General Subjects Section
ADJUTANT DEPARTMENT
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1947 - 1948

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 17TH INFANTRY, USAFIP,AD (P.A.)
IN THE CAPTURE OF NAKOMA, NI. PROVINC, BORNEO, P.I.
26 JULY - 1 AUGUST, 1945
(UCKH CAMPAIGN)
(Personal experience of a Regimental Commander)

Type of operation described: RESISTANT IN THE ATTACK

Lt. Col. Donald D. Blackburn, Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO. 2

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The General Situation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Battle for Leyteo</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis and Criticisms</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map A - North Baseson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map B - Leyteo Area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlay #1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlay #2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlay #3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A-1 After Battle Report
United States Army Forces in the Philippines

A-2 After Action Report, Final Phase of Luzon Campaign, 1 July to 21 August 1945, 6th Infantry Division (TIGS Library)

A-3 11th Infantry (F.A.), S-3 Operations Report No. 129, dated 9 August 1945, (Personal possession of author)


A-5 A Brief History of the 11th Infantry, F.A., prepared Sept. 1945 by S-2 Section, 11th Infantry. (Personal possession of author)

A-6 Personal knowledge
INTRODUCTION

This monograph is about an action of a Filipino Guerrilla Force in the destruction of a Japanese center of resistance, resulting in the capture of the town of Baling, in Batangas Prov., Luzon, Phillipine Islands on 7 August 1945. This force command by the 11th, 11th Infantry (P.A.), was composed of the 11th Infantry (-1st and 2nd Bns.),(P.A.), plus the 1st Bn., 11th Infantry (P.A.) and a provisional battalion (P.A.).

As an introduction to this operation it is necessary to retrace to the fall of the Phillipines in 1942. When Japan surrendered on 9 July 1945, rather than surrender to the Japanese, many Americans and Filipinos evaded capture and swore their way northward out of the Japanese periphery. Some of those individuals made their way into the mountains and forests of northern Luzon, where they already existed many Americans, both military and civilian, and Philippine army personnel, and had escaped capture by the Japanese on the retreat drive to Japan. These then as a nucleus, under the leadership of Col. (now a Maj. Gen.) Homme, organized a guerrilla force, later to become known as U.S. forces (United States Army Forces in the Philippines, North Luzon), as organized. The strength of this force ultimately approached 20,000 officers and men. (1)

U.S. P.A. was composed of a General Headquarters under which were the command, combat and service echelons. The combat echelon included the 11th Inf., 17th Field Artillery Regiments (P.A.), and a Field Artillery Battalion (P.A.). (2)

The 11th Infantry (P.A.) was composed of a Headquarters Service Battalion, and three rifle battalions of four rifle companies each. A Headquarters and Service Company, a Combat Company and a Medical Company made up the Headquarters Battalion.

A Rifle Company was composed of three rifle Platoons and a Special Weapons Platoon. Any machine guns, American or Japanese, were in the Special Weapons Platoon. At the time of this operation the Japanese machine guns had been replaced by Browning light machine guns, three (1,2) a-1, P-6 and a-6

(1)
being three per platoon. These machine guns arrived with neither tripods nor ammunition belts. Tripods, that would permit both elevating and traversing, were ingeniously designed and made from pipe by a Filipino non-commissioned officer of the regimental gun section's finance group. The ammunition belts were made by Filipino women. To carry the weapon, the tripods that could not be easily detected would hang perpendicular to the gun but was tied to a pole which was supported from the shoulders of two men. (1)

The Combat Company was composed of an A.I. Mortar Platoon, an anti-tank Platoon, and a rifle Platoon. There were three A.I. mortars in the mortar Platoon and two Japanese A.I. guns in the anti-tank Platoon.

In addition to the organic units the C.O., 11th Infantry, had been authorized by the C.O., 50th Div., to organize an anti-aircraft replacement and Casualty Companies, two Hospital Companies, two Engineer Companies, a Signal Company, and a Field Communication (message carrier) Company. (4)

The area throughout which the units of 50th Div. were organized and operated was that portion of Luzon, north of an anticline line running generally through San Jose, Agoo, and Tinglayan, Kalinga. (see map 4) (5)

On 9 January 1945, D-Day for the Americans reentry onto Luzon, 50th Div., 21st Army Group, had been in radio contact with American forces since August 1944, was placed under the command of the commanding general, Sixth Army. At 03:00, 1 July 1944, 21st Div., as part of the control of XIV Corps, Eighth Army when 71st Army relieved the Sixth Army of the tactical responsibility of Luzon. (6)

At this time, (1 July) the 11th Infantry (1st bn.) (P.I.) was attached to the 3rd Infantry Division which was engaged in clearing up operations against the Japanese in the Sierra Madre mountains of the upper Canyon Valley.

