

COMBAT REPORT 27TH INFANTRY

CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE JAPANESE

NEW GEORGIA, BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS

REFERENCES: Attached Overlay, Staff Journal, Field Orders, Operational Memorandums, and Intelligence Annex.

JULY 29 - 30:

On July 29, 1943 the Commanding General, 25th Infantry Division directed that the 27th Infantry, with Company B, 65th Engineers, and Company C, 25th Division Medical Battalion attached, be prepared to move by water transportation to New Georgia, British Solomon Islands on 24 hour notice. Specific instructions on the movement were given to the Regimental Commander, Lt. Colonel George E. Bush, by G-3, XIV Corps the afternoon of July 29th and morning of July 30th. The remainder of July 29th and July 30th were spent by the regiment in procuring and checking combat equipment and packing and storing rear echelon equipment.

JULY 31:

The Regiment with attached units moved by truck to Kukun Beach, Lunga, and loaded on to the assigned water transportation consisting of 5 LCI's, 6 APD's, and 1 LST. On the evening of July 31st the regiment sailed for New Georgia, British Solomon Islands.

AUGUST 1:

Before daylight the Regiment arrived at Sasavale Island, of the New Georgia British Solomon Island Group, and by 1400 the last unit was unloaded. The balance of the day was spent in organizing and moving into bivouac areas. During the debarkation, enemy planes bombed and strafed the ships and shore-line, but no casualties or damage to ships resulted. In the afternoon the Regimental Commander, with the Battalion Commanders and Staff Officers made a reconnaissance on New Georgia for a Regimental assembly area and the general situation and mission of the Regiment was outlined.

The situation on New Georgia at this time was as follows:

(1) The XIV Corps comprising the 37th and 43rd Divisions landed on New Georgia Island east of Munda airfield in the early part of July and drove west toward the airfield. The enemy was strong and determined and the operation did not progress as rapidly as had been planned.

On July 24th the Corps reinforced by the 161st Infantry Combat Team, 25th Division, made a coordinated drive on the airfield. This attack had progressed to the outskirts of the Munda airfield and was still in progress at the time the 27th Infantry arrived at New Georgia. The initial mission assigned the Regiment by XIV Corps was to maintain contact with and protect the right flank and rear of the 148th Infantry which was advancing on the extreme right (north) of the Corps line.

AUGUST 2:

In the morning the entire Regiment with attached units moved in assault boats to New Georgia Island landing at Laiana Beach, from which it marched to the Parachute Drop and a cordon defense was established for the night.

Company L established road blocks on Baxter Road between the Parachute Drop and Rd-W.

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A patrol from Regimental Headquarters was sent to the west to contact units of the 148th Infantry.

Security patrols from all battalions were sent to the north, east, and west. The patrols returned before nightfall with a negative report.

The Regimental Supply Dump was established in the vicinity of Laiana Beach. It was planned to supply the Regiment northward to the Parachute Drop then westward along the Baxter Road as it progressed.

AUGUST 3:

Security patrols were again sent to the north, east, and west from the Parachute Drop. Patrols returned before dark with a negative report.

Early in the morning the 3rd Battalion, minus I Company, was ordered to move west along the Baxter Road to Rd-W. From this point a patrol was sent northward along the Bairoko Trail. The patrol encountered an enemy machine gun position and bivouac area.

I Company was ordered to move northward along the trail, establish a trail block just short of the enemy resistance and await further orders. In the meantime Company K occupied for defense Rd-W. I Company maintained road blocks on Baxter Road, and the remainder of the 3rd Battalion remained at the Parachute Drop.

By this time the attack on the airfield was progressing rapidly and it was apparent that the Japanese were attempting to withdraw northward. The 25th Division was assigned the mission of pursuing the enemy.

The Regimental Commander received the Division Plan of Attack (See Unit Staff Journal, FO #1, Hq. 25th Infantry Division) from the Division Commander, and issued the following attack order (See Staff Journal - FO #1 Hq. 27th Infantry) to the Battalion Commanders.

(1) The 1st Battalion was to move the following morning to Rd-W and proceed north along the Bairoko Trail with a mission of relieving the 3rd Battalion, destroying the enemy resistance in that area, locating and securing Mt. Bao, then proceed west and make contact at Mt. Tiwokimbe with other elements of the 27th Infantry, who were to advance north along the Ziata Trail.

(2) The 3rd Battalion, upon being relieved by the 1st Battalion, was to continue west on the Baxter Road to the Ziata Trail, advance northward, seize Ziata Village, and seize and secure Mt. Tiwokimbe, in conjunction with the column moving north on the Bairoko Trail.

(3) The 2nd Battalion was to remain at the Parachute Drop temporarily, make local patrols in all directions and protect the right flank and rear of the Regiment. The mission of the Regiment was to destroy all enemy resistance between Piru Plantation and Sunday Inlet.

(4) The 89th Field Artillery Battalion was attached to the Regiment as direct support. The 27th Infantry Combat Team now consisted of the 27th Infantry, Company B, 65th Engineers, 89th Field Artillery Battalion, and Company C, 25th Medical Battalion.

(For future reference, it should be noted that the plan of attack was based on a map published by a Marine Reconnaissance Unit showing the locations of Mt. Bao, Mt. Tiwokimbe, the Bairoko Trail, and the Ziata Trail. This information proved to be very inaccurate and the plan of operation was modified at a later date.)

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AUGUST 4:

At 0800 Company I drove north from RJ-W along the Bairoko Trail, contacted the Japanese, and in attempting to locate their flanks soon committed the entire company. The Japs were defending the high ground, and were employing the fires of mutually supporting machine guns both light and heavy from pillboxes. (25 pillboxes and 40 holes were counted after the resistance had been overcome.) During the fierce fighting that ensued, in which Company I lost 4 men killed and 11 wounded, the flanks of the enemy were located, but due to early commitment no reserves were available to envelop the enemy's flanks. The company was ordered to make a holding attack until relieved by the 1st Battalion.

