

COMBAT REPORT THIRD BATTALION 27TH INFANTRY

CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE JAPANESE

ARUNDEL, BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS

(Period: Sept. 10 - 21, 1943)

A warning order was received by Third Battalion, 27th Infantry, on the morning of September 10, 1943, while the Battalion was on Beach Defense at Pira Plantation, New Georgia, B.S.I. The order stated that the Battalion would embark at Pira on September 11, 1943, and would proceed to Arundel Island, B.S.I., the same date.

The Battalion started embarking operations on the morning of September 11, and had completed loading of troops by 1230. Transportation consisted of two LCT's. Combat equipment only was taken. The Battalion departed Pira at 1300, and continued to Arundel Island. The Battalion was far understrength, consisting of nineteen officers and three hundred forty five EM. The morale of the entire unit was good.

The LCT's arrived at Bustling Point on Arundel at 1515. Troops and equipment were unloaded immediately, and tentative bivouac areas were assigned to units. Upon learning that a limited number of small assault boats were available to the Battalion, the shuttling of troops to Bomboe Peninsula was started at 1600, and by 1730 Companies I, K, and half of Company L had been moved to a point on the Bomboe Peninsula approximately 200 yards east of Bomboe Village. An all-around defense was set up by these units, with the remainder of the Battalion bivouacing at Bustling Point.

Early on the morning of September 12 shuttling operations were resumed, and the Battalion had consolidated on Bomboe Peninsula by 0900.

On this date twelve men were furnished to Regiment to be used in conjunction with several men from Regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon in reconnoitering and seizing the chain of small islands extending west of Sagekarasa Island. These small islands were arbitrarily numbered from #1 to #10, from east to west, starting with the one just west of Sagekarasa. The twelve men referred to above were especially selected scout-swimmers, and plans were made by Regiment to seize several of these numbered islands just before daylight on each of the following two mornings.

At 1430 this same day Company L was ordered to place a block on the Jap trail extending north-south across Bomboe Peninsula in the vicinity of grid line 61. This was accomplished before nightfall, with blocks emplaced on both ends of the trail.

The remainder of the Battalion formed a cordon defense in the general area occupied the previous night by Companies I, K, and L.

The Battalion moved early on September 13, following the route taken by Company L the day before, and reached Company L's block at approximately 1000. The Battalion remained in this area until 1100, at which time it received orders to continue eastward to the vicinity of Stepping Stone Island, a small body of land lying between Bomboe Peninsula and Sagekarasa Island, and situated opposite the center of the latter. This move was completed at about noon and an immediate reconnaissance of Stepping Stone Island was made from the edge of the peninsula. The Battalion had been given the mission of seizing Sagekarasa Island, and Stepping Stone Island appeared to offer the best route of approach.

At this time Company L was ordered attached to the Second Battalion which was in contact with the Japs approximately 1000 yards to the east, and left the Battalion at 1330.

Orders for the attack of Sagekarasa were then issued: Company I, with a section of machine guns from Company M attached, was to wade the narrow channel separating the peninsula from Stepping Stone Island, cross the island, and again by wading was to cross over on to Sagekarasa. They were to drive across Sagekarasa to the northern side and establish a block across and on the southern side of the island, opposite Stepping Stone, to cover the subsequent crossing of the Battalion. Company K, with a section of machine guns from Company M attached, was to follow Company I, and depending on the opposition met by Company I was likewise to drive across to the northern shore, going to the left or west of Company I. Company M was to prepare 81mm mortar positions on the peninsula with the mission of placing fire on any part of the island. The remaining section of Company M's machine guns and Headquarters Company were to remain on the peninsula in the vicinity of the mortar positions pending developments of the attack.

Company M immediately started clearing firing positions. It was necessary to cut a number of large trees in addition to the dense undergrowth before any firing could be done, and work on this was continued until late in the day.

At about this time it was learned that Company B, 82nd Chemical Battalion, had been attached to the Regiment. They likewise started clearing mortar positions close to those being prepared for the 81's.