To the north and in a zone adjacent to the 3rd Division, the 6th Infantry Division was heavily engaged with Japanese forces of 8th. Army.Fnnnited's XIV Army that were vitally located northwest, from the lower (3,1) A-65; (3) A-65P-52; (6) 1-1, 1-5 and 1-2, P.I.; (3)
Cagayan Valley, along highway 4 into the Cordilleras Mountains. (7)

Yamashita's forces on Luzon had been defeated at every turn and were now preparing for a last stand in the very rugged and mountainous terrain west of highway 4 in the general area of Bayan-antipolo-anguinan-baunan. Another Japanese force estimated from 10,000-20,000 believed to be remnants of ground, air, service, and naval units, organized into Provisional ground force units was west of highway 4 in the general area of Antipolo-danao-banuan-angayon-landat. This latter force was reported to be concentrating in the vicinity of the town of Angayon with the intent of making a junction with Yamashita's force to the west. (8)

On or about 7 July a conference was called at 11th, Staff, Hq. Those present included staff officers of XXIV Corps, the C.G., Staff, and the C.O., 11th Infantry. (P.A.). It was brought out in this conference that the 6th Infantry Division was to continue its advance north to Banaue, and once Banaue was reached the division's main objective would be Yamashita's force west of highway 4. The large concentration developing in the vicinity of Angayon would be a constant threat to the division's rear and its main supply route, thus it was necessary to destroy this threat. (9)

The town of Angayon was approximately 6 miles away on the trail, though its exact position was not known. There were no roads in the area, and the only way to reach Angayon was by trail. On the trail, the division would be able to move at a slow pace. (10)

The decision of the conference was that the C.O., 11th Infantry (P.A.) would be assigned the mission of destroying this concentration at Angayon. Among the factors influencing this decision were that the C.O., 11th Infantry (P.A.) had been in the vicinity of Angayon for nearly ten years, (11, 12) A-2, A-1, A-2, and A-6
and the 11th battalion, 11th Infantry (F.A.) was composed of igorot soldiers whose homes were located in this general area. This knowledge of the country would prove most valuable in lieu of maps of the area that were nonexistent. (11)

On 9 July orders from XIV Corps directed that the 11th infantry (1st bn. and 2nd bn.) (F.A.) with the 1st bn. 11th Infantry (F.A.) stations would pass from the control of the 37th Infantry Division to the 6th Infantry Division. On 10 July the 3rd. 11th Infantry (F.A.) received orders from the 6th Infantry Division assigning him the mission of silence ambush and prepare to advance west to secure layaasen on Division order. (12)

To fully understand the composition of this force that was actually employed on this mission it is necessary to digress a bit. when the 11th infantry (F.A.) was assigned the layaasen mission the 1st battalion was at that time attached to the 12th Infantry (F.A.) and the 3/4th Infantry Division had requested the retention of the 2nd battalion. Because of the loss of these two battalions the 1st bn. 11th infantry (F.A.) was attached to the 11th Infantry (F.A.) and a provisional battalion (F.A.) comprising the Company C, 11th Infantry (F.A.), and replacement and Casualty Companies 49 and 51 was organized. The purpose of the latter battalion being two-fold: one, it would make a third battalion and second, if casualties became excessive the provisional battalion could be dissolved and the personnel of the two replacement and Casualty Companies be used to fill the vacancies in the other two battalions. (13)

This was by no stretch of the imagination small-trained force. The 1st bn. 11th Infantry (F.A.) was not completely organized until the latter part of July. It had been separated from the rest of the regiment that was located several days of tough hiking across the mountains. This made close and continuous supervision of its activities by the regimental commander quite difficult. Only a small number of the officers and men had received any previous military training and there had been little or no attempt to train the battalion. The battalion was not much more than an undeveloped basic, although, it had had numerous encounters with the (11) A-4(12) A-8, F.A.; (13) A-5
Japanese and was willing to fight. To bring the organization into line the G.O., WAPFRI, ordered it to the 11th Infantry (P.A.) during April 1945. The sector of the 1st bn., 14th Infantry (P.A.) being adjacent to that of the 11th Infantry (P.A.) facilitated control and supervision.

The battalion was on area except rifles. One shipment of automatic weapons consigned to the 14th Infantry (P.A.) had been lost in a plane crash and another shipment fell into the hands of the enemy. The battalion remained under the control of the G.O., 11th Infantry (P.A.) until the 374th Infantry Division took over the control upon the division's occupation of the Cagayan Valley in June 1945. (34)

The two replacements and casualty companies "C" and "D" of the Provisional Battalion (P.A.) were comprised entirely of civilians who had never received any military training prior to 1945. Several Philippine Army officers had organized them into a unit, and with few arms and a limited knowledge of military tactics, attempted to train them. In April 1945 the group requested to be incorporated into WAPFRI, replacements being a continuous problem. The G.O., WAPFRI, ordered the G.O., 11th Infantry (P.A.) to reorganize this group into "C" and "D" of the replacement and casualty unit, WAPFRI, and early they were attached to the 11th Infantry (P.A.). This being accomplished they were given rifles and put into training camp. They were given limited combat missions from time to time and moved up fairly well in several encounters with the enemy. The casualty company, Provisional Battalion, was made up ofagma soldiers who were former Philippine Scouts or Philippine Army and on whom the battalion commander could rely.

The personnel of the 11th Infantry (P.A.) had had considerable experience. About 85% of the combat elements of the regiment were Philippine Scout and Philippine Army personnel. A number of the officers were graduates of the Philippine military academy. The other officers were commissioned by the Philippine Army, or were former Philippine Scouts or Philippine Army non-commissioned officers that were appointed officers. (35)

From the middle of 1945, as the regiment was being organized, the men lived in camps in the mountains. Training to a degree, was continuous.
There were no Army regulations, field manuals or technical manuals, but
the Philippine Scouts proved to have retained the training they had
received under American officers prior to the war, and were of great
value in the training camps. There were also a number of Filipino
officers and non-commissioned officers, who prior to the outbreak of the
war, had been especially selected to train the Philippine Army Cadets.
Since knowledge and experience came in handy. This training, though
basic, was supplemented by limited encounters with the enemy. Since all
efforts of December pointed to being prepared on I-Day, very few encounters
were permitted prior to 9 January 1945, but subsequent to I-Day hardly a
day passed without some unit of the regiment being engaged with the
Japanese. Small encounters or actions developed until companies and
battalions were employed against the enemy.

