon leader stays in a position from which he can best control the movements of his platoon — a central location if possible. He makes use of prominent hills where he can observe the action of his enemy and keep abreast of the situation with first hand information. He keeps in contact with his squad leaders by voice, through his runners, and by simple hand signals.

The platoon leader makes a situation report once a day unless there is no change in the situation. He reports only the enemy situation. If he is killed in action, the senior NCO takes charge and informs the company commander who may send another officer to replace the platoon leader.

Platoon Dispositions

In the Japanese Army the platoon is the smallest unit capable of independent action in combat. In platoon combat, the platoon leader conducts the fighting according to his own ideas. He combines and develops the fighting power of his various squads according to the plans of the company commander, and cooperates with other platoons and supporting units in the company.

The platoon leader at all times tries to carry out his duties so as to be a model for his men. He is taught to recognize the importance of his responsibilities, to work and study constantly for self-improvement, and to give evidence in his actions of noble ideals and a high conception of duty. He exercises strict control over his squads and directs his platoon by signals or orders suitable to the battle situation and terrain. For this he maintains close liaison with the company commander.
The platoon forms the framework of the company positions and the nucleus of the distribution of fire power. In effect, it is a unified strong point which acts independently during combat. Its fire net is constructed on the basis of the company plans, and the platoon endeavors to annihilate the enemy on its front before the positions. If an enemy penetrates part of the strong point or if the combat situation of nearby units becomes disadvantageous, the platoon must hold its position to the end, aiding the company counterattack. To do this, independent platoon preparations are made for directing fire power to the flanks and rear outside the firing area, in case of enemy attack there. Also constructed is a closely organized network of fields of fire, supposed with no gaps, within the firing area.

The platoon leader of a platoon with four rifle squads has a much wider variety of dispositions to choose from even though the fire power of this platoon is just one LMG more than the typical three-squad platoon. Some of the possibilities are represented graphically below:

![Diagram of platoon positions](image-url)
The interval between riflemen, although dependent upon terrain and the extent of the zone of responsibility of the platoon, is usually from five to ten yards. When a limited number of troops is available, this distance may be increased to as much as 20 to 30 yards. Even larger intervals may occur where the terrain is relatively level.

As a general rule, the LMG is placed in or near the center of a rifle squad. At times, however, it may be detached and placed...
some distance from the squad, usually to the front. Independent riflemen ordinarily are placed slightly to the rear and extending laterally from the LMG. By virtue of its position with respect to the squad, the LMG is given protection by adjacent riflemen. If time and terrain permit, alternate and supplementary positions are prepared.

Riflemen, designated as snipers, may be placed to the flanks of the LMG. A graphic example of a typical platoon with three rifle squads is given below:

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**KEY**

- LMG
- S Sniper
- O Riflemen
- 1 Squad Leader (1st)
- L Connecting File
- O Platoon Leader
- 1 Company Commander
- Q Grenade Launcher

The position of the platoon leader is determined by the terrain. It is often near the center but in rear of the platoon, from which position he can observe and control his unit. Observers are stationed at points where they can best note the approach of assault forces. If the interval between two squads is unusually large, observers may be placed at advantageous points between squads to maintain contact between units. (See Figure 10). The normal interval between squads is 50 to 65 yards, but this also is determined by the terrain and the width of the sector to be defended.

A squad is assigned to cover a sector from 50 to 90 yards wide, although the actual ground occupied may be much less. A platoon front will cover from 165 to 218 yards and the interval between platoons will vary from 60 to 100 yards. These figures are neither maximum nor minimum limits, but are elastic enough to cover normal situations.
The company commander orders the platoon leader to arrange for one or two platoon lookout posts in front of the MLR to observe enemy troop movements. When the attack starts, these observers fall back and report enemy strength, disposition, and the direction of attack.