Company Commanders having issued their orders, the attack by Company I jumped off at 1430. The advance proceeded very slowly, as the channel to Stepping Stone proved to be almost neck-deep and rather swift. The leading scouts felt their way cautiously onto and across Stepping Stone, which was found to be almost entirely mangrove swamp, with the remainder of the company following their route and arriving at 1530. A brief halt was made by the scouts while they scanned the jungle-lined shore of Sagekarasa, and again they moved forward. The channel to Sagekarasa was not as deep as the other had been, and the scouts reached the island without opposition. The advance was pushed steadily and the northern shore was reached at 1630. Company K followed closely behind and going slightly west of Company I also reached the north edge of the island. No opposition was met by either unit of this advance.

Companies I and K immediately consolidated in a cordon defense, forming a small square with Company I facing to the east and south and Company K to the west, the northern flanks resting on the beach which was covered by machine gun fire only. Company I also placed a small block on the southern edge of the island opposite Stepping Stone. (See accompanying overlay.)

Shortly before dark, while the men were digging in, two Japs approached from the east and were fired on by an outpost of Company I. Results of this fire were not observed. At about 2000 two Japs were again seen coming into Company I's positions; both of these were killed. No other activity occurred on this flank during the night.

At about 2230 a machine gunner of Company K, whose gun covered an east-west trail running along the center of the island, observed a column of Japs approaching along the trail from the west. Visibility was good, as the moon was within a day of being full. He held his fire until the leading Jap was within a few feet of his position and then opened up. The first five in the column were killed, with the others scattering to the west. The remainder of the night on this flank was quiet.

OP's which had been established on the northern flanks of both Companies noted extensive barge activity throughout the night in Blackett Straits, which lay between Sagekarasa and Kolombangara Island to the north. This body of water was only 1200 yards wide at its narrowest point, and because of the bright moonlight boats could be seen immediately and they left Kolombangara. Most of this traffic proceeded towards Devil's Island and then cut northward along the eastern shore of Kolombangara. The barges were in column, and often five or six were visible at one time. Some barges were noted moving westward from the vicinity of the mouth of Villa River. Several times during the night a Jap float plane was observed landing and taking off near the southern shore of Kolombangara.

Requests were made for artillery fire to be placed on these targets, but apparently artillery had not registered, and the fire was not received.

Shortly after daylight on September 14 Japs were observed infiltrating from the west towards Company K's line, and a brisk fire fight ensued. Fire was received from several Jap light machine guns, and grenades were thrown towards our line. This fire fight was still in progress at 0600 when the remaining section of machine guns from Company M, the Battalion Aid station and the communication section of Headquarters Company arrived on Sasekarasa.

In order to prevent the Japs from cutting the line of communications between the perimeter defenses on the north and block covering Stepping Stone on the south, the section of machine guns of Company M was placed in this gap. This line was lightly held, but additional troops were not available. Inter-mittent fighting took place throughout the day on the entire western line. The eastern flank was quiet. At 0900 a patrol from Company I moved 300 yards to the east and returned. No enemy was encountered.

At 1330, in order to feel out the enemy strength to the west, a platoon of Company I consisting of an officer and fourteen men was sent along the southern slope of a small ridge running east-west near the middle of the island. About 200 yards west of our line and between the above-mentioned ridge and the southern edge of the island a large Jap bivouac was encountered. The platoon succeeded in surprising the Japs in this bivouac, killed five of them and withdrew safely to our line, the enemy following them as they pulled back.

The small numbered islands forming a chain to the west of Sasekarasa had by this time been secured, with an OP in position on #1 from which observation was possible of the western and northwestern shores of Sasekarasa. It was known from captured maps that a Jap barge landing was located on the Northern shore of Sasekarasa near the western end. Accordingly, the 8mm mortars of M Company and the attached 4.2 mortars registered on the western end of the island and eastward along the northern shore for about 500 yards (See overlay). Arrangements with both mortar units were made so that these barge concentrations could be put down on very short notice in the event the Japs used this barge landing or any other part of the northwestern shore for reinforcing or evacuating. These registrations were completed on the afternoon of September 14. During this afternoon a forward observer from a 155 unit came to Sasekarasa, and 155's were adjusted on the western part of the island.

