

COMBAT REPORT FIRST BATTALION 27TH INFANTRY

CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE JAPANESE

ARUNDEL, BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS

(Period: Sept. 15 - 21, 1943)

At 0800 on September 15, 1943, the Battalion Commander received a written order from the Commanding General XIV Corps, that the First Battalion Twenty Seventh Infantry would be prepared to move with combat equipment at 1300. One LCT would arrive at Enogai at 1200 to transport the Battalion and Anti-Tank Company to Arundel Island where we would rejoin the Regiment.

The Battalion Commander promptly alerted the Battalion to be ready to move out with combat equipment at 1130. Outpost were called in from Triri, Shark Island and from defensive positions facing Leland Lagoon. Supplies and equipment not essential in combat were stored at Enogai and two men from each company were left behind as guards. Each individual was to carry combat pack, two-thirds "C" rations, two canteens and individual equipment. Each company was ordered to carry one unit of fire, 2 stoves with necessary equipment for operating in the field and 20 cans of water.

One LCT arrived at 1200 and loading was started immediately. It was found that all personnel and equipment could not be loaded on the transportation provided. A LCM was secured from the Enogai Boat Pool for the purpose of transporting supplies. By 1300, the Battalion with attached Anti-Tank Company had loaded on transportation provided and started for Arundel Island.

The First Battalion with Anti-Tank Company attached arrived at Bastling Point at 1730. We were met by the Regimental Commander and ordered to bivouac in the vicinity of the 169th Field Artillery for the night. The situation as pointed out by the Regimental Commander was: The Third Battalion is engaged on the small island of Sogekarasa (just north of Arundel) and the Second Battalion with remnants of the 43rd Division (parts of seven companies totalling 225 men) are engaged on North Arundel, having met strongly organized defensive positions (at 63.3 - 69.1). The enemy is estimated to be about two companies with supporting automatic weapons and it is believed that reinforcements are being brought in at night, as evidenced by a strong counter-attack during the day.

The First Battalion was ordered to be ready to move out at dawn the next morning by Higgins boat. They would go to East Bomboe and move inland to join the Second Battalion. Supplies would be brought from East Bomboe over the Regimental Route. The strength of the Battalion with attached units at that time was 539 men and 26 officers.

On September 16, 1943 at 0645, the Battalion Commander, Company Commanders and "B" Company moved by Higgins boat to East Bomboe. The remaining companies were to await boat transportation to follow in the order of "C", "H", "A", "D" and Anti-Tank. A guide from each company went with the advance party and was to return to East Bomboe and guide the company to the assembly area. All companies had reached the Second Battalion by 1300 and were put in a cordon defense in rear and on the right flank of the Second Battalion's line.

At 1500 the Company Commanders were called in conference with the Battalion Commanders of the First and Second Battalions and orders were given for the coordinated attack of the next day.

FIRST ORDER NO. 1

1. a. The enemy, estimated to be two companies reinforced with automatic weapons occupy the area in front of the Second Battalion. He is well dug in on the high ground has made excellent use of cover and concealment. Following the attack by the Second Battalion that day, the enemy had launched a strong counter-attack, with added weapons and reinforced troops.

b. The First and Second Battalions, Twenty Seventh Infantry with elements of the 172nd Infantry, supported by four tanks of the 11th Marines, a platoon of the 82nd Chemical Mortar Company and 169th Field Artillery, will attack at 0745 on 17 September 1943 and eliminate all enemy resistance to our front, continue forward and secure the high ground overlooking the peninsula (see overlay).

2. The First Battalion Twenty Seventh Infantry will attack with "B" Company in the center, "C" Company on the left flank and "A" Company on the right flank; following immediately in rear of the tanks. They will seize and hold the high ground overlooking the peninsula. Line of departure: The present line of the Second Battalion Twenty Seventh Infantry. Time of attack: 0745.

3. a. Company "C" with a section of heavy machine guns from Company "D" attached will attack and follow the left flank of the assault tanks; holding ground secured.

b. Company "B" with one section of heavy machine guns from Company "D" attached will attack abreast and on the right flank of Company "C"; seizing the high ground to the immediate front.

c. Company "A" with one section of heavy machine guns from "D" Company attached will attack on Company "B"'s right flank and echeloned to the rear will secure the right flank of the Battalion.

d. Company "D", less the detached units will support the attack from their present positions.

e. Anti-Tank Company will remain in Battalion Reserve in present position, prepared to move forward on order.

4. Supply will be from present assembly area.

5. a. The Battalion Command Post will be in rear of Company "C" and will displace forward with Company "C".

b. Communication will be maintained between companies and the Battalion Command Post by sound power telephone.

c. The Battalion Commander will have communication with the Tank Commander by means of SCR - 284.

On September 17, five light tanks followed by the assault companies "A", "B", and "C" moved through the Second Battalion lines at 0745. Heavy concentrations of artillery, 81mm and 4.2 mortar fire was laid down in front of the assault companies. The canister and H. E. shells fired from the light tanks were very effective in knocking out the well-camouflaged enemy machine gun positions as well as clearing the area of undergrowth. By 1310 the assault units had reach the shore overlooking the peninsula thus attaining their objective for the day. Considerable machine gun, automatic weapon and rifle fire was encountered. By 1700, the Second Battalion and elements of the 172nd Infantry had advanced and tied in with the First Battalion Twenty Seventh Infantry forming a perimeter defense for the night.