At 0830 the 1st Battalion completed the move to RJ-W, and reconnaissance was made by the Battalion Commander and orders issued to relieve Company I and continue the attack on the enemy positions. With supporting fires from heavy machine guns and one 7mm AT gun firing from the south of the enemy pocket, the 1st Battalion attacked enveloping the Nips left flank. Due to the well entrenched machine gun positions and superior fire power, the Battalion was unable to penetrate enemy positions. By nightfall the Battalion had surrounded the enemy strong point on the south, east, and west.

Company H and Company G were given the mission of protecting the supply route from RJ-W to the 1st Battalion positions 500 yards to the north on the Bairoko Trail.

At 1000 Company K followed northward along the Bairoko Trail, then moved due west cross-country at a point just south of the Japanese strong point in an attempt to locate and establish a block on the Zista Trail to prevent the use of this route by the enemy evacuating from the Iunda area. The company advanced to the west for a distance of 500 yards where it encountered a large enemy bivouac. After continuous fighting for several hours in an attempt to bypass the resistance it was realized that the company would be unable to reach the objective that day and, accordingly, was ordered to return to RJ-W.

At 1300 Company L was relieved from its road block by Company G and was ordered to move to RJ-J thence northward along the Zista Trail for a distance of 800 yards and establish a block on the trail. At 1630 Company L encountered strong enemy resistance along the trail 200 yards north of RJ-J, and because of the time of the day was unable to attack further, and dug in for the night.

Regimental CP moved up to RJ-W. Headquarters Company and Anti-Tank Company, established a perimeter defense on RJ-W.

AUGUST 5:

At 0630 with supporting fires of 37mm AT gun and heavy machine gun, Company C enveloped the right flank of the Japanese pocket. The company encountered heavy mortar, and automatic fire in this attack but pushed forward until contact was made with Company A on the north of the enemy positions at 1500. A block was finally established on the trail north of the enemy pocket preventing a withdrawal over that route. Mortars were not employed because of the density of the jungle and the difficulty of clearing. Although our supporting artillery had not yet gotten into position, it could not have been safely employed in this attack because of the close proximity of our own forces to the enemy on all sides.

At 1000 the entire 3rd Battalion assembled at RJ-J. The Battalion was directed by the Regimental Commander to attack and seize Twin Hills immediately. At 1215 the attack got underway with 81mm mortars in support from RJ-J

and one company in reserve. Having determined the enemy's resistance from Company I's action the previous day, the Battalion employed a double envelopment of the enemy positions taking the Japanese by complete surprise and after furious fighting the objective was gained at 1600. 24 enemy were known to be killed with a loss of 2 killed and 19 wounded of our own forces. Much booty including rifles, clothing, medical and radio equipment was left behind by the enemy in an elaborate bivouac estimated to accommodate 1000 men.

At 0800 the 2nd Battalion, less G Company, was relieved at the Parachute Drop by the Reconnaissance Troop of the 37th Division, and was ordered to proceed to a bivouac 400 yards west of RJ-W on Baxter Road and stay in readiness to assist either the 1st or 3rd Battalions. Company H was held at RJ-W and assigned the mission of protecting the supply routes of the 1st and 2nd Battalions.

The 89th Field Artillery having gotten into firing positions placed intermittent artillery fire to the north of the 1st Battalion's positions throughout the night of August 5-6.

AUGUST 6:

The Division Commander ordered the Regimental Commander to bypass the enemy pocket north of RJ-W and to proceed on to Mt. Bao the following morning. Accordingly plans were made to have A and C Companies bypass the pocket and continue on with the mission of the 1st Battalion. Headquarters, B, D, and Anti-Tank Company, which was attached to the 1st Battalion, were ordered to remain in place and reduce the strong point.

A patrol from the Regimental Reconnaissance Platoon with native scouts reconnoitered the Bairoko Trail to RJ-R where one Nip was observed in a large bivouac. Patrol returned at 1600.

Early in the morning the 3rd Battalion after securing the saddle in between the Twin Hills, was ordered to continue the advance toward Zista. Company L advanced generally northwest following the Zista Trail for 600 yards and established a block on the trail without opposition.

Lt. Colonel Benjamin Evans assumed command of the 2nd Battalion.

The Division Commander directed the 89th Field Artillery Battalion to support the column advancing on Zista and the 140th Field Artillery Battalion, 43rd Division to support the column advancing on the Bairoko Trail.

AUGUST 7:

At 0700 A and C Companies moved north along the Bairoko Trail 2000 yards to RJ-R passing through a large enemy bivouac. From this point trails led to the west and north. Security patrols were sent in every direction but encountered no resistance.

At 1300 mortar and 75mm guns from the Cannon Company fired a concentration on enemy positions north of Hill W. No enemy fire was returned and the Jap positions were immediately assaulted from the enemy's right flank and secured. The remainder of the Japanese had evacuated the previous night. Many rifles, machine guns, bayonets, landmines and large quantities of small arms ammunition were captured. Engineers immediately began demolition of the pillboxes. At 1530 the remainder of the 1st Battalion with Anti-Tank Company attached rejoined the leading elements of the Battalion at RJ-R, where the Battalion bivouaced for the night.

A patrol from the Regimental Reconnaissance Platoon reconnoitered the trail north of RJ-I for a distance of 1000 yards, encountered several Japanese, a large bivouac area, and definitely determined the trail as being the Bairoko Trail.

Company G and H rejoined the 2nd Battalion, and the Battalion marched west on the Baxter Trail to RJ-J, thence north to the enemy bivouac area between Twin Hills where the Battalion minus G Company bivouaced in the area occupied by the 3rd Battalion the previous night. Company G having been attached to the 3rd Battalion, continued north on the trail with that Battalion. The Regimental Commander ordered the 2nd Battalion to pass through the 3rd Battalion the following morning and continue the advance to Zieta.

AUGUST 8:

At 0600 a patrol from the 1st Battalion following southwest along a trail from RJ-I contacted other elements of the Regiment near Twin Hills on the Zieta Trail.

A patrol from the 1st Battalion followed the Bairoko Trail to the north and at 1130 had moved a distance of 3000 yards, passed through two large enemy bivouacs and reached a high ridge but had encountered no resistance. At 1600 the patrol was joined by the remainder of the 1st Battalion with the Anti-Tank Company attached.

