

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

NAVY DEPARTMENT
JUL 16 2008
LIBRARY

ACTION REPORT

HEADQUARTERS, FIRST MARINE DIVISION

NO SERIAL

MAY 24, 1943

FINAL REPORT ON GUADALCANAL OPERATIONS PHASE I.

DIVISION COMMANDER'S FINAL REPORT ON
GUADALCANAL OPERATION, PHASE I. EVENTS
PRIOR TO H HOUR, 7 AUGUST 1942. 26 JUNE
1942 - 7 AUGUST 1942.



DECLASSIFIED

ORIGINAL

HEADQUARTERS, FIRST MARINE DIVISION,
FLEET MARINE FORCE,
C/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, Calif.

24 May, 1943.

From: The Commanding General.
To : The Commandant Marine Corps, Headquarters, U.S.
Marine Corps, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.
Via: The Commanding General 1st Marine Amphibious Corps.
Subject: Final report on Guadalcanal Operation Phase I.
Reference: (a) Art 10-21 Marine Corps Manual.
Enclosure: (A) Copy of subject report.

1. There is submitted herewith a report on activities of this division during the first phase of the Guadalcanal Operation. It covers the period 26 June to H-hour, 7 August and is an account of the planning, reconnaissance and approach periods which preceded the landing. Remaining phases of this report will be forwarded prior to 15 June.

2. The basic or covering report is annexed with numerous special reports, operation orders, and other documents. In many cases these contain recommendations and conclusions with which the undersigned is not necessarily in accord. This supplementary material is submitted because of its freshness of view point and as being of possible historical value. It is regretted that the exigencies of the campaign did not permit the keeping of a more exact account and that in many cases records were destroyed due to the danger involved in a large accumulation of documentary material in the presence of the enemy.

3. Phase V, which will conclude the report, will contain a final summary and restatement of conclusions and recommendations covering the entire period of the operation.

A. A. Vandegrift
A. A. VANDEGRIFT

Copy to: Cominch	1	ComPacAmphFor	1
CinCPac	1	CGAmphCorpsPacFlt	1
CinCSowesPac	1	ComGenSoPac	1
CMC	6	ComGen13thAirForce	1
ComSoPac	1	ComAmphFor7thFleet	1
Com7thFleet	1	CG2ndMarDiv	1
CG6thArmyUSA	6	CG3rdMarDiv	1
ComAirSoPac	3	CG4thMarDiv	1
CG1stMac	6	MarCorpsSchools	6
ComAmphForSoPac	3	File	1

00204
108/332

First Marine Division,
Fleet Marine Force,
C/O Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, California.

SECRET

DIVISION COMMANDER'S FINAL REPORT ON GUADALCANAL OPERATION

PHASE 1

EVENTS PRIOR TO H HOUR, 7 AUGUST, 1942.

GENERAL

The First Marine Division was brought to war strength at Marine Barracks, New River, N.C., between 7 December, 1941 and 1 May, 1942. Expansion from a small pre-war nucleus to a war strength division presented a serious problem in training, equipping, and quartering, which was further complicated by the early detachment of a provisional brigade for immediate service in the South Pacific. Formation of this brigade, built around the Seventh Marines (reinforced), withdrew from the division a disproportionate number of officers, noncommissioned officers and men trained and experienced in amphibious warfare. Early replacement of the loss being impossible, the division was reconstituted as a two regiment division with supporting units and remained so until the arrival of the Seventh Marines on Guadalcanal in September, 1942, returned it to the original triangular form of organization.

TRAINING AND STATE OF READINESS

All units of the Division (except the First Marines, which remained inactive until March, 1942) participated in intensive training during the period December, 1941 - April, 1942. Training was of a practical nature and included field exercises, combat firing and service practices for all arms and units. In addition to this training at New River each reinforced combat team of the Fifth Marines and one of the First Marines engaged in a ten day landing exercise at Solomons Island, Maryland, during March and April.

Although full advantage was taken of every opportunity and facility for training it was considered that the Division had not yet attained a satisfactory state of readiness for combat when first intelligence of the Lone Wolf plan was received in mid-April.

MOVEMENT OVERSEAS

The Lone Wolf Plan required the early movement of the division, (less 7th Marines reinforced) to New Zealand for the purpose of establishing a training base and

SECRET

conducting intensive amphibious training in preparation for active combat. It was estimated that no combat mission would be required of the Division prior to 1 January, 1943. In accordance with this plan necessary establishments were obtained in the vicinity of Wellington, New Zealand, and arrangements were completed for the reception of the Division which was scheduled to move overseas in two echelons. The first echelon (Division Headquarters, certain divisional units and Fifth Marines Reinforced) reached New Zealand on 14 June; the second echelon (First Marines, reinforced, Eleventh Marines, and remaining divisional units) arrived on 11 July. (Annex A).

PLANNING AND RECONNAISSANCE

PRELIMINARY ORGANIZATION

On 26 June, twelve days after the arrival of the First Echelon and while the Second was at sea enroute to the area the Division Commander was informed of a plan for an offensive operation in the South Pacific involving the employment of the First Marine Division reinforced by 2nd Marines, 1st Raider Battalion and 3rd Defense Battalion. This information was received from Commander South Pacific at a conference in Auckland attended by the Division Commander and Officers of his staff. The proposed theater of operations was to be the Solomon Islands, with the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area as the probable specific objective of a landing attack by the reinforced First Marine Division. D-day was tentatively set at 1 August, only three weeks after the prospective arrival of the Second Echelon in New Zealand. The state of readiness of the Division and the complicating logistical factors involved in an operation at so early a date were appreciated by all concerned but were dismissed from consideration in view of the urgency and high national importance of the projected undertaking.

The Division Commander returned to Wellington and active preparations for the operation was begun by all staff sections. There was no time for a deliberate planning phase, and in many instances irrevocable decisions had to be made even before the essential features of the naval plan of operations could be ascertained. Since the success of the operation would be singularly dependent upon surprise, it was considered necessary for all preparations to be surrounded by the utmost secrecy. For this reason preliminary measures were carried out under the guise of preparations for a period of amphibious training.

SECRET

SECRET

By Operation Order 5-42, (Annex B) on 29 June, the Division was organized into two reinforced regimental combat groups, each comprising a headquarters and support sub-group and three reinforced battalion combat teams. Each sub-group and combat team was assigned to a designated transport. At this time only Group A, consisting of the Fifth Marines (Reinforced), was present in New Zealand, and by Mailgram Serial 290145 (Annex C) it was directed to begin embarkation on transports at Wellington on 2 July. As further information became available, a Divisional support group, comprising elements not previously assigned to Regimental combat teams was organized. It consisted of four sub-groups and a rear echelon. Each of the former was assigned for transportation to a transport or cargo vessel while the latter consisted of elements which were to remain in Wellington.

Operations Order 6-42, (Annex D) the first complete order of the operation was issued on 9 July. It directed that the force be embarked for a period of amphibious training or for employment in active operations.

INFORMATION OF THE ENEMY

There was little information immediately available either as to the character of the theater of operations or the enemy strength and activity therein. Other than a few photographs of the Tulage harbor area and the conventional small scale hydrographic charts there were no adequate maps available. Officer missions were sent to Australia, New Guinea, Noumea, and Auckland to exploit all available sources of information, and much valuable material was obtained. This included studies, photographs, and a fragmentary coastal mosaic of Guadalcanal. The services of several qualified Australians thoroughly acquainted with the Solomon Islands were made available by Commander Southwest Pacific. The same source provided useful estimates of the enemy strength and dispositions and prepared an excellent aerial mosaic and map of Guadalcanal both of which were reproduced in quantity. This cartographic material would have been of invaluable assistance but through a failure of intelligence liaison it failed to reach the division. (Annex E Intelligence)

PLAN OF OPERATIONS

Based on the foregoing and after a thorough appraisal of terrain and hydrographic conditions the following plan of operations was decided upon:

SECRET

To execute simultaneous landings on Tulagi and Guadalcanal in order to seize these islands and destroy enemy forces thereon.

To land the First Marine Raider Battalion, followed by one infantry Battalion on Beach Blue on the southwest coast of Tulagi at H hour.

To land the First Parachute Battalion on Gavutu at H plus 4 hours to seize Gavutu and Tanambogo.

To protect the flanks of these major landings by landing small forces on Florida, in the vicinity of Halavo and Hallett respectively.

To land the remainder of the Division on Beach Red (on Guadalcanal 6,000 yards east of airfield) beginning at H plus 30 minutes to seize a beach head and then attack to the west capturing the airfield. (Annex R Sketch of Lunga Sound).

Although changed in certain minor respects, this remained the fundamental scheme for the employment of the division and it was embodied in Operation Order Number 7-42, First Marine Division, issued at Wellington on 20 July. (Annex F). It was considered that the northern attack (Tulagi-Gavutu-Tanambogo) would be more difficult initially than the southern attack (Guadalcanal) due to the restricted terrain and unfavorable hydrographic conditions which implied that any landing in this area must of necessity be made in the face of strong resistance. The more favorable terrain and the unlimited extent of beaches on the Guadalcanal side indicated that a landing at a point remote from the Lunga defenses would in all probability meet with little or no initial opposition. For this reason the best trained and longest organized battalions available were assigned to the northern attack. Events of 7 August indicated that these two assumptions were correct.

The Division Reserve (Second Marines, reinforced) was retained under control of commander, Task Force 62 for occupation of Ndani Island subsequent to D day if its release to the Division Commander for occupation of the Guadalcanal-Tulagi area proved unnecessary. However, prior to issue of Operation Order 7-42 the release of one team for the northern attack was secured.

NAVAL PLAN OF OPERATIONS

The basic Divisional Operation Order (Annex F) was incorporated by Commander Task Force 62 as Annex D (Landing Force Plan) of the order of the naval attack force which was issued on 30 July at Koro Island. This order enjoined the seizure of Tulagi, Gavutu and Guadalcanal by Task Force 62 (Naval Attack Force) supported by Task Force 61 (carriers). The organization of Task Force 62

SECRET

appears in Annex G.

The plan provided for two fire support groups for ships gunfire in support of the landing; one group (Group Love) to fire in support of the southern attack, the other (Group Mike) to support the northern attack. (Annex H. Extracts from Ships Gunfire Plan). Air support provided by carrier based planes of Task Force 61 was to consist of two fighting squadrons and three dive bomber squadrons operating in support of the landing attack. Extracts of the aircraft support plan appear in Annex I.

LOGISTICS

The movement of the division to New Zealand had not been planned with a view to its immediate employment in active operations. The bulk of the personnel were organizationally loaded on two large passenger vessels (WAKEFIELD and ERICSSON) which had little cargo carrying capacity. As a result units were in large measure separated from their supplies and equipment which were dispatched on several cargo vessels (DEL BRAZIL, ELECTRA, LIPSCOMB LYKES, ALCYONE, LIBRA, MIZAR, and ALCHIBA). Furthermore the loading of these vessels in the United States was not under the control of the Division Commander. The movement had been planned and executed with the object of effecting an expeditious and economical removal of the Division, its equipment and supplies to New Zealand, where, it was anticipated, there would be ample time for a deliberate unloading, reclassification, and distribution of all types of material. In consequence the movement of the division involved marked departures from the well established principles of combat loading.

The change in plans brought about by the order for the Solomons operation thus created an unparalleled logistical problem. The Fifth Marines had reached New Zealand, had unloaded and was in a position to reembark at once. The units of the second echelon, however, had not yet arrived, and it was apparent that only a few days would be available for them to unload, classify equipment and supplies and reload for combat on designated ships of the transport force. The difficulties presented by the limited time available were aggravated by the restricted port facilities available in Wellington and by the fact that the exact loading of incoming ships could not be ascertained prior to their arrival.

