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restricts approach through these narrow breaks. At no point would the landings be easy. The least hazardous beaches are in Agat Bay from Facpi Point to Haputo Point, and to the northeast from Asañ Point to Adelup Point. Along both these stretches men could wade from the reef to the shore, if their landing craft could not pass the reef barrier. A further advantage was that neither stretch was blocked by a cliff. Their beaches are bordered by a coastal plain, a half mile to a mile in width, over which the men could push inland.

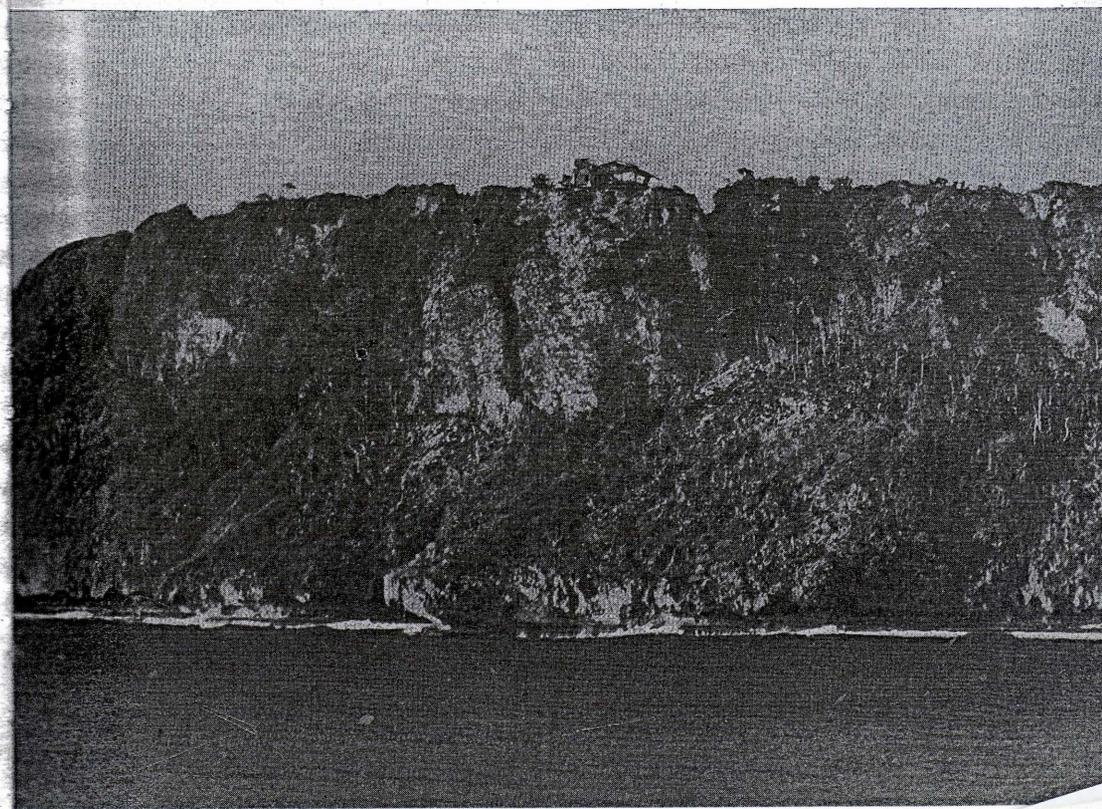
Overlooking these beaches the terrain rises from the coastal plain to a range of hills which dominates the western shore of the southern half of the island. Peaks in this range, the key hills for control of the entire island, reach heights of more than a thousand feet about two miles inland. Mt. Alifan (869 feet) and Mt. Tenjo (1,022 feet) command the southernmost of the two beaches; Mt. Chachao (1,046 feet) and Mt. Alutom (1,082 feet) command the northern. On the east side, the range gradually slopes down to foothills and a plateau stretching to the coast 100 to 300 feet above sea level.

Heights, primarily volcanic rock, are rugged and sparsely covered with tall, coarse, sharp-edged grass and scrub growth, except between Mt. Alifan and Mt. Lamlam (1,334 feet) where timber is found in large stands. Orote Peninsula and Cabras Island, on the west, and the coastal regions, on the east, are underlain by coral limestone. Here ravines and lower lands are heavily wooded and thick with tropical growth. Weeds, trailing vines, and tropical vegetation, consisting of strand trees intermingled with lianas, air plants, and under-
scrub, grow to six or eight feet, and at such rate as to make even roads impassable if they are not used constantly. Rice paddies and coconut groves are cultivated in the marshes and lowlands.

The topography of the northern half of the island differs markedly from that of the south. From Agana and Pago Bay a forested limestone plateau rises gradually to more than 600 feet at the northern end of the island. East of Agana, approach to the plateau is through an area of low hills, covered with palm trees. These hills merge into the plateau broken only by Mt. Barrigada (674 feet), Mt. Santa Rosa (870 feet), and Mt. Mataguac (600 feet). Four natural clearings exist in the forest, on Mt. Santa Rosa, Mt. Mataguac, at Finegayan, and near Pati Point; man-made clearings are restricted almost entirely to roads, limiting a military advance to the channels



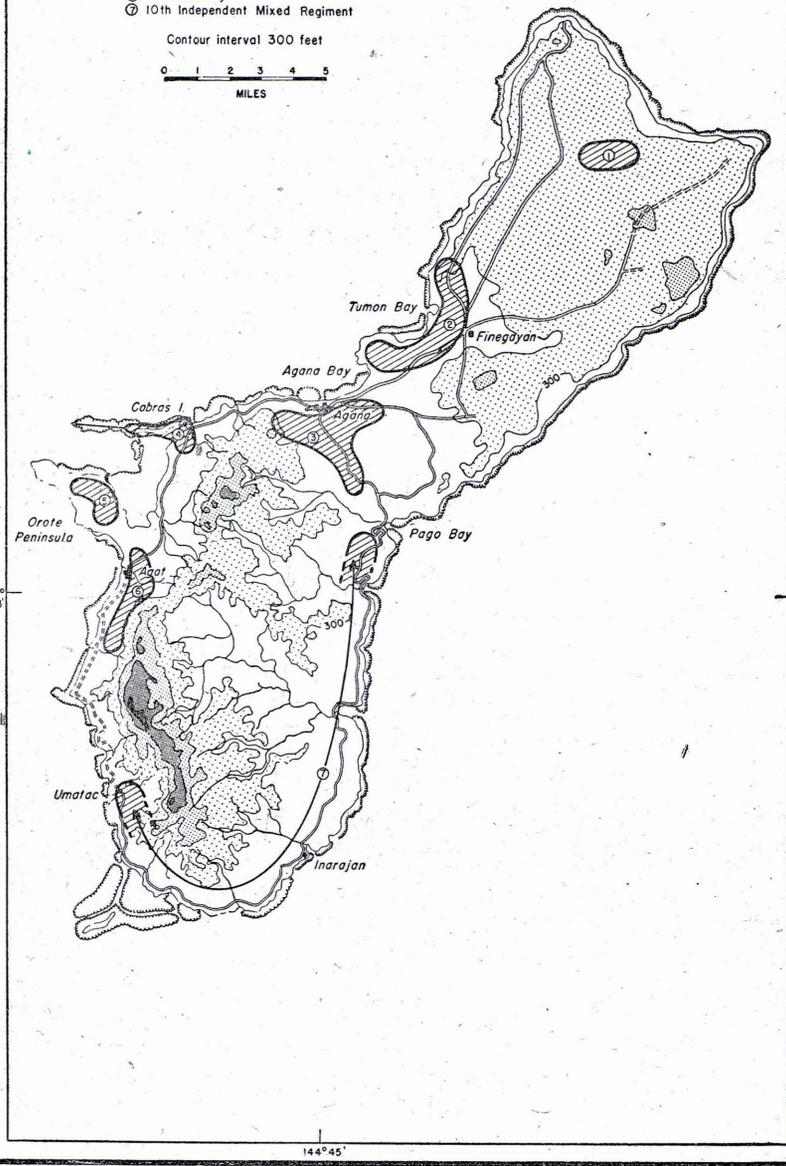
BLUFFS RISING 600 FEET *above the water make a barrier of the Guam coast. Because of cliffs, landing points for large invading force were limited. The oblique above shows a two-mile stretch on Orote Peninsula. Below is a close-up of a rugged coastal section.*



ENEMY DISPOSITIONS ON GUAM
JULY 1944

- ① 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry
- ② 48th Independent Mixed Brigade and part of 29th Division
- ③ Rest of 29th Division
- ④ 5th Company, 38th Infantry
- ⑤ 54th Keibitai
- ⑥ 38th Infantry
- ⑦ 10th Independent Mixed Regiment

Contour interval 300 feet



MAP NO. 5

Piti, and cable facilities and marine barracks at Sumay. They recruited slave labor from the natives to assist in maintaining their base.

Enemy Forces on Guam

Once before in our history American assault units had appeared off Guam, but then it had been comic opera. On 20 June 1898, shortly after the beginning of the Spanish War, the *Charleston* fired a few shots from its secondary battery on Fort Santiago as a preliminary to occupation. The Spaniards did not know of the opening of hostilities far to the east; legend on Guam even has it that they interpreted the gunfire as a friendly salute. At any rate, their only defense was four small guns of obsolete design, formerly used for saluting but at that time condemned as unsafe even for that purpose. The island was occupied without opposition by marines and by 2 companies of the 2d Oregon Infantry Regiment, taken to the shore by 25 rowers.

No one expected comic opera in 1944. The experiences of Tarawa, Makin, Kwajalein, and Eniwetok had shown the ferocious quality of Japanese resistance. The strategic importance of Guam indicated the probability that the enemy garrison would be strong, and the island's extensive land mass led the Central Pacific forces to expect a longer defense than that encountered in earlier operations. The fighting on Saipan did nothing to alter this estimate.