Those Officers that failed to promote were immediately donated to
the enlisted grades. On the other hand, those non-commissioned officers that
showed promise were appointed officers.

The assignment of the more experienced, better trained, disciplined
and equipped 1st and 2nd battalions was a serious loss. In addition, the
services of the 1st battalion that was composed entirely of Igorots could
be missed in the mountains. It was hoped that the Negro mission could
have been accomplished more expeditiously had both Igorot battalions
(1st and 2nd) been employed. As it was the majority of the troops were
natives, the same situation being further complicated by the
mountains extremely difficult. (16)

The Initial Situation

At the time the order to seize Bataan and to prepare to move on
Nagoya was issued, the Japanese were in the process of withdrawing their
troops which were scattered along the eastern foothills of the Cordilleras
mountains, from Pandacan to Pandacan, generally, westward toward Nagoya.
this withdrawal had been under way for several weeks. (see map A) (17)
Nagoya was a logical area for the Japanese to concentrate. It was
not only remote but difficult to reach, but it was also the largest rice
(17) A-1, p. 177-179
producing area in the mountains remaining accessible to the Japanese, who were in dire need of food. The town was easy to defend, though at an elevation of approximately 3000 feet; it was situated in a bowl whose surrounding peaks and ridges towered 5000-6000 feet above. The only probable routes of approach for an attacking force were the long and difficult trails from Lamian, and from the Cagayan River Valley via Bamban. (10)

Units elements of the 16th Infantry Division along Highway I, approximately 35 kilometers south of Lamian, which was occupied by the Japanese, Lamian would have to be approached from the Cagayan River Valley. (10)

There was a possible route into Lamian from the Cagayan Valley via the village of Almit, but this was not given much consideration due to the almost impassable trail and the distance, which would lead to an insolvable supply problem.

There was a good trail leading to Lamian and Sayang from Lamant Granda in the Cagayan Valley, but this trail led over the crest of a divide approximately 3000 feet in elevation which separated Lamian from the Valley. The enemy was known to have this divide fortified.

A third trail led to Banuhan from the north through the mountains. This trail could be reached from the Cagayan Valley by two probable routes: one was from the village of Ilang to Palamul to Lusuan via Natividad; the other, from Balingat to Banuhan via Natividad. There was a large concentration of Japanese reported to be in the vicinity of Balingat. There were few, if any, Japanese along the trail to Banuhan trail.

This northern route to Banuhan was long and over steep and treacherous mountain terrains for the greater part of the distance. But, this trail had been seen travelled by the former soldiers of the 3rd Battalion (P.A.) during the period of the Japanese occupation, and coupled with the fact that many of these Igorots were natives of this area, the trail was not new to them. It was estimated, barring any Japanese resistance, that the 3rd Battalion could move from Ilang to Banuhan in three to four days.

(18, 19, A-6)
with these facts taken into consideration the following plan was
concised upon (20):

1. The 3rd Battalion, 11th Infantry (P.A.) would depart from Fajî
ly July, and move to Basihan via Saniton, avoiding any contact with the
enemy. The battalion would attack and seize the village, and without
delay, would attack the fortification directly east of the village from the rear.
It was believed that once Basihan was captured, the enemy would
automatically withdraw from their position on the divide; or if any
resistance were offered it would be meager. The divide should be free
for passage of the main force from the valley on or before 10 July.

2. The 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry (P.A.) would depart from Kana
11 July, and move advance through the valley on the foot path via
Biagani and follow to Basihan which was situated at the foot of the divide.
Any enemy encountered within the assigned zone would be destroyed. The
battalion was expected to arrive in Basihan 17 July, and would prepare to
advance to Basihan.

The Provisional Battalion (P.A.) would depart from Vina in July, and
advance southeast to Basihan Fajî. The battalion was expected to
arrive at the same 18 July and would prepare to advance to Basihan via
these

3. The 5th, 11th Infantry (P.A.) that was located at Tomb, Basihan,
would move to the Basihan area and be established thereon in 18th July.
Upon the arrival of the Provisional Battalion (P.A.) the C.P. would move
toward Basihan.

The 5th Infantry Division has been made responsible for initially
supplying this force with ammunition and rations, and also for tracking
the units to their points of departure. The 6th Infantry Division was to
establish a ten (10) day supply deep at Sarasin Bridge, which was on the
eastern side of the Magar river opposite the Basihan Fajî. (21)

As pointed out earlier the 1st Bat., 11th Infantry (P.A.) and the
provisional battalion (P.A.) were given with only rifles, because of the
rough nature, assigned the 3rd Battalion (P.A.) made necessitated travelling
(22) a-65 (22) a-2, P.A., and 1-0

(21)
light as possible, the Battalion was permitted to carry only one light machine gun per company. The other machine guns were redistributed to the other two battalions.

The three platoons of the Combat Company were turned over to the regimental HQ for transporting. They would be available if needed, from then on. The Heavy anti-tank guns were to remain in touch. Thus the Combat Company was just another rifle company of the Provisional Battalion.