At about 1800 the sporadic fighting which had been taking place throughout the day on the western flank suddenly increased in intensity as the Japs attempted to work their way into Company K's lines. This attack continued until just before dark, when the enemy ceased his activity. The use of our hand grenades and light machine guns had prevented the Japs from breaking the line, although the denseness of the jungle growth permitted them to approach very close to our positions. Company K's lines were reinforced for the night by five men from Company I; all available Headquarters Company personnel, consisting of wireless and intelligence men, were also placed in the line.

Barge activity in Blackett Straits started soon after dark, following the same routes as on the previous night. At about 2100 three Jap bombers or transports were led on to the Vila air strip on Kolombangara by a float plane, which then immediately flew towards Piru Plantation on New Georgia Island. Anti-aircraft firing was heard at this time from the vicinity of Piru. The float plane later landed off Kolombangara. The bombers referred to above were seen taking off at 2400. Artillery was again called for, but none was received.

At about 2115 OP#1 reported that several small landing boats were seen approaching the northwestern corner of Sasekarasa. The barge concentrations were immediately laid down. OP#1 was unable to determine whether or not these craft were loaded; they later saw several of these boats pulling away from Sasekarasa. Barge activity in Blackett Straits continued throughout the night.

A few minutes after daylight on September 15 the Japs attacked along the entire west line. Their main effort was made along the high ground near the center of the island, which was opposite Company K's left platoon. The lack of a good field of fire was keenly felt, as the enemy was able to work his way un-

seen to within grenade distance of our positions. In addition heavy automatic fire was laid down on our line, and considerable sniper fire was received.

No reserve was available as all men were already in the cordon. Contact was made with the Company M mortar positions on the peninsula, and men who could be spared from the mortars plus Headquarters Company men who had been carrying supplies were sent to reinforce the Battalion. A request was also made to Regiment that Company L be returned as soon as possible.

The Japs continued to exert pressure along the entire line, in some cases approaching almost to the edge of Company K's foxholes before being shot. Grenades were again used to good advantage in holding off the enemy. The light machine guns covering the ridge to the west prevented the Japs from breaking the line in that sector.

Upon the arrival of reinforcements from the peninsula they were put in the line extending the left flank of Company I. Company I in the meantime started digging positions in rear of Company K, clearing fields of fire at the same time. Progress was slow, as considerable fire was sweeping the area, but by 1150 a new line had been made and occupied by Company I. Company K was ordered to withdraw behind the new defensive line.

The withdrawal by Company K was skillfully executed, and upon its completion Company K took over the line to the east formerly occupied by Company I. This eastern line had been outposted by Headquarters Company men while I Company was digging in on the new line.

At about noon a platoon of the 169th Infantry arrived, having been attached to the Battalion, and Company L arrived at approximately the same time. The weapons platoon of Company L and the platoon of the 169th were placed in line to the left of Company K's new positions, extending southward across the island to the block opposite Stepping Stone. Company I less weapons platoon formed a similar line to the east, connecting the right flank of Company I's old position with the block on the south and facing eastward.

Company I had taken up the fire fight as men from Company K worked their way back through the lines, as the Japs continued to exert pressure all along the line. They continued to work their way forward, and placed automatic fire and sniper fire on our positions.

Before Company K had been withdrawn, steps were taken to place 81mm mortar fire on the Japs in front of the western line. Using one gun only with RE light adjustment was started 300 yards to the west of our line, and to the north of the ridge in the center of the island. Upon the completion of Company K's withdrawal this fire was walked in towards Company I, adjustment being made by the company commander of Company I and a forward observer from Company M, until it was falling on the Japs 100 yards west of our line. Ten rounds for effect were quickly dropped. Adjustment was continued until a round was dropped fifty yards from our positions. This round produced immediate reactions from the Japs, causing them to chatter and shout, as fire for effect was ordered. Further adjustment brought the fire to within thirty-five yards of our line, and again fire for effect was laid down. The impact area was moved north to the shore and then south to the ridge with concentrations of ten rounds dropped on areas in which the enemy was active.