At night, depending upon the situation, the daytime MLR may be withdrawn and contracted, and troops placed closer together. Part of the reserve may be used to fill gaps considered dangerous to the safety of the position. Positions covering fixed installations, and important fire points, are not changed. For this reason, such points are given an independent character and all-around security. Reserve elements within these points are at the rear to insure security of the position.
The platoon leader may make a reconnaissance at night or send out patrols to gather information about the enemy. If an attack appears imminent, the platoon leader may send a squad or less to creep as close as possible to enemy positions and harass him, trying to delay or postpone the assault. These patrols have proved most effective. On Leyte, the Japanese reconnoitered security outposts, determined which unit had the least number of sentries and on the next night counterattacked through this unit.

Grenade Discharger Squad

Depending upon terrain and mission, the grenade discharger squad is placed in the rear of and near the center of the platoon. It is not general practice to split the squad, but on rare occasions, the squad separates into pairs. Single weapons seldom operate independently. The four grenade dischargers are dispersed about 20 yards apart.

Small hills or folds in the earth are sufficient to place these weapons in defilade. If time permits, primary, alternate and supplementary positions are prepared. Particular attention is paid to the location of the grenade discharger squad by the platoon leader for this is the element employed to block avenues of approach which cannot be covered by flat trajectory weapons.

The dischargers usually fire a concentration. Whenever possible, coordination with the artillery is sought, and areas not covered by artillery fire are designated for the grenade dischargers. When the targets of the artillery are not known, the platoon leader designates target areas, or the grenade discharger squad may be held to fire on targets of opportunity. In situations where use of the grenade dischargers is not planned, personnel of the squad may be called upon to act as riflemen. This applies particularly to the ammunition carriers in the squad, who normally take no part in the actual firing of the weapons.

In case of a sudden assault on the defensive position, the fire of the entire grenade discharger squad is shifted from other targets and placed on the point of attack. If the front line is penetrated, the squad leader withdraws his squad, one discharger team at a time, to previously selected supplementary positions, and resumes defensive tactics.

Although the platoon leader gives the original order for the employment of the grenade discharger squad, the squad leader is responsible for the squad's actions. He reconnoiters for positions, moves the squad and gives fire orders. The squad leader, without consulting the platoon leader, may shift fire to a new target and change the position of his squad. It is his duty to see that security measures and concealment are enforced.
The Squad in Defense

The squad is the smallest Japanese Army unit combining military strength and fire power.

After the platoon leader has issued his orders, the squad leader reconnoiters in his assigned sector, examining the terrain of the firing area and learning the plans of adjacent units. He chooses positions for LMGs and grenade dischargers to achieve maximum destructive power. He assigns snipers, observers, and other troops to points among the squad positions. When the sector and direction of fire must be designated immediately, he decides upon the firing sector himself. He also ascertains positions of friendly forces, determines points for prearranged fire, studies terrain ahead, and explains all information to his subordinates.

When ordering the opening of fire, the squad leader makes certain that his men have cover or concealment. He is responsible for observing the enemy disposition. He stays near the center of the squad and may have two or three men near him to protect the rear of the position. These men are close enough to the front lines to fire to the front without changing positions and are available to the squad leader to fill gaps in the line caused by casualties.

Fire control is another responsibility of the squad leader. Only in rare instances does a rifleman use his own initiative.

Rifle fire is primarily held in reserve for protection of the light machine gun. When the squad leader is near the LMG position, he will normally control the LMG's fire.

Fire Control

The Japanese seldom open fire from a defense area unless an assault actually is being made upon it. Surprise and close-range firing to produce confusion and a maximum number of casualties are normally employed. Fire is held until opposing forces are too close to receive support from their artillery, mortars, and machine guns. Extreme care is taken to keep the positions of automatic weapons concealed.

Evidence of Japanese cunning along these lines comes from LEYTE:

"The outstanding Japanese characteristic was excellence in fire discipline and control of all arms. Without exception fire was withheld until the moment when its delivery in great volume would give greatest effect. On 5 November 1944, the enemy on forward slopes of the first ridge allowed his positions to be
bypassed by two reinforced companies. The enemy, in approximate strength of one battalion, remained quietly in such concealment that the two companies advanced apparently without opposition on a routine relief movement and to secure the high ground. Then the enemy opened with such great effect that the two forward companies found themselves completely isolated and unable to move, receive supplies, or evacuate wounded.