All the men were in bad need of clothing and equipment. With the exception of about 300 ponchos, and a smaller number of blankets, the men possessed absolutely nothing but their rifles, helmets, one uniform, and if fortunate, a pair of shoes; no more. This condition of the men had been brought out before the invasion mission was assigned, though nothing materially was done about it. (22)

The widely dispersed battalions made necessary the maintenance of good communications. This was accomplished by furnishing each Battalion with an M1 Car and each company with an M3J bi. Radio technicians, capable of repairing the radio, were attached to the 3rd Pl., 11th Infantry (P.A.) and the last Pl., 11th Infantry (R.A.). Telephone and radio communication would be maintained between regiment and the supply area at General’s Ranch. The personnel charged with the responsibility of establishing and maintaining communications came from the signal Company attached to 11th Infantry (P.A.)

Supply and evacuation could be foreseen as two of the most difficult problems to be solved. In addition to the ruggedness and inaccessibility of the area, the rainy season caused the many rivers and streams to remain high and swift. Crate bringing of men would be necessary before the men and supplies could be crossed safely. The trails that were narrow and steep were made even more difficult by the very alluvial clay. Rains had been made so as to drop supplies if the weather permitted, but this could not be depended upon, thus it would be necessary to recruit civilian engineers, and continue with slight to land the supplies and evacuate the...
wounded. Initially each Battalion Commander was made responsible for his own transport. Regiment would establish and maintain the main supply route from Cailima Ranch to Laoyoa. An would relieve the battalions of their responsibility when they were into this supply route at Ubun or Usaun.

The plan as outlined was initiated on 15 July. Everything was proceeding according to plan when on 16 July the C.O., 3rd Battalion radioed that he was engaged with the enemy in the Katoam area. On 17 July the 1st pl. 11th Infantry (P.A.) was sent into an unexpectedly large concentration of Japanese east of Patigai, who offered little fight. By 19th, 15 July the battalion had reached Patigai, forcing the Japanese to withdraw east through this village. It was estimated elements of this force was the C.O., 3rd Battalion permitted to only him, and that results in his failure to seize the fortified divide east of Ubun as ordered. (23)

The provisional battalion (P.A.) arrived at Cailima Ranch 16 July after encountering only slight resistance in their zone. The regimental C.P. had been established at the ranch on 11 July. By 17 July sufficient supplies to begin the movement eastward had been stocked at the ranch, and the regimental C.P. had procured enough cargoes and cattle to move them to Ubun. With the 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry (P.A.) still engaged with the enemy between Patigai and Laoyoa, the provisional battalion (P.A.) was ordered to proceed there.

By 19 July Ubun was occupied by the provisional battalion (P.A.) and elements of the 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry (P.A.), and the C.P., 11th Infantry (P.A.) established there. A continuous stream of natives with cargoes were arriving with supplies from Cailima Ranch. In addition, these supplies were supplemented by air drop, by mistake. The C.O., 3rd Battalion asked permission and food to be dropped to him in the vicinity of Laoyoa, and the plane mistook his location and dropped at Ubun. (24)

On 20 July orders were received from the C.O., 6th Infantry division to seize Laoyoa. With the 3rd battalion still lost some in the vicinity (23) A-6; (24) A-5, A-4, A-3, and A-6 (20)
of Iwojima, and elements of the 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry (P.A.)
still engage with Japanese units still ashore, the Provisional
Battalion (P.A.) was assigned the mission of seizing the enemy position
on the island and capturing Iwojima. The 1st Inf., 36th Infantry (P.A.)
was assigned the mission of protecting the supply route from Guadalcanal
Hill to Utao. (22)

At 0700, 21 July, the Provisional Battalion (P.A.) began the ascent
to Iwojima with the Combat Company leading. By 1200 leading elements
of the company were held up by fire from the village position. The
enemy was able to hold their position until the morning of 23 July
when they withdrew toward Iwojima. By 1200, the Combat Company, having
overcome scattered resistance, captured the village of Iwojima.

By 1400, 22 July, except for a few snipers, Iwojima was secured by
the Provisional Battalion (P.A.), and the advance U.S. of the regiment
established contact. At 1100 Company A, one of the platoons of Company H
arrived from Iwojima, having found their way through the Japanese in
that area. The Provisional Battalion commander was ordered to move the
Combat Company north toward Iwojima in a reconnaissance in force in an
attempt to find out the actual situation in that area. The remainder of
the battalion with Company K and the two platoons of Company 2>A were
able to advance on Iwojima on 23 July with the mission of
seizing that town. (26)

**THE BATTLE FOR IWOJIMA**

By 26 July the 36th Infantry (P.A.) U.S. was well established in
Iwojima. The main supply base was maintained at the Guadalcanal Ranch,
and an intermediate supply point at Utao. The 1st Inf., 36th Infantry
(P.A.) was assigned the mission of protecting these bases and the supply route. (27)

It was now apparent that the enemy had been fighting a rear guard
action covering his withdrawal into Iwojima where he was estimated to
have from 300-500 troops. There was another enemy force of undetermined
strength in the vicinity of Iwojima, approximately 20 miles northeast of
Iwojima, and the 3rd Battalion reported to be tied down by an
(28-30) A-2, P.18 and 2-6; (29) A-2; P.12

(31)
Increased enemy forces in the Arakan area scattered enemy elements were being encountered north and south of the main supply route in the foot-
alls to the west by units of the 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry (P.A.).
The 2nd division, since 1st Infantry and captured Meme on 20 July,
reported that patrols that have been sent easterly along the Same-
Geyme trail were encountering enemy resistance a few kilometers east
of Samee. (28)

To date, the enemy had not shown much fight except along Mame.
He appeared to be disorganized, demoralized, and absolutely void of any
of the aggressiveness and tenacity with which he had been characterized.
Our casualties have been extremely light. These facts, coupled with the
problem of resupply, that was proving more difficult as the advance
pushed deeper into the mountains and away from the supply base at
Samee. Having the regimental commander decided to continue the advance
to Samee with the Provisional Battalion, we not wait the arrival of
the 1st Battalion from Samee. (29)

In driving the Japanese from Samee, the Provisional Battalion (P.A.)
captured a large quantity of ammunition. The natives, who had
- evacuated to the town, began filtering back into the village. Some were
put to work at once threshing the rice, while others were sent to round
up the other straggler and collect more rice that also had been evacuated.
These lucky natives (both men and women), were put to the tough
 task of hauling supplies from Samee. The locals met natives with their
- carabao and herd transported back into the Samee town to same.
Attempts were made to use carabao to haul the supplies from Samee over the
divide to Samee, but these heavy loads of ordnance at the Samee town prove
to be of little value in the mountains.