At 1300, Company G having passed through the advance positions of the 3rd Battalion was rejoined by the remainder of the 2nd Battalion. The 2nd Battalion continued the advance without opposition for a distance of 600 yards. At 1430 the leading elements of the Battalion came under intense automatic fire from the front while entering a deep ravine flanked on both sides by precipitous ridges paralleling the trail. The leading company deployed on each side of the trail but was unable to progress more than 30 or 40 yards. An envelopment of the enemy's right flank on the west ridge was undertaken. The enveloping company reached the top of the ridge but were stopped by automatic fire. A patrol succeeded in skirting what appeared to be the enemy's left flank but after advancing 150 yards came under cross fire from draws to its left and right. From all reports, it became evident that the resistance was disposed in depth along a ridge to the right front of the leading company. At 1700 the attack was discontinued and all around defense prepared for the night.

The Regimental CP was moved in a draw just north of Twin Hills.

The Cannon Company was attached as carrying parties to the 2nd and 3rd Battalions.

AUGUST 9:

At 0730, the 1st Battalion continued to advance along the Bairoko Trail until they reached the Bairoko River where the Battalion bivouaced for the night. From here a patrol led by the Battalion Commander moved 1500 yards north on the trail and contacted elements of the First Marine Raider Regiment at the junction of the E-W, N-S Trails. The Battalion Commander received maps and was shown dispositions of friendly forces in the Bairoko area from Colonel Liversedge, the Commanding Officer of the 1st Marine Raider Regiment and all American Forces in that area. The patrol then returned to the Battalion and notified the Regimental Commander by radio of their situation and location.

At 1730, Commanding Officer, 161st Infantry, notified the Battalion Commander that his Battalion was attached to the 161st Infantry as per radio message from Commanding General, 25th Infantry Division. (See Staff Journal Oper Memo #24.) It should be noted that the original plan of the Regimental

Commander could not possibly be carried out because of the misinformation as to the location of Mt. Bao and trails leading to Mt. Tiokianaba. (Mt. Bao was found to be much further north and east than reported.) The Regimental Commander could no longer control the 1st Battalion nor use it to influence the situation of the remainder of the Regiment on the Zieta Trail, and the Battalion was therefore released from his control. (The History of the 1st Battalion in the Bairoko area follows at the end of the New Georgia Campaign report.)

At 0930 the 2nd Battalion attacked attempting to envelop the enemy's left flank, but met with only limited success. An advance was made of 150 yards. The top of the ridge east of the trail was gained by Company E, but the company was unable to gain complete control of the high ground. The Regimental Commander then ordered the 2nd Battalion, minus Company E, which was attached to the 3rd Battalion, to make a wide envelopment of the enemy's right flank and attempt to bypass and get in rear of the enemy resistance. Company E was withdrawn to the line of departure in order that the artillery fire could be placed on the enemy positions in preparation for a coordinated attack by the 2nd and 3rd Battalions. As it was impossible to observe artillery fire from any location on this terrain, it was necessary to adjust all fire by sound. During this firing, unfortunately, a defective round fell short and exploded in the Company E CP area killing 6 non-commissioned officers and wounding 6 enlisted men. Because the artillery adjustment was not completed until 1530, it was decided that the 3rd Battalion with Company E attached would attack the following morning. The 3rd Battalion then moved up and occupied the two precipitous hills on each side of the trail.

In the meantime the 2nd Battalion, marching on a compass course to the west then north, started its enveloping maneuver at 1300. At 1430 the Battalion encountered considerable rifle and machine gun fire from a line of pillboxes on the top of a ridge perpendicular to their front. In the fight that followed, two pillboxes were destroyed, several machine guns knocked out and considerable enemy killed. Fire from other machine guns from the left and higher up on the ridge prevented a complete break through of the enemy line, and as it was nearly dark the Battalion withdrew 20 yards and without digging in set up a defense for the night. Throughout the night there was considerable chopping and digging in the enemy lines.

AUGUST 10:

The 2nd Battalion was ordered to withdraw two to three hundred yards and throughout the day the artillery fired numerous concentrations on the enemy strong point.

The 3rd Battalion with E Company attached was ordered to make an attack on the enemy's left flank. At 0900 the assaulting companies moved to the line of departure and by 1300 they had reached the top of a narrow ridge held by the enemy. The attack jumped off at 1400, had progressed but a short distance when strong enemy opposition was encountered consisting of automatic and rifle fire and grenades from well concealed and well camouflaged positions. Stiff fighting followed but our lines were unable to advance any appreciable distance due to the strong defense positions of the Japanese. At 1700 the order was given to dig in for the night and a cordon defense was established.

The Regimental Commander requested that tanks be attached to the Regiment.

The 3rd Battalion of the 148th Infantry, part of the Liversedge force in the Bairoko area, was reported to have occupied Mt. Tiokianaba unopposed.

In the advance north along the Zieta Trail the Regimental CP followed closely in rear of the attacking echelons.

AUGUST 11:

At 0730 following a 30 minute artillery preparation the 2nd Battalion again pushed forward swinging further to the left in an attempt to envelope the resistance encountered the previous day. After advancing 300 yards the leading elements of the Battalion suddenly met a heavy grenade barrage followed immediately by rifle and machine gun fire at close range from well prepared positions. No sooner had the attack started when the Japanese launched a counter attack against the right flank of the Battalion. The attack was repulsed. Throughout the remainder of the morning and most of the afternoon the 2nd Battalion repeatedly attacked the Nips positions on the commanding ground without effecting a breakthrough and with numerous casualties being inflicted on both sides. The Battalion dug in on the ground they had taken. Surprisingly, a relatively quiet night was spent with the two front lines only a few feet apart.

At 1100 the 3rd Battalion with Company E attached extended their lines further to the right and preparation was made for an attack. At 1300 the attack was launched west and north towards Zieta Trail. Using smoke grenades and intense rifle and machine gun fire combined with aggressive movement, the Japanese were pushed back and several machine gun emplacements destroyed. About this time the tanks arrived and it was decided to coordinate the attack with the tanks spearheading the assault. Because of the marshy terrain it became evident that the tanks could not be employed and because of oncoming darkness the initial success could not be followed up.