"In numerous instances, enemy defensive areas often consisting of bunkers, eight to 12 machine guns, mortars, and one company of riflemen, would permit cautiously moving advance elements to pass their excellently concealed positions, and fire on reserve troops moving in more compact formations."

Rifle and LMG fire are controlled by the squad leader who takes a position near the center of his squad from which he has a commanding view of the terrain to the front and flanks of his squad. His orders will be coordinated by the squad leaders of adjacent squads in the platoon. Control is by voice and simple hand signals. The squad leader in turn must keep in contact with the platoon leader. The platoon leader controls the actions of the squad leaders by voice, hand signals or runners. He maintains communications with the company commander through runners. Simple messages are oral; detailed messages are written and may be accompanied by overlays. Signal flags are also used between the platoon leader and company commander.

The platoon leader communicates with adjacent platoons through squad leaders on the flanks of the platoon, or by runners from platoon headquarters. A liaison NCO is in charge of the platoon CP and handles all incoming and outgoing messages.

Communications between the platoon leader and strong points under his command and between strong points within his sector may be augmented by speaking tubes.

The unit of fire for a rifleman is 130 rounds. This is supplemented by a bandoleer containing 85 rounds. Unit of fire for the LMG is 1500 rounds. Each man carries at least one hand grenade and usually will have four or five.

In assigning sectors of fire to squads, the platoon leader is careful to concentrate the fire power on the most likely avenues of approach and make it overlap with adjacent sectors of fire so that there are no gaps between sectors. He clearly defines left and right limits and, if necessary, the limits of the range. Markers may be used to show these limits.
In the absence of HMGs, LMGs may be located on the flanks of a squad to deliver flanking fire. Riflemen fire at targets of opportunity within their zone of responsibility. LMGs usually hold their fire and await the opportunity to fire at troop concentrations and automatic weapons. Snipers single out leaders and automatic weapons.

HMGs and heavier weapons normally are sited by the company commander and assigned oblique and flanking fire. Great importance is attached to the HMG; as long as its firing is not interfered with, the HMG position is isolated from the front line and constructed to utilize terrain and natural obstacles. At night, the HMGs are moved closer to the front line. These weapons may have a much wider sector of fire but upon command they are sited along a FPL. They are placed on the flanks of a defensive position and generally in a covered emplacement. Construction of pillboxes for HMGs is assigned high priority.

Occupation of an Advanced Position

On certain occasions the occupation and organization of an advanced defensive position is ordered for one or all of the following purposes:

1. To prevent for as long as possible the occupation of important points of terrain near the main defensive position.

2. To delay preparations for an attack.

3. To induce the opposing forces to launch an attack in a false direction which will lead them into a position favorable to counterattack or counteroffensive.

The organization of a formal advanced defensive position is not standard Japanese practice, although the assignment of some of the missions of such a position to the outpost line of resistance is not uncommon. Cases where advanced positions have been organized are:

1. The outpost line of resistance, to obtain observation, is pushed well forward of the MLR.

2. An oblique advanced position is organized between the OPLR and the MLR to induce the enemy to turn a flank to a protected counterattack or counteroffensive.
The garrison of the advanced position may come from the troops on the OPLR or on the MLR, reinforced by machine guns, antitank weapons, and some artillery firing from advanced positions. The Japanese recognize the delicacy of withdrawing this force at the appropriate time. They make it the responsibility of the division commander to give the force a clear, simple mission, and to prescribe the time and manner of withdrawal.

When a platoon is brought forward from the MLR to occupy an advanced position, it disrupts and delays the enemy's attack, forces him to deploy prematurely and then withdraws to previously prepared positions on the MLR according to a predetermined plan.

Withdrawals

A platoon leader withdraws his unit only under certain conditions:

1. When there is an immediate advantage to be gained by withdrawing;
2. When he is specifically ordered to withdraw; and
3. When the battle plans call for a withdrawal under special conditions.

He never undertakes a withdrawal on his own initiative, as withdrawing is strictly against his doctrine and consequently should be ordered by higher echelons. In CHINA, where there is sufficient room for maneuvers, it has been noted that the Japanese fight to the last man for any ground captured in battle. When their position is overrun, the Japanese make immediate plans to counterattack and regain the position.