As long as the 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry (P.A.) and the Provisional
Battalion (P.A.) were fighting in the Samee area, they supplied the people
of the Samee Valley were over enthusiastic in transporting supplies as
this meant that their names would be protected from the Japanese raiding
parties, but once the advance was crossed their interest began to wane,
and it was most difficult to keep them on the job.

(28, 29) A-6

(12)
The Igorots around Bamban and vicinity were eager to transport supplies, but the area was sparsely settled and could not provide enough people to transport all the supplies necessary for a sustained action, nor could the food in the vicinity last for many days. It would have been difficult to remain indefinitely in Bamban awaiting the arrival of the 3rd Battalion.

The Provisional Battalion (P.A.) was ordered to begin the advance on Ipong on 23 July. The Battalion was to advance in two columns. (one company). The Battalion, with the two platoons of Co. B retained to be attached to the Combat Company, would advance west along the main Bamban-Ipong trail and seize the high ground (1-1) 600 yds. east of Ipong, from which point they would attack the town. This trail being the west direct and easiest route to Ipong, the Provisional Battalion (P.A.) could expect resistance minimal. In fact the Combat Company that had been sent ahead on 25 July reported they were unopposed and appeared to be easier fire from the ridges overlooking the trail. There was another trail to Ipong that was known by the other than the natives. It was narrow, rocky, steep and ill defined. This trail led through the village of Illag and terminated at the village of Ipong, which overlooked Ipong from approximately 1,000 yds. to the southeast. Company K, with the assistance of B Company, was assigned this route of advance. (31)

The battalion and attachments departed from Bamban at 0030, 26 July, and picked up the Combat Company at 4 a.m. Kilometres east of Ipong, at which time they were encountering minimal resistance from the enemy. Company K encountered no resistance during their advance to Ipong. At 0730, 27 July from the Provisional Battalion position along the ridges (1-1) east of Ipong, the Combat Company K in the village of Illag. (31)

The Provisional Battalion was receiving heavy machine gun, rifle and mortar fire from the village of Batubang, 300 yds. south of Ipong. Company K apparently had arrived in Ipong under the cover of darkness. The Provisional Battalion commander reported the original estimate of approximately 1,000 Japanese, in the vicinity of Ipong, to be correct. Japanese could be observed along the ridges south and west of the town, and in the rice terraces (30, 31) 1-2, F-11 and A-6.
surrounding the town. (2)

Company E was ordered to attack the town from its commanding position, and at about 0900, 27 July, the company began the ascent on the town supported by fire from the battalion deployed along the ridge (R-1). (See Overlay 1.) Almost immediately Company E was detected and began receiving fire from the town. At this point, the concealment afforded by the contours of the ridge terraces and the naturally irregular terrain, the company was able to continue its advance, thus reaching a point approximately 300 yds. from the town on enemy machine gun and rifle fire. Located on a small knoll to the company’s right flank, opened up killing the platoon leader and several men of the leading platoon, who not only did not cross the rice terraces to enter the town. This caused the company commander to halt the advance. Early in the morning, the enemy were able to recover sufficiently from their surprise and placed enough fire on the company to pin it down. (3)

As pointed out earlier, Buna-Gona is situated in a bowl surrounded by rugged peaks and ridges. (See page 8.) This bowl was pierced on the east by a river that was 150 ft. below and 300 yds. south of the town. Rice terraces extended from the town to the river. South of the river was a crescent-shaped hill east that forms the southern rim of the bowl. The small from Buna-Gona was north of and 150 ft. above, the river. The commanding terrain feature overlooking the town was an apex (a) about 700 yds. northeast and 500 ft. above, the swamps. This apex was the western terminus of the main ridge (a-2); running generally east-west, from Buna-Gona; the northern terminus of the north-south ridge (a-1), 600 yds. east of the town, and along which the provisional battalion was deployed; and the eastern terminus of a crescent-shaped ridge (a-2) about 1500-2000 yds. north of the town. (4)

Throughout the morning Company E attempted to drive the Japanese from the town, but without success. (See Overlay 1.) The company began receiving the brunt of the enemy fire, sending quick rifle fire from the town and the small hill. At approximately 1130, with ammunition (24, 33-1/8) a-6
nearly exhausted, the Company withdrew to Coye, and from there proceeded along the ridge (K-2) through the apex (A) to rejoin the Provisional Bn. whose CP was located along the trail between the ridges (K-1) and (K-2). (35)

It is difficult to picture the position of Company K that was only 500 yards from their objective, were forced to withdraw due to the lack of ammunition to traverse the circuitous route from their position to the supply point of the Provisional Battalion would entail a minimum of four to five hours of tough climbing. Although the battalion was in position only 600 yards away, the intervening terrain was open rice terraces which could be easily covered by fire from the town and knoll (K).