On September 18, the Anti-Tank Company was released to the Third Battalion Twenty Seventh Infantry and would be used on Sogekarasa. In the previous day's fighting two enemy machine guns were spotted on the high ground in front of "C" Company. Two light tanks were moved into our line (Company "B" sector), from where they were able to deliver a heavy concentration of 37mm canister and H. E. shells into the well-emplaced and camouflaged enemy machine gun positions. During the early phase of the attack one of the tanks was knocked out by enemy 37mm anti-tank gun fire and the other caught fire; however, the volume of fire laid down by the supporting riflemen enabled the tank crews to escape. The enemy made determined efforts to completely knock out the two

tanks and their crews. Making use of the light and heavy machine guns, BAR's and rifle fire Companies "A", "B" and "C" with attached units were able to repulse the attack and at the same time kill more than forty Japs.

The First Battalion Commander received an order from the Segmental Commander to the effect that Companies "A" and "B" would be reassigned to the Third Battalion for the push on Sogekarasa. At 1315, "A" and "B" Companies were pulled out of the lines and replaced by elements of the 172nd Infantry. The remaining portion of the afternoon was spent in reorganizing and forming a perimeter defense. Mortar and artillery fire was continuously being laid on enemy positions both day and night.

Six light tanks, originally planned for Sogekarasa, were brought up during the afternoon, and five of the six original tanks were in operating condition. Plans were laid for a strong attack by the tanks on the following day, with Company "C" following in close support. It was not definitely known whether the enemy anti-tank gun had been knocked out the previous day.

During the afternoon, the Anti-Tank Company, attached to the Third Battalion had moved from the middle of Sogekarasa to the East and without meeting any enemy resistance. As they were establishing a bridgehead on the peninsula, they were hit by a strong enemy counter-attack. Supporting machine gun fire from Company "H" on Arundel coupled with timely and accurate mortar fire enabled them to withdraw to Sogekarasa, where they reorganized and dug defensive positions for the night.

The Third Battalion Twenty Seventh Infantry with attached units, met heavy machine gun, automatic and rifle fire in their push to the West end of Sogekarasa.

At 1300 on September 19, the eleven tanks moved to the right front and supported the advance of all front line troops. In spite of encountering heavy enemy machine gun, rifle and mortar fire, the assaulting forces captured the enemy organized positions and were able to make an advance of three hundred yards to their objective; where they formed a perimeter defense for the night. The heavy concentration of 37mm oscillator and machine gun fire from the tanks contributed toward the success of the attack.

The Third Battalion Twenty Seventh Infantry with attached units in the push toward the West end of Sogekarasa encountered heavy machine gun, automatic rifle, knee mortar and rifle fire. By making full use of machine gun, M91 rifle grenade, 81mm and 4.2mm mortar fire to support the riflemen they were able to penetrate the enemy defensive position for 100 yards.

During the night the Japs attempted to evacuate their beleaguered garrison. Artillery, mortar, 37mm oscillator and H. E. shells coupled with machine gun fire inflicted numerous casualties and greatly hampered their attempt to evacuate.

At 0830 on September 20, a thirty-man patrol from Company "C" Twenty Seventh Infantry and Company "I" One Hundred Seventy Second Infantry was ordered to patrol the route to the base of the peninsula and contact the One Hundred Sixty Ninth Infantry who had established a block across the base of the peninsula. After advancing 2500 yards along the trail the patrol encountered automatic rifle and rifle fire from an organized enemy position near the base of the peninsula. A fifteen man security patrol from the Second Battalion was sent 500 yards to the South. This patrol returned two hours later with a negative report.

During the day the Third Battalion Twenty Seventh Infantry with attached units cleared the West end of Sogekarasa of all enemy resistance. The only enemy resistance remaining on Arundel was on the peninsula. During the night enemy barges again attempted to come in and evacuate the remaining troops. Artillery and mortar concentrations had been prepared during the day and these inflicted tremendous casualties on the enemy as they attempted to land on the beach and leave the shore. Direct hits were scored on several barges that had been loaded with personnel and the scores of enemy dead that drifted ashore testified to the effectiveness of the artillery, mortar, 37mm and machine gun fire.

September 21, at 0930, the Second Battalion Twenty Seventh Infantry followed by the First Battalion Twenty Seventh Infantry (less "A" and "B" Companies) with elements of the One Hundred Seventy Second Infantry advanced 2000 yards along the trail to the east and met no enemy resistance. A patrol from Company "C" was sent to contact the One Hundred Sixty Ninth Infantry, who were in position on the peninsula. Contact was made with the One Hundred Sixty Ninth Infantry and the patrol returned without meeting any resistance. In the meantime the Third Battalion Twenty Seventh Infantry had crossed over from Sogekarasa to the peninsula and also contacted the One Hundred Sixty Ninth Infantry. This ended all enemy resistance on Arundel, British Solomon Islands.

JOSEPH F. RYNESKA,
Lt. Col., 27th Inf.,
Commanding.