Throughout this close-in mortar fire Company I laid down rifle and machine gun fire along the entire line, opening up as soon as the roads were completed and stopping when another concentration was on the way. This volume of fire served to restrict movement among the Japs, and prevented them from pulling out of the impact areas.

As soon as the area north of the ridge had been covered, another gun was adjusted in front of our line to the south of the ridge. The same procedure was followed, with the fire again being walked in close to our line, and the area from the ridge to the southern shore was covered in the same manner. Intermittent firing was continued with both mortars, single rounds being followed up with concentrations whenever they caused movement or noise among the Japs, until after 1700.

Another platoon of the 169th Infantry had arrived at about 1630, and it was placed in position in the eastern line.

Earlier in the day, an outpost from Company K and 169th's platoon had been sent 400 yards to the east. They remained in position during the day, and were withdrawn at 1600. No enemy activity had been observed by them.

Harrassing fire to be employed during the night by the 81's was set up, with eight rounds per hour to be dropped close in.

All enemy activity to the west had ceased after the mortar firing, and both flanks were quiet throughout the night.

Barges were again active the night of September 15, following the same pattern as on the two previous nights. At about 2100 six Jap barges succeeded in landing on the northwestern shore of Sagekarasa. OP #1 was slow in reporting this, and as a result the barges remained there for about ten minutes before barge concentrations by the 4.2's and 81's were called for. Later in the night barges were again reported by OP #1, and the concentrations were again laid down.

Early on the morning of September 16 an outpost was again put out to the east. Plans were made for an attack to the west to be launched at 0930; this hour was selected so that units would be able to obtain water before jumping off. The plan of attack was: Company I, on the right, was to drive to the west, with its zone of action extending from the beach to and including the high ground near the middle of the island; Company L, in the center, was to drive to the west maintaining contact on the right with Company I and on the left with a platoon of the 169th Infantry; Company L's zone of action was approximately 150 yards in width. A platoon of the 169th on the left was to drive to the west, maintaining contact on the right with Company L, and to extend to the southern shore on the left. It was to echelon its line slightly to the left rear, with the mission of protecting the rear of Company L.

After a mortar preparation which started very close in to our lines and then walked westward about 200 yards the attack was started. It progressed steadily until it had passed through the area of Jap activity of the day before, and then came under hostile fire. This fire increased in intensity as the rifle men attempted to work forward, and at a point approximately 200 yards from the line of departure the entire line was pinned to the ground. The undergrowth was very dense; many logs and large rocks made observation difficult. Any attempt to move forward was met with fire. In addition to using snipers and grenades, the Japs had in action north of the ridge three heavy and at least two light machine guns; and about the same number of guns (M.G.) were in action south of the high ground.

It was decided to pull back slightly and place mortar fire on the Jap line. The withdrawal was made, and it was learned that two wounded men from Company L had been unable because of enemy fire to pull back. The mortar fire was held off while efforts were made to extricate these men, but each attempt was met with intense automatic fire. It was finally decided to dig in and hold the ground gained, and after the line had been straightened defensive positions were prepared about 150 yards west of the old line. The flank on the northern shore which had been opened by Company I's advance was covered by Headquarters Company men, and adjustments were made by the 169th's platoon to the left of Company L and the Company I block on the south to close that flank.

All attempts at rescuing Company L's two men having failed, mortar fire was adjusted on the Jap lines, and considerable fire for effect was laid down. The 81mm mortars also registered farther to the west on Sagekarasa, using HE medium. (See Overlay.)

During the afternoon an Anti-Tank Gun, 37mm, and two 50 caliber machine guns were brought to Sagekarasa, and emplaced on the northern shore between Company K's left and Company I's right. Fields of fire for these guns were not cleared until dusk because of the direct observation possible from Kolombangara. All of these weapons had good fields of fire to the north, fair to the east and poor to the west, this being dictated by the lay of the shore line.