After the invasion of Kwajalein the III Amphibious Corps C-2 learned that the Japanese were transferring army troops from Manchukuo to Guam to reinforce the *54th Keibitai*, nucleus of the naval units in complete charge of the island's defense (Map No. 5). The reinforcing army units from China, organized under the *South Marianas Area Group*, arrived on Guam in March. The group included the *29th Division* (with the *18th* and *38th Infantry Regiments*) commanded by Lt. Gen. Takeshi Takashina, and the *6th Expeditionary Force*. The force was composed of three infantry battalions, a field artillery battalion, and an engineer company of the *1st Division*; and an infantry group headquarters, three infantry battalions, one mountain artillery battalion, and one engineer company of the *11th Division*. In June the *6th Expeditionary Force* was dissolved. The units of the *1st Division* formed the *10th Independent Mixed Regiment*



GENERAL TAKASHINA AND COLONEL SUENAGA inspect the defenses along Agat beach. The 38th Infantry, under Colonel Suenaga (at left), manned positions in the Agat area, later assigned to the Marine's 1st Provisional Brigade and to the Army's 77th Division.

nder Lt. Col. Ichiro Kataoka; those of the 11th Division became the 48th Independent Mixed Brigade under Maj. Gen. Kiyoshi Higematsu. Before the invasion of Guam, III Amphibious Corps estimated that the total enemy strength on the island was about 8,500, of which 13,000 were army troops and 5,500 naval. On 14 July intelligence officers of the 77th Division were inclined to revise their estimates of the number of Japanese troops on Guam upward to more than 36,000. Division's higher figure, almost twice that of 'corps', was based partly on units identified on the island, and partly on the potential capacity of the enemy to land additional troops on Guam until 15 June.

the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry in northern Guam, the 48th Independent Mixed Brigade and part of the 29th Division in the Tumon Bay area, the rest of the 29th Division in the waist of the island between Agana and Pago Bay, the 54th Independent Guard Unit on the Orote Peninsula, the 38th Infantry, except for the 5th Company on Cabras Island, in the Agat sector, and the 10th Independent Mixed Regiment to the southeast. Because the whole of the Agat sector was relatively isolated by limited routes of communication from the more populated areas to the north, the 38th Infantry, defending it, was more or less independent of the rest of the island command. Although in June the enemy had stationed his forces to cover the entire island, during July he began to shift them to the areas most vulnerable to an attack from the sea.

JAPANESE 200-MM COASTAL DEFENSE GUN, emplaced on Bangi Point in Agat Bay, is examined by III Corps men. Revetment, destroyed by pre-invasion bombardment, was never completed. Other revetments had protective roofing. This is one of two naval shore guns on the point.



of the island, showing graphically the natural characteristics of the shore and the hilly, wooded inland. As the transports neared the objective, the men gave their weapons a last check and prepared to disembark.

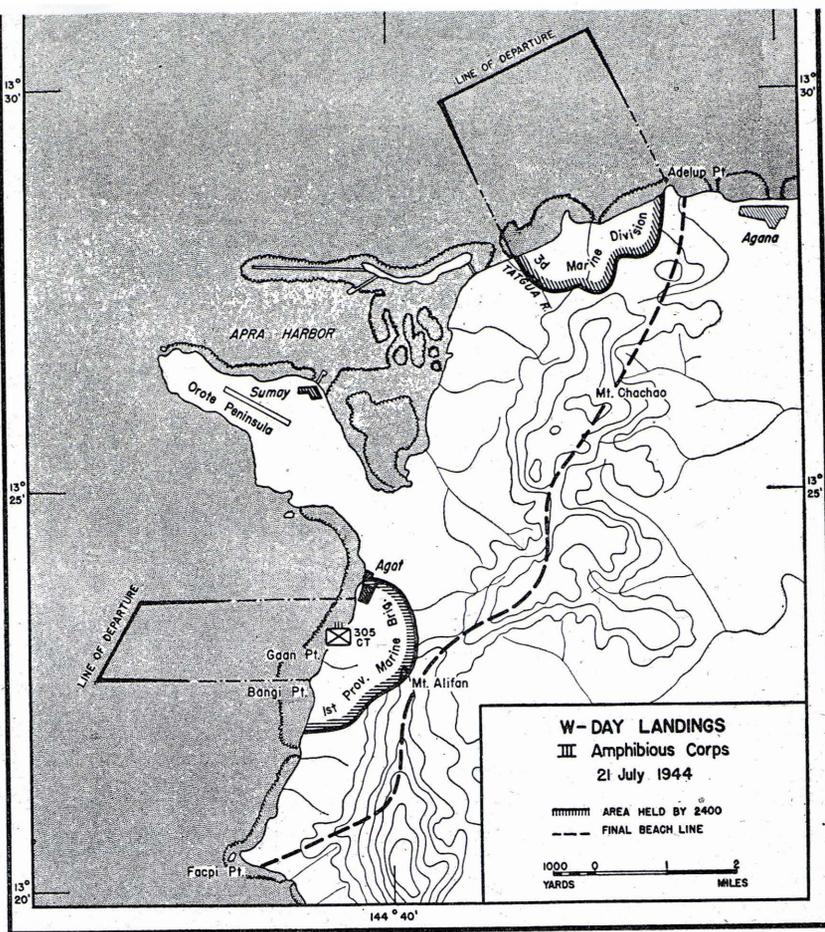
The Landings

The bombardment on W Day opened at 0530 when thunder of 16-inch guns of the Southern Attack Force offshore at Guam broke the early morning quiet. Between the heavy salvos from battleships, sharper reports of 5-, 6-, and 8-inch guns echoed across the island's western beaches into the mountains above. Six battleships, four heavy cruisers, five light cruisers, and seven destroyers moved slowly along, their guns trained on the dark bulk of the land mass. Bursts of flame lit up the dawn as shells exploded on the beaches and in the hills behind.

At 0803 the slow, deliberate shelling of coastal installations and bivouac areas stopped, and the ships turned their guns to intensify the fire on the beaches. At the same time, carrier planes, flying above the naval gunfire trajectories, dropped depth charges along the shore and strafed the landing areas. Under this air and naval protection, LVT's (Landing Vehicles, Tracked), packed with the first wave of marine assault units, assembled in position on a quiet sea several thousand yards from the Asan and Agat beaches and on signal crossed the line of departure for the shore.

Eight minutes before H Hour, naval guns bearing on the landing beaches speeded up their volleys. All 5-inch guns began firing at the rate of ten rounds per gun per minute, and 6- and 8-inch guns also increased their rate of fire. Forty-eight carrier-based fighters and bombers strafed and bombed the beaches. When the first wave of marines was 1,000 yards from the beach, hundreds of rockets, fired from LCI(G)'s, hit the shore with terrific impact. The LVT's crawled over the reef and waded through the two feet of high water toward the beaches.¹ When the men were 300 yards offshore, the fire lifted and concentrated on the flanks and rear of the beaches. The planes shifted their attack farther inland.

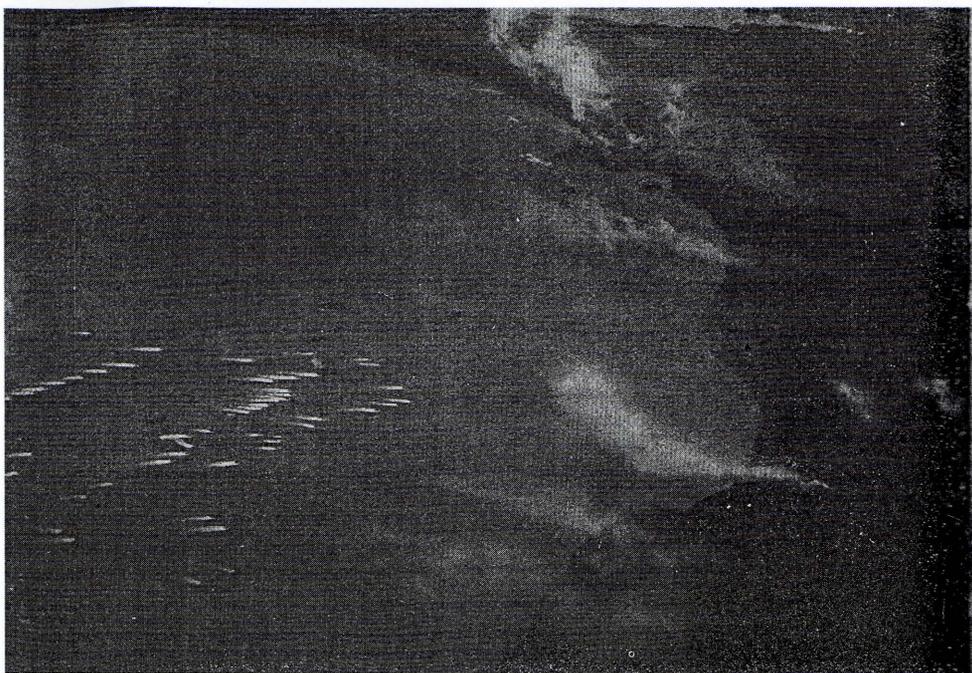
¹High tide in the morning of 21 July was at 0712. Its height at 0833 was 2.4 feet.



MAP NO. 7

the Marianas. While the troops waited, they had a chance to leave the cramped quarters of their transports for the first time in more than a month to exercise ashore on the limited atolls of the Marshalls. On 6 July General Smith attached the 77th Division to the corps. The 305th RCT left Oahu to join the force at Eniwetok as early as 1 July. The rest of the 77th Division sailed direct from Oahu to Guam. The corps, including the 305th RCT, moved from Eniwetok on 18 July aboard the transports of the Southern Attack Force to arrive off Guam the morning of W Day, 21 July.

En route the troops went through final, exhaustive briefings. They pored over tactical maps for details of the landing beaches, roads,



THE FIRST WAVE OF LANDING CRAFT heads for Agat beaches. Smoke from targets, hit by air and naval bombardment preceding the invasion, rises along shore. Orote airfield, an objective of marine brigade, is seen at top left. (Photograph taken from 5,000 feet.)

The first wave of the 3d Marine Division hit the Asan beach at 0828, and three minutes later the leading wave of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade landed at Agat (Map No. 7, page 30). The bombardment had knocked out virtually all the enemy positions on the beaches, but a few Japanese machine gunners fired from caves near the water's edge before being overcome. Emplaced in the hills commanding the beaches, enemy mortars and artillery put fire on the troops. Air strikes silenced some of this fire against the 3d Division. At Agat, where the enemy had mined the reefs and the beaches, the 1st Brigade's landing was more difficult. Enemy guns on Gaan and Bangi Points sank 20 LVT's; dukws bogged down in the silt on the reef. However, by 0900, 30 minutes after H Hour, tanks were ashore and in action.

As the troops of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade pushed inland, they came under more fire from mortars and artillery. They held off

Japanese might be able to attack when the Americans had committed sufficient forces to make the effort worthwhile. Nevertheless, by evening of W Day the marines had penetrated inland 2,000 yards on a 4,500-yard front. For support in holding this beachhead against an expected counterattack that night and in expanding the area the following day, the brigade had summoned during the afternoon the 305th RCT of the 77th Division, commanded by Col. Vincent J. Tanzola.