In order to take full advantage of all time available, it was decided to embark combat group A (Fifth Marines Reinforced) at once, together with pertinent supplies and ammunition. (Annex C).

SECRET

In this way all port facilities could be made available for the exclusive use of the second echelon when it arrived. Accordingly Combat Group A was embarked in AMERICAN LEGION, FULLER, NEVILLE, and BELLATRIX, beginning 2 July. With the exception of shortages in certain items of supply this part of the embarkation proceeded expeditiously and smoothly. The shortages were largely made up through local purchase in Wellington, although in a few instances it was necessary to await arrival of Second Echelon supplies.

Loading and unloading operations in Wellington were centralized at one large wharf (Aotea Quay) capable of berthing five vessels at once. Combat loading necessarily took place simultaneously with the discharge of incoming cargo and the operation was exceedingly complex and most difficult to control. A working team of three hundred men was assigned to each vessel and maintained around the clock by a system of eight hour reliefs. Divisional transportation was augmented by vehicles of the First Base Depot and by a daily detail of thirty flat-topped New Zealand Army lorries which proved particularly useful in this type of work. Ammunition, organizational equipment, and gasoline dumps were established in open areas on the wharf. Rations and perishables were classified in a large warehouse which occupied one end of the wharf. The operation was directed by D-4 through a field officer in charge of each loading team, and the transport quartermasters of the various ships. Dock labor was restricted to skilled operators of special loading machinery, cranes, hoists, carriers, and stacking machines. Use of general civilian labor was rejected in favor of employment of troops as it had been found both inadequate and unreliable during earlier operations. Major M. W. Horton, an experienced officer of the New Zealand Army Transport Service assisted throughout the operation. Through his detailed knowledge of shipping, local port and labor conditions, availability of facilities and special machinery, he rendered invaluable aid to the Marine Corps during this period.

It was obvious from the beginning of the planning stage that the number of ships available for the operation would not be sufficient to meet the combat loading requirements of the entire division and that some units must be left behind. However to realize to the utmost the troop carrying capacity of the various vessels, all excess equipment and supplies were eliminated and even normal supplies were radically reduced. Seabags, extra clothing, bedding rolls, and company property were stored in Wellington, and such bulk supplies as rations and fuel were reduced from a normal 90 day to a 60 day basis.

SECRET

Only ten units of fire were embarked, three on each AP for the unit thereon, and seven on the supporting AK. (Annexes C and J) (See also Annex L Logistics).

SORTIE

Sortie from Wellington was originally set for 18 July, but with the arrival of the second echelon delayed until 11 July, it became evident that reembarkation and reloading could not be completed by the anticipated date and permission to delay the date of sortie until 22 July was secured. This necessitated a deferment of the projected D day from 1 August to on or after 4 August. On 22 July at 0900 the transport group carrying the division left Wellington under Naval escort bound for Koro Island in the Fiji group, there to rehearse and rendezvous with the remainder of Task Force 62 and the supporting naval air force, Task Force 61.

KORO ISLAND

Rendezvous was effected on 26 July and from 28 July until 31 July rehearsals for the forthcoming operation were conducted at Koro. Coral conditions on the island beaches rendered them impractical for actual landing operations and to that extent the rehearsal period was unsatisfactory. It proved invaluable however, in providing an opportunity for familiarization with debarkation procedure, ascertaining debarkation intervals and the conduct and timing of largescale boat group movements. For the supporting forces the rehearsal provided an opportunity for naval gunfire bombardment practice and air support bombardment practice by carrier based planes. It also permitted the necessary exchange of staff visits and conferences between commanders of supporting, escort, and landing forces, during which further details of execution of the attack were agreed upon and minor changes carried into effect. Actual experience in the operation of boats for example, indicated the expectancy of a high percentage of boats inoperative due to mechanical failure, and in the light of this experience an effective and workable boat pool was established. Some slight changes in gunfire and air support plans were found necessary and it was decided that, in view of the dual nature of the attack, the time of landing at Guadalcanal would be set at "Zero-Hour" while the time of attack by the Northern group on Tulagi would be designated as "H-Hour".

As finally assembled for the Solomons operation, the United Nations forces consisted of Task Force 61 and 62. Task Force 61 consisted of the three carriers, SARATOGA, ENTERPRISE, and WASP, with a strong escort comprising

SECRET

NORTH CAROLINA, some cruisers and a number of destroyers. Task Force 62, which embarked the landing force, consisted of the following vessels of the navy.

Cruisers	Destroyers	Mine Sweepers
Quincy	Hull	Hopkins
Vincennes	Dewey	Trever
Astoria	Ellet	Zane
San Juan	Wilson	Southard
Australia	Monssen	Hovey
Canberra	Buchanan	
Hobart	Henley	
Chicago	Helm	
	Blue	
	Selfridge	
	Jarvis	
	Mugford	
	Patterson	
	Talbot	

Transports	Cargo Vessels
American Legion	Bellatrix
Neville	Libra
Fuller	Alchiba
McCawley	Fomalhaut
Barnett	*Batelgause
Elliott	Alhena
Crescent City	
President Hayes	
President Adams	
President Jackson	
*Zeilin	
Hoywood	
Hunter Liggett	
Calhoun (APD)	
Gregory (APD)	
Little (APD)	
McKean (APD)	

* Third Defense Battalion embarked. Joined formation 1 August while en route Koro to Solomons.

SECRET

Landing Force Elements embarked comprised the following:

1st Marine Division	12,900
less:	
5th Bn., 11th Marines	
1st Tank Bn. (less two cos)	
Detachments	
2nd Marines (Reinforced)	4,846
1st Raider Bn.	828
3rd Defense Bn.	972
Total-----	19,546

APPROACH

The entire force left the Koro area at sunset on 31 July and began the approach to the Solomons. The course followed took the convoy generally west by south from the Fijis to a point south of Rennell Island, thence due North to Savo Island. Weather conditions during the final two days of the approach were extremely favorable. The sky was generally overcast with low ceiling and intermittent rain squalls. There were no signs of hostile reconnaissance aircraft or submarines and nothing indicated that our approach had been observed. At 0200 on the morning of 7 August Savo Island appeared ahead and Cape Esperance was sighted to the Eastward, plainly visible in the light of the moon, then in its third quarter. The weather was clearing rapidly and visibility had improved to such an extent that even the most perfunctory observation could have detected our movement. At 0240, in accordance with the approach plan, Task Force 62 split into two groups, the Tulagi attack force passing to the north of Savo, the Guadalcanal attack Group passing to the south between Savo and Cape Esperance. Thereafter each group pursued its separate and divergent course toward its respective transport area.

At daylight fire support vessels, (cruisers and destroyers) began execution of the ships' gunfire support plan, subjecting hostile installations on both Tulagi and Guadalcanal to intense bombardment. The only enemy vessel encountered was a small supply ship carrying gasoline. It was set afire and sunk. Of the few enemy aircraft stationed in the area, only one got into the air and it was destroyed immediately after takeoff by cruiser anti-aircraft fire, off Lunga Point. The remainder were destroyed on the water or on their ramps at Gavutu by carrier aircraft.

Friendly spotting planes (BOC) were in the air at daylight, and the supporting carrier groups arrived in time to carry out their assigned missions. After their arrival, no further enemy aerial activity was noted and our dive bombers undertook the systematic attack on their prescribed targets without interference

SECRET

other than weak and ineffective anti-aircraft fire from Tulagi, Kukum, and the airfield.

At 0630 the transport area was reached. H-hour was set at 0800 and Zero-hour at 0910. Debarkation began immediately and proceeded smoothly and rapidly without hostile interference.

LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Battalions should be practiced in landing operations whenever opportunity presents itself and without regard to state of training. The limited exercises at Solomon's Island, Maryland, in March and April proved invaluable, even though at the time it was considered that the general state of training of the troops did not justify this advanced type of training.

2. Loading of supplies and equipment for overseas movement should be under the control of the unit concerned.

(a) Much confusion and loss of invaluable time in New Zealand is to be attributed to the fact that the Division did not have accurate knowledge of what was being sent into the theatre.

(b) Vital items of equipment were left in the United States to make room for items of minor importance or supplies procurable locally.

(c) The Transport Quartermaster who loads the vessel should accompany it to its destination to provide information upon which to base plans for berthing and discharge of cargo.

3. A minimum period of six weeks for planning and reconnaissance should precede embarkation for combat.

4. All information of the enemy and terrain should be verified by the force conducting the operation through the medium of aerial reconnaissance and on-shore patrols. Information of enemy strength on Tulagi proved highly accurate. That dealing with Guadalcanal proved most inaccurate, and this factor profoundly affected subsequent events. A longer period for planning and reconnaissance would have permitted measures for verification.

5. Use of persons possessing a detailed familiarity with the area of operations as guides and terrain advisers is of the utmost importance. A number of such persons were made available and accompanied the attack force. Their services were invaluable.

6. Cartographic materials of the widest variety reproduced in unlimited quantities are utterly essential. Lack of such materials severely handicapped all phases of the Guadalcanal operation. This lack was attributable to the limited time factor, imperfect liaison and failure to utilize available

SECRET

reproduction facilities.

7. The organization of the division into combat groups sub-divided into combat teams provided a sound basis for planning, supply and embarkation.

8. As a member of the operational staff, the Division air officer is extremely valuable. His planning and liaison functions can not be executed satisfactorily by a staff officer who is not an experienced Naval Aviator.

9. Whenever possible artillery units should be combat loaded, even when landing operations are not contemplated. This will make loading for combat easier and enable units to safeguard and service their own weapons.

10. The unsuitability of card-board or similar light paper containers for supplies cannot be stressed too strongly. In very few instances is there sufficient storage space for the supplies of a Marine Division in a loading area and the wastage resulting from the bursting of rain soaked paper cartons is serious. Rations and supplies landed on an operational beach are subject to unlimited abuse by weather and enemy action, and the light flimsy containers used in the Guadalcanal operation aggravated the waste.

11. Adequate space and facilities for division headquarters communication activities should be provided aboard the ship in which division headquarters is embarked and this ship originally should be equipped with adequate visual signalling equipment and operators. A headquarters ship would be the most desirable solution for the problem.

12. Upon embarkation the attack force should conduct a series of thorough rehearsals of the intended landing.

DECLASSIFIED

ACTION REPORT

HEADQUARTERS FIRST MARINE DIVISION

SERIAL 00204

NO DATE

DIVISION COMMANDER'S FINAL REPORT ON THE
GUADALCANAL OPERATION

PHASE 2
FROM H HOUR TO EVENING 9 AUGUST

50716

OFFICE OF NAVAL RECORDS AND LIBRARY

SECRET

Reg. No... 0-97...

R.S. No... 6... 731...

DIVISION COMMANDER'S FINAL REPORT

ON GUADALCANAL OPERATION

PHASE II

00204
108/333

1943 JUN 25 10 35

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
FLAG OFFICE
RECEIVED

50716

FILMED

SECRET

00204
108/333

First Marine Division
Fleet Marine Force,
C/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, California.