AUGUST 12:

At dawn, the Regimental Commander ordered both the 2nd and 3rd Battalions to pull back several hundred yards in order that artillery could be placed on the Japanese positions. In order to take advantage of the artillery fire which continued intensely throughout the morning a coordinated attack of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions was ordered with the artillery lifting only when the safety of the attack echelons made such action necessary. The attack got under way at 1000 preceded by two tanks. Upon reaching the area of previous resistance it was found that the enemy had evacuated and the Regimental Commander ordered an immediate pursuit by the 3rd Battalion across the Zieta River with the 2nd Battalion in reserve maintaining contact with the 3rd Battalion.

The attack commenced at 1300 across the Zieta River beyond which the tanks could not pass. By 1600 the forward elements of the Battalion had reached a point approximately 1000 yards south of Zieta Village. The Battalion encountered an enemy outpost withdrawing to the north and heard chopping and digging. Believing that the enemy thus located was probably the same group that had been opposing the Regiment all the way from RJ-J, and that they were digging in for further delaying action an immediate attack was ordered. The Battalion quickly encountered machine guns, grenades, and sniper fire. The lateness of the day precluded the further development of the Nip positions and orders were given to dig in for the night.

Elements of the 3rd Battalion, 148th Infantry advancing on Zieta from the north reported that they had reached a point 1400 yards north of Zieta.

Colonel Douglas Sugg, absent sick, returned and assumed command of the 27th Infantry.

At 1800 a patrol from the Regimental Reconnaissance Platoon with native scouts returned after having made a reconnaissance of Piru Plantation. The patrol left the Regimental CP at 0800, 10 August, skirted to the east of the resistance at Zieta, made contact with the 3rd Battalion of the 148th Infantry on Mt. Tiokianba August 11th, then proceeded west to Piru Plantation, making a reconnaissance of the plantation the night of August 11-12. The patrol reported a mangrove swamp 3000 yards wide between Mt. Tiokianba and

the plantation, and continuous barge activity in the Hathorn Sound on the night of August 11-12. The patrol was challenged and chased by two small groups of enemy and were unable to make a complete reconnaissance of the plantation and determine the exact number of enemy or extent of his activity. The patrol returned to the Regiment by way of Mt. Tiokianba where contact was made with the 161st Infantry who had replaced the 3rd Battalion of the 148th Infantry on August 11th.

AUGUST 13:

On the Zieta Trail the attack was held up until artillery could be placed on the enemy positions. The 3rd Battalion withdrew approximately 150 yards. Registration, sensing completely by sound, was begun at 1010 and completed at 1100, at which time a 20 minute preparation was fired. The leading elements of the Battalion moved as closely as possible to the artillery fire during the closing minutes and the attack was started at 1120. It was discovered that Nip snipers had moved in following our withdrawal for artillery fire. The Battalion quickly fought its way up the line of departure and progressed a short distance beyond the advance of the previous day. The leading companies were pinned to the ground by the superior fire power of mutually supporting machine guns as well as intense sniper and grenade fire, and the dense jungle made observation practically nil. Any attempt of riflemen to work their way forward was met by a hail of automatic fire. The Battalion attempted enveloping both of the enemy's flanks. On the Japanese right flank the same type of resistance was encountered and on their left flank the enveloping unit was forced to make too wide an envelopment because of a swamp and no contact was made with the enemy. Casualties throughout the day were heavy.

The 2nd Battalion, less E Company, which was attached to the 3rd Battalion, remained in reserve furnishing flank protection for the 3rd Battalion August 13, 14, and 15th.

A patrol from H Company located and placed a block across the enemy's supply and evacuation route leading from Zieta Village west to the sea. During the night August 13-14, the patrol killed all members of a 7-man carrying party.

AUGUST 14:

The 3rd Battalion resumed the attack at 1730. The fire was even more intense than the previous day, and the Battalion was still unable to advance. A company was again sent around the enemy's left flank but as on the day before was forced to make too wide a sweep because of the swamp and did not locate the Nips left flank.

At 1400 81mm mortar positions had been cleared in the jungle and fire was adjusted by sound and walked in to the minimum range for safety of troops. With the Battalion reinforced by more automatic fire and with the mortars in support, another attempt to move forward was made with the same results as before.

A bridge had been constructed across the Zieta River by Company C, 65th Engineers, who had been following and maintaining the supply lines of the Regiment all the way from RJ-J.

At 1500 four light Marine tanks which had been requested by the Regimental Commander arrived at the 3rd Battalion. The tanks were guided to the front and passed through the attacking riflemen. One tank immediately became blinded and withdrew. The other tanks moved forward in line closely followed by the Infantry. The tanks firing both 37mm guns and machine guns drew the fire of the entire Jap lines. Several pillboxes were destroyed during this operation yet no appreciable slackening of enemy fire could be noted.

AUGUST 15:

In the meantime, on the block established by Company H west of 21st Avenue was maintained. On the night of August 14-15, an estimated 200 enemy soldiers were seen to move from the block to the east. The Japanese force was undoubtedly the same group that had been fighting, delaying action along the 21st Avenue. At dawn the Japanese force broke camp and moved down the trail directly into the ambush. After the initial surprise attack, the enemy broke off the fight against the block and completely encircled its all-around defenses. At 0800 and one half hours of continuous fighting, the platoon leader, finding that his men had only a few rounds of ammunition and two hand grenades left and not knowing that reinforcements had been sent to his assistance, succeeded in breaking through the enemy line and returning to the Regiment. At a cost of two men killed and seven wounded this platoon killed 60 Japanese (actual count at a later date) and wounded many others.

Company L reinforced by Company K attacked the enemy resistance but darkness prevented the complete annihilation of the enemy force and the attacking units dug in for the night. Throughout the night harassing artillery fire was placed along the trail to the west of the 3rd Battalion lines.