The 2d Battalion, Lt. Col. Robert D. Adair commanding, was first on call. It had debarked from the transport into landing craft during the opening hour of assault; then the battalion waited, circling in the assembly area. Since the marine brigade was meeting only moderate opposition at the start, the 2d Battalion was not summoned to shore

SMALL BOATS LEAVE ASAN BEACHES for men and supplies. On W Day 3d Marines start an eight-day battle for hills dominating shore.



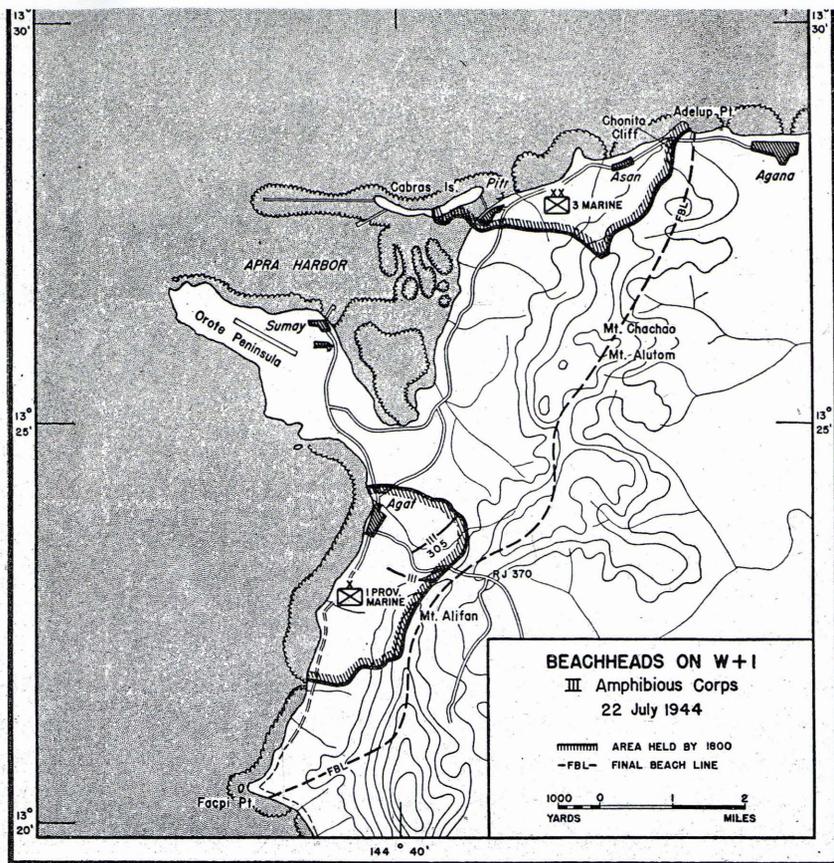


WAITING FOR ORDERS to land at Agat beach. The 305th RCT, supporting the brigade on W Day, debarked from transport to Coast Guard-manned landing craft before H Hour and circled outside the reef until Brigade called for reinforcements to hold beachhead during night.

until 1300. When they reached the reef, there were no LVT's to pick up the troops and carry them in. They waded ashore in water waist-deep,¹ falling into occasional submerged shell craters. In order to avoid these and keep their weapons dry, the 2d Battalion men tended to bunch on the axis of a narrow channel where the footing was good. Fortunately, though the beach area was open to the fire of enemy guns, the Japanese were fully occupied by the marines, now pushing forward a half mile inland. The 2d Battalion received little fire.

¹The average rifleman carried a steel helmet and liner, gas mask, life belt, bayonet, grenade launcher, and light pack. He also had two bandoleers of ammunition slung around his chest, a bag full of rifle grenades hung from his neck, a pouch of hand grenades strapped to his thighs, a two-foot long pair of wire cutters tied to his pack, two canteens of water, first aid pack, and a machete hanging from his cartridge belt. Heavy weapons company men had to carry most of this equipment plus part of a mortar or heavy machine gun. "Have you dubbed your shoes?" they asked one another as they pushed through the deep water.

The remainder of the 305th had even greater difficulties in making shore and was even more lucky in that enemy fire did not take advantage of the situation. Colonel Tanzola received orders, at 1530, to land his other two battalions at 1530, the message having been delayed an hour in transit. He had only enough craft to land one battalion, pending return of the 2d Battalion's craft, and so informed Brigade. The 1st Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. James E. Landrum, debarked at 1615, then was held up by naval boat control officers who said they had no instructions to allow movement toward shore at that time. It was 1730 before Brigade settled this issue. Darkness was now close at hand, and Colonel Tanzola suggested that unloading be suspended. Brigade ordered the movement to proceed. Some slip-up had occurred in coordination or communication between Brigade and the Navy, and naval control officers had not called for the LVT's at the reef. The men waded in, this time in higher water, and were



MAP NO. 8

often forced to swim past the deeper holes. By the time they reached the beach, the units were intermingled and thoroughly lost in the darkness. Colonel Landrum found they had veered several hundred yards south of their planned touchdown and were dangerously near enemy held territory. With staff officers and guides, he found the assembly area, and managed to get most of his battalion there by 2130.

The 3d Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Edward Chalgren, Jr., was waiting for the return of craft that had taken in the 2d, and these were delayed in getting back. The transport was suddenly ordered out to sea because of a report of enemy submarine attack. It steamed out 10 or 15 miles, then came in again, arriving at 2120. Debarkation finally commenced, though some craft were still missing. As a result of the darkness and lack of craft, the whole movement was delayed,

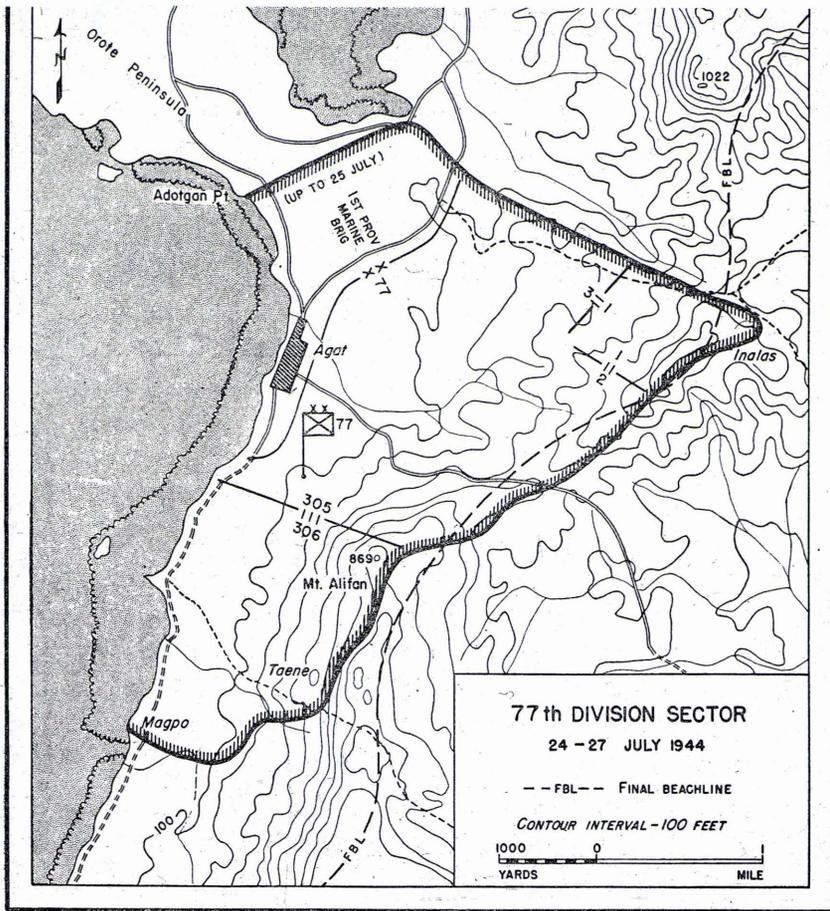
Some of the craft scattered far south of the rest. Fearing that they might draw fire from friendly troops if they moved inland; the disorganized units dug in on the beach for the night. Some elements did not get to dry land until 0600. The 305th had had its first lesson in the liability of all plans (and particularly in landings) to upset by reason of "changing situations" and "unforeseen developments."

The assault troops had established precarious footholds at Asan and at Agat, near both ends of the final beachline. Neither the 3d Marine Division nor the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade had reached the beachline in its zone. Both holds on the island, each about two miles wide and one mile deep, were vulnerable to counterattack from higher ground. Over the left flank of the 3d Division and both flanks of the 1st Brigade, Mt. Chachao and Mt. Alifan towered from 300 to 500 feet above the highest ground within the beachheads.

Expanding the Beachheads

On W + 1, before the Japanese could strengthen their forces to the rear of the landing areas, the III Amphibious Corps was to secure both of its beachheads by reaching the high ground on the final beachline. In front of the 3d Division, Mt. Chachao was the northernmost commanding height, and it lay about 3,000 yards from the unit's forward positions. The 1st Brigade, with the 305th RCT attached, had to push inland only one-third of this distance to reach the top of Mt. Alifan, the highest point to the east of the Agat beach. The rest of the 77th Division, in corps reserve, was approaching Agat Bay aboard 12 transports and 2 LST's (Landing Ship, Tank), ready to reinforce the marines on either beachhead.

Until daylight the corps troops were harassed by small-scale but determined counterattacks. Shortly after midnight mortar and artillery fire became so heavy that the 3d Division suspended unloading activities on Asan beach. At dawn the enemy launched an attack against the division's left flank from Agana and the hills behind Chonito Cliff (Map No. 8, page 36). The marines on the main defensive line, with tank, carrier-plane, and naval fire support, turned the enemy back. Meanwhile, Japanese forces east of Agat attacked the right flank of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. Aided by tanks and artillery the enemy soldiers fought their way through the brigade's positions, and



MAP NO. 9

a few infiltrated as far as the perimeters of the 305th RCT. The marines counterattacked, destroying five tanks and driving the enemy off.