SECRET

DIVISION COMMANDERS FINAL REPORT ON
GUADALCANAL OPERATIONS

Phase II
(From H hour to Evening 9 August)

SHIP TO SHORE MOVEMENT

The convoy reached the transport area at 0651 on the morning of 7 August. Zero hour, the time for the landing on Guadalcanal, was set at 0910 and H hour, the time for the northern attack (Tulagi) was set at 0600. Debarkation was begun immediately under cover of ship's gunfire and air attack of the supporting carrier groups. A favorable sea permitted the use of cargo net gang-ways simultaneously on both sides of all ships. There were ample boats available for the operation and previous arrangements relative to assignment and rendezvousing of boats and the establishment of the boat pool functioned admirably (Annex A). There was no noise or confusion attendant upon the operation and it proceeded with the smoothness and precision of a well rehearsed peace-time drill. All boat formations crossed lines of departure promptly and moved inshore toward assigned beaches with all boat groups in good order and under excellent control.

There was little opposition to the initial boat movements and only the Halavo boats, which embarked a protective force for the right flank of the northern attack, were fired on from Gavutu as they approached Florida. All boats reached their correct beaches and debarked troops promptly and without casualties. From the view point of the landing force the ship to shore movement, even though made under favorable conditions, is to be regarded as an unusually successful operation. It was a convincing demonstration of the fruits of long years of thought and planning and combined training by the Navy and Marine Corps in developing a practical working technique for the conduct of amphibious operations. It likewise reflected the benefits to be obtained from a period of rehearsals of the precise operation immediately prior to its execution.

THE SEIZURE OF THE TULAGI AREA

The assault on the Tulagi area was under the immediate command of the Assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General W. H. Rupertus, whose command post was first on the USS Neville and later on Tulagi Island. Unlike Guadalcanal, the landings on the three main islands of the Group, Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo were met with the most determined resistance of which the enemy was capable. Each of the three islands was a fort in itself, honey-combed with tunnels and caves, and thick with machine guns.

SECRET

The intelligence estimates of the enemy troops in this area were remarkably accurate. These were seasoned naval landing force troops with the usual conscript laborers. The latter, in contrast to their fellows on Guadalcanal, fought with the utmost tenacity and courage. The enemy forces on the two islets of Gavutu and Tanambogo are thought to have been the maintenance and protective forces for the seaplane establishment set up on Gavutu, and their defense could be called the high point of Japanese resistance in this phase of the operations.

The first landing in the area was made by a company of the Division Reserve, B Company, Second Marines (Captain E.J. Crane). Guided by Pilot Officer C.E. Spencer, RAAF, an Australian aviator well acquainted with the district, they landed at H minus 207 (0740) on the west side of Florida Island near Haleta on a promontory which commands Beach Blue at Tulagi. They met no opposition.

A H-hour, 0800, the first wave of the First Marine Raider Battalion, under command of Colonel Merritt A. Edson, USMC, landed on Beach Blue, on the southwest slope of the northern ridge of Tulagi. (For Map of Tulagi see Annex B). The terrain there is hilly and wooded and great difficulty was expected. The Japanese, however, had retired to their caves and dugouts, and the only casualty suffered in the landing was one man killed by a sniper. Two Companies, B (Major Lloyd Nickerson) and D (Major Justice Chambers) landed in the first wave on a five hundred yard front. Avoiding the trails along each side of the island, which are commanded by steep cliffs, the two companies pushed straight across the island from the beach. B Company secured the settlement at Sasapi, and then swung to the right. D Company turned to the right after crossing the ridge, and the two companies swept down the northeastern half of the island to the phase line 'A'. B Company echeloned to the left rear of D and with its left flank resting on the beach line. C Company (Major Kenneth Bailey) and A Company (Captain L.W. Walt) landed in the second wave. C Company secured the right flank of the beach head and A Company advanced down the central ridge on the right slope with C Company echeloned to its right rear. No opposition was met on this side of the ridge until the raiders came to the phase line. On the other side, Company B ran into opposition in the form of enemy outposts at Carpenter's Wharf. The commanding officer of D Company, Major Justice Chambers, was wounded by mortar fire, after crossing phase line 'A', and his Executive Officer, Captain W. Sperling, took command.

As Combat Team No. 2 (less E Battery, 11th Marines) under Lieutenant Colonel H.E. Rosecrans, USMC, landed at Beach Blue at 0830, all units of the raiders advanced to the southeast. Company C, Raiders, advancing on the southwestern side of the island, met heavy opposition at Hill 208 where a concentration of machine guns held them up for an hour. This was finally reduced with small arms fire and hand grenades. A and C Companies then continued on

SECRET

to the hill west of the cricket ground, where Major Bailey was wounded, command of his company passing to his executive officer, Captain Robert H. Thomas. Only one platoon of C Company was able to advance beyond this point, and it continued on down the beach to the southeastern tip of the island. D Company advanced roughly parallel to A Company on the opposite side of the ridge, and by nightfall this company was on the north side and ridge line of hill 281. Company B took up positions for the first night in the government wharf area, Company A on the hill west of the cricket ground, and Company C on Company A's right flank extending covering to the beach. E Company (Weapons) Raiders (Captain George Herring) was in support along this ridge.

Combat Team No. 2 had started to land at H-hour plus 30 minutes. Two companies, E (Captain Harry S. Connor) and F, (Captain Charles R. Baker), cleaned out the snipers on the west end of the island. Company G, (Captain Harold T.A. Richmond) followed the Raiders down the ridge to the Government house area where it reported to Colonel Edson. He committed it to action with the mission of cleaning out the ravine north of the cricket ground, where there was a gap between companies A & D (Raiders). Three attacks failed to clean out this ravine, but contact along the Marine line was gained and maintained. One Platoon, Company H, (Captain Charles A. Rigaud) was attached to E Company (Fifth) as Sasapi. The remainder of the company was at Beach Blue as part of the security element at that place.

The day's fighting grew intense only after troops had passed the phase line and was typical of all offensive fighting against Japanese in this area. The enemy was strongly entrenched in cleverly constructed dugouts and tunnels. These positions could only be eliminated by bold action with grenades, well placed explosives and submachine guns. The enemy employed the tricks for which he has become known, such as letting the points of units go through him and then firing on the main body. Snipers tied into trees, under houses, behind rocks, continually harassed the attacking forces, and the naval gun fire preparation and aerial bombardment had little effect on the well dug in small groups and individual snipers.

The principal enemy defense seemed to be concentrated in the ravine west of hill 281, and on the steep slopes of the hill itself. Captured maps confirmed the fact that the strong opposition met here was the island main center of resistance. It became apparent that this area would not be reduced during the first day and a defensive line was set up along the ridge north and west of the ravine.

That night the enemy sortied and counter-attacked, driving a wedge between C and A Companies of the Raiders and isolating C near the beach and hill west of the cricket ground. They con-

SECRET

centrated their attack then on Company A in an attempt to sweep up the ridge toward the residency. "A" Company halted this attack, killing 26 Japs within twenty yards of the Company defense line. That night the Marines had their first taste of the Jap at his best in a savage all night fight, with every means of deceiving an opponent employed against them. The enemy from the ravine succeeded in infiltrating almost to the command post in the residency, and from 0030 to 0530 five separate attacks were made on the residency. Japanese from the southeastern end of the island trying to advance northward along each side of the ridge were stopped by Companies A and C, Raiders, on the west side, and Company D on the east. No serious breaks were made in the Marine lines during the night, in spite of the numerous infiltrations and on the morning of the 8th the Marines resumed the advance. Companies E and F, of the Second Battalion, Fifth Marines (Combat Team No. 2) who had mopped up the western end of the island, on the first day advanced southward. On the second day they were in line northeast of hill 281, F on the right, E on the left, and advanced over the top of the hill to the southwest side of the island. F Company now flanked the enemy positions on the south, giving the Marines mortar and machine gun positions on three sides of the main Japanese concentration. At about 1500 G Company, Fifth Marines, and the Raiders pushed through the ravine, blasting the Japanese out of their principal strongpoints, and physical occupation of the island was complete.

The numerous snipers on the island were hard to find, and the next day Marines combed the area around hill 281 three times, finding snipers each time. For several days there were still snipers in the area and enemy still lodged in the caves which honey-combed hill 281. The tenacity of the individual soldier was astonishing. Each Jap fought until he was killed, each machine gun crew to the last man, who almost invariably killed himself rather than surrender. There were, it is estimated, about five hundred Japanese on the island, and of this number only three surrendered. According to these, some forty Japanese attempted to escape by swimming to Florida Island. Some of these, as well as others from the other islands of the group evidently succeeded, for Raider Patrols on the large island later spotted about seventy.

Casualties for the First Raider Battalion during the fight numbered seven officers and eighty-three enlisted, of whom three officers and thirty-three enlisted were killed or died of wounds on the island. The rest were wounded and were evacuated.

The Japanese had withdrawn to their caves and dugouts during the preliminary aerial bombardment and ships gunfire, evidently believing it to be only a raid. Continued bombardment kept them from effecting an organized defense until late in the afternoon of seven August, and the defensive installations--two 3" guns and two 13mm guns on hill 281--were never fully manned.

SECRET

GAVUTU-TANAMBOGO

The First Marine Parachute Battalion, (Major Robert H. Williams, USMC), Commanding, effected its landing on Gavutu at H plus 4 hours (1200) on 7 August, following a five minute ships gunfire preparation on that island by Fire Support Group Mike (footnote a) and a ten minute dive bombing and strafing attack on Gavutu and Tanambogo by SBD aircraft from the carrier support group. This fire appeared to be most effective, starting several fires, and knocking out a three inch gun on top of hill 148 on Gavutu,

The preparation did not, however, silence all small arms fire, and the thirteen landing boats met heavy opposition from this fire as they approached the beach, "I". (For Map of Gavutu-Tanambogo, see Annex C). These boats intended to land at the concrete sea-plane ramps, but because the heavy naval gunfire and bombing preparation had tumbled huge blocks of cement in the path of the leading waves, several of the boats were forced to land along the concrete dock to the right. The enemy allowed the personnel in the first few boats to get ashore and off the beach line, and then concentrated on the rest as they hit the beach. The first boat landed in the slip to the left and secured a small beach head in spite of the opposition.

The remainder landed along the beach from the south side of the slip to the concrete dock on the right of beach "I". Personnel of the boats which landed on the dock were met by extremely heavy fire sweeping the top of the pier, which was some six feet above the water. One out of every ten men in the boats that landed here became a casualty, most of this group being immediately pinned down by fire on the beach line, and held there until about 1400. The fire on this area came from the northern slope of hill 148, from trenches across the island to the westward, and a considerable volume of it from the south coast of Tanambogo, some five hundred yards away across the water.

By 1400 the left flank of the landing party had advanced inland and with mortar fire had relieved the pressure on the right flank. A CP and dressing station was set up in the Lever Brothers store at the head of the slip. Major Williams was hit at about this time and command of the battalion passed to Major C.A. Miller. Physical occupation of the island extended over almost all of it by this time, but operations against the Japs dug in on the slopes of hill 148 were hampered by sniper and machine gun fire from the adjacent island, Tanambogo. This had been combatted by fire from the paratroopers near the concrete dock, but shortly before 1400 Major Miller requested immediate assistance of bombers on Tanambogo. At about 1430 he also requested that reinforcements be sent to land on Tanambogo and that the parachute battalion would support that landing from the present position on Gavutu.

SBD's answered the call, and, cooperating with mortars

(a) Fire Support Group Mike (62.4); Rear Admiral Scott; USS SAN JUAN, CL54; USS MONSIEUR, DD436; USS BUCHANAN, DD484.

SECRET

on Gavutu, bombed and strafed Tanambogo for about ten minutes. Immediately afterwards two United States Destroyers laid down a concentrated fire on Tanambogo from the south firing over Gavutu, and shortly after that one of them circled Tanambogo, shelling it all the time. Several large fires were started and not a tree was left standing on the island. Fire from it against Gavutu slackened considerably and the paratroops completed the physical occupation of the larger island, (Gavutu) raising the United States flag on Hill 148 at 1800.