AUGUST 16:

Zista Village having been captured and contact lost with the enemy, the Regimental Commander immediately made plans to proceed with the Regimental mission of clearing the area from Sunday Inlet to Piru Plantation, inclusive. The 3rd Battalion, 148th Infantry, was attached to the Regiment. (See Staff Journal OM #26, Hq. 25th Infantry Division.)

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AUGUST 17:

After receiving oral orders from the Commanding General, 25th Infantry Division (See Staff Journal OM #21, Hq. 27th Infantry Division), the Regimental Commander issued the Regimental plan of operations to the 2nd and 3rd Battalions. (See Staff Journal, OM #1, Hq. 27th Infantry). The 2nd Battalion was to conduct rigorous reconnaissance to the west and northwest with a view to occupying the area of the 2nd Battalion's probable date and denying the use of Diamond Narrows to the enemy. The 3rd Battalion was to follow and maintain contact with the 2nd Battalion and the 27th Infantry. The 27th Infantry was to maintain contact with the 3rd Battalion, 27th Infantry.

AUGUST 18:

A patrol from the Regimental Reconnaissance Platoon with native scouts returned from Sunday Inlet at 1400. The patrol which had left Regiment 0800, August 15th, reconnoitered along the south and west of Sunday Inlet to Hathon Sound. The patrol reported mangrove swamp the entire distance from MW, Tirokiamba to Hathon Sound, but saw no Nips and little signs of them having been to Sunday Inlet.

AUGUST 19:

The Regimental Commander made a personal reconnaissance to Mt. Tirokiamba contacting the 161st Infantry.

AUGUST 20:

Patrols from the 3rd Battalion which travelled west in an attempt to locate a southern route to Piru likewise reported swamp in that area.

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AUGUST 21:

The Regimental Commander issued the Regimental Plans of Operation (See Staff Journal OM #2 Hq. 27th Infantry). The 2nd Battalion, leaving their present location August 21 and followed by the 3rd Battalion, was to follow a trail blazing party through the swamp, arrive in rear of Piru Plantation August 22, bivouac there for the night, and make a surprise assault on the plantation the following morning.

In accordance with the Regimental Commander's instructions an advance party consisting of members of the Regimental Reconnaissance Platoon, trail blazing detail from the 3rd Battalion and a wire detail, left the 3rd Battalion C.P. at 0900 and cut a trail through mangrove swamp (which ranged from knee to hip deep) following an azimuth of 270 degrees. At 1400 the detail arrived 800 yards in rear of the plantation and bivouaced for the night.

Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion backtracked 2000 yards to the south and proceeded west along the marked route bivouacing just to the east of the mangrove swamp.

AUGUST 22:

Throughout the morning an OP was established just in rear of the plantation, security outposts were located to protect the 2nd Battalion advancing through the swamp, and reconnaissance made for a Battalion assembly area.

At 0700 the 2nd Battalion proceeded across the swamp arriving 800 yards in rear of the plantation opposite Cutter Point in the afternoon. A bivouac with all-around defense was prepared for the night. In the afternoon the Battalion Commander with his Company Commanders made a personal reconnaissance in rear of the plantation and preparations were made for securing the plantation the following morning.

The 3rd Battalion followed the 2nd Battalion occupying the old 2nd Battalion bivouac to the east of the swamp.

AUGUST 23:

At 0700 the leading elements of the Battalion entered Piru pushed on to Hathorn Sound. One Company advanced to the north and two Companies advanced south sweeping the entire plantation, but meeting no opposition. The last of the enemy had evacuated the previous day (as evidenced by the report of an OP and dead cattle left behind) leaving food, equipment, and prepared defensive positions.

The Regimental Commander arrived on the plantation just prior to noon and the 3rd Battalion shortly after.

The Regiment had completed an overland movement of 22 miles pursuing the enemy over mountainous jungle and treacherous swamp operating and supplying itself under extremely difficult conditions of terrain and weather. The Regiment which had arrived on New Georgia approximately two-thirds to strength, lost 42 men KIA and 137 WIA (See Intel. Annex for enemy losses).

The Regimental Commander ordered that beach positions be prepared with the 2nd Battalion on the left in the Diamond Narrows area and the 3rd Battalion on the right extending 500 yards north of Cutter Point.

At 0200 the first of three parachute drops of food and ammunition was received.

AUGUST 24:

Early in the morning 25 - 30 Japanese were reported on Mauro Island across from Diamond Narrows. 81mm Mortar and small arms fire was immediately laid on the enemy personnel and positions throughout the day with unobserved results.

At 0730 a combat patrol was sent to Sunday Inlet along the coast, the patrol passed through one enemy bivouac, but encountered no enemy.

AUGUST 25 - SEPTEMBER 10:

On August 25th a Higgins boat bringing supplies to the Regiment received heavy machine gun fire from the southwest bank of Diamond Narrows and turned back.

On August 26th, part of Headquarters Company and one platoon of Cannon Company joined the Regiment across the swamp.

On August 27th the 3rd Battalion, 148th Infantry reverted to the control of the 37th Division (See Staff Journal OM #26, Hq. 25th Infantry Division).

On September 4th the rear CP which had remained at Zieta, the remainder of Headquarters Company, Cannon Company, and Service Company with supplies rejoined the Regiment at Piru Plantation and a system of supplying by water was established.

The period August 25 - September 10 was spent improving beach positions, patrolling to Sunday Inlet, east across the swamp, and the Lulu Channel and Zieta River area by engineer boat. Except for regular nightly bombings from which there were only two casualties, there was no other enemy activity.

On September 10th, the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry, was attached to the 43rd Division at Enogai.

FIRST BATTALION COMBAT REPORTAUGUST 10 TO SEPTEMBER 23AUGUST 10:

At 1500 the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry, bivouaced on the Bairoko River, was notified by radio communication from the Commanding General, 25th Infantry Division that the Battalion was detached from the 161st Infantry and attached to the Liversedge Force which was comprised of the 161st Infantry, 1st Battalion 145th Infantry, 3rd Battalion 148th Infantry, and 1st and 3rd Marine Raider Battalions.