During the day the corps' progress was slow. The 3d Division made very little gain toward the high ground on the final beachline. Enemy opposition on the left and center of the beachhead was so strong that the marines' advance was held at a standstill except south of Asan. There they pushed 1,000 yards toward Mt. Chachao. On its right flank the division captured Piti Navy Yard, and one battalion landing team, executing a shore-to-shore movement, seized part of Cabras Island, north of Apra Harbor, which was not strongly defended except by aerial bombs emplaced as land mines.

slopes of Mt. Alifan, climbing in the open under fire from the Japanese positions concealed by thick wood on the top. In support of this direct advance toward the summit of Mt. Alifan, the 305th RCT cut north to reach the ridge running northeast from Alifan and to secure the high ground above Road Junction 370. By 1700 the brigade and the combat team were on their objectives and had control of more than 3,000 yards of the final beachline.

While the corps troops were attempting to secure their beachheads on 22 July, General Geiger issued an order for the relief of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, to enable that unit to reorganize and get into position for the attack on Orote Peninsula. The defense of the beachhead from Inalas southwest to the coast near Magpo would be taken over by two RCT's of the 77th Division, including the 305th RCT, which would revert to the division when the relief of the brigade was effected (Map No. 9, page 38). While the 77th protected the corps' southern flank, the brigade was to prepare to capture Orote Peninsula. One RCT of the 77th was to remain afloat in corps reserve until ordered to land.

The 306th RCT was designated by the division to take over the southern sector held by the marine brigade. A party headed by Col. Douglas C. McNair, Chief of Staff, and including Col. Aubrey D. Smith of the 306th Infantry and his battalion commanders with their staffs, went ashore on the 22d to reconnoiter the area and coordinate plans with the brigade. Shortly before noon next day the 306th began landing at Agat.¹ The 3d Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Gordon T. Kimbrell, reached its position between Mt. Alifan and Taene, and the 1st and 2d Battalions, under Lt. Col. Joseph A. Remus and Lt. Col. Charles F. Greene, respectively, went into assembly areas near the beach.

¹ The unloading itself was a difficult operation. As a reserve division, the 77th had no LVT's. Assault divisions normally have two battalions. There were 60 dukws but these had to be reserved for cargo and to get the light artillery ashore. Consequently, plans had to be made to carry troops to the reef in landing craft, after which they would wade ashore at low tide carrying all equipment. Vehicles were to be dragged from the reef to the beach by bulldozers. The Division G-4, operating from an SC1319 (Submarine Chaser) just off the reef, was to coordinate all landings. Although the troops got ashore without difficulty, most of the vehicles drowned out in the water between the reef and beach, and practically all vehicles' radio sets, even the water-proofed, were completely ruined. One medium tank dropped in a large pot hole and disappeared from sight.



306TH RCT COMES ASHORE on W + 2. Soldiers wade to land from landing craft at the reef's edge. The men file along a shallow channel where they can keep their weapons above water. Amphibious vehicles, at right, continue unloading supplies. Third tractor in line tows a jeep.

Relief of the 1st Brigade continued during the morning of 24 July. At 0800 the 306th assumed responsibility for the sector, and at 1400 the last elements of its 2d Battalion were in position. Action during the day consisted principally of skirmishing with enemy patrols and cleaning out caves and dugouts within the sector. During the early hours of darkness the enemy attempted to infiltrate through the lines, but he was driven off without casualties to the 306th.

The 305th RCT had in the meanwhile extended its area north of the 306th sector. Within the line from Adotgan Point to Inalas on the final beachline, the 305th was holding all the ground to the east of Old Agat Road. Behind these forward regiments, the 307th, commanded by Col. Stephen S. Hamilton, and division troops were brought ashore and supplies were being built up on the beaches. The brigade, now grouped at the base of Orote, defended only enough space in which to prepare for the attack on the peninsula.

Extension of the beachheads during 23 and 24 July gave the corps necessary room for continuing the assault phase. The 3d Marine Division, completing the occupation of Cabras Island, had gained command of the north side of the harbor and, on the left flank, had fought up the steep slopes near Chonito Cliff. Although the marines in this sector had made slow progress, they had withstood an enemy counterattack of battalion strength, and were in position to press the advance toward the high ground along the final beachline. At Agat the 77th Division controlled a sector that was being developed as a staging area for the attack on the rear of the enemy's main defenses protecting the Orote air strip and Apra Harbor.

On 24 July General Geiger ordered a corps attack for 25 July, designed to complete the assault phase. This involved linking the northern and southern beachheads on the final beachline, and capturing Orote Peninsula. The main burden in this operation would fall on the marine units. The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade received the assignment of advancing into Orote Peninsula. To the north the 3d Division was ordered to reach the final beachline and, by extending southward, to pinch off the area east of Orote. Corps Artillery was to support the coordinated effort, giving priority to requests from the brigade, and the artillery of the 3d and 77th Divisions would also be ready to assist the attack on Orote. The 77th Division had the mission of holding its present lines in the southern beachhead; the 307th RCT, ashore at Agat, remained in corps reserve.

Six hours after issuing the order, General Geiger postponed the time of jump-off for the Orote attack until 0700 on 26 July. The brigade needed an extra day in which to prepare for the assault and develop the enemy position at the base of Orote Peninsula. The supporting efforts by the rest of the corps proceeded as originally ordered. The 77th Division started to consolidate its line, while the 3d Division pressed toward the high ground on its front.

At daybreak on 26 July the 77th Division artillery, commanded by Brig. Gen. Isaac Spalding, opened the attack on the Orote defenses. Although some of the batteries were not yet in position, the 305th, 306th, and 902d Field Artillery Battalions, under Lt. Col. Edward B. Leever, Lt. Col. Jackson P. Serfas, and Lt. Col. Leo B. Burkett, respectively, joined in the opening concentrations. Altogether

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He sent a message to Admiral Conolly on 8 July being 21 July 1944 as W-Day on Guam.⁶⁸

ATTACK PREPARATIONS

For the Japanese on Guam the period following the Saipan landing was a continuous nightmare. Stabbing raids by planes from TF 58 occurred with ever-increasing frequency as the month of June wore on. Even during the height of the Japanese fleet's attack on TF 58 the weary defenders had no respite. Reinforcement flights from Iwo Jima and Japan being sent to aid the Imperial Navy in its effort to stop the Saipan landing, found Admiral Mitscher's flyers ready to halt such attempts. Enemy pilots seeking to stage their attacks through Guam's airfields found their landing plans interrupted by American interceptor planes.

Battleships, cruisers, and destroyers from the carrier task force began a series of harassing raids on 27 June, concentrating their fire on Orote Peninsula installations, that increased the damage wrought by bombing.⁶⁹ Guam was now cut off effectively from all hopes of relief. The heckling attacks of TF 58 lifted the curtain on the most thorough pre-landing preparation seen thus far in the Pacific.

The bombardment pace was stepped up on 4 July. One carrier group (TG 58.3) lay to off the island sending its planes in during daylight hours to strafe and bomb the Japanese and smash defensive installations. The destroyers of the group threw their 5-inch shells into Agaña, Asan, and Agat during the night. As TG 58.3 left for Eniwetok to refuel on 6 July, two more carrier groups arrived off Guam and continued the round-the-clock bombardment. On alternate days each carrier group hit the Rota airfield to render it inoperable and further isolate the embattled garrison on Guam.⁷⁰

Following the plan as outlined at the commander's conference on Saipan, elements of TF 58 entered the picture on 8 July when CruDiv-6

⁶⁸ CTF 53 OpRpt, 6.

⁶⁹ CinCPac WD, June 1944.

⁷⁰ CinCPac WD, July 1944. These carrier groups, TG 58.1 and 58.2, had just returned from a two-day raid on Chichi and Iwo Jima, part of a series of strikes on these islands designed to prevent enemy air reinforcements from reaching the Marianas.



USS PENNSYLVANIA is wreathed in smoke as its 14-inch rifles shell the area south of Orote Peninsula. (Navy Photograph.)

and CarDiv-24 took station off Guam to add their power to the preparation. The scope of the bombardment grew as additional supporting units, some from TF 52, arrived in the area. A continual procession of ships shuttled back and forth between ammunition and fueling rendezvous at Saipan and Eniwetok, making a lethal pause to spread devastation on Guam. From 11 July onward at least one battleship division was always present to lend the massive broadsides of its rifles to NGF salvos.⁷¹ The umbrella of carrier planes that blanketed the island neutralized effectively any remaining air opposition still present at Guam's crater-pocked airstrips. These naval pilots received the first evidence that the defenders were keyed to a fighting pitch. Antiaircraft fire brought down 16 planes before assault troops hit on W-Day.⁷²

Admiral Conolly, embarked in the *Appalachian*, arrived off Guam to assume personal control of the bombardment program on 14 July. The admiral ordered the flagship to take position approximately 3,500 yards off the coast, and much to the surprise of everyone on board directed gun crews to commence firing at designated targets. That night Conolly sent a message to CinCPac to the effect that, "the *Appalachian*, ably supported by other elements of the fleet, this day bombarded Guam." A second dispatch went to the bombarding ships and directed all vessels to move in close and deliver point-blank fire.⁷³

⁷¹ CTF 53 OpRpt, OpLog, 16A-23A.

⁷² CinCPac WD, July 1944.

⁷³ Scheyer.



UNDERWATER DEMOLITION MEN of UDT-4 paddle their rubber boat toward the reef off Agat on 19 July to continue the work of destroying enemy obstacles. (Navy Photograph.)

The presence of General Geiger in the command ship, "as the individual most interested in the reduction of beach defenses, had the effect of placing naval gunfire where it would do the most damage."⁷⁴ Close coordination of air and NGF support was achieved by setting up a board of officers to evaluate the effect of the continual pounding the island received. The attack force air, gunnery, and intelligence officers worked with representatives of General Geiger to carry out a systematic plan for destroying enemy defenses. Daily the board prepared a target list to guide ships and carrier planes in their bombardment missions. After a target had been thoroughly worked over, it was checked off the list, but occasionally re-examined to make certain it would cause no trouble on W-Day. Observation planes that hovered over the island discovered new targets, and the board added them to the list. For a good portion of this preliminary bombardment period, the island was divided into two zones with air and NGF alternating morning and afternoon in striking these. This eliminated all restrictions on minimum plane pull-out and support ship's ranges.⁷⁵

During the softening-up process planned for Guam Navy Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT's) received the important task of removing obstacles from Asan and Agat beaches and improving the reef approaches for landing

craft. Three UDT's were made available TF 53 for the operation: UDT's 3 and 4 joined the attack force at Guadalcanal while UDT reported at Eniwetok on 9 July after participating in the Saipan campaign. For three nights and two days beginning on 14 July UDT 3 carried on reconnaissance of assault beaches and made diversionary checks of possible landing points all along the west coast. At night swimmers crossed the reef and examined the actual shore line, while LCI gunboats,⁷⁶ destroyers, cruisers, and battleships provided protective cover. Any enemy fire on the team's scouts drew an instant reaction from guns of all calibers. This cover proved so effective that only one member of the team was killed during the reconnaissance operation.