Harrassing fires by both the 4.2's and the 81's for the night were set up, covering the area from close-in to our lines to the western end of the island. The 81's were to use HE light for the close-in concentrations, and HE medium for the more distant (#'s 3, 4, 5, & 6; see overlay).

Jap barges resumed operations shortly after dark. At about 2130 OP #1 reported six barges approaching the landing on the northwestern shore of the island, and barge concentrations were quickly laid down. The OP then reported that five of the barges were observed going to the east. The gun crews of the 37mm and the 50 caliber machine guns were informed of this, and shortly thereafter the barges came in view, proceeding in column eastward, about 600 yards off shore. The 37mm opened fire on the leading barge with AP and got a direct hit with the first round. The second round, HE, also was a hit. At this time a Jap light machine gun from the second barge in column opened fire, but this was quickly silenced by one of our light machine guns emplaced near the 37mm. The leading barge had disappeared when the smoke from the 37mm had cleared, and the other barges were heading north towards Kolombangara. The 50 caliber machine guns had also fired on the barges, and several tracer bullets were seen ricocheting from their sides. Barges continued active across Blakett Straits throughout the night, but none approached the center of Sagekarasa.

Little activity occurred on September 17 other than mortar fire laid down on the western half of Sagekarasa. This fire included close-in concentrations by the 81's using HE light, and also concentrations #2, 4, 5, & 6 using HE medium. On all of these, continuous searching and traversing fires were employed, in order to thoroughly cover the area. In addition the 4.2's laid down frequent concentrations covering from 200 yards to 500 yards east of the western end of the island. These different concentrations were laid down at irregular intervals, singly, in groups and simultaneously throughout the day.

Registration of 105's by an artillery liaison officer was started in the afternoon, and was finally completed just before dark. This registration covered the western half of the island from 150 yards in front of our lines to the end of the island. Another 37mm gun was obtained and emplaced on the northern shore.

The outpost to the east had again been sent out early in the morning, and reported no sign of enemy activity.

Harrassing fires by the 81's and 4.2's were arranged for the night, again covering all concentrations. Barge activity in Blakett Straits was resumed by the Japs as on previous nights, but the moon was coming up later each night and they were confining most of their movements to the early period of darkness. Barges were again heard several times by OP #1 in the vicinity of the Jap landing on Sagekarasa, and the barge concentrations were laid down each time.

Word was received on the morning of September 18 that the Anti-Tank Company, 27th Infantry, as a rifle company, was being attached to the Third Battalion, with the mission of advancing to the eastern end of Sagekarasa and establishing there a block. The leading element of Anti-Tank Company arrived on Sagekarasa at 1000, and orders for the move were issued. A reconnaissance having been made, the advance got under way at 1100.

After Anti-Tank Company had started its advance, orders were received that in the event no opposition was met, it was to continue across to the western end of the peninsula and emplace a block there. This information was conveyed to Anti-Tank Company before the end of Sagekarasa had been reached. No opposition was met, and the channel between Sagekarasa and the peninsula was reached at 1400.

The crossing was accomplished a squad at a time, with each squad taking up a defensive position a few yards inland and forming a line extending across the peninsula. No sign of Jap activity had been observed during the crossing.

Two small patrols were then sent out to the east. The patrol on the right, or south, encountered a swamp about 100 yards to the front, and returned with negative information. The patrol on the left had advanced about the same distance when a single Jap was seen. He disappeared before any firing could be done, and the patrol returned with this information.

In the meantime Anti-Tank Company was in the process of organizing for defense the northwestern corner of the peninsula. Before positions could be dug or fields of fire cleared the Japs attacked in force, using at least one light machine gun and numerous grenades. The suddenness and intensity of the fire forced the right of the line to fall back, with the result that only a very shallow foothold near the channel was held. Three machine guns were being set up by Anti-Tank Company at the time of the attack; one in the left of the line, one in the center and one on the right. The machine gun to the right was never gotten in action, as that side of the line was forced back; the center gun had three of its crew knocked out immediately it opened fire, and could not be remanned because it was under constant Jap fire; the left gun was put in action, but had a very limited field of fire.