The situation in the Bairoko area at the time the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry arrived in the area was as follows: The 1st Marine Raider Regiment comprising the 1st and 3rd Raider Battalions with the 1st Battalion, 145th Infantry, and 3rd Battalion, 148th Infantry attached had landed at Rice Anchorage early in July, taken Enogai Inlet from the Nips, attacked Bairoko Harbor without artillery support and were repeatedly repulsed suffering severe casualties. On August 10th, the Liversedge force was awaiting for artillery support to arrive, and gathering strength for a coordinated drive against Bairoko Harbor. Bairoko Harbor was the enemy's main supply port for the entire New Georgia area, and an elaborate system of defenses employing artillery and pillboxes had been prepared.

AUGUST 11:

At 0700, after supplies which had been carried from RJ-R were issued, the Battalion moved through a block of the 161st Infantry on the N-S, E-W trails and reached Kelly's Bar at 1700 after a march of 8 miles and relieved the 1st and 4th Marine Raider Battalions and 1st Battalion of the 145th Infantry in that area.

AUGUST 12:

The Battalion was given the mission of patrolling from Kelly's Bar to the north and east of the Bairoko River.

August 12 through August 17, ambush, combat, and reconnaissance patrols patrolled Hills 4 - 5, Bairoko Inlet along the north trail, and to the east of Bairoko Harbor, with contact being made daily with the enemy and a number of them being killed. Contact was also maintained with the 161st Infantry and Marines.

AUGUST 15:

Cargo planes made a parachute drop of supplies to the Battalion of ammunition, food, and medicine. Native bearers were used to carry supplies from Enogai Inlet. The Battalion was instructed to remain in place until adequate supplies could be built up for the next move toward Bairoko.

AUGUST 18 - 19:

The 1st Battalion occupied Hill 4 - 5. The Anti-Tank Company remained in position and continued to carry supplies forward to the Battalion.

AUGUST 20:

Forward observers of the 140th Field Artillery joined the Battalion, and the artillery was preparing to move into position to support the Battalion.

AUGUST 21:

A security patrol reconnoitered the area to the Battalion's left flank. The patrol travelled southwest for 600 yards to the Bairoko River, but made no contact with the enemy and returned at 1600.

AUGUST 22:

The Battalion Commander with a patrol of 30 men made a personal reconnaissance for a route of approach for an attack on Bairoko. The patrol travelled north for 1500 yards to Hill 9 for which there was excellent observation to Bairoko Harbor.

AUGUST 23:

At 0845 a patrol reconnoitered the area to the west of Hill #9 looking for a Nip OP which had been previously reported in that area. Fresh tracks were found in that area but no enemy were to be found.

At 0945 an artillery OP was established on Hill #9 to observe enemy activity in Bairoko Harbor. Large fires had been reported in the harbor the night of August 22nd and it was believed the enemy was burning all supplies and equipment in preparation for a complete evacuation of Bairoko Harbor. Plans were immediately made to attack Bairoko Harbor the following morning.

AUGUST 24:

At 0800 the Battalion left their bivouac, occupied hill #9 in force at 1030 and pushed on to Bairoko Inlet, passing through three large bivouac areas which had recently been evacuated, and arrived at Bairoko Inlet without opposition. From examination of the area and from enemy activity heard the previous night, it was determined the evacuation had taken place the night of August 23-24. Contact was made with the 161st Infantry on the opposite side of the inlet. The Battalion bivouaced at the inlet that night.

AUGUST 25:

At 0700 Colonel Liversedge and the Battalion Commander contacted the 1st Battalion of the 145th Infantry which had occupied the northeastern section of the harbor the previous afternoon. Instructions were given by Colonel Liversedge for the defense of the area Sunday Inlet, - Enogai Inlet. The 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry was given the mission of defending the east side of Bairoko Harbor.

AUGUST 26:

The Battalion set up defensive positions at Bairoko Inlet and salvage was begun on enemy equipment abandoned in that area.

AUGUST 27:

The Battalion was ordered to move to Enogai Inlet to relieve the 1st Marine Raider Regiment and with the 145th Infantry attached, established a defense of that area.

The Battalion had completed an overland movement of 23 miles over mountainous jungle operating and supplying itself under extremely difficult conditions of terrain and weather.

1st Battalion, 27th Infantry, relieved from attached to the 1st Marine Raider Regiment and attached to the 161st Infantry.

SEPTEMBER 15:

1st Battalion, 27th Infantry relieved from attachment to the 161st Infantry and attached to the 43rd Division. (See Staff Journal, OM #31, Hq. 29th Infantry Division.)

From August 27th to September 24th at which time the Battalion reverted to the control of the 27th Infantry Regiment, the 1st Battalion maintained beach defense at Enogai.

COMBAT REPORT 27TH INFANTRY

CAMPAIN AGAINST THE JAPANESE

ARUNDEL, BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS

AND OCCUPATION OF KOLOMBANGARA ISLAND

During the time the 27th Infantry was at Fira Plantation, Arundel Island was patrolled by elements of the 43rd Division. After patrols had crossed the island and the slight resistance had been overcome, Arundel was officially announced as cleared. A few days later, however, patrols encountered enemy strong-points on North Arundel, the main defenses guarding Blackett Strait, the narrow strip of water separating Arundel from Holobanbara.

The entire coast of North Arundel is void of suitable landing beaches, all approaches being dense jungle, mangrove swamps, and coral rock. The typical Solomon Islands rain forest generally covering the entire area.

SEPTEMBER 10:

At 0900 the components of the 27th Infantry at Piru were ordered to prepare to move with combat equipment later in the day. In the afternoon the Regiment (less the 1st Battalion and Anti-Tank Company at Enogai Inlet) boarded three LSTs and proceeded to Bustling Point. For the Arundel operation the 27th Infantry was attached to the 43rd Division. The Commanding Officer, 27th Infantry, was placed in command of all units on North Arundel. Attached to the 27th Infantry were units of the 169th and 172nd Infantry.