When Teams 4 and 6 arrived from Eniwetok on 17 July the second phase of the UDT work started. Protected by LCI(G)'s operating close to shore and screened by smoke laid beach areas by planes from TF 53, all the teams began four days of clearing barriers from reefs in front of assault beaches. Off Agat obstacles consisted mostly of palm log c

⁷⁶ The close support provided UDT 3 by the LCI(G)'s proved so effective that on 16 July CTF 53 requested to send eight more gunboats from Saipan to reinforce those already available. Within 24 hours the gunboats were at Guam where they helped cover the demolition operations until 20 July. CTF 53 OpRpt 8-9.

⁷⁴ Ltr BrigGen M. H. Silverthorn to CMC, 1 May 47.

⁷⁵ CTF 53 OpRpt, Air Support Comments, 12C.

filled with coral, joined together by wire cable. On the northern reef, teams found wire cages four feet square and three to four feet high filled with cemented coral.⁷⁷ Very little barbed wire and no underwater mines were located. By midnight of W-minus 1, hand-placed demolition charges had blown 640 obstacles off Asan and 300 off Agat. The value of the UDT's work is clear. Admiral Conolly stated that, "positively, landings could not have been made on either Agat or Asan beaches nor any other suitable beaches without these elaborate but successfully prosecuted clearance operations."⁷⁸

During the course of covering operations for the UDT's, LCI(G) 348 grounded on the reef 400-500 yards from Asan at about 2000, 17 July. Admiral Conolly immediately requested a tug be sent from Saipan to rescue the vessel. Throughout the night, destroyers covered the stranded gunboat and at daylight cruisers from fire support units moved in and successfully neutralized enemy fire. The tug, *Apache*, arrived at 1415, took position to seaward of the LCI, and at 1730 with the help of a rising tide pulled the grounded LCI(G) free. With the gunboat in tow, the *Apache* returned to Saipan.⁷⁹

The promptness with which the request for help was answered by Admiral Turner demonstrated a unique feature of the naval support at Guam. Because W-Day had been delayed until after the end of the Saipan campaign, unprecedented numbers of ships from TF 52 and TF 58 could be allocated to reinforce the Southern Attack Force. Unquestionably, these additional planes and ship's guns contributed heavily to the effectiveness of the prelanding preparation.

While supporting units smashed Guam's defenses, the transport and tractor groups of TF 53 made ready to depart from Eniwetok for

"A POW captured on W-Day revealed he had been a member of an antiboat gun crew that watched the UDT's destroy these beach barricades. Although almost close enough to throw rocks at the teams the gun crew had done nothing to interfere. When asked why his section did not open fire on the Americans the POW replied that "No one gave us orders to shoot." *Coleman 1952.*

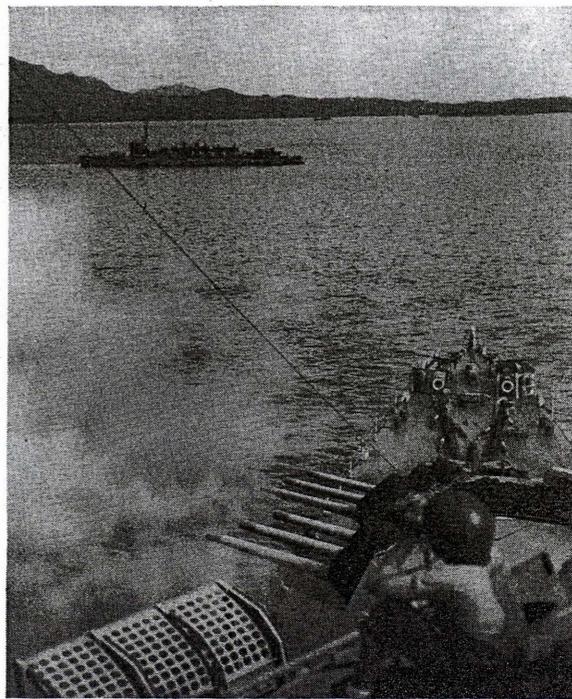
"CTF 53 OpRpt, 10.

"*Ibid.*, 9.

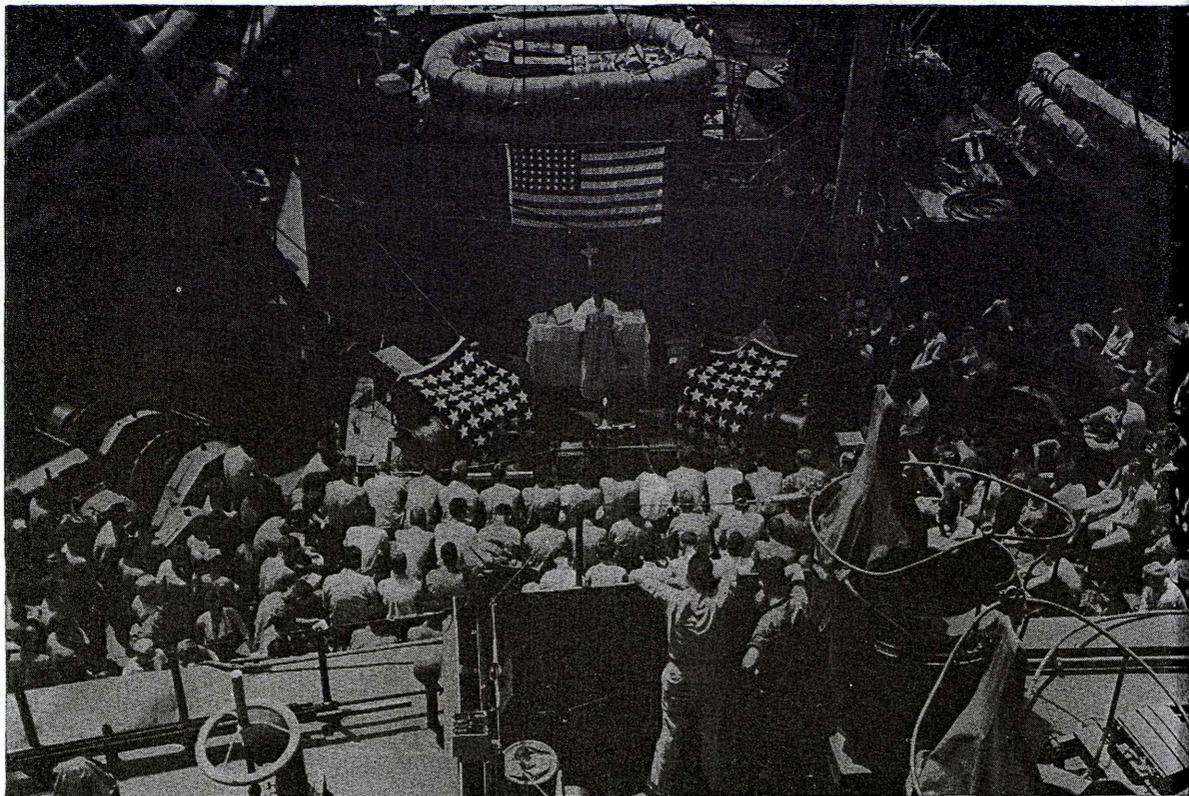
the objective. Screened by a host of destroyers, gunboats, mine sweepers, patrol craft, and submarine chasers, the LST's left the anchorage on 15 July. Two days later, transports got under way, accompanied by covering units of the attack force escort carrier group. Just a few hours prior to the departure of these ships, transports carrying the 77th Infantry Division (less the 305th RCT) entered the lagoon. Refueling lines were taken on board and preparations made to bring the floating reserve to the Guam area at sunrise on W-plus 1.⁸⁰

At Guam, as W-Day drew nearer, the destructive rain of shells and bombs increased. Early on 20 July the *Indianapolis*, with the Fifth Fleet commander on board, arrived and joined the fire support vessels. By afternoon of W-minus 1, all forces connected with STEVEDORE were in position or approaching on schedule. All known major defensive installations covering the landing beaches had been silenced, and demolition teams were completing

⁸⁰ CTG 53.2 OpRpt, OpNarrative, 7.



SIX-INCH GUN from the main battery of the USS *Honolulu* fires on Guam while in the background one of the UDT destroyer transports moves in to cover demolition operations. (Navy Photograph.)



RELIGIOUS SERVICES are held on board one of the transports as Marines of IIIAC move closer to combat on Guam.

their task of clearing reef obstructions. Favorable weather had been predicted for 21 July, and Admiral Conolly confirmed that date as W-Day, setting H-Hour for 0830.⁸¹

At dusk major NGF support vessels retired for the night, ready to return at first light and place fire on areas assigned them in the operation plan. On board the fifteen carriers of TF 58 and the five escort carriers of the attack force, ordnance men armed planes for their lethal strikes. In the seas immediately surrounding the island lay a vast armada: six battleships, nine cruisers, and fifty-seven destroy-

⁸¹ CTF 53 OpRpt, 11.

ers.⁸² From this number four battleships, three cruisers, and four destroyers had been allotted close-in support missions off Asan, and two battleships, three cruisers, and three destroyers had drawn the same role at the Agaña landing beaches. (See Map 4, Map Section.) In addition, a host of smaller ships and landing craft were available to cover the landing teams with a protective curtain of fire.

At 0530, 21 July 1944, NGF support vessels moved into assigned firing areas and commenced prearranged bombardment schedules. The assault to recapture Guam was underway.

⁸² *Ibid.*, OpLog, 25A-26A; CTG 53.2 OpRpt, Op-Narrative, 8-10.

CHAPTER II

Under cover of darkness, TF 53 moved into position and took their positions for the simultaneous assault on the northern and southern beaches. The main task for the transports was to land the assault forces. Against the shore batteries, officers gave the order to open fire. The LST's carried the main force of the DUKW's moved into position and fired their ramming charges. The waterborne assault force moved from the USS Blue and Greer. The waves formed by the 0740 troops were accompanied by the LCI(G)'s of the pocket barrage boats neared their 20mm and the once clear,

Each of the LCI(G)'s of the pocket barrage boats neared their 20mm and the once clear, LCI(G) to fire a period of time. Each beach just prior to the assault. CTF 53 OpRpt, N



THE RECAPTURE OF GUAM

CHAPTER III W-Day to Landing of the Reserve

Under cover of darkness on 21 July, troopships of TF 53 moved into the transport area and took their positions. Preparations began for the simultaneous assault on the northern and southern beaches. By 0600 all assault units of the task force had reached their assigned areas. Against the background of naval gunfire, officers gave final words of advice as troops made last-minute readjustments of equipment.