The position rapidly becoming untenable, and upon the recommendation of the company commander, at 1600 Anti-Tank Company was ordered to withdraw to the eastern end of Sagekarasa. A small force was withdrawn initially, and covered the subsequent withdrawal of the remainder of the company.

At the same time that orders for the withdrawal were given a request was made of the Second Battalion, then occupying positions on Arundel approximately opposite the channel between Sagekarasa and the peninsula, to lay down machine gun fire across Anti-Tank Company's front. This was effectively done, and undoubtedly served to distract and divert the enemy, thus materially aiding the withdrawal operation.

Also at the same time that the withdrawal was ordered Company K and the platoon of the 169th which had been in position on the eastern flank were ordered to proceed to the eastern end of Sagekarasa and there consolidate with Anti-Tank Company in a cordon defense.

Anti-Tank completed the withdrawal at about 1645, and upon the arrival of Company K and the platoon of 169th shortly thereafter an all-around defense covering the channel and including the northeast corner of the island was prepared.

Casualties sustained by Anti-Tank Company were two killed and nine wounded. Losses would probably have been more severe had not the withdrawal been carried out in an efficient manner.

At about noon on this date the Battalion was informed that Companies A and B of the 27th Infantry would be attached to the Battalion upon their arrival at Sagekarasa at approximately 1400, and that they would be used in an attack to the west to be launched the following morning. This order was changed before the arrival of Companies A and B, and the attack was ordered to take place as soon as possible after their arrival.

The plan of attack was as follows: At H hour minus 15 minutes the 105's were to begin a preparation, starting 150 yards in front of our lines and walking westward to the end of the island; at H hour minus 10 minutes the 81's and 4.2's were to lay down mortar fire covering from 50 yards in front of our lines to the end of the island; at H hour Companies A and B were to attack, Company A on the right, with boundary between companies the left of the high ground in the middle of the island.

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Upon the arrival of both Companies, which was completed at 1515, H hour was set at 1545, and the companies went into position behind our lines opposite their zones of action. The attack jumped off as scheduled, and proceeded about 75 yards before meeting any resistance. The entire line then came under Jap machine gun fire, and was unable to advance further.

In an attempt to neutralize the heavy automatic fire being received, machine guns were set up as a base of fire by both companies, but due to the dense undergrowth and limited fields of fire they proved ineffective. Any movement forward by riflemen drew heavy fire, and it became apparent that the attack would progress no farther that day. Both companies were therefore ordered to withdraw. Company A was placed in the line on the eastern flank formerly occupied by Company K and the platoon of the 169th, and the weapons platoon of Company B was placed on the beach to the north. The remainder of Company B occupied positions within our cordon.

At about 1700 Regiment directed that the 4.2's register on the western end of the peninsula, and also register on a Jap barge landing known to be on the northern shore of the peninsula at a point between 500 and 600 yards east of the western end. Adjustment was done by a forward observer from Company M who was with Anti-Tank Company. Adjustment on the western end and the northwestern shore of the peninsula was also done by 105's.

Harassing fires on Sagekarasa by the mortars were set up as on previous nights. Jap barges followed the same pattern as on other nights, and several barge concentrations were called for during the night, following any indication that the boats were landing on the northwestern shore.

Harassing fire on the western end of the peninsula was carried out throughout the night by 4.2 mortars. The barge concentration on the peninsula was also laid down on two occasions during the night, barges having been heard in the vicinity of the landing previously registered on.

An attack to the west was again directed on the morning of September 19. The orders were the same as on the afternoon before, with the exception that the artillery and mortar preparations were intensified.

The attack jumped off at 0830, and proceeded much the same as on the previous day. The same resistance was met, consisting of many Jap machine guns, both lights and heavies. Sniper fire was not as heavy as had been received before, but any forward movement was met with a hail of automatic fire.

Fire and movement was attempted, with the entire line opening up while a squad or platoon endeavored to work their way forward. This met with limited success, and a few yards were gained. Anti-Tank grenades were also employed, and good results were experienced in the few grenades that were not duds. Several machine gun emplacements were knocked out by this method.