About 1330 when the last elements of Company K were approximately 500 yards east of the apex (A) and along ridge (K-2) they were fired upon from the rear. The Japanese, by coming out of the rugged and heavily covered terrain, had worked their way undetected up to the apex (A), where the CP's Provisional Battalion (P.A.) had neglected to secure although he had deployed his battalion along the ridge (K-1), which became critical. (36)

Following this initial burst of fire the Japanese directed their fire down the ridge (K-1) to the great surprise and amazement of the battalion commander. The enemy was now in a position to attack the flank of the Provisional Battalion (P.A.), or advance unobserved along the main ridge (K-2) and outflank the battalion's position.

Foreseeing these possibilities, the battalion commander ordered Company K to take up a defensive position along the main ridge (K-2). Company K selected a position (B) on the lip of a saddle, and approximately four hundred fifty (450) yards east of the apex (A).

At approximately 1400 the Japanese launched an attack on the Provisional Battalion's flanks, and by 1700 the battalion had been forced to withdraw from the ridge (K-1), and take up positions along the ridge (K-2) 500 yards to the east.

On 20 July, the advance CP. 11th Infantry (P.A.) moved to the (35,36) A-6

(12).
baryang area, accompanied by the 1st BN., 14th Infantry (60th and 61st BNs). which had arrived in Buan on the afternoon of 26 July.

The two companies of the 14th Infantry (P.I.) were placed in position on the ridge (A-5), south of, and adjoining, company K which was deployed along the main ridge (A-3), extending from point (50) eastward. From this position along the ridge (A-5), which was approximately 300 yards east of the Provisional Battalion's position (B-4), the two companies of the 14th Infantry (P.I.) could protect the flanks of the Provisional Battalion (P.I.) and by direct overhead fire support that Battalion's attempts to regain their former position (B-3). (37)

The enemy held the key to baryang—the apex (A). This position had to be seized before the town could be assaulted again with any success. (38)

From the position (B) that Company K occupied to the Japanese held apex (A) was approximately 120 yards between these two positions, the Japanese had occupied a cove position (C) on the opposite side of the saddle and facing Company K. The distance across the saddle was approximately 200 yards, and the depth of the cove was about 125 feet. The side of the saddle leading up to the Japanese position was at an angle of slope of 65 degrees. The Japanese could enter their cove position through a gully from the rear. The only approach for attacking the cave position was from the front facing Company K, as it was protected on both sides by a sheer drop of several hundred feet. Though the position of Company K was barren and rocky, the cove in the rocks afforded some concealment for the men who were deployed in depth, with not more than six men abreast and shoulder to shoulder. This should give some indication as to the narrowness of the ridge, and the terrible position that it afforded. (39)

At 1700, 29th July, elements of Company K, covered by fire directed at the cave entrance, descended to the bottom of the saddle and begun the ascent to the Japanese cave position (C). (See Map B) The men were able to get within 50 ft. of the position when they were forced to withdraw because of the inaccessibility and the Japanese rolled down upon them. (37) A-1 P.1071 (30) A-2, P.105; (39) A-6

(10)
Throughout the night the Company attacked the cave by utilizing the ladders in attempts to scale the vertical cliffs on the Flanks and rear. The enemy in the cave and along the ridge between the cave (C) and the Apex (A) were able to repel all attempts. The following morning several bodies of men of Company K were visible hanging on the cliffs below the ridge. 

At 1100, 30 July, Company H, 116th Infantry relieved Company K, and continued the task of trying to reduce the cave position (C). 

On 31 July the 3rd Battalion (Co. K and the Platoons of Co. L) (F.A.) arrived in Janikau from Aitutaki. Company "C", 116th Infantry (F.A.), had also arrived from the lagoon, leaving Co. "H", 116th Infantry (F.A.) with the mission of securing the supply routes and the caves at the Flank and rear. Leaving Co. "H" was had received severe casualties in the island fighting, in addition to the protection of the installations in that area from any movement of the Japanese from Aitutaki and Atokito, the remainder of the 3rd Battalion and Company "O", 116th Infantry (F.A.) moved to Janikau on 1 August.

On 1 August a reorganization of the battalions was effected. Company K and the two Platoons of Company L moved to the 3rd Battalion. The Provisional Battalion (F.A.) was dissolved. Replacement and Casualty Company C was attached to the 3rd Battalion 116th Infantry (F.A.); Replacement and Casualty Company 2 was completely dissolved and its personnel used to replace casualties in the other companies; and the Combat Company reverted to regimental control (L).

This reorganization having been completed the units within the Janikau area were disposed as follows (see Overlay 32) (L):

1. 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry (-Co. D) (F.A.), with 2/6 Company 
   A attached:
   a. Company A along the main ridge (K-3) facing the Japanese cave position (C).
   b. Company A and Company C adjacent to Company B extending perpendicular down the ridge (K-3).
   c. 2/6 Company C along the ridge (K-4).

(L) K-1, L-10; and K-5; (L) K-2, P.13; (W) A-6

(17)
2. 3rd Battalion, 11th Infantry (P.A.):
   a. Company K on same ridge (A-5), and south of Lt. Sn., 11th Inf.
   b. Company L along the ridge (A-6) 500 yds. east of the last Lt. Sn., 11th Inf.
   c. Company I providing security for the Air Reception Base(c).
3. Contact Company providing local security for the regimental C.O. at mile, minus the mortar Platoons that was put in general support of the two battalions.