LST's carrying the assault LVT's and LCU's moved into launching areas and lowered their ramps. Most assault waves were waterborne in time to see strikes by planes from the USS *Wasp* on Cabras Island and a destructive attack by USS *Yorktown* planes on Blue and Green beaches. Circles made by the rendezvousing LVT's began to disintegrate as waves formed behind LCI(G)'s and LVT(A)'s. By 0740 troops had started toward the shore accompanied by an increasing din of naval gunfire.

LCI(G)'s opened up with a tremendous rocket barrage on all beaches and as the gunboats neared the reef they added the fire from their 20mm and 40mm guns.¹ In a few minutes the once clear, bright day became hazy from

¹ Each of the 18 LCI(G)'s assigned to support the landing, nine to each attack group, had been fitted prior to departure from Guadalcanal with 42 rocket launchers. It was possible, therefore, for each LCI(G) to fire a total of 504 rockets in a very short period of time. A total of 4,536 rockets exploded on each beach just prior to touch down of the first waves. CTF 53 OpRpt, NGF Support Comments, 5B.

smoke and dust. Landing beaches were completely blacked out as assault waves moved across the line of departure.

All the while a steady stream of naval shells screamed overhead as the softening-up process continued, but at 0822 the real show started. Naval gunfire loosened a devastating barrage on the immediate beach areas and continued until landing waves were 1,200 yards from shore. Large caliber fire then lifted and moved inland. Five-inch fire continued until LVT(A)'s started across the reef.

Eighty-four fighters and 16 torpedo bombers added their H-Hour contribution to beaches, then shifted their attack 1,000 yards inland. LCI(G)'s led assault waves and continued firing until they turned to take station on the flanks. There they resumed fire to hinder movement of the enemy. LVT(A)'s now became responsible for fire on the beach area until troops came ashore. The armored amphibians leading the 3d Division landed at 0829. In the south, LVT(A)'s of the brigade first touched down at 0832.² Assault troops scrambled ashore on all beaches one minute later.

Men making their first landing felt in their own minds that nothing could live through such a pulverizing barrage as they had just seen. This illusion lasted only until mortar fire started to fall among approaching LVT's. The Japanese made a quick recovery from the bom-

² CTF 53 OpRpt, OpLog, 28A; CTG 53.2 OpRpt, OpNarrative, 11.



TORPEDO BOMBERS OF TASK FORCE 53'S escort carrier group fly over circling landing craft on the way toward the beach to give support on W-Day. (Navy Photograph.)

ardment and opened up on all beaches. Small-arms fire grew more intense and mortars, antiaircraft guns, and artillery scored direct hits on LVT's.³

ASAN-ADELUP BEACHHEAD

The 3d Marine Division operation order called for the three regiments to land abreast, capture the high ground immediately inland, and prepare for further operations to the east and southeast. (See Map 5, Map Section) Division did not provide for a floating reserve, but each combat team designated one of its battalions as a regimental reserve afloat. The division itself would have to depend on the corps reserve (77th Infantry Division less the 305th RCT).

The 3d Marines (Colonel W. Carvel Hall), landing on the left was to secure Chonito Cliff, Adelup Point, and the commanding terrain extending to the right of the cliff area. This

³ The leading waves of the brigade suffered 10 LVT and LVT(A) casualties. 1st ProvMarBrig WD, 1Jul-10Aug44, 4. The division reported nine LVT's and LVT(A)'s destroyed by enemy fire during the landing. 3d MarDiv WD, July 1944, 6.

would protect the left flank of the division. On the right, the 9th (Colonel Edward A. Craig) would land one battalion (3d) in assault to seize and hold the low ridges off of the beach; after the other two battalions landed and passed through the assault unit on order, the 3d Battalion would assemble in regimental reserve and be prepared to capture Cabras Island by an amphibious landing. The 21st Marines, commanded by Colonel Arthur H. Butler, going ashore in the center, would drive inland to secure a line of cliffs and defend until the division was ready to expand the beachhead. On reaching the cliff objective the regiment would assign one battalion as division reserve.⁴

The 2,500 yards of beaches used by the division lay between a pair of "devil's horns," Beaches Red 1 and Red 2, used by the 3d Marines, rested almost against the left horn, Adelup Point. Beach Green, in the center, was assigned to the 21st Marines and from the right horn, Asan Point, stretched the 9th Marines Beach Blue.⁵ (See Map 6)

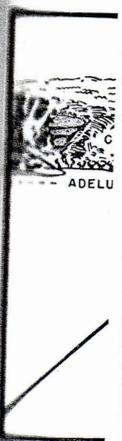
The 9th Marines moved ashore in a column

⁴ 3d MarDiv OpPlan 2-44, 13May44.

⁵ 3d MarDiv SAR, OpNarrative, 1.

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of battalion landing teams: 3d in assault, followed by the 2d, with the 1st in reserve. Under fire from the front and right flank (Asan Point) the right assault company (I) of the 3d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Walter Asmuth, Jr.)⁶ made very little progress, and the reserve company (L) had to be committed to give added strength. But still the attack remained stalled. Asmuth called for tanks, which had landed at H-plus 40 minutes, and with the armor supplying overhead fire, the units advanced slowly. On the other hand, the left company (K) swept across the rice paddies and took the ridge to the front (the first objective) with astonishing rapidity. The swift advance threw the enemy off balance and the follow-up units of the 9th mopped up the Japanese defenders not killed by the assault. This cleared the all-important rice paddy area behind Blue Beach where the division's artillery regiment planned to set up.⁷

The 3d Battalion reached the D-1 line⁸ (See Map 7, Map Section) and the regimental re-

⁶ Wounded in the W-Day action and evacuated.

⁷ Ltr Col E. A. Craig to CMC, 15Apr47, hereinafter cited as *Craig*; ltr Col W. Asmuth, Jr. to CMC, 11Sept52.

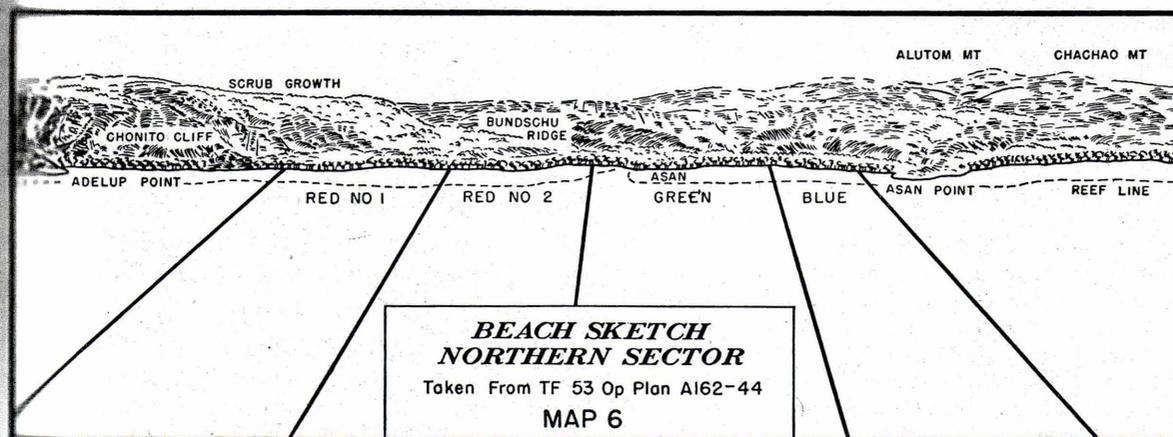
⁸ On the operation overlay issued for the landing, III Corps designated phase lines, usually terrain features extending across the zone of action, which would aid coordination and control during the attack. The division and regiments, in turn, set up intermediate objectives to govern the actions of subordinate units. These lines are labeled for uniformity in the monograph D-1; D-2, etc.; D-1a, D-2b, etc., in the division actions and O-1, O-2, etc.; O-a, O-b, etc., in corps advances.

serve (1/9) had moved ashore by 1345. Colonel Craig made preparations to continue the attack with the 1st and 2d Battalions passing through the 3d. Eight minutes after receiving a message from the commanding general to advance beyond D-1 by 1700, Craig ordered the 1st and 2d to move out. As the 2d crossed the bridge over the Nidual River, machine guns from cleverly camouflaged positions along the west face of Asan Point opened up, forcing the Marines to fight to the rear for a short distance. Near these positions Colonel Craig's men found a three-gun battery of Japanese 8-inch naval howitzers in concrete emplacements. These big weapons covered the beaches and seaward to the west of Asan Point but they had been abandoned. Against moderate small-arms fire the advance continued, but increased resistance from enemy-occupied caves stopped the drive 400 yards short of the D-2 line.⁹ All units began digging in, and by 1830 the 9th had tied-in with the 21st on the left. W-Day activities had been a success for the 9th Marines but the regiment had 231 casualties, including a comparatively high toll of officers: 20 killed or wounded.¹⁰

In the center, between the devil's horns, the 21st Marines hit on schedule. Receiving little

⁹ Ltr LtGen E. A. Craig to CMC, 30Sept52, hereinafter cited as *Craig 1952*.

¹⁰ 9th Mar SAR, 1; 9th Mar Unit Rpts. The regimental executive officer, LtCol J. Sabater was one of the officers wounded, and as a result the 9th Marines did not have an executive officer until 30 July when LtCol R. M. King joined the regiment.





GREEN AND BLUE BEACH, with Asan Point in the right foreground, as seen from the air show area assaulted by the 9th and 21st Marines on W-Day. (Navy Photograph.)

fire initially, the regiment landed in a column of battalions: 3d, 2d, and 1st. The men soon learned that terrain, rather than the enemy would be their worst obstacle the first day ashore. After securing the immediate high ground overlooking the beach, the 3d Battalion halted to reorganize at the foot of the "almost impossible" cliffs.¹¹

Colonel Butler had made his plans with the

¹¹ "Commanders and their staffs had been told on Guadalcanal by officers familiar with the terrain on Guam that it would be almost impossible to scale the cliffs immediately beyond the beaches, particularly in the zone of the 3d and 21st Marines." 1stLt R. A. Arthur and 1stLt K. Cohlma, *The Third Marine Division*, (Washington, 1948), 147, hereinafter cited as *3d MarDiv History*.