The mechanics of a Japanese and United States withdrawal are quite similar. When ordered to withdraw, the platoon leader sends an NCO to reconnoiter the route of withdrawal and if the company commander has not designated the assembly area, the platoon leader decides where it will be. The place to which he withdraws is usually determined by the terrain. The withdrawal is directed to the nearest terrain feature which can be defended, or to ground which offers some protection for the troops. There, preparations are made for an immediate counterattack. The platoon may withdraw by squads or individually, thinning out the skirmish line gradually. In either method, the LMGs maintain a high rate of fire and cover the withdrawal of the riflemen. Usually the reserve squad, or riflemen in reserve, withdraw intact and are not committed to aid in the withdrawal as are United States troops. The front line units alternate in withdrawing and holding, one or more guns moving to a rear covering position while other guns remain in place.
When a platoon has the mission of forcing the opponent to deploy prematurely, it spreads out over a large area, often as wide as 1200 yards. It opens fire at extreme ranges and causes enemy troops to deploy in battle formation. Withdrawal is conducted gradually and usually individually, with the intention of deploying the enemy as long as possible. The withdrawal ends when units reach their new MLR, or in an assembly area where they proceed to their MLR.
Counterattacks

A platoon is held responsible for an all-out defense of its sector and is expected to hold its position or sacrifice every man in the attempt. If circumstances force a platoon to withdraw, the platoon leader is expected to reorganize his platoon and counterattack immediately. The grenade dischargers normally prepare to lay down a barrage on front line positions, should they be overrun. This is especially true when a platoon or squad is organized into a separate defensive position. (See Figure 11). Any unit held in reserve by the platoon leader augments the fire of the grenade dischargers and assists the other units in the counterattack.

In the past, counterattacks were poorly organized and showed inadequate planning and lack of control. More recently counterattacks by small units appear to have been planned in advance and are better coordinated and controlled. Speedy launching of the counterattack, before the opponent has time to reorganize, is emphasized. The decision of the commander of a higher echelon to create a general counterattack may depend upon the success of a platoon counterattack.

From a defensive position, the platoon leader constantly considers possibilities of switching to the offensive. For this reason, he seizes any opportunity to launch a counterattack when the assault force:

1. Attack is stalemated.
2. Fire power is inferior.
3. Has blundered into an unfavorable position.
4. Hesitates to reorganize or consolidate.

The platoon leader may feel out resistance by sending a squad forward. If necessary, he may dispatch a runner to inform the company commander that he is launching a counterattack. In counterattacking, he is not held under rigid company control and he does not need permission from his company commander to launch a counterattack. This makes him capable of independent action, but faulty exercise of this action often leads a platoon into a poor position from which it may suffer undue losses. Properly executed, it speeds up the exploitation of an initial success.

The platoon leader exploits to full extent gains made by counterattacking when such action will not endanger the platoon being cut off from adjacent units.

After launching a successful counterattack, a platoon leader may assist an adjacent unit which is pinned down by fire.
Obstacles

As a rule, obstacles are used to make fire power more effective and to check surprise attacks by hampering assault force movements, retarding advance and prolonging exposure to oblique and frontal fire. Barbed wire is employed inside FPLs to canalize an approaching enemy and to subject him to enfilade fire. When a platoon occupies a strong point, protective fire sometimes is used on the flanks and in rear of the position. (See Figure 11).

Barbed wire entanglements, barricades and antitank ditches are constructed across likely avenues of approach. Although obstacles are designated by a company commander or battalion commander, any such obstacle in a sector covered by the platoon affects the disposition of the troops within that area. Such obstacles may be constructed by the platoon. Trip wires are used in conjunction with other obstacles to impede infantry troops. Obstacles are far enough in front of a platoon position to prevent use of hand grenades by enemy troops.

Antitank defense and obstacles are of prime importance to the Japanese defensive setup. The latest trend is toward the construction of antitank "islands" or strong points, sited about 400 yards apart. Each strong point, occupies a frontage of 150 to 200 yards and consists of trench and bunker systems. Each is completely enclosed by antitank ditches and communication trenches and taken together the "islands" form a chain of fortified positions each completely independent and armed with both artillery and MGs. These are the backbone of Japanese defense on small islands. (See Figure 11). Antitank weapons are sited to fire down the antitank ditches. In addition to the barricades and antitank trench system, the Japanese employ infantry antitank teams whose mission is to attack tanks with magnetic antitank mines, land mines, and Molotov cocktails.