The bulk of the Japanese forces were concentrated on Sagelkarasa Island and the commanding terrain of Bomboe Peninsula immediately south of Sagelkarasa. The plan of the Regimental General was strategically bold and simple. The 2nd Battalion was to attack swiftly to clear the enemy on Bomboe Peninsula into the supposed block held by the 1st Battalion. By the time the 2nd Battalion had reached the eastern extremity of Bomboe Lagoon, the 1st Battalion, having been contacted the block our forces would have cleared the terrain south of Sagelkarasa Island. The 2nd Battalion groups could then be destroyed separately, the Bomboe force being caught between two pincers, and Sagelkarasa being cleared by the 3rd Battalion.

SEPTEMBER 11:

The 2nd Battalion proceeded by small personnel craft from Bustling Point to the landing point at East Bomboe. The defense block of East Bomboe, maintained by a company of the 169th Infantry, was passed through by two companies, and the high terrain to the east of the landing was secured in preparation for the attack the following morning.

The Regimental Command Post was established at Bomboe Village.

SEPTEMBER 12:

The attack to the east was launched by the 2nd Battalion, two companies abreast, at 0730, left and right flanks secured by the north and south shores of the narrow peninsula. By 1030 the assault companies had passed through the dense woods around many vivacious area of approximately 200 troops some 1300 yards east of the beachhead. The resistance was met in the vicinity of the 62 grid line but was quickly overcome. From this point the assault vivacious area was encountered, and from this point on delaying forces of at least one company of riflemen were met successively at regular intervals of two to three hundred yards. The assault was completely over-comes as they were met, by 1600 the assault had advanced 3000 yards.

The morning of the 12th the 3rd Battalion followed the route of the 2nd Battalion to East Bombee. At 1430 one company placed a block at each end of a north - south trail running through the bivouac area the 2nd Battalion had passed near the 62 grid line.

SEPTEMBER 13:

At 0730 the attack of the 2nd Battalion was resumed with resistance encountered 350 yards to the east. The advance was slowly continued until the left assault company was pinned down by intense heavy and light machine gun and rifle fire. The right company, having met only slight resistance, attempted to flank the enemy, but were stopped by intense fire after reaching the crest of high ground to the northeast. The Battalion suffered eight casualties during the day.

The 3rd Battalion, assigned the mission of clearing Sasekarakas, moved to the area south of Stepping Stone Island, the best approach to the objective. After a reconnaissance from the northern shore of the island, the company was ordered the neck-high strait. The company was to make the crossing to Stepping Stone Island. The island was clear, to proceed to Sasekarakas, driving through to the main island. The landing on the opposition met by the leading company, another was to drive across the beach. The landing was made by the lead of the leading company. A platoon of 4.2" chemical mortars attached to the 3rd Battalion supporting concentrations in conjunction with the Battalions 81mm mortars.

The current around Stopping Stone was swift and most of the island was a mangrove swamp, however, the crossing was successfully accomplished. Artillery fire from Bastling Point had driven the Nip installations to the western end of the island, and the move of the Battalion was unopposed.

Some infiltrators and one column of Nips approached the western company's lines, but all were killed or driven off.

To protect the left flank of the Regiment the outlying islands west of Sagekarasa were outposted. Before dawn the Regimental Reconnaissance Platoon with twelve men from the 3rd Battalion patrolled the islands, and when they were cleared, the 169th Infantry outposted them. The patrols paddled assault boats under cover of darkness to within 100 yards of the shore and swam the remaining distance with full combat equipment. Islands 4 - 10 were outposted 13 September, and 1 - 3 the 14th.

SEPTEMBER 14:

Repeated attempts on 13 September to contact and definitely determine the location of the 1st Battalion, 172nd Infantry, were unsuccessful. The 2nd Battalion had reached the point supposedly blocked by this Battalion with somewhat further delay than was expected. The block was not in effect, all suffering from fatigue and lack of food. The unit was of only 250 men, all suffering from 50 to 60 degrees and contact the right flank of the 2nd Battalion, pass it and join the 27th Infantry.

During the day and night several fire fights ensued as the opposing forces felt out their fronts and improved their positions.

Shortly after daylight the 3rd Battalion on Sagekarasa engaged in a brisk fire fight with enemy forces from the west who employed light machine guns and grenades.

In the late afternoon the sporadic firing that had been taking place

during the day suddenly increased in intensity as the enemy attempted to work into our lines. Light machine guns and grenades prevented an enemy break-through, although at times the Nips, hidden by the dense jungle growth, advanced to within a few yards of our positions.

At 2115 the OP on Island #1 reported barges approaching the north-west shore of Sagekarasa. During the day, observers on Island #1 had adjusted concentrations on this known enemy barge landing. These concentrations, consisting of light and medium artillery and 4.2" and 81 mm mortar fire, were laid down with unobserved results.

SEPTEMBER 15:

The 1st Battalion and Anti Tank Company were released from their defensive assignment at Enogai Inlet. The Battalion proceeded to Bustling Point, bivouacking here for the night.

During the morning the lines of the 2nd Battalion were strengthened by the composite unit of the 172nd Infantry, and an attack was launched at 1150. The attack met with little success, and the Nips countered, making a small penetration which was quickly thrown back. Casualties were heavy on both sides.

Shortly after daylight the enemy on Sagekarasa attacked along the entire west line. Again the dense jungle growth permitted the enemy to advance unobserved to within a few feet of our positions, but as before, grenades and light machine guns prevented a break-through. 81mm mortars searched parallel to and as close as 35 yards in front of the 3rd Battalion lines. Between mortar rounds intense small arms fire was laid down to prevent the Nips escaping from the impact area of the mortars.

The enemy was obviously reinforcing from Kolombangara by barge at night. The Regimental Commander requested a naval destroyer, corvette, or similar craft to be placed under his control, eliminating normal communication channels and permitting immediate counter action against the reinforcing barge activity. The request was disapproved, and the length of time consumed in requesting naval assistance through normal channels was so great (communication to New Georgia was very poor and slow) that we had to rely solely on our own Infantry and Field Artillery weapons to combat this activity which each night was strengthening the enemy to our front.

SEPTEMBER 16:

The 1st Battalion moved from Bustling Point to east Bomboe and went into position in rear of the right flank of the 2nd Battalion.