"almost impossible" in mind. As soon as the LVT's had returned to the transfer line and brought the reserve battalion (1st) ashore, the 2d would be released from its assembly area and move abreast of the 3d. The 2d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Eustace R. Smoak) would then attack up a defile in the left of the zone. Lieutenant Colonel Wendell H. Duplantis with his 3d Battalion would move up the Asan River valley in the right of the regimental zone. Both units, after establishing a foothold on the cliffs, would extend to right and left respectively and establish a line.¹²

The Japanese knew nothing of Colonel Butler's plan, but as soon as it began to unfold the

¹² 21st Mar SAR, 1-2.

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enemy made a determined effort to stop its execution. The 1st Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Marlowe C. Williams) met increasing mortar and artillery fire as it came ashore and moved into an assembly area near the Asan River at the foot of the high ground overlooking the beach. The unit could not set up its CP in the assigned area because of the enemy interference and the resultant relocation caused a slight delay in the establishment of wire and messenger communications with regiment.¹³

As the 2d Battalion maneuvered into position the Japanese offered only light opposition, but the terrain was not so obliging. As Marines inched up the rough, bare rock, the day grew hotter, and the long shipboard confinement began to take its toll as men fell by the wayside. By sheer physical stamina the remainder reached the top of the cliff, but the Japanese did not let the attackers relax. They started to spray machine-gun bullets from a ridge not 50 yards away, and as the 2d Battalion began to dig in, a heavy mortar concentration fell on its newly-won position.¹⁴

On the right the 3d Battalion encountered stiff resistance immediately. As the unit started to move up the valley, mortar shells caused numerous casualties. An enemy reinforced machine-gun platoon defending a defile along the river began to fire and stopped the advance. With naval gunfire neutralizing the mortar positions and 1/9 laying down a base of fire, Lieutenant Colonel Duplantis' units launched a coordinated attack and overpowered the strong point. Approximately 14 machine guns, heavy and light, six mortars, considerable ammunition, and what is believed to be the first prisoners taken on Guam were seized during the action.¹⁵ But the enemy was not the only problem as the advance continued. Men began to run out of water, and many fell from exhaus-

¹³ Ltr Maj L. A. Gilson, Jr. to CMC, 13Oct52.

¹⁴ The battalion had no 81mm mortar support for about an hour of the afternoon's activities. One mortar blew up about 1415 killing or wounding the entire crew and disrupting the fire of its section. The other section of the battalion mortar platoon was in the process of displacing forward at this time. Ltr LtCol A. Hedesh to CMC, 26Sept52.

¹⁵ Ltr Col W. H. Duplantis to CMC, 30Oct52, hereinafter cited as *Duplantis 1952*.

tion. The capture of the cliff at this point seemed "almost impossible," but through concerted efforts and the urging of officers and NCO's the men went forward. One officer, Captain Rodney L. Heinze, Company I commander, walked along the front lines of his company, lifted individual Marines who had fallen, and helped them forward.¹⁶

The 3d Battalion finally reached the top of the cliff and began the important mission of making contact with the 2d on the left and the 9th Marines on the right. The tangled mass of vines and scrub growth made physical or visual contact difficult. To complicate further the job at hand, heavy mortar and small-arms fire harassed the troops as they began to dig in.

The Japanese had not forgotten the 1st Battalion in its assembly area at the foot of the cliff. Intense mortar fire during the day caused many casualties and disrupted work at hand.¹⁷ Nevertheless, on order from the regimental commander, the 1st swept the zone behind the D-1 line, encountering few enemy. After completing the mopping-up assignment, the battalion returned to its assembly area and reverted to division reserve.¹⁸

On top of the cliff in the 21st's zone, the two attacking battalions prepared for the night. Contact had been made with the 9th Marines on the right, but repeated attempts by patrols had failed to find the 3d Marines on the left. A deep, jungle-filled ravine stretched between the two regiments, making contact, visual or otherwise, virtually impossible. So 2/21 was ordered to refuse its left flank to the very edge of the cliff. The remaining gap was well neutralized since the enemy and the 2d Battalion both used their mortars to cover the area.

After the 21st dug in, Japanese mortar shells began to fall more often. During the night, repeated small-scale attacks of about platoon strength failed to penetrate the lines. However, the 2d Battalion, which received the brunt

¹⁶ Ltr Maj P. M. Jones to CMC, 8Apr47, hereinafter cited as *Jones*.

¹⁷ The battalion executive officer placed the casualty figure at approximately 10% of the battalion before it went into the line on 22 July. Ltr LtCol R. R. Van Stockum to author, 7Jan52, hereinafter cited as *Van Stockum*.

¹⁸ 21st Mar SAR, 2.



JAPANESE CAVE POSITION on the reverse slope of Chonito Cliff furnished excellent protection for the enemy from the prelanding bombardment and enabled them to reoccupy prepared positions to oppose the 3d Marines advance. Adelup Point is in the background.

of this action, withdrew its right flank slightly to block the enemy's approach into the position.¹⁹

Early in the afternoon (1330), Brigadier General Alfred H. Noble, assistant division commander, had come ashore over the 21st Marines' beaches. And after that regiment had cleared the area, advance division command post set up in a gully on the left bank of the Asan River.²⁰ By the time General Turnage

had moved to the beach, communications had been established with all combat teams, and at 1715 Turnage assumed command ashore.²¹

The 3d Marines, landing on the left flank of the division, soon found that the devil's left horn, Adelup Point, held plenty of the enemy. Support from Chonito Cliff,²² the high ground immediately off of the beach, added to the effectiveness of the Point's defenses. The Japanese

¹⁹ 1stLt A. A. Frances, "The Battle for Banzai Ridge," *MC Gazette*, June 1945, 13-18.

²⁰ This CP location was not the original area selected prior to the landing, mortar and small-arms fire having made that impossible to occupy at this time. HqBn, 3d MarDiv SAR, 1-2.

²¹ 3d MarDiv D-3 Jnl.

²² Available sources indicate a difference of opinion as to the extent of this very important terrain feature. To avoid confusion Chonito Cliff as used in this monograph refers only to the nose of high ground immediately inland from the seawall and northeast of Beach Red 1.

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had survived the tremendous pre-invasion bombardment by holing up in a complex cave system in and behind the cliff. From their perfect observation posts on the height, the enemy directed mortar and artillery fire on beaches being used by the 3d Marines.

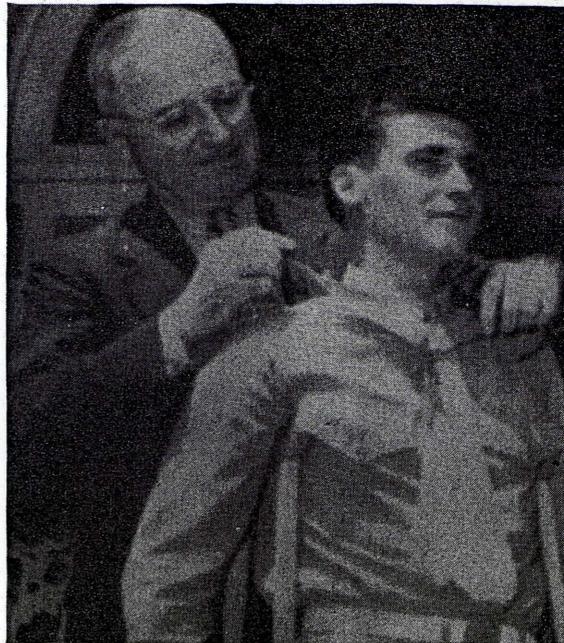
First waves landed on Beaches Red 1 and Red 2 on schedule despite this intense fire. Fifteen minutes after H-Hour, assault waves reported heavy casualties on both beaches. Mortar shells scored direct hits on LVT waves as they moved toward the shore. But a job had to be done, and Colonel Hall's 3d Marines took its losses, reorganized, and prepared for the attack on the O-a line, the first high ground inland.

Two battalions landed in assault, the 1st on the right. Despite many losses, the 3d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Ralph L. Houser), on the left, moved slowly ahead. The 3d's plan had called for Companies I and K to land abreast, hit the beach with a rush, and dash to the initial objective (Chonito Cliff) before the Japanese could recover from the pre-invasion bombardment. Company I, on the right, tried to move up the draw south of Chonito but the enemy stopped the attempt. Houser pressed flame-thrower operators into service immediately, and they performed invaluable service in neutralizing many of the caves in the face of the cliff. Company K succeeded in crossing the beach road and pivoted to flank the cliff area on the left, but enemy machine guns halted the drive before it gained momentum.²³ Tanks of Company C, 3d Tank Battalion took position along the road running parallel to the sea and commenced pouring shells directly into the caves. Colonel Houser committed his reserve (Company L) and by noon, Chonito Cliff had been cleared and the Marines had advanced to the O-a line. Tanks then shifted their fire to Adelup Point to join that from destroyers and LCI(G)'s which had been working over the area since early morning. But this continuous pounding had failed to knock out several enemy guns that harassed the flank of the division.²⁴

Adelup Point was not the only source of trouble that plagued the 3d Marines on W-Day. As

²³ Ltr LtCol R. R. Bastian, Jr. to CMC, 23Aug52.

²⁴ 3d Mar Jnl.



PRIVATE FIRST CLASS LUTHER SKAGGS, JR., 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, is presented the Medal of Honor by President Truman for action during the first day and night ashore on Guam. Private Skaggs assumed command and effectively directed the fire of a mortar section supporting his unit's attack and despite critical wounds led his men in repulsing several strong enemy counter-attacks.

the 1st Battalion landed and started across rice paddies toward Bundschu Ridge, a nose of land running down toward the beach,²⁵ enemy machine guns began to fire from the woods bordering the open ground. Company B, in assault on the right, quickly cleared these woods and made good progress until it ran into jungle and rock.