Beach Defense

In the past, the Japanese have placed little emphasis on destruction of a hostile force before a landing is effected, but strong emphasis on destruction of such a force after it has landed and before it has consolidated a beachhead. First consideration in combat plans is the destruction of the enemy at the water's edge. This calls for strong fortifications and careful disposal and concealment of men and material to withstand air and naval bombardment. Defense positions are strong points from which the Japanese counterattack when the landing party hits the beach and general confusion is prevalent. Counterattacks are usually executed the night of D-day, the objective being to push the landing party back to the water's edge.
At SAIPAN, the Japanese intention was to fight from prepared beach positions, supported by artillery and mortars, but United States naval shelling forced withdrawal. The alternate plan was to withdraw initially from the beaches, shell the beaches with all available weapons and then launch a coordinated counterattack before United States forces could consolidate their positions.

The PHILIPPINES, IWO JIMA and OKINAWA operations indicate that the Japanese have abandoned the doctrine of destroying the landing party at the beach, or as soon thereafter as practicable, not because of a purposeful change of tactics, but because of the devastating effects of Allied pre-landing bombardments which neutralize or destroy defense positions at or near the water's edge. New tactics are to stay back off the beach and organize fortified positions in the greatest possible depth. This newer method of beach defense may well be expected in coming operations.

A company manning a strong point in beach defense may use HMG flanking fire in conjunction with adjacent companies. (See Figure 11). Similarly, LMGs may be assigned flanking fire to cover the interval between squads. Reserve positions are incorporated to insure the independence of strong points. A reserve squad or unit may occupy the rear positions of a platoon manning a strong point.

If HMGs are not available in a sector where it is necessary to have oblique or flanking fire, the platoon leader may employ LMGs on the flank of his platoon. If the terrain calls for the use of additional HMGs in one sector, the company commander may assign them to a platoon. In such cases the platoon leader may direct their fire in keeping with the company commander's orders.

Reserves

Within a platoon, a squad or some portion of a squad may be used as a "reserve" unit. It will have two or more positions and will be committed according to the direction of the enemy attack.

Since there is little space for maneuver to counterattack on a small island, such as ENIWETOK or KWAJALEIN, the plan of defense rarely includes any unit to be held in reserve. Most of the units are committed to front line positions. Sometimes a small reserve may be held under control of the island commander. He will set forth several plans of defense to cover all likely enemy landings. These plans will call for definite action on the part of each subordinate unit. Thus one platoon, or any portion of a unit stationed on one side of an island, may be pulled out of position and used in counterattacking in some other sector.
As land masses and the number of troops increase in size, the number and size of reserve units also increase. Insofar as possible, large reserves are maintained. Platoons held in reserve usually are assigned the mission of aiding antiaircraft units and are ordered to destroy airborne troops which may land in rear of front line units.

**Gas Defense**

The Japanese have adequate equipment for the detection of and protection against gas. The individual's equipment consists of a gas mask, protective cape, and ointment. Rubber suits and gas detector sets are organizational property and seldom issued to the individual.

**Camouflage**

The Japanese are camouflage conscious and conceal positions excellently. On every operation they have taken the utmost advantage of vegetation, trees, undergrowth and any other facilities at hand to blend positions with the surrounding terrain.

Prior to the occupation of ATTU, contacts with the Japanese generally had been in tropical areas, where natural materials for camouflage were plentiful. But, on ATTU, with no foliage or tropical growth, the Japanese were equally adept in concealing positions, as they have been in subsequent operations in the Pacific area.

The platoon leader is directly responsible for camouflage in his zone of action and is checked by the company commander who tours and inspects his platoon areas.

Often individual emplacements are so well camouflaged that troops are immediately in front of them before discovering their existence.