The extent and location of the enemy dugouts remaining on the island was not yet realized, however, and nightfall saw an increase in accurate enemy sniping. In the evening B Company, First Battalion, Second Marines, (Captain E.J. Crane), having been withdrawn from Florida Island as a reinforcement for the Parachute Battalion, joined Major Miller's command on Gavutu, and with three Higgins boats attempted a landing at 1845 on the north coast of Tanambogo. Five minutes of naval gun fire preceded the attack, but it was met by heavy small arms fire and two of the landing craft were driven off before they hit the beach. The third attained the beach, landed a portion of its personnel, and was driven off. This attack undoubtedly failed due to the troops being silhouetted by a huge gasoline fire burning on the beach. Late that night two of this stranded party succeeded in making their way back to Gavutu.

After dark the enemy force on Gavutu was strengthened by individuals who swam over from Florida and Tanambogo. The greatest force of the enemy was holed up in a cave in the steep cliff on the south shore of the island under Hill 148. Many of these Japanese sortied that night and did considerable damage by sniping. At the same time, personnel landing on the beach to the west, where there were piers and houses, caused several casualties. Heavy rain made concealment easy for the enemy.

Upon the report from the Parachute Battalion to the Assistant Division Commander of the failure of Company "B", 1st Battalion, Second Marines, to secure Tanambogo, the Assistant Division Commander at 2200 requested the Division Commander to secure the release of an additional combat team to him in order to secure Tanambogo. At 0615, 8 August 1942, Combat Teams "B & C" were released to the Assistant Division Commander. Combat Team "C" was directed to land at Gavutu and from there utilize the same boats to make the attack and capture Tanambogo. Combat Team "C" was the 3rd Battalion, Second Marines (Reinforced) under the command of Lieutenant Colonel R.G. Hunt, USMC.

This Unit arrived at about 1130, 8 August, and companies I (Captain M.P. Hagan) and K (Captain H.A. Courtney) assisted the parachute battalion in mopping up operations. Marine activities on the northern slopes of Hill 148 were hampered by long range sniping and machine gun fire from enemy forces on Tanambogo, but

SECRET

that afternoon another, and successful, attack was made on Tanambogo.

The assault on Tanambogo was preceded by air and surface bombardment, and at 1615 two tanks of the 3rd Platoon, C Company, 2nd Tank Battalion (Lieutenant R.J. Sweeney) landed on the southern part of beach J, one to cover the south side of the hill and the other the east slope. One tank in delivering effective fire into the Jap positions got ahead of its supporting troops. The Japanese rushed out of their dugouts and caves and stalled it by inserting a large iron bar into the track. In attempting to free this bar the tank backed into a stump of a coconut tree and became lodged thereon with the overhanging portion of rear of the tank. Thus preventing any forward or rearward movement of the tank. The Japanese threw molotov cocktails and other inflammables which killed the entire crew with the exception of one man who managed to escape from the turret. Lieutenant Sweeney was killed in this tank. The other tank executed its mission perfectly being well supported by the advancing infantry.

Company I, 3rd Battalion, Second Marines, (Captain W.G. Tinsley) followed the tanks ashore, landing at 1620. About half of his force worked up the southern slope of the hill while the balance worked around the east and north sides and along the shore. The fighting was close and savage and sniper fire from nearby Gaomi (Palm) Island harrassed the landing party until about 1700 when USS Gridley silenced the enemy on the islet.

At this time the First Platoon of Company K (Lieutenant J.J. Donahue), with a few marine paratroops, crossed the causeway and took up positions on the south side of Tanambogo. By 2100 the southeast two-thirds of Tanambogo had been secured.

Nightfall found both islands under control, although hidden snipers on Tanambogo sortied for a counterattack which caused casualties but was otherwise unsuccessful, and there remained only the routine mopping up of isolated snipers. The cave on the south side of Gavutu was reduced by an amphibian tractor. Snipers who had occupied a wrecked Jap seaplane located about three hundred yards off the southeast beach of the larger islet were silenced by mortar fire which ruined the wreck for future snipers. Physical occupation of both islands was completed on the 9th, and all serious Japanese concentrations destroyed.

Casualties among the First Parachute Battalion were at first estimated to be 50-60% during the first day and a report to that effect was made by the ADC at 0007 on the eighth. This was later found to be exaggerated, but parachute dead for the entire three days of fighting numbered 27, and wounded 50. Casualties among the Second Marines for the first three days of fighting numbered 56, of which most can be presumed to have occurred on Gavutu and Tanambogo. The sniper activity of the enemy was accurate and determined, causing losses among our personnel con-

8

SECRET

tinuously for the first three days of fighting.

There was no means of counting all of the enemy dead on the two islands, many of them having been buried when their caves were dynamited, but the most accurate estimate puts the enemy strength on the two islands at one thousand, of which about six hundred were labor troops. Fifteen labor troops and five regular naval landing force personnel were captured. At least two boat loads of regular naval landing force (presumably aviation personnel) escaped during the night 8-9 August 1942, to Florida Island, but the rest were all killed. The enemy had no mortars on the island and few grenades. Among their weapons were captured U.S. rifles, model 1903, with ammunition captured at Guam, and some British Lee Enfields.

It was estimated that on Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo there were in all some 1,500 Japanese. Five hundred of these were on Tulagi and the remainder were on the two smaller islands. The Tulagi force was entirely Naval, said to be part of the Third Special Landing Force (Marines), with Headquarters at Rabaul. On Gavutu and Tanambogo about four hundred of the thousand odd Orange forces were regular naval troops (Marines and naval aviation personnel), and the remainder were laborers. No accurate count could be made of bodies, for many were left in the caves, which had been blown in upon them by high explosive. Total Japanese casualties can be set with reasonable accuracy at 1,500 killed, less 23 captured, and 70 escaped to Florida.

Our casualties, killed and wounded in the operation, totaled 15 officers and 233 enlisted of whom 8 officers and 100 enlisted were killed, missing, or died of wounds. Outstanding materiel loss to our troops during the northern operation was the tank of the Third Platoon, C Company, 2nd Tank Battalion, which landed on Gavutu and was burned out by the enemy. For total list of captured materiel see Annex D.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Dive bombing and gunfire are not effective against the caves and dugouts used so extensively by the enemy on Gavutu and Tanambogo. Nor are they particularly effective on gun emplacements unless bombs or high explosive shells land directly on these emplacements as a lucky hit. These must be reduced by ground troops with high explosives and short fused hand grenades. Machine gun fire is frequently ineffective because the enemy does not always dig his tunnels straight, but makes concrete partitions at right angles with the entrance line. High explosives placed by hand were the most effective means of reducing these emplacements. And the use of flame throwers would appear to be a highly practical and effective method. Accurate divebombing with depth charges might be successful.

SECRET

2. Japanese labor troops, although unarmed, must not be presumed to be useless for fighting purposes. Although those on Guadalcanal had little combative spirit, those on Gavutu and Tanambogo were quite the opposite.

OCCUPATION OF GUADALCANAL

Seizure of Beachhead

The attack on Guadalcanal was premised on an estimate of defensive strength which proved entirely erroneous. The hostile force was placed at about 5,000 including 2,100 labor troops, an anti-aircraft battalion of 625 a reinforced infantry regiment of 2100 and air and naval detachments totaling 185. It was believed likewise, that, while the major portion of this force was disposed in the vicinity of Lunga Point, there was also a considerable body in the vicinity of Taivu point to the east where construction of an additional airfield had been reported by natives. Consequently the decision had been reached to avoid both the Lunga Point and Taivu Point defenses by a landing midway between, in the vicinity of Koli Point. Beach Red, which lies about 6,000 yards east of Lunga Point was chosen as the point of landing. It consisted of a slight reentrant in the coast line about 1600 yards in length with its eastern boundary the Tenavatu Stream and its western boundary the mouth of the Ilu River. Landing conditions were believed favorable, and the river constituted an obstacle for the protection of the more exposed right flank in the event of a counter-attack early in the landing from the direction of Lunga Point.

In pursuance of the plan of operations (Annex E) the Fifth Marines reinforced (Less Second Battalion) landed on Beach Red at zero hour with two battalions abreast, 1st Battalion on the right. Both assault Battalions advanced inland occupying a shallow beachhead bounded by the Tenavatu Stream--east branch of the Ilu (which runs generally parallel to the beach and 600 yards inland therefrom)--main body of the Ilu which runs northward into the sea. This natural beachhead offered a strong position from which to cover the landing of successive elements.

Advance to Lunga (1st Day)

Combat Group B (First Marines Reinforced) landed on Beach Red in column behind the Fifth Marines and when its landing was completed, the advance in the direction of Lunga Point was begun. Fifth Marines Reinforced (less 2nd & 3rd Battalions) crossed the Ilu at its mouth and began the advance along the beach with its right flank resting on the water's edge. Its assigned objective was the line of the Tenaru River. On their left, the First Marines advanced with Battalions echeloned to the left rear on magnetic azimuth 260° with "Grassy Knoll" its assigned objective.

SECRET

In this connection, it should be remembered that no adequate maps or photographs were in the possession of the Division. "Grassy Knoll" had been designated the objective on the strength of its description by a former resident as a commanding terrain feature of unmistakable appearance which dominated the entire area of Lunga Point and the airfield. As such, it represented the key terrain feature of the area, but in actual practice, it proved to be too large and too removed in point of distance to be of controlling importance from the point of view of the relatively small forces engaged.

The rear of the advancing force and the landing beach were covered by 3rd Battalion, Fifth Marines, which remained in place along the Tenavatu stream facing south and east.

The advance was begun at about 1330 but progress was extremely slow. The Ilu was found to be a deep stream with high steep banks and entirely lacking in fords. The Fifth Marines were able to cross the river at the sand bar on the beach at a point opposite the mouth but in the First Marines zone, it was necessary to construct temporary bridges. The need for this had been foreseen and light bridging materials had been sent ashore in amphibian tractors with initial assault waves. In view of the height of the banks and width of the stream it was necessary to construct a two span bridge using an amphibian tractor as a ponton to support the mid-stream end of each truss.

In addition to the delay in crossing the Ilu, the dense jungle encountered on the opposite side constituted a further obstacle to rapid progress. Some units advanced with unnecessary and time consuming caution. Others pushed ahead aggressively and lost contact with their neighbors. There was a uniform and lamentable failure to use patrols to the front and flanks. These difficulties when added to the great inexperience of junior officers and the lack of adequate maps for command purposes, rendered control and communication difficult to maintain, consequently the advance was halted at dusk in order to reestablish contact and reorient the advance for the following day. Positions occupied during the night are shown in Annex F.

Movement of Supplies (1st Day)

Meanwhile the ship to shore operation maintained a continuous flow of personnel and supplies across Beach Red, interrupted only by a high altitude attack against the transport group by a strong force of enemy two engined bombers from Rabaul at 1230. Timely warning of the attack was received and all ships were underway with fighters on station when the bombers appeared. The attack was comparatively ineffective, our losses consisting only of damage to one destroyer while the hostile formation was broken up and driven off with considerable losses. The attack was successful however in causing a loss of three hours unloading time.