Casualties were beginning to mount, and the hand carry to Bataan Grande from where they could be evacuated to a hospital was long and arduous, often proving fatal to the wounded. It would take from two to four days for the natives to carry a wounded man in a hammock this distance. On 30 July the Commanding Officer, 14th District Hospital Company (P.A.), one of the Companies organized by the C.O., 11th Infantry (P.A.), that was located in the vicinity of Tenga, Cagayan, was ordered by the C.O. 11th Infantry (P.A.) to organize a portable medical unit to include two surgeons and two nurses, and send it to Bataan without delay. This hospital unit arrived in Bataan 2 August. The seriously wounded were evacuated to this hospital facility for surgery. The less serious wounded, having received initial treatment by the regimental or battalion surgeons, were evacuated to Bataan Grande via the hospital.  

On or about 31 July several hundred natives were put to work clearing an area of heavy grass and boulders along the main ridge (A-3) about 1200 yds. east of the apex(a) for an air drop zone (k). Two air drops had been received previously at Bataan, but the supplies still had to be carried to Laoyao, which was an all day hike. The location of this drop zone was far from ideal, but it was the only spot within the vicinity that had the semblance of being flat. It was about 150 ft. long and the widest place was not more than 30 ft. On 2 August, with the weather having cleared, the first drop was made on this reception area.
base. It was not too successful. Several paratroopers with ammunition crashed into the enemy territory south of the river, and only of the boxes of 10 in 2 nations and were free dropped fell several hundred additional feet into the gage north of the base and were destroyed.

All the activity along the main ridge (6) was clearly visible to the Japanese posts of the river, and to some extent for a few paratroopers in the river, the enemy had not moved much further from that direction. On 2 August the enemy three sorties of ground company had been placed in position along the same ridge (6). Thus, in addition to the air reception base, apparently was a little too much for the enemy to watch without taking some action. During the night 2-3 August the enemy made his first attempt to reach those installations, but was repelled. (4)

On 3 August an air strike was set up for dropping rounds on the Japanese cave position (7). This air strike was to be followed by company B assaulting the position. This had been attempted on two previous occasions but without success. Though we again hit the cave position, before it could be suppressed, the Japanese who had apparently withdrawn to the rear were able to recapture the position before our troops could reach it. Before the enemy was dropped our men would have to withdraw from their positions (8) for safety reasons, which made considerable the distance they would have to advance to reach the cave.

The strike on 2 August was a success, and before the Japanese could recapture their position (6) Company B had moved in. The Company immediately begun its advance toward the apex (A), but even within 150 yards (8) of the position (A) they were placed under heavy fire from the approaches of that position. (15)

From the afternoon of 2 August the 1st Battalion was unable to advance. The ridge at this point was wide enough for only two men to lay abeam, and maneuver was impossible because of the vertical sides to the flanks. The Japanese took vigorous to drive us out of the last remaining E.M. from their newly gained position but without success. During this period the enemy intensified his efforts to flank (14,15) A-6
our position from the south.

From 20 July, the day the attack on the enemy cave position (K) began, it had been necessary to relieve the units frequently along the main ridge line (K-1). The nights were bitterly cold and rainy and the heat during the clear days created almost intolerable conditions along the barren ridge. The men not having any containers, water had to be carried to them in their ammunition casings. During this period the men were lucky if they received two boxes of K rations per day. This ration was supplemented from time to time with rice that ration parties were able to procure in nearby villages. The men used their helmets for cooking as they possessed no cooking equipment. Notwithstanding these conditions the men maintained high morale and very few were casualties for other reasons that occurred.

Except for frequent patrol skirmishes and mortars off the enemy's attempts at our rear, a virtual stalemate existed. To remedy this situation another course of action was decided upon. On 3 August the 3rd Battalion was ordered to relieve the 1st Battalion. The 1st battalion would take over the security of the flanks and rear, and the 3rd battalion with A and Company C would be utilized in a new attempt to capture the Apex (A) and Haya (K). (See Overlay 3) (K-6)

Patrols reported having climbed a peak (J), 1000 to 1200 yds. northeast of the Apex (A) from where they could observe the approaches from which the enemy aerial guns were covering the ridge (K-3). Patrols also reported shaya to be free of enemy. With this bit of information it was decided to again move units to Shaya and attempt to hit the Apex (A) from the north and east.

The CO, 3rd Battalion was ordered to send Company A and Company K, both composed of Negroes, to Shaya. With Company K protecting the flank and rear of Company A, the latter company would attack the Apex (A) by moving southeast along the ridge (K-2). The patrol from combat Company B had scaled the peak overlooking the Apex (A) and was ordered to return to the vantage point (K) with a (K-6) A-3, P-106
machine gun, sufficient ammunitions, and an M5A 100 with which to maintain contact with C.O., I Company. Company I supported by this machine gun fire would attack the Apex(A) from the east, from positions on ridge (ii-4), 1/4 Company C supported by fires from Companies A and C, 11th Infantry (P.I.) from ridge (ii-2), would attack the Japanese position along (ii-1). (i-7)

During 6 August the units were reorganized for the attack that was set for 7 August. An air strike had been requested to plaster the Apex(A) with napalm. Company K and Company L being loaded down with ammunition moved over the precipitous ridges to Chaya. At approximately 0630, 7 August the attack jumped off. Company K reported 25 machine guns firing first along the ridge (ii-1). The Apex(A) was pouring machine gun fire along the ridge (ii-1) to the east, but since the machine gun fire from point (iii) began registering on the approach of the Apex(A), Company L found that they could advance. A/C Company C reported to be making slow progress toward the Japanese ridge position (ii-1). Things as a whole were not going too badly considering the stalemate that had existed. The two companies were advancing, though slowly. The morning had started off rather slowly and it was doubtful whether our air request would materialize.