In particular, the Japanese are very adept in camouflage of small emplacements and in personal concealment. Large installations may be poorly treated for concealment and often troops are careless in establishing paths that lead directly to important points or installations.

**Supply and Evacuation**

The platoon leader is responsible for the immediate supply of food, water and ammunition for his platoon, and is kept informed of this situation by his squad leaders. An NCO has charge of distributing supplies within the platoon.
There seems to be no definite organization for supply of units lower than the battalion.

In the past, the Japanese have done all their fighting on islands where the problem of supply for smaller units was not too difficult. Supplies are stored near defensive positions in dumps which are scattered throughout the island or atoll, and it is comparatively simple for units as small as the platoon to have ready access to these dumps for their own needs. Details may be made up from the different squads or a single squad may be sent to the nearest dump to supply the platoon.

Whenever possible, the Japanese construct innumerable cave networks and store supplies within these caves. This method provides protection of supplies from air raids, naval bombardment, and artillery shelling, as well as providing easily accessible supplies while fighting defensively from this network of caves.

To the Japanese the problem of complete evacuation of a small land area does not exist - the fighting continues to the last man. On a large land area, however, the process of evacuation is similar to that of United States forces, except that the Japanese are handicapped by limited transportation and therefore are much slower.

The Japanese combat units have medical officers, medical NCOs and medical corpsmen attached. The officer carries a medical satchel, the NCO a medical haversack, and the corpsman a private's medical haversack. Tourniquets, splints and triangular bandages are put in their haversacks or satchels. Each unit has medical panniers and stretchers.

The Japanese medical service is quite extensive for a division. It includes a medical unit, three to five hospitals, and a water purification unit, plus divisional components of medically trained personnel. This extensive organization is probably to keep all battle casualties as far forward as possible in order to facilitate their quick return to fighting units. Large numbers of Japanese medical personnel are armed and have been employed as fighting troops.

The stretcher unit remains in the rear of the combat unit. It consists of headquarters, stretcher company, and ambulance company. The stretcher bearers follow directly behind the front line men. When a soldier is hit, his companions are not allowed to aid him. They leave him and advance if they can, while the following corpsmen care for the wounded.
The wounded soldier is attended first by medical corpsmen attached to the company who apply the first field dressing and then either direct the casualty to the battalion aid post or have him carried there by auxiliary litter bearers.

In case of retreat, able-bodied men are not permitted to help the wounded back unless expressly ordered to do so by the commanding officer. Stretcher bearers and the ambulance company transport the wounded to the rear. Injured persons may fall back to a field hospital without the permission of the CO, but the soldier usually does not go unless he is ordered or receives permission from his platoon leader to do so.

When a soldier is wounded and goes to the rear he takes with him his rifle, bayonet, and a few rounds of ammunition, leaving the rest for redistribution in his platoon.

Conclusion

Most recent contacts with the Japanese indicate that their basic tactical doctrine has not been appreciably altered. Numerous improvements, however, in techniques have been apparent. It is evident that the Japanese have conducted extensive research in tactical errors of past campaigns and have used this research as a basis for improving their defensive positions and techniques. One of the most outstanding results has been improved coordination of counterattacking forces up to battalion strength in contrast to independent charges by small groups. The Japanese have learned that the latter technique has needlessly dissipated their strength.

Passive defense against United States shelling and bombardment has culminated in the extensive use of caves and tunnels. Already the Japanese are beginning to realize the shortcomings of such defense. They are consistently improving mutual support between caves and are desperately trying to overcome the present handicap of poor communications. In addition, they are modifying their passive defense through the tactical employment of security outposts stationed to cover cave entrances. These outposts are manned during United States bombardment and shelling to prevent surprise attacks.

As United States forces continue to advance, the Japanese are being compelled to recognize the need for strong and coordinated defenses. Further refinements in Japanese defensive techniques may be expected in future operations.
JAPANESE PLATOON IN DEFENSE

CINCPAC-CINCPOA BULLETIN 182-45 10 AUGUST 1945

UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
AND PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS
HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF

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12 August 1945 - Serial DIS-120830.

From: Japanese Platoon in Defense,
(CINCPAC-CINCPOA Bulletin No. 182-45.)

To: Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas.

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