SECRET

By mid-afternoon, all personnel except unloading details had come ashore and the movement was taking on the aspect of a logistical operation involving the landing of supplies and heavy equipment. Supplies were beginning to pile up at the beach line and delay was experienced in the unloading of boats. The shore party organization was functioning efficiently and all concerned were doing their utmost, but, as had so often been pointed out in peacetime maneuvers, the manpower available at the beach was physically inadequate to cope with the tremendous volume of incoming supply. In theory the conditions might have been alleviated by the assignment of combat troops to unloading operations, but at the time in question, the Division Commander was constrained of necessity to dispose all his forces tactically. In the situation as it then existed, he occupied the most dangerous of all positions for any commander of a naval or military force; i.e. being in close proximity to a large enemy force which possessed complete knowledge of his dispositions and movements, while he, the Division Commander, was unable to make contact with the enemy or to gain information as to the direction from which he might appear. Under such circumstances and in order to insure the security of the entire enterprise, it was incumbent upon him to employ all his forces toward seizure of the objective and protection of rear area installations against assault from the flank or rear. This was particularly true since 2d Marines (less one battalion) had not been released to the Division Commander.

Advance to Lunga (2nd Day)

The advance to the west was resumed by the First Marines and Fifth Marines (less 2nd and 3rd Battalions) on the morning of 8 August. In accordance with orders issued during the night the day's objective was to be the line of the Lunga River, which was to be occupied by the First Marines, the Fifth Marines then passing to reserve in an assembly area near the airfield. Again progress was slow. The thick jungle encountered in the First Marines zone retarded their rate of advance, but on the right the First Battalion Fifth Marines was moving through favorable terrain consisting of the flat coconut plantations bordering the sea. Their slow progress can be attributed only to an excess of caution manifested by a hesitant and time consuming advance.

By midday a few prisoners had been examined, and it was apparent that no large Japanese force was in the vicinity and that the only regularly organized garrison had fled to the west. In consequence and in view of the continued delay in reaching phase lines and objectives, the Fifth Marines were directed to contract their front, and move rapidly astride the road leading to Kukum in order to seize the village and enemy installations there before nightfall. This they did under the personal direction of their regimental commander.

The Lunga River was crossed at the main bridge and no

SECRET

opposition was encountered until the advance elements entered Kukum at 1500. Light rifle and light machine gun fire was received from the low knolls near the village but this resistance was quickly overcome, and the entire area occupied. Meanwhile First Marines had reached more favorable terrain in the plains west of the airfield and by 1600 was in possession of the airdrome, having encountered only one small enemy patrol. It was directed to occupy the line of the Lunga. Positions occupied during the night are shown in Annex F.

The extent to which the enemy had been able to develop their Lunga Point positions was remarkable in view of the short time of occupation. Since 4 July they had succeeded in constructing large semi-permanent camps, finger wharves, bridges, machine shops, two large radio stations, ice plants, two large and permanent electric power plants, an elaborate air compressor plant for torpedoes, and a nearly completed airdrome with hangers, blast pens, and a 3600 foot runway.

The actual defenses of Guadalcanal were centered in the Lunga Point area. They consisted of three anti-aircraft batteries and machine gun emplacements. It is believed that the military garrison, excluding labor troops, consisted of about two hundred Naval personnel (Naval Officers and bluejackets) and about four hundred naval landing force troops (Marines). The latter were well trained and equipped and the reason for their precipitous flight toward Kokumbona must remain an enigma. There was no evidence of an organized conduct of defense although the Tonaru and Lunga Rivers offered opportunities for a few troops to inflict heavy damage upon any force engaged in a crossing. Camp sites showed signs of having been abandoned in a state of utter confusion. Stores and equipment had been broken into and scattered indiscriminately. Arms, ammunition and personal equipment were found abandoned in quantity; no effort had been made to execute even the most obvious and elementary of demolitions. Few dead were found as a result of the aerial and naval bombardment, but, upon examination of prisoners, it appeared that the daybreak bombardment caught the garrison completely by surprise and that a state of panic ensued which was followed by a precipitate and disorderly flight to the west.

Movement of Supplies (8-9 August)

Congestion of supplies became an acute problem during the night of August 7-8 and by 2300 it was necessary to ask that unloading operations be discontinued in order to reduce the dangerous accumulation of materiel along the water's edge. When unloading operations were resumed on the morning of 8 August, the right boundary of Red beach was shifted to the Block Four River, thus providing a new and unencumbered landing area more conveniently situated with respect to the direction of advance. The shift alleviated the situation to a limited extent, but the advantages gained were offset by the inevitable effect of fatigue upon personnel which

SECRET

caused the rate of handling supplies to decline steadily. Unloading operations were likewise interrupted by a heavy air attack at 1230 in which the USS George F Elliot was set on fire and lost with much of the supplies intended for CT5 (2nd Bn, First Marines, reinforced). During the night all transports got underway and proceeded to sea in order to avoid involvement in the night naval engagement off Savo. All ships returned on the morning of the ninth, but little was accomplished in the way of unloading. At sunset the transport force and escort cleared the area.

Events of 8-9 August

During the night 8-9 August the Division Commander left the command post, which was established near the beach in the vicinity of Alligator Creek, to attend a conference on board the flagship (USS McCawley). During the conference, Commander, Task Force 62 announced his decision to withdraw all naval forces from the area at 0600 on nine August (D plus 2 days), in order to avoid further ship losses from aerial attack. As the operation had been planned with the expectation that the transport force would remain in the area until D plus 4 days, and in view of the unsatisfactory progress of unloading supplies, the decision to withdraw the surface vessels was most alarming, as its execution would profoundly affect the entire future course of operations in the Solomons.

The Division Commander left the McCawley at about 2345 and proceeded on board USS Southard to Tulagi for the purpose of conferring with the Assistant Division Commander with respect to the amount of supply which had been put ashore in that area. This information was required because of the decision to withdraw the supporting naval forces. (Footnote B).

The situation confronting the division on the morning of nine August was as follows:

All objectives had been taken in the Guadalcanal-Tulagi area. Enemy forces in the Tulagi area were destroyed but those in the Guadalcanal area remained capable of reorganizing for effective local action against us. The terrain and the attenuated dispositions enforced upon us by the necessity of covering both our supply base at Red Beach and the Lunga Point installations afforded the enemy an excellent opportunity for raiding and harrassing tactics. The congestion of supplies at Red Beach was likewise a serious danger, as upon the departure of the surface vessels it would become the logical target for aerial attack, and, in addition, would be exposed to ship's gunfire bombardment by enemy surface vessels, which would be free to operate in the area by day or night. In addition there were reports of strong enemy landing forces with armored landing craft on transports at Rabaul which would be able to make an

Footnote B: Losses among allied surface vessels from enemy aerial attack up to 2300, 8 August: USS George F Elliot (Burned out), one destroyer damaged. -----

SECRET

attack on the area before nightfall, 11 August.

In consequence of the above, the following plan was decided upon:

To establish a strong water's edge defense at Lunga Point immediately.

To reduce the congestion of supplies at Red Beach by moving them to Lunga Point and by dispersing in place those which could not be moved immediately.

To employ the engineers in a rapid completion of the Lunga Point Airdrome.

To limit further operations against the enemy to active patrol operations pending establishment of Lunga Point defenses and the movement of supplies thereto.

On the morning of 9 August unit commanders were assembled at the Division command post where the situation was explained to them and orders issued for the establishment of defenses and the movement of supplies.

The transport group returned during the day but little or nothing was accomplished in the way of a further landing of supplies. At sunset all vessels cleared the area, proceeding eastward through sealark channel.

SECRET

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ship to Shore Movement:

1. The organization for landing, the technique of ship-to-shore movement, landing craft and special landing equipment developed in the ten years prior to the war were satisfactory to a degree beyond expectation.
2. The operation did not involve a real test of methods of controlling ships' gunfire by shore based fire control parties. However, nothing developed during the operation to indicate the need for any fundamental changes in doctrine.
3. Centralized control of supporting aircraft proved satisfactory in view of the relatively few missions required. The inference is permissible, however, that need of a more direct air-ground contact would have been felt had serious resistance been encountered on Guadalcanal. This was appreciated in advance but lack of time prevented organizing and training air control groups for liaison duty with lower units.
4. The landing reemphasized the vital nature of the logistical problem presented by the ship-to-shore movement of supplies. As had been foreseen, the Pioneer Battalion proved inadequate in size to cope with the tremendous burden placed upon it. Adequate supplementary labor must be provided. It is considered that there must be available to the shore party on the landing beach additional personnel in the proportion of 100 men for each vessel discharging cargo across the beach.
5. The use of liaison planes in the ship to shore movement was based on an unsound principle and would, had there been active resistance at the beach line, have deprived the division commander of air observation in the later stages of the landing when he needed it most. The practice objected to consisted of dropping smoke bombs to mark the extremities of the landing beaches. This required eight runs by the liaison planes at exceptionally low altitudes. It is considered that this use of the liaison planes is an unnecessary hazard as proper identification of a landing beach should be possible through map or photographic study.
6. Subject to the foregoing, shore-party organization and technique embodied in Atlantic Amphibious Force General Order No. 7-42 proved sound in operation.

Beachhead Line Operations:

1. A determined low level or dive bombing attack on the landing beach may prove ruinous unless supplies are promptly cleared to dispersed dump areas. Likewise great attention must be paid to the rapid establishment of a strong anti-aircraft defense of the landing beach.

SECRET

2. To the greatest extent possible ammunition should be loaded on vehicles and Amphibious Tractors prior to embarkation. This will permit a large proportion of the initial ammunition supply to be landed with maximum speed and minimum exposure.

3. A comparison of the several landings points to the inescapable conclusion that landings should not be attempted in the face of organized resistance if, by any combination of march or maneuver, it is possible to land unopposed and undetected at a point within striking distance of the objective.

Equipment:

1. Initial equipment was cut to the minimum for this operation with accompanying savings in shipping space and increases in mobility. This decision proved sound and will be followed in future operations.

2. Medically speaking, the weight of the equipment carried by the individual marine was excessive for jungle operations, especially in view of the fact that all hands had been held on transports without opportunity for conditioning exercises for many weeks. Although water supplied from ships contained one tenth of one percent of salt in solution, neither this nor the salt tablets carried by combat medical units was sufficient to replace the salt loss of the unconditioned troops.

3. While equipment employed in the landing proved generally satisfactory, the amphibian tractor demonstrated a usefulness exceeding all expectations. Some of the initial missions assigned were transporting bridging material from ship to erection site direct, ammunition carrier, prime mover for 105mm guns, bridge pontoons and ambulance. These missions were executed early in the operation under conditions of terrain which precluded the use of trucks. The amphibian thus made a vital contribution to the operation by its performance of diverse missions beyond the capacity of conventional vehicles. It proved proof against the fire of enemy .25 calibre weapons in one instance where a tractor was employed to attack a cave on Gavutu. It is to be observed that this was an emergency undertaking only as it is not considered that the tractor is a tactical combat vehicle.

4. The Reising gun proved definitely unreliable. Other arms and equipment were satisfactory for landing but too heavy for the jungle warfare to follow. It is recommended in particular that the light machine guns be made available as a reserve substitute for the heavy guns and that 60mm mortars be made available as a reserve substitute for the 81mm mortar. This will permit a desirable flexibility through a limited degree of selective armament to meet special operational conditions. In future operations this division will reduce the amounts of ammunition carried by the individual. Only one canteen per man was available; two were needed.

SECRET

5. The lack of adequate maps and photographs was to be a distinct handicap which continued throughout the entire period of our occupation of Guadalcanal. A recommended future procedure:

(a) Designation of an aerial photography unit to take photographs in accordance with exact landing force requirements.

(b) Direct liaison between landing force and designated photographic unit.

(c) Photography unit to supply negatives and six prints of every photograph taken and to furnish mosaics including copying camera negatives of all mosaics so provided.