About 1000, the weather having cleared, the 1/5 Marine plane that directed the artillery moved in followed closely by F-5B fighters with napalm. At this time the companies were holding their own but not making much progress. It looked as though the companies would have to be pulled back to permit the dropping of the napalm. As this was about to be done the C.O., Company I raised requesting that the strike be held off as he was going to assault the Apex(A). At approximately 1020 men of Co. I manned the position with handgrenades, and seized the well-prepared Apex(A), killing seven (?) Japanese in the cave, and fourteen (14) more who were attempting to escape. A total of 25 recently dug graves were discovered near the Apex(A). By 1100 Company K made a junction with Company I at the Apex(A). Once Company I had seized (i-7) II-3 P. 21 and A-6
the apex, the C.O. directed fire down the Japanese held ridges (P-1) to the south. At about 1645 the C.O., 1/C company C requested that Company I withdraw their lines as we was moving onto the ridge. By 1800 the ridge that the Provisional Battalion (P.B.) had been driven from on 27 July was recaptured by Company C. The Japanese along the ridge apparently realized that the ridge was no longer defensible with their troops having been driven from the apex, withdrew to the south and southeast. At this point the Japanese thought the enemy was not seen hastily withdrawing to the south toward Jimbut and to the southeast.

Leaving a security detachment at the apex, the 3rd battalion with the 1/C company C began their advance on Koga no town, meeting very little resistance. By 1900 elements of the 3rd battalion had entered the town. By 1900 the stragglers in the vicinity of the town had been cleaned up and the regimental C.O. was moving into the municipal building.

On 3 August, with Company L, 11th infantry and Company A, 11th infantry advance from Abe and Koyinburg, and Company A left to secure the town until relieved by units of the 6th infantry division, the remainder of the force began its advance to Hakone. At 0000 Company A made junction with elements of the 1st infantry (40) near Higashimura. At 0000 after a 17 kilometer drive, the regimental commander and leading elements of the 3rd battalion arrived in Hakone. (3)

Analysis and Situation

The Japanese mission was successfully completed on 3 August 1945 when the area was completely cleared of Japanese and the 6th infantry (40) made a junction with the 6th division at Hakone.

During this operation over 300 Japanese were killed in the Japanese area and a large and well-organized rear support region was captured. The losses to our forces were approximately 50 killed and 300 wounded. (12)

One of the most serious handicaps of this operation was the lack of capable leaders.

(18) A-6; and A-33 (12) A-2, P-19

(22)
If the U.C.R. (!) had complied with orders, and bypassed the enemy in the Itoman area—(it was later learned that he could have done so) he would have been able to seize the divide west of Bushido a week earlier. He would have caught the enemy by complete surprise at Itoman, and once that town had been secured, the divide, which was held by a small force, would have been most vulnerable from the rear. There would have been no reason for the Japanese to remain in position along the ridge, as the apparent purpose for their being there (to delay our forces advance on Iwojima) would have been defeated.

In addition, had the 13th battalion been prepared to attack Iwojima with the Provisional Battalion a week earlier, again it is believed that the objective would have been taken with little effort. The enemy would have been caught completely off balance and unprepared.

As it was, on 27 July, when the Provisional Battalion attacked the town, the enemy was still preparing his position, and bringing in troops from the direction of Amiato, as well as shifting troops from the ridges to the west to meet our attack from the east.

The failure of the U.C.R. Provisional Battalion to have seized the key Iwojima feature when he initially occupied the ridge leading up to it on 26 July, plus the fact that the U.C.R. Company B failed to exploit his advantage of surprise in assaulting the town on 27 July, are two violations of military principles.

If the U.C.R. Provisional Battalion has seized the apex (1) and Company A had been immediately, the Provisional Battalion would have still been in possession of the key position from which he could have made another attack on the town; and conversely, had Company A continued the assault on the town and captured Iwojima, it is not probable that the enemy would have isolated himself at the Apex (1) without a source of water, food and ammunition.

The Iwojima mission was a difficult operation if undertaken by the best trained and equipped troops. This mission was accomplished by Officers and men, who by all standards, could be considered well-trained.
or equipped, with few exceptions. In my opinion the spirit and determination displayed by these Filipino officers and men under such adverse conditions is deserving of great credit. It is important to note that the entire personnel of this force were Filipinos, with the exception of the regimental commander.

Some of the lessons brought out by this operation that bear mentioning are:

1. That good leadership is essential to success in combat.
2. That an objective and comprehensive training program is essential in preparing troops for combat.
3. An excellent communication system is a vital factor in the success of jungle and mountain operations.
4. Portable hospital units are an almost absolute necessity in mountain operations where evacuation is difficult or impossible.
5. That surprise is a vital element to a successful attack.
6. That calculated risks must often be taken to effect surprise.
7. That surprise by air is almost a "must" in penetrations deep into the mountains where there exist no roads.
8. That the key terrain in the battle area must be seized and secured.
9. That decisive results are only obtained through the offensive.
10. That light and large caliber portable weapons, such as the 7.5m and 7.62m recoilless rifles, could be used to great advantage in jungle and mountain warfare.
11. That terrain is not a barrier to the attack, and conversely, is not alone an obstacle for defense.
12. Once the assault is begun it should not be halted.
13. There are definite and important roles for guerrilla units during war, but to get the maximum benefit from them there should be a far sighted program worked out for their future employment.