All attempts at breaking the enemy resistance having failed, at about 1500 two flame throwers were carried forward and used. Close approach to a pillbox with these flame throwers was difficult because of mutually supporting enemy weapons and they were not effective. At about 1630 the attacking companies were withdrawn to our lines.

Intermittent firing by mortars was arranged for both Sagekarasa and the peninsula for the night of September 19, and plans were made for an attack to be made the following day.

At about 2000 barges were heard on the western end of Sagekarasa, and the barge concentrations were laid down. Shortly thereafter OP #1 reported seeing red flares or tracers being fired from the western part of the island.

At 2100 one of the outposts along the beach saw a small Jap landing boat approximately 25 yards off shore approaching his positions. He could see one Jap in the boat, but because of the darkness was unable to determine if he were alone. The outpost opened fire with his carbine, and the boatman cried out in Japanese. The entire beach line, including the 37mm with cannister, opened fire, and the boat was quickly sunk. Another boat or barge farther out was also sighted and fired on with unobserved results.

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At about 2215 a 4.2 concentration was placed on the western end of the peninsula and the barge contraption on the peninsula was fired at the same time. This was repeated 30 minutes later, and much shouting and screaming was heard from the impact areas. While this second firing was being done "Pistol Pete" opened up from Kolombangara and shelled the mortar positions. As the 4.2's were in exposed positions and their muzzle flash was considerable, they were ordered to cease firing and the 105's were requested to take up the firing on the peninsula.

For the next three hours "Pistol Pete" gave the area between the mortar positions and eastern end of Sagekarasa a thorough shelling. Fortunately most of the rounds were long, and fell in rear of the units. One man was killed and four wounded on the eastern end of Sagekarasa.

Barges were heard in the vicinity of the Jap landing on Sagekarasa throughout the night, and on each occasion the barge concentrations were fired. It was apparent that the enemy was using "Pistol Pete" as a diversion, but whether he was again reinforcing Sagekarasa or was evacuating could not be ascertained.

At the height of the shelling from Kolombangara all communication lines went out, and the Battalion was out of contact for several hours. The line from Regiment was finally repaired; the other lines were out until daylight.

At 0900 on September 20 the attack to the west was again launched. Orders for the attack were the same as on the two previous days. A close-in mortar preparation was fired, and the western half of the island was subjected to harassing mortar fire only; artillery fire was held on call.

The advance got under way slowly, as leading elements cautiously felt out the dense terrain to their front. The line of Jap resistance on previous days was reached and passed without opposition, and the advance continued steadily to the west. On reaching the part of the island where the southern shore cut sharply to the northwest, Company A took up the attack with Company B following. The rate of advance was increased as the undergrowth became lighter. All mortar firing was stopped.

At 1405 the western end of Sagekarasa was reached, and contact was made with the OP on Island #1. One Jap was killed near the end of the island, and one was taken prisoner.

Orders were received from Regiment to outpost the western extremity, and to withdraw the remainder of Companies A and B to the center of the island. A rifle platoon from Company A with a section of machine guns attached was formed as a strong point near the end of the island, and the withdrawal was accomplished by 1630. Upon the arrival of Company A, 169th Infantry, at about 1700, this outpost was relieved and the defense of the western part of Sagekarasa was taken over by them.

Orders were received at this time that the defense of Sagekarasa would be taken over by units of the 169th the following morning, and that the Third Battalion with attached units would cross the channel to the western end of the peninsula and attack to the southeast. The Battalion was given the mission of making contact with a unit of the 43rd Division holding a block across the peninsula at a point approximately 2400 yards southeast of the western tip.

Harassing concentrations covering the area from the western end of the peninsula 600 yards east were set up by both the 4.2 mm mortars and the light artillery, and were fired throughout the night. Following one of these concentrations screaming was heard. The same concentration was repeated immediately.

"Pistol Pete" commenced firing from Kolombangara at about 2200, with most of his shelling directed at the eastern tip of Sagekarasa. As on the previous night most of these rounds were long, and several landed across the channel on the peninsula. During this firing the same signalling was observed on the peninsula as had been seen on Sagekarasa the night before.