(d) Landing force photolitho unit to reproduce photographs and mosaics in quantity for unit distribution.

Initial Supply:

1. For this operation 60 day's supply and 10 units of fire were embarked. While these amounts represented reductions of 33% of supplies and 50% of ammunition as compared to the normal levels of 90 days and 20 units they nevertheless proved somewhat excessive from the point of view of immediate requirements. Only a fraction of these supplies were actually landed; that this fraction proved inadequate in no way detracts from the conclusion that amounts actually embarked were somewhat excessive.

2. In view of the foregoing the following recommendations are submitted:

(a) That not to exceed thirty days supply, 10 units of fire, and 50 days rations be embarked.

(b) That only half this material be landed initially and that the transports clear the area on D plus 1 day.

(c) That APA's carrying the remainder of the supplies be withheld from the danger area initially and that, beginning on D plus 2 day, they be committed singly or in pairs at regular intervals to permit orderly unloading and to reduce the target offered to hostile aircraft.

Operations (General):

1. Considering the elementary state of training of the troops and the inexperience of junior officers, combat discipline of the division was satisfactory. There was little or no straggling and no serious offenses were noted. There was some minor pilfering of stores and a certain degree of carelessness with respect to individual equipment. Outposts and sentinels were tense and apprehensive at night; there were instances of random firing,

SECRET

and firing upon friendly parties. These represented the natural reactions of green troops in their first action, deficiencies which disappeared as confidence was acquired. A more serious deficiency was the failure to patrol actively and aggressively to front and flanks.

2. On Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo, the combat assumed the nature of a storming operations from the outset, a soldier's battle, unrelenting and relentless, to be decided only by the extermination of one or another of the adversaries engaged. Soldierly behavior was manifest wherever the enemy was encountered. Individual morale was excellent and there was an unflinching willingness to accept the risks and hazards of a close and sanguinary combat.

3. Cooperation of all services with respect to an area to be attacked should be attained in time to provide complete accurate maps and aerial photographs of the projected theatre. All units of a task force should use the same map. In the Guadalcanal landing, the maps used by the landing force were not only incomplete but in many cases inaccurate. The maps used by the escorting task force and support aircraft were not the same as those of the landing force, a situation which had the obvious result--orientation between the two units by coordinates was most unsatisfactory.

4. On Guadalcanal the advance of the two infantry regiments on the seventh and eighth was retarded to a dangerous degree by several contributing factors. Most of these, it must be realized, were directly attributable to the elementary state of training and the almost total lack of experience in jungle warfare except among senior officers and NCO's. Some units advanced too slowly, not only because of the difficult terrain, but also because of excessive caution on the part of subordinate leaders.

5. Casualties were relatively low in view of the nature of the resistance encountered. In large part this may be attributed to the excellent tactical direction of senior battalion officers.

6. Operations in general pointed to the fact that insufficient training had been conducted in close and difficult country approximating jungle terrain. Large sections of the divisional training area in New River were ideally suited for this purpose but were generally neglected in favor of open terrain.

7. Likewise insufficient emphasis had been placed on physical training to acquire the stamina necessary to march and fight. This condition was aggravated by the deteriorating effect on long periods aboard ship.

8. While the division as a whole was made up largely of green troops with inexperienced company officers it should be observed that battalion commanders and higher ranks consisted of thoroughly experienced and capable officers on whose shoulders rested the major burden of planning, organizing and directing the operation.

ANNEX D (Cont)

Intelligence Report, TULAGI Group, (Including Report of Captured
Material).

S E C R E T

fusion, especially at night. Actual casualties caused by them were not an appreciable number.

2. The Japanese apparently had withdrawn to caves and dugouts during the initial aerial bombardment, believing the attack to be merely a raid. Continued aerial and naval bombardment thereafter kept them under cover and prevented their effective organization of defense until late afternoon of D-Day.

3. Defensive installations, although never fully manned, were located on TULAGI as follows:

- (1) Two three inch guns on Hill 281.
- (2) Two 13 mm AA guns on Hill 281.
- (3) Several light machine guns covering the valley between the south-eastern slope of the Residency Hill and Hill 281.
- (4) A machine gun covering White Beach from the south-eastern slope of Hill 281.
- (5) Sandbag, reinforced dug-outs in the valley between Hill 281 and the south-eastern slope of Residency Hill covering the valley and White Beach.
- (6) Numerous caves combined with dug-outs with an unknown number of weapons provided interlocking fire for the defenders.

4. An enemy counter attack supported by machine gun fire was launched against our positions on the south-eastern slope of Residency Hill about 2230 by an estimated group of about 200 Japanese. A slight penetration of our lines was effected, but positions were regained in the early morning hours.

5. Mopping-up operations against snipers in the north-western half of the Island required two days, in the south-eastern half of the Island required four days.

6. Five inch guns, reported located in this area, have not been found.

7. A landing at White Beach would undoubtedly have encountered strong resistance. The landing at Blue Beach was never realized by the defenders due to lack of observation of that beach from the caves and dugouts to which they had retired.

S E C R E T
ANNEX D (2)

TWP/jcs

ANNEX D

SECRET

25 August, 1942.

From: ADC
To : The Commanding General

Subject: Intelligence Report, TULAGI Group, (Including Report
Of Captured Material).

Reference: A. ComTaskFor 62, Serial 00050, Paragraph 13.

Enclosure: Blueprints of Radar equipment. (Probable)

I. TULAGI

A. Enemy Strength

1. It is estimated that on TULAGI there were approximately 450 to 500 Japanese troops. Prisoners have stated that these troops were a part of the 3rd Special Landing Force, commanded by Yano, with headquarters in RABAU.

2. On TULAGI, this force was commanded by a Lieutenant Keikichi Yoshimoto. Included in the group were some Corporal, Communication and Paymaster personnel.

3. Of the number estimated to be on the island, three were captured. Combat Team Two buried an estimated 110, the Raider Battalion buried an estimated 250, and an estimated 50 were buried in scattered graves about the island. An undetermined number were also buried in the caves. According to captured prisoners, approximately 40 Japanese attempted to escape by swimming to FLORIDA Island. Some of these very probably succeeded. Again the number is unknown, but at least four Japanese were captured on FLORIDA.

4. According to prisoners taken and questioned on TULAGI, there were no laborers on this island.

5. Enemy Disposition

1. During the advance to Line A there was no organized enemy resistance encountered. Japanese outposts in this area were not contacted and remained in the rear of the advance, necessitating later mop-up operations against snipers. The effect of snipers in rear of our advance was to tend toward con-

S E O R E T
ANNEX D (1)

25

情報要約

Intelligence Report, TULAGI Group, (Including Report of Captured Material).

3. Enemy Disposition

1. As on TULAGI, the Japanese withdrew to their caves which, however, commanded the beach area and allowed one wave of our troops to land and then opened fire on the beach area and the succeeding waves as they made the beach. The fire of succeeding waves was thus masked to a large extent by troops advancing from the beach.

2. Dive-bombing and gunfire was not effective against these cave installations. The fire from these caves was over-lapping and effective against our attacking troops.

3. It took many days to clean out snipers on these Islands. The snipers were particularly accurate at night.

4. Many Japs swam over from FLORIDA Island to attack our troops at night.

5. On several occasions, unarmed Japanese would attack superior Marine forces. In fact, many of them simultaneously attacked one of our tanks and, although they were practically all killed, they succeeded in stopping the tank and killing its crew.

C. Captured Prisoners

1. Troops

(1) MATAMAE, Sebuo	- believed to be an officer, although he claimed to be a carpenter.
(2) HAYASHI, Yoshio	- 1st Class Sailor
(3) YOKOYAMA, Senke	- 1st Class Sailor
(4) TAKAMOTO, Yuko	- 2nd Class Sailor
(5) MATSUMOTO, Haruji	- 3rd Class Sailor

2. Laborers

(1) SATO, Yoshio	- Conscripted (barber)
(2) INAZUMI, Guntoshu	- Conscripted (postmaster)
(3) INAWATA, Tenzeshi	- Mechanic
(4) OBI, Tokuichi	- Truck driver
(5) LAITO, Fuku	- General laborer
(6) OSUJI, Yoshio	- Service laborer

DECLASSIFIED
SECRET

ACTION REPORT

HEADQUARTERS, FIRST MARINE DIVISION

SERIAL 00204

NO DATE

DIVISION COMMANDER'S FINAL REPORT ON THE
GUADALCANAL OPERATION

PHASE 3

ORGANIZATION OF THE LUNGA POINT DEFENSES
10 AUGUST - 21 AUGUST

51210

OFFICE OF NAVAL RECORDS AND LIBRARY

SECRET

Reg. No. *e-213*
R.S. No. *7* 362

DIVISION COMMANDER'S FINAL REPORT
ON GUADALCANAL OPERATION

00204
108/334

PHASE III

1943 JUL 13 9 30

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
FLAG OFFICE
RECEIVED

51210

FILMED

SECRET

00204
108/334

First Marine Division,
Fleet Marine Force,
C/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, California.

SECRET

DIVISION COMMANDER'S FINAL REPORT ON
GUADALCANAL OPERATION

17 362

Phase III

ORGANIZATION OF THE LUNGA POINT DEFENSES

10 August - 21 August

INTRODUCTION

On Guadalcanal all ground objectives had been occupied by sunset on August 8 but unloading operations were proceeding at a most unsatisfactory rate due to insufficient labor to unload boats and clear beaches. Congested beach conditions existed from the Tenavatu stream to the Block Four river, and in consequence divisional supplies were exposed to possible air, sea and ground attack. In addition a strong sea-borne attack from the direction of Rabaul appeared imminent. All naval forces had withdrawn the evening of the 9th after heavy losses the previous night in the First Battle of Savo. In view of the foregoing it was decided on the morning of 9 August to suspend ground operations temporarily in order to organize beach defenses on Lunga Point and move all supplies within the defensive position thus established.

SCHEME OF DEFENSE

The order for the defense was given orally and was based on a plan of defense prepared during the approach to the Solomons. The decision was to defend Lunga Point in strength at the water's edge, with short flank extensions inland. The right rested on the Tonaru River, a strong natural obstacle, with the right flank refused for a distance of 600 yards inland along the west (left) bank of the river. The beach defenses covered the sea approaches from the mouth of the Tonaru River westward around Lunga Point and thence to a point 1000 yards southwest of Kukum. Here a high hill overlooked the beach and provided a comparatively strong point upon which to secure the left flank. Beach defenses consisted initially of a continuous cordon of weapons' emplacements and fox-holes. .30 caliber machine guns emplaced to fire normal barrage missions (final protective lines) along the water's edge formed the back bone of the defense. Thirty-seven MM and .50 caliber guns were emplaced to fire anti-boat missions. Some infantry were used to provide protection for weapons emplaced but the majority were held in prepared positions in rear of the cordon defenses

SECRET

SECRET

in readiness to counterattack or contain any penetration of the water's edge defenses. Seventy-five MM half-tracks were held mobile in dug in positions several hundred yards inland, prepared to move on call to prepared firing positions near the water's edge. Mortars were emplaced in rear of their battalion or company sectors prepared to fire normally in front of the beach positions. Artillery was emplaced in centrally located battalion position areas south of the airfield, prepared to support the defense of any sector. No barbed wire or sand bags were available, none having been landed. The supply of engineer tools was extremely limited. Captured Japanese rice bags made of woven straw were available in quantity for use in lieu of sand bags.

The original front was divided into two regimental sectors; 5th Marines less one Bn. held the left (west) sector while 1st Marines held the right (east) sector. The boundary between sectors was the Lunga river inclusive to 1st Marines. Initially the rear of the Lunga Point position received only the incidental coverage afforded by local security detachments of artillery and other rear installations. However, the annoyance caused by the penetration of snipers and small nuisance patrols at night was such that a regular outpost line was soon organized to provide rear area security.