Nip positions in front of the 2nd Battalion were heavily shelled, and intermittent automatic and rifle firing continued throughout the day.

At 1630 six light tanks landed at East Bomboe and moved to the rear of the 2nd Battalion, rainfall covering the noise of the tanks. This coupled with the seeming impossibility of either landing or employing tanks on Bomboe Peninsula afforded a complete advantage of surprise.

On Sagekarasa the 3rd Battalion, following an 81 mm mortar preparation, attacked, three companies abreast, to the west. Enemy resistance was determined and intense, and only 200 yards were gained during the day, each foot bitterly contested.

Nip barges were active shortly after dark. The concentrations were laid, and the barges turned east. Direct hits were scored by a 37mm anti Tank gun and two .50 cal. machine guns on the north shore. Those barges not sunk retired to Kolombangara.

SEPTEMBER 17:

The 1st and 2nd Battalions combined for a coordinated attack at 0740 along an azimuth of 60 degrees. The tanks, in waves of three, spearheaded the attack, the second wave protecting the first. The Infantry troops followed closely behind the tanks which moved by bounds. Cannister and HE ammunition was fired by the tanks' 37mm guns at point-blank range. The tanks were controlled by radio from the 2nd Battalion Command Post which also had telephone communication with the front-line company commanders who located many of the enemy machine gun positions. The attack broke through to the sea around noon, pinching off the center of enemy resistance. After reorganization the advance was pushed to the east. Another 350 yards was reached before increased resistance and the approach of nightfall necessitated digging in for the night.

This successful tank-supported attack apparently caught the Nips by surprise. Many freshly killed bodies were found in addition to numerous hastily-covered shallow graves.

Throughout the day mortars and artillery shelled western Sagekarasa.

SEPTEMBER 18:

The 1st Battalion, using two tanks, launched a limited objective attack to improve positions. After a short gain the Nips counterattacked but were driven back with heavy losses, however, both tanks were put out of action; one caught fire, and the other was hit by Anti Tank fire.

The Anti Tank Company was attached to the 3rd Battalion as a rifle company and ordered to advance east along Sagekarasa, and if not opposed, to cross to the western end of the adjoining peninsula and there enplace a block. The move was effected, and the company began to organize the block. Before positions could be dug or fields of fire cleared, the Nips attacked in force. The position became untenable, withering fire being brought down by the enemy, and the company withdrew. The withdrawal could not have been successfully effected had not the 2nd Battalion on Bomboe Peninsula been able to lay heavy flanking fire across the Nip front.

In the afternoon two companies from the 1st Battalion were also attached to the 3rd Battalion. After a preparation of artillery and mortar fire an attack was launched to the west, meeting with little success. Nip light and heavy machine gun fire was intense.

SEPTEMBER 19:

During the morning additional tanks were moved in rear of the 2nd Battalion, bringing the total to eleven. All eleven tanks were employed abreast, the entire line advancing by a series of short bounds. After each short advance the weapons of all tanks thoroughly swept the entire area to their front. The assault companies maintained close physical contact with the tanks at all times. This plan depended on the sweeping preponderance of fire power of the massed tanks to completely overwhelm and demoralize the enemy. The attack was highly successful, overrunning the enemy positions and breaking his will to resist. 450 yards were gained by this attack.

On Sagekarasa the attack to the west was resumed at 0830, preceded by a more intense artillery and mortar preparation. The same resistance was met, but a few Nip positions were reduced by flame throwers and anti tank grenades.

During the night naval guns on Kolombangara heavily shelled Sagekarasa.

and Bomboe Peninsula. This was obviously an attempted diversion of attention from the heavy barge activity heard around the northwestern end of Sagekarasa. Whether the enemy was reinforcing or evacuating was not known. The prepared barge concentrations were laid, sinking at least one barge.

SEPTEMBER 20:

At 0900 the attack on western Sagekarasa was resumed. The western end of the island was reached with very light opposition. The barge activity the night before had been an evacuation.

SEPTEMBER 21:

A coordinated advance to the east was begun at 0830. The units on Bomboe Peninsula kept abreast of the units likewise moving along Sagekarasa Peninsula. After mopping up a few stragglers the Regiment contacted units of the 43rd Division thus reducing the last of enemy resistance on Arundel Island.

In reviewing the action on North Arundel it is well to remember that the 27th Infantry was considerably understrength in officers and men. The Regiment had been in the Solomons area for over eight months and had participated in the general attack on Guadalcanal which drove the Japanese into the sea at Kokumbona as well as the gruelling pursuit of the enemy on New Georgia from Munda to Bairoko and Firi Plantation. In spite of all this, the Regiment, outnumbered at times, completely annihilated or drove off Arundel all of the 13th Japanese Imperial Infantry, "The Pride of South Japan."

From prisoners taken later on Kolombangara it was learned that the 13th Infantry had been given a mission of "holding out to the end" on Arundel. From the period 15 - 18 September the enemy reinforced and evacuated casualties from Sagekarasa each night.

During the Arundel operation at least 600 Japanese, including the Regimental Commander, his successor, and two Battalion Commanders, were killed. In addition to this the entire western end of Sagekarasa is littered with shallow Japanese graves, and for several days bodies of those who had desperately tried to swim to Kolombangara were seen floating near the island and peninsula. Estimate about 400 of the enemy were evacuated by barge to Kolombangara.

OCCUPATION OF KOLOMBANGARA ISLAND

SEPTEMBER 21 - OCTOBER 4:

Following the evacuation of the remainder of the Japanese forces from Arundel Island on September 21st the Regimental Combat Team (89th Field Artillery Battalion attached) now reverted to the control of the Commanding General, 25th Infantry Division, was assigned the mission of defending the north coast of Arundel Island and bombarding with artillery the enemy-held airport of Vila, Kolombangara Island, 1200 yards across Blackett Strait.

On October 2nd, two reconnaissance patrols which had reconnoitered the south coast and the Vila-Hamberi trail respectively, returned having been gone since September 29th and reported that the enemy were evacuating from Kolombangara Island.