The plan of attack for the following morning was issued: Following a twenty minute artillery and 4.2 mortar preparation on the western end of the peninsula, Anti-Tank Company followed by Company K was to cross the channel and establish a block across the peninsula at a point 200 yards inland. The platoon of the 169th Infantry was to remain in position, and was to establish a base of fire with their automatic weapons covering the crossing by Anti-Tank Company.

The artillery and mortar preparations were completed at 0800 on September 21, and a patrol from Anti-Tank Company quickly crossed the channel and gained the peninsula. When its reconnaissance disclosed no enemy activity the remainder of Anti-Tank Company crossed over, followed by Company K, and the block was put in according to plan, with Anti-Tank Company on the left.

At 0800 the remainder of the Battalion and Companies A and B left the center of Sagekarasa and moved to the eastern end of the island. Companies I and L crossed over to the peninsula at once and started to go in position in rear of the block, since it was planned to pass them through the Anti-Tank Company and Company K and have them continue the attack. Because of the very heavy jungle growth and the swampy ground on the right it was decided to move the block forward 200 yards, which would give Companies I and L more room for deploying.

At 0945 Companies I and L were in position and at 1000 they passed through the block and resumed the advance. The remainder of the Battalion followed in column. Progress at first was slow, but became more rapid as the undergrowth thinned out.

The advance continued at a steady rate, and at 1438 the leading elements made contact with the 43rd Division block. One Jap was killed and one taken prisoner by Company A during this advance.

Orders were received that the northern shore of the peninsula from the western end to the block would be defended by the Battalion. This was accomplished by placing companies at intervals of 400 yards, each company establishing a cordon defense which included as much of the shore as the size of the company would permit. Units received water and sandwiches later in the evening; these were carried by boat via the lagoon south of the peninsula. Nothing of note happened during the night of September 21.

On September 22 the defense of the peninsula was taken over by the First Battalion, 27th Infantry; Companies A and B reverted to the First Battalion. The Third Battalion with Anti-Tank Company attached moved by marching via Stopping Stone Island to a bivouac area on Bamboo Peninsula. Thus the active part of the campaign came to a close.

Casualties received by the Third Battalion and attached units from September 10 through September 22 were eleven killed and sixty-nine wounded. Of this number five killed and twenty wounded were from attached units. In addition a total of eighty-seven were evacuated because of sickness.

Japs known to have been killed on Sagekarasa Island during the period September 13 to 20 inclusive were 126, with one prisoner taken. Japs killed on the peninsula from September 18 through September 21 amounted to 38, with one prisoner. The total number of Japs killed from September 13 to September 21 inclusive was 164. In addition to these known enemy dead, the entire western half of Sagekarasa is littered with shallow Jap graves, and for several days Jap bodies were seen floating near the island and peninsula.

Material captured on Sagekarasa included a Jap 75mm field piece with about 200 rounds of ammunition; a Jap 37mm AT Gun, less tube; a Jap 81mm mortar; and a BAR & IMG, both U.S. weapons which had been used by the Japs. In addition quantities of land mines and ammunition of all types were captured. On the peninsula many rifles, light machine guns, bayonets, land mines, ammunition, and other equipment and food were seized.

Fourteen hundred rounds of 4.2 mortar were fired on Jap positions on the western part of Sasekaraa during this campaign. Approximately 3000 rounds of 81mm mortar, both HE light and HE medium, were laid down during the same period.

It is believed that the wedge driven across the island by Companies I and K on the afternoon of September 13 cut off a small Jap outpost which had been stationed at the eastern end of the island, and that they were returning to the main Jap garrison on the western part of the island when they encountered Company I's line. It is also believed that the Japs were successful in landing boats on the northwestern shore of Sasekaraa each night from September 13 through the 16th, bringing in reinforcements and taking off wounded each night; and that they finally evacuated the island on the night of September 19.

WALTER N. GULETSKY,
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Commanding.