The defenses, as described above, were in place by the night of 9 August but the completion of field fortifications and the necessary coordination of fires required a longer period. The defenses were meanwhile augmented by the 3rd Defense Battalion which established 5" gun batteries east and west of Lunga Point, a 90 mm anti-aircraft battery near the fighter strip and numerous medium and light anti-aircraft positions around the perimeter of the airdrome. Annex A includes a map of the area showing all defenses established during the period.

The establishment of these defenses was subjected to almost continuous hostile observation and interference. By day and by night submarines and destroyers shelled the area. Large flights of high level bombers attacked the airfield daily, and hostile observation craft were continually intruding with light bombs and strafing attacks. At night enemy patrols became increasingly active. In view of the continued threat of a hostile landing and the absence of any means of aerial reconnaissance it was necessary to mount an alert continuously throughout the hours of darkness.

COMPLETION OF AIRFIELD

The principal motive for the seizure of Guadalcanal was to obtain possession of the enemy airdrome known to be under

SECRET

construction near Lunga Point. In consequence a first priority in all matters was given to the completion of the airfield and the preparations necessary for the reception and operation of combat aircraft. The engineer battalion was employed primarily on this major task and by 12 August, 2600 feet of the runway were ready for use. By 18 August this was extended to the full length of 3778 feet. Approaches were improved by clearing away dense growths of banyan trees, some of which were of thirty feet diameter at the base. Within the limits of the means available, every effort was made to provide rudimentary servicing and rearmament facilities for the planes and primitive accommodations for pilots and crews.

The need for air support had been apparent from the beginning as the lack of aircraft even for reconnaissance was a severe handicap to our operations. When the first two squadrons arrived on 20 August it was considered that a major turning point in the operation had been reached. Details of the establishment of the airfield appear in Annex B.

LOGISTICS

Coincident with the establishment of the Lunga Point Defenses and the completion of the airfield there remained a third major problem, that of moving the division's supplies from Red Beach to proper dumps established within the defense perimeter. Although only a portion of the total Division supplies had been landed the tonnage was nevertheless impressive and their removal taxed to the utmost the available transport facilities. All available vehicles, including captured Japanese trucks and our own amphibian tractors were used. The pioneers threw a substantial bridge over the Ilu river, repaired existing bridges over smaller streams and to the limit of their ability labored to maintain and improve the Government Track, as the coastal road to the Lunga was called. Vehicles moved both ways in an unending procession. Laden alligator tractors lumbered along the beach in the shallow waters just outside the surf and beyond them a flotilla of sampans, left behind with the boat detachment, plied between Red Beach and Kukum.

In four days the major part of the task was accomplished and the division stores were segregated in dispersed and classified dumps. Upon inventory it was found that about 4 units of fire 30 days supply of food, (including captured rations) and a considerable quantity of gasoline were available (Annex C Logistics).

Loss of supplies through enemy action was continuous but never reached serious proportions. Fortunately hostile aviation did not take the opportunity of attacking the supply target

SECRET

SECRET

presented by Red Beach during the first few days of the operation. Had the enemy done so the consequences might well have been incalculable and ruinous. As time went on additional lessons were learned which enabled us to reduce losses still further. For example, in examining the effects of our own bombardment, aerial and Naval, it was readily apparent that the probability of damage to supplies varied directly in proportion to the vertical height of the dump. Gasoline drums laid on their sides, for instance, were rarely hit, whereas drums standing on their ends were invariably ignited by a close hit. The same was true of ammunition and other inflammable stores. By the simple expedient of requiring dumps to be kept at the minimum height consistent with the size of the smallest dimension of the unit package it was possible to reduce fire losses to a minimum. Likewise the practice of camouflaging dumps with the dead palm fronds, grass or other inflammable material was forbidden. During the later stages it was possible to get much of the material below the level of the ground in the shelter of shallow trenches. This was extremely effective, but required much time and labor.

CAPTURED MATERIEL

Materials captured included about every conceivable item used by a military force; arms, ammunition, equipment, food, clothing, fuel, transportation, tools, and building material. A great deal of this was wasted through pilfering and souvenir hunting, but large quantities were salvaged by the division quartermaster and made the subject of regular issue. As the division, throughout the entire period was acutely short of everything needed for its operations, the captured material represented an important if unforeseen factor in the development of the airfield and beach defenses and the subsistence of the garrison. A partial list of captured equipment appears in Annex D.

JAPANESE REACTION

Reaction of the enemy to our seizure of his Solomons' bases was immediate and violent. Heavy air attacks on August 7 and 8 were followed by the attack of a strong cruiser formation which surprised our screening forces in the night battle of Savo Island in the early hours of 9 August. Upon the withdrawal of friendly naval forces enemy surface craft and submarines dominated the Lunga Sound by day and night, harassing our operations, interdiction of circulation between Guadalcanal and Tulagi and destroying inshore patrol craft by means of which we attempted to supplement the security of the beach defenses at night.

⑥

SECRET

5

SECRET

While initial attacks from the air were directed against the transport areas, the enemy lost no time in beginning a systematic assault on our shore establishments as soon as our naval forces had withdrawn. Day and night cruiser seaplanes operated in almost continuous relays over Lunga Point, observing our movements and activities and delivering low level attacks as targets of opportunity presented themselves. Strong formations of two engined bombers would appear regularly at midday to deliver a heavy bombardment against the airdrome and surrounding installations. Our only means of reply lay in the hasty creation of anti-aircraft defenses. At first these were limited to guns of light caliber but a 90mm battery was soon in place and the effectiveness of its fire forced the enemy bombers to extreme altitudes with consequent reduction in the effectiveness of their attacks. As the situation developed all anti-aircraft defenses were consolidated under the control of the attached 3rd Defense Battalion, an organization whose high state of training was reflected from the outset in a finely professional performance under most disadvantageous circumstances.

FIRST OPERATIONS AGAINST THE ENEMY

On August 7 the Japanese garrison on Guadalcanal, in evident panic, had dishonored its own traditions and fled to the westward. It was the desire of the division commander from the outset to seek out and destroy this garrison but no substantial forces could be spared due to the urgent necessity of completing the airfield and erecting defenses against the eventualities of a large scale sea-borne attack. Daily patrols, however, were sent out in all directions to establish contact and seek out enemy bases. Small patrol contacts were of daily occurrence but the presence of numerous bands of partially armed and uniformed laborers introduced a note of confusion in our attempts to locate the hostile main body. Within a few days, however, it became apparent that the more sanguinary hostile contacts were being made by patrols of the Fifth Marines to the west of our positions in the direction of the Matanikau.

On 9 August one officer and several enlisted men were wounded in a contact with a heavily armed enemy patrol east of the Matanikau river. The following day a large patrol, attempting to force a crossing was pinned down by heavy fire. It reported that the high ground on the west bank was organized for defense with a series of prepared positions which dominated the only crossing--a sand spit across the mouth of the river which was destined to be the scene of bitter fighting and, in fact, to become the critical terrain feature in the entire battle for the possession of Guadalcanal.

SECRET

SECRET

THE GOETTGE PATROL

These incidents focused attention on the Matanikau - Kokumbona area as the most probable Japanese stronghold, and intense efforts were made to gain further information of the terrain and its defenders. In addition it appeared desirable for humanitarian reasons to take steps to bring in the remaining labor troops who were wandering in bands beyond our outmost line. A prisoner taken on 12 August, on examination at division headquarters, stated that there were many like himself starving in the jungle. The prisoner was a naval rating, recalcitrant and surly, but admitted upon questioning, that he came from the Matanikau area and that there were others in his particular group who might be willing to surrender. This information coincided with a patrol report that a large white flag had been seen displayed from the high ground beyond the Matanikau. It should be stated here that the prisoner was not cooperative in any way and there was nothing to indicate that he was acting in concert with others. Likewise, with respect to the white flag, it is now believed that it was merely a large Japanese infantry flag, white, with a red ball center, intended as a banner and not as a signal for parley or surrender. Such flags were commonly seen in later operations but the mistake can be attributed to lack of detailed familiarity with the enemy's habits which prevailed in the early days.

This combination of circumstances caused the Division Intelligence Officer, Colonel Frank B. Goettge, to organize a patrol for the purpose of contacting any groups wishing to surrender, or, failing in this, to obtain information of the terrain and defenses beyond the Matanikau. The patrol consisted of twenty-five officers and men largely intelligence personnel from Division Headquarters and the 5th Marines. Although the Japanese prisoner was taken along as being of possible service, he had nothing to do with the conduct or planning of the operation.

The patrol, under the personal command of Colonel Goettge, embarked at Kukum after darkness of 12 August and proceeded west along the coast. It disembarked on the beach at a point between Matanikau River and Point Cruz, probably opposite Matanikau village. The patrol was met with heavy fire shortly after landing, and Colonel Goettge, who was slightly in advance of the others, was killed. Shortly thereafter the patrol was heavily attacked and overwhelmed by superior enemy forces. Three men escaped. The account of this action has been set forth above in considerable detail for the purpose of counteracting sensational versions of the encounter which have appeared in the press.

SECRET

SECRET

FIRST ACTION ON MATANIKAU

Following the Goettge patrol, a force of three companies from the 5th Marines was directed to seek out and destroy the enemy in the area beyond the Matanikau. One company was to cut its way through the jungle, cross the Matanikau well inland and approach Matanikau village from the landward side, with the dual mission of destroying any enemy there and recovering the bodies of the Goettge patrol. Another company was to land from Higgins boats at Kokumbona and cut off any enemy attempting to escape from Matanikau westward along the beach. The third was to occupy the defenders by an attack from the east across the mouth of the river. Accordingly Company L (Spurlock) set out at 0800 on 18 August on an inland route to cross the Matanikau 1,000 yards upriver from its mouth. The company encountered no opposition enroute to the crossing point except three Japanese, two of whom were killed. Arriving at the river late in the afternoon, Captain Spurlock took his company across, meeting no opposition in the movement. Immediately across the river a recently vacated enemy bivouac was found. A short distance beyond this point, two more Japanese were found and killed. The company bivouacked for the night near the river and plans were made to attack the next morning at 0900.

Meanwhile Company B (Hawkins) had left its battalion bivouac area and advanced to the Matanikau in order to be in position to attack in the morning.

On the morning of the 19th Company L began its attack following artillery preparation. Almost immediately scouts discovered a line of enemy emplacements dug in along a ridge about 1000 yards to the left flank. As the company continued its attack, Sergeant John H. Branic, an acting platoon leader, was killed by rifle fire from this ridge. The Company executive officer, Lieutenant George H. Mead, Jr. took command of this platoon and covered the advance of the other platoons by fire thus enabling them to continue their advance across open ground exposed to hostile fire.

Company L arrived at the outskirts of the village at about 1400. During the advance Lieutenant Mead had been killed and his platoon taken over by Marine Gunner Edward S. Rust, attached to the company as Regimental Liaison Officer. Meanwhile Company B on the opposite bank of the river had been unable to force a crossing at the mouth, but engaged the enemy by fire. One platoon of Company L entered the village, losing contact with the remainder of the company. The other three started to enter the

SECRET

⑨

SECRET

village and were met by a bayonet charge. This was broken up with heavy losses by a prompt change of front followed by extremely effective close range fire.

Shortly after 1500 Company L was in place on the edge of Matanikau village about three hundred yards west of the river, delivering rifle, machine gun, and rifle grenade fire into the enemy positions there. Company B from the other side of the river continued to occupy the enemy by fire. Defending in depth, enemy positions extended from the river 200 yards through the village. By 1600 the defenders fire became spasmodic and ineffective, and the village was taken by assault.

Casualties were some sixty-five Japanese dead in the village as opposed to our losses of four dead, and eleven wounded.

In the meantime Company I (Hardy) had left Kukum by boat at 0430 to land west of Kokumbona and to attack toward the river at 0900. The landing boats came under rifle and machine gun fire as they proceeded along the beach and were shelled in landing by two Japanese destroyers and a submarine. The landing was successfully carried out despite the hostile fire. Japanese were found in Kokumbona village and this was attacked and occupied, the surviving defenders retreating to the hills. At about 1700 Company I returned to the Kukum area.

This action on the Matanikau, while costly to the Japanese, proved of no great import to the campaign. It did however, confirm the whereabouts of the garrison which had fled from the Lunga region on the first day of the landing.

ARRIVAL OF FRIENDLY AIRCRAFT

Although the captured airdrome was prepared for the reception of supporting aircraft by 12 August no planes were immediately available. During the night of 18 August a converted destroyer arrived off Kukum to discharge a small cargo of bombs and aviation gasoline under cover of darkness. She was the first friendly surface vessel to return to the area since 9 August. In addition to supplies she landed a small party of aviation ground personnel. Almost daily a single B-17 visited the area inspecting the progress of the airport by "dragging" the runway at low altitude, and on one occasion attacking a large enemy destroyer off Lunga Point. This attack, delivered at low altitude, succeeded in crippling the enemy ship which proceeded out Sealark Channel at reduced speed, ablaze, and in obvious difficulty.

SECRET

SECRET

In the late afternoon of 20 August one squadron of Marine F4F Grumman fighters and one squadron of Douglas dive-bombers landed at Henderson airfield and were dispersed in the plains and palm groves bordering the runway. These planes comprised fighter squadron 223 (Smith) and bomber squadron 232 (Mangrum). They were destined to give a most remarkable account of themselves in subsequent operations. On the following day 5 - P400 Army fighters (Brayton) also arrived. These were low altitude fighters unable to participate effectively in high level interception, but their armament and the zeal and fine training of the pilots enabled them to undertake ground support missions which were to contribute as materially, if not as spectacularly, to the defense of Guadalcanal. There were almost no facilities available for servicing the incoming aircraft and little provision could be made for personnel. Despite these handicaps, all squadrons reported themselves ready for duty and began operations at once.

BRUSH'S PATROL

Captain W.F.M. Clemens, a young, active and highly intelligent officer of the Solomons civil administration force, commissioned at the outbreak of war in the Solomon Islands Defense Force, had remained in observation on Guadalcanal throughout the period of enemy occupation. He reported information by radio on hostile activities as it reached him through scouts and friendly natives. Reporting in from the hills on 14 August he at once set about the organization of an information gathering agency based on the use of native police and scouts who could move rapidly and secretly through the bush and along the maze of native tracks. From these sources it was learned that a small group of Japanese near Gurabusu 35 miles to the east of Lunga Point, was operating a radio station presumably in contact with enemy vessels and bases. As a routine measure, a strong patrol with native guides was dispatched to the east with orders to destroy this enemy detachment and its equipment.

This patrol, a detachment from Company A, 1st Marines (Brush) made no contact until it reached the vicinity of Taivu on the evening of 19 August where it encountered and surprised an enemy patrol of 4 officers and 30 men proceeding boldly and carelessly along the beach. In a brief encounter the hostile patrol was enveloped and wiped out, only two men escaping. Our losses were three killed and three wounded. Captain Brush returned with his wounded sending an advance party ahead with information of the contact and captured enemy documents. From an analysis of this action the following appeared definitely established.

SECRET

SECRET

1. The enemy were well equipped, clean shaven and wore fresh uniforms, indicating that they had been on the island only a short time.
2. The helmet insignia was the five pointed star of the Imperial Army rather than the anchor and chrysanthemum device of the Naval Landing Force troops who comprised the original garrison.
3. The high proportion of officers and their comparative seniority indicated that singular importance was attached to the patrol mission.
4. The quantity and high quality of radio equipment captured indicated likewise the importance attached to communication with other forces.
5. Diaries indicated that at least certain members of the patrol had recently departed from Truk apparently in company with a larger force.
6. Documents included a prearranged code for use in ship to shore communication during landing operations against resistance.

From the foregoing and from additional information received from Commander Task Force 62 it appeared that an attack in force was imminent. Enemy capabilities appeared to include an attack delivered against our right flank following an unopposed landing to the east, an attempt at a forced landing in the face of the Lunga Point defenses, or a combination of both.

The position of our own forces was in brief as follows:

Five infantry battalions were available for the defense of Lunga Point. Four of these were committed to beach defense; one was withheld as division reserve. On 15 August work had begun on a further extension of the right flank by refusing it inland along the west bank of the Tenaru for a distance of 3200 yards. This work involved road and bridge construction and extensive clearing prior to the establishment of field fortifications. As of 18 August little progress had been made.

Our courses of action were two; first to send the division reserve to the east with orders to destroy any enemy forces encountered, second to continue work on defenses limiting operations to the east to strong patrols and outposts. The first course involved the premise that the main force had already landed to the east and could be located and dealt with by one battalion. This was rejected as being unsound as there had been no verification of a landing in force to the east and even assuming that such a landing had been made, there still remained the doubt as to the ability of a single battalion to deal with it.

SECRET

SECRET

This detachment of the reserve would also greatly weaken the defenses of Lunga Point in the event of an attack on the western flank or from the sea. The second course was accepted as being more consistent with the facts then established and as offering greater promise of a successful defense against any possible course of action the enemy might follow.

In pursuance of this decision additional native scouts were sent along the coast and strong patrols covered the area to the east as far as the Malimbui by day, with listening posts established along the Ilu and Block Four by night. The reserve was kept closely in hand and all defenses were maintained at "stand-to" during the hours of darkness.

SUMMARY

The period covered by this section of the report, 9 August - 20 August is made distinct by the fact that the division was forced by circumstances to operate entirely without air or surface support, with a minimum of supply and materiel and under conditions creating uncertainty as to the state of our line of communications with our bases to the east. Nothing was known of the general naval situation or the extent of our losses at sea. Radio communication was unsatisfactory and little information was received as to the results of aerial reconnaissance conducted from the rear areas. Observation over the sea approaches was limited to shore observation points which could provide only limited surveillance during the day and none at night. Patrolling was constant but the extent and type of terrain to be covered was such that little reliance could be placed upon negative information obtained from patrol reports. The original enemy garrison on Guadalcanal had been sharply defeated but not destroyed in the action on the Matanikao on 19 August. Surviving elements had made good their escape into the jungle where they retained comparative freedom to continue their harrassing tactics. Short rations, continuous hard labor and lack of sleep were reflected in a steady deterioration in the physical condition of the troops. Morale remained high however, as all ranks made light of their hardships and refused to take too serious a view of their situation. Little was known of the enemy's intentions and not until the patrol action near Taivu on 19 August did it appear that the enemy had landed, or was preparing to land, fresh troops in an effort to regain possession of the island.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EQUIPMENT

1. During this period it became apparent that our armament

(13)

SECRET

12

SECRET

and equipment while satisfactory for landing operations is in general too heavy for jungle operations. Troops must be taught to strip down to bare essentials and travel on light rations; patrols must be specially armed and equipped in accordance with the terrain and type of resistance to be encountered. Specific recommendations are:

- (a) Carry only 40-60 rounds per rifleman with proportionate reductions for the B&R and light machine gun.
- (b) A limited system of selective or optional armament permitting the following substitutions for special occasions

- Light machine guns for heavy machine guns
- 60 mm mortars for 81 mm mortars
- Increased number of submachine guns and carbines required by close terrain
- Sufficient machetes to issue one per man when required

- (c) The "C" ration is too bulky and the "D" ration unsatisfactory for extended patrols. Troops must be trained to live for considerable periods on individually prepared rations of rice, bacon, raisins and coffee.
- (d) This ration should be varied and supplemented by airplane drops of canned fruit and "C" ration at intervals of four or five days.
- (e) Two canteens are necessary
- (f) Blankets are not required; men should carry only the shelter half or poncho.
- (g) Make preparations in advance for airplane drops of ammunition and medical supplies in the event of a serious action.
- (h) Organize natives as carrying parties as soon as possible after landing.

2. All types of marine corps combat transportation proved highly satisfactory. The superiority of our 4-wheel drive equipment over the 2-wheel drive type of Japanese truck was most apparent. Despite its short mechanical life the amphibian tractor continued to demonstrate its usefulness and versatility.

3. Reproduction equipment will always be needed. It should be brought in with the second echelon. Little reliance can be placed on obtaining cartographic assistance from rear areas.

4. The failure to land Engineer equipment and machinery severely handicapped our efforts to complete the airfield and its defenses. Construction equipment and personnel are not a luxury

SECRET

SECRET

but an absolute necessity in modern warfare. Bridging equipment is particularly necessary.

5. A well organized boat detachment with repair facilities should be provided the landing force. The detachment left at Guadalcanal initially lacked all semblance of organization, many of the crews being simply left behind when the attack force departed. A high percentage of the boats were damaged. The situation was gradually improved but was never entirely satisfactory.

LOGISTICS

6. To reduce waste and wanton destruction, orders should be issued prior to the landing covering the disposition of captured materiel.

7. Security for supply dumps is to be found in wide dispersion rather than overhead cover. Second only to the foregoing is the necessity for limiting the height of stacks of inflammables to a maximum of two feet instead of the normal six feet as the maximum density of fragments of the enemy personnel bomb appears in a sheaf extending horizontally and about three feet above ground impact level. These fragments have an incendiary effect. As rapidly as possible dumps should be placed below ground level.

TRAINING

8. On every occasion our troops proved themselves superior to the Japanese in actual combat. Their great deficiency was inadequate physical training and hardening prior to combat. An important secondary deficiency was the failure of small patrols to operate effectively. This was corrected in subsequent phases, but precombat training proved definitely inadequate.

9. Troops in training must be made to live hard and to march long distances by day and night through unfavorable terrain. Ease and comfort in training periods will lead to excessive losses in combat.

10. Care of the feet including daily foot inspection by junior officers is particularly essential in jungle warfare. In one instance during this period one battalion had 159 ineffectives due to minor and entirely avoidable foot ailments.

11. Troops must be trained to preserve their clothing and equipment. This is an important disciplinary problem and its only solution is constant inspection followed by disciplinary action

SECRET

SECRET

and checkage against offenders. This should be impressed upon the troops beginning with their recruit training period so that it will be instinctive during field operations.

ENEMY COMBAT METHODS

12. During the period the enemy revealed for the first time certain specific weaknesses which were to be repeated again and again. These were:

(a) Lack of perception--failure to attack the supply target on Red Beach.

(b) Careless disregard of security measures--Brush's patrol.

(c) Fondness for the tactically dramatic (Bushido)--improvident "Banzai" charge against Company L, Fifth Marines, near Matanikau. Initiated at long range and without fire superiority it presented us with a gratuitous opportunity for annihilation by fire.

(d) Lack of intelligence and initiative--as individuals, or in groups without formal leadership the Japanese soldier displayed tenacity and a willingness to die on the spot but no capacity to take independent action to redeem his situation.

(e) Lack of combat discipline as demonstrated by their general habit of keeping and carrying diaries together with operation orders and other documents into action. Their weakness provided a valuable and never failing source of information.

SECRET