The Japanese did not give Company A, on the left, time to organize for an assault, but opened fire on LVT's as they moved ashore and stopped to unload troops. Casualties mounted as reorganization got under way. Enemy opposition, plus the fact that terrain bore little resemblance to that studied on maps and models, added to the normal confusion which

²⁵ Referred to as Bundschu Ridge in most sources and hereinafter so called. This ridge was named on board ship for Capt Geary R. Bundschu, Company A commander, whose unit was assigned the mission of taking this terrain feature. Ironically, it was the fighting on this ridge that took his life.

follows any assault landing.²⁶ But cool thinking and the training under adverse conditions on Guadalcanal paid off. Captain Geary R. Bundschu quickly organized his company and made preparations for the assault on the ridge that already bore his name. (See Map 13)

The attack started with two platoons in assault and one in support, but the going was slow and rough. The support platoon had to be committed in short order. This added strength enabled Bundschu to get within 100 yards of the top by 1045, but he reported he needed corpsmen and stretchers badly. This message gave just a hint of things to come. Moving that last 100 yards proved to be a lengthy and costly business. Only one officer, Lieutenant James A. Gallo, Jr., and a few men of the company survived the action that followed.

It is doubtful if Captain Bundschu realized until after 1200 what he was up against.²⁷ The initial assault on the ridge had been driven back by two machine guns emplaced to deliver enfilade fire on advancing troops. A platoon tried to flank one position by going up a heavily wooded gully but the waiting Japanese forced it to withdraw. About 1400 Bundschu asked his battalion commander, Major Henry Aplington, II, for permission to disengage. But Aplington felt this could not be done because of the unit being so involved. However, the right platoon (1st) succeeded in disengaging. Lieutenant Gallo, its leader, reorganized the remnants of his unit and those of the 3d Platoon and awaited orders from his company commander.²⁸

After a conference between the regimental commander and Captain Bundschu, Colonel Hall ordered a second frontal assault on the ridge. Bundschu and Gallo organized the re-

²⁶ Maps were deficient in several respects. They lacked detail of small hills, defiles, and secondary road nets. Omission of vegetation detail, except in isolated instances, hindered planning and locating positions. Photos received prior to the embarkation of troops were incomplete because of excessive cloud cover. Excellent photos were received later but not in sufficient quantity. 3d MarDiv SAR, IntelRpt, 1; 1st ProvMar-Brig OpRpt, 4-6.

²⁷ *Aplington.*

²⁸ Interview with Capt J. A. Gallo, Jr., 15Nov51, hereinafter cited as *Gallo.*

maining men of Company A into two forces for the attempt. The company commander requested that an 81mm mortar barrage be placed on the hill,²⁹ and just before sundown the attack started. Bundschu and his men inched forward but the same machine gun that had caused them trouble earlier in the day soon stopped the advance. Repeated attempts to take the position failed. Finally, covered by fire from every available weapon, the Marines silenced the gun with grenades. An assault reached the top of the hill, but by this time the remaining handful of Marines found it impossible to reorganize and defend this crest.³⁰

On the right, Lieutenant Gallo and his men fared no better. Under cover of the 81mm barrage, they crawled up the ridge and reached a position under the machine gun in their sector. But the Japanese, by rolling hand grenades down on the advancing troops, made the position untenable and halted the attack. Little had been accomplished. The company was back where it had been earlier in the day, but this time with fewer men.³¹

During the course of the Bundschu Ridge action, the regimental commander had decided to commit his reserve, Lieutenant Colonel Hector de Zayas' 2d Battalion. When it became apparent that the enemy offered the most resistance in the center of the zone of action, Hall alerted de Zayas' unit for a move into the line between the two assault battalions. Shortly thereafter, at 1300, Colonel Hall assembled his battalion commanders on top of Chonito Cliff and issued his fragmentary order:

The enemy resistance on Adelup Point is light. Resistance is strong in the center and on the right. He continues to prevent the 1st Battalion from seizing the high ground behind Red 2. We continue the attack with three battalions abreast at 1500. 2d Bat-

²⁹ Little effect was achieved by the requested barrage because the Japanese made good use of the caves and other prepared positions. The enemy waited under cover until the firing stopped, then moved back to their weapons before the Marines could reach the ridge crest.

³⁰ *Gallo.* Capt Bundschu was killed during this action.

³¹ *Ibid.* The next morning, after hanging on tenaciously during the night, Gallo could only muster 20 men. Most of the losses were suffered in the afternoon attack.

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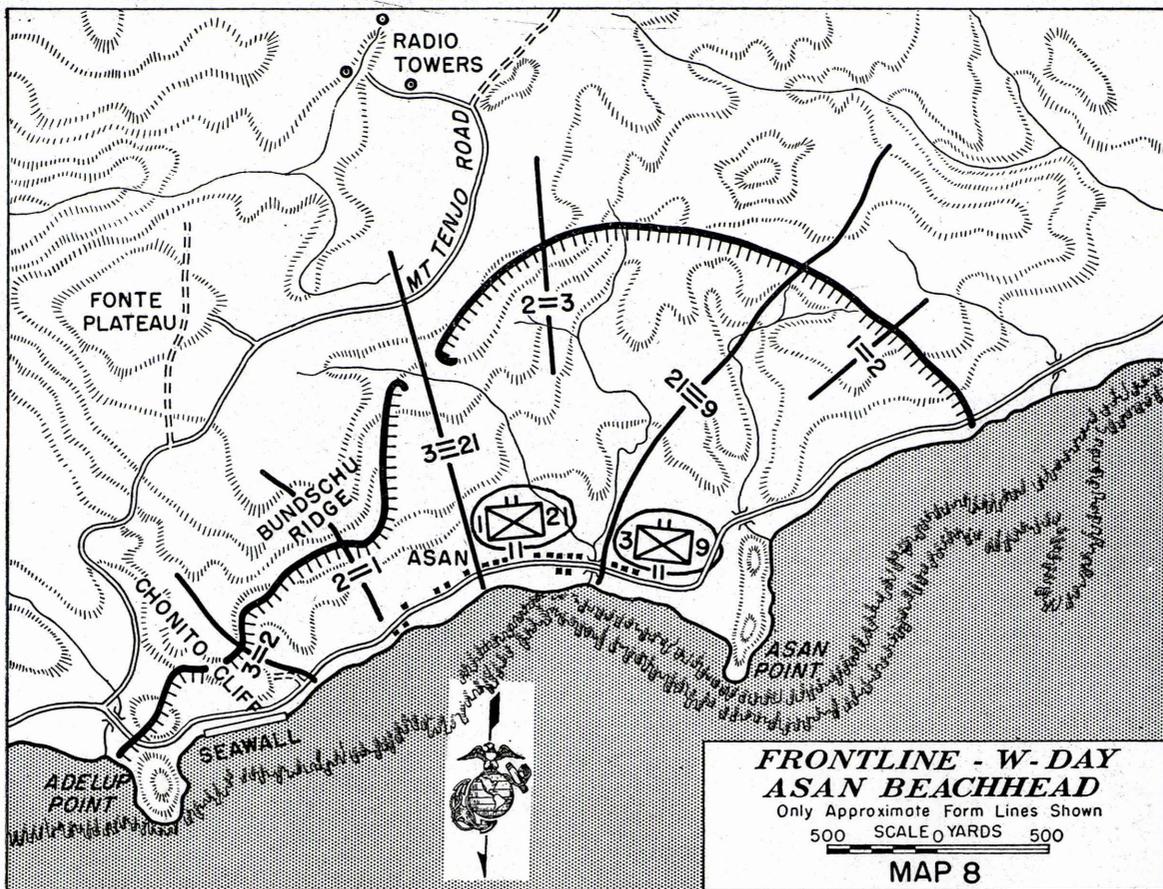
COMPANY A of the 3d Marines held up on the forward slope of Bundschu Ridge. Mortar and machine-gun fire inflicted very heavy casualties and prevented the unit from advancing beyond this point on W-Day.

llion move to O-a and take position as center bat-
tallon. 3d Battalion attack on left and seize Adelup
Point. 81mm mortars revert to battalion controls.³²

"3d Mar SAR, 1. The regimental operation plan
for the landing called for the 81mm mortar platoons
from HqCo of each of the battalions to land with
their parent units and then set up a mortar group near

Preparations for the attack got under way.
Meanwhile, the Japanese made a few plans of
their own. They moved reserves from the

the boundary of Red Beach 1 and 2 where regiment
could mass fires on Adelup Point. 3d Mar OpPlan
3-44, 27May44.



Fonte area, the next high ground inland, and manned all available weapons in an effort to contain the 3d Marine Division in its small beachhead. Despite constant air strikes and naval gunfire bombardment, the enemy continued moving men to strategic positions.³³

Utilizing every supporting arm available to the regiment, the 3d Marines (less the 1st Battalion busily engaged on Bundschu Ridge) attacked at 1500. All units met stiff resistance immediately after jumping off. The only battalion to make progress was the 3d, which moved along the coast to get into position for an attack on Adelup Point. Following a heavy preparation by tanks, destroyers, and

³³ Behind this bristling defensive line, Gen Takashina assembled "the troops which had been located in the Tumon area, Agana area, and the southern part of the Pago area of Sinajana [to] let them participate in the battle of Fonte area at the right moment of driving the Americans from Fonte." *Takeda*.

LCI(G)'s, the assault was successful but sustained substantial losses.

Having suffered a considerable number of casualties while coming ashore and moving into the assembly area, the 2d Battalion had some idea of the fire it would encounter. However, the unit's baptism had been from snipers and sporadic mortars and did not compare with the volume received when the battalion tried to move from the O-a line. The murderous fire continued the rest of the day, and when the 2d received orders to dig in for the night it found itself short of the D-1 line. It had, nevertheless, taken the immediate high ground in its sector.³⁴

Less than 1,000 yards behind front lines, other units supporting the division made ready for the night. Enemy mortar and artillery fire had been heavy, and snipers harassed men

³⁴ 3d Mar Jnl.

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as they went about their jobs. But this did not keep work from progressing on schedule.

Careful planning and the new techniques developed on Guadalcanal, discussed earlier, enabled artillery to move ashore soon after H-Hour. By 1215 one battery of Lieutenant Colonel Alpha L. Bowser, Jr.'s 3d Battalion, 19th Marines was in position and firing.³⁵ Shortly thereafter the 4th Battalion came ashore and started into its position where it found two enemy machine guns still active. Fortunately Colonel Craig had his command post in this area and, upon request, he directed a tank to take out these emplacements so the 4th could go into action.³⁶ Other units quickly set up and by 1640 all division artillery was ashore. Howitzer sections hurriedly made preparations to fire, but at first, the infantry could get little or no fire close to its own front lines. Minimum range and lack of observation by forward observers curtailed close-in firing. However, by using air spot, the artillery furnished beneficial support by harassing enemy troop concentrations and suspected and known enemy mortar and artillery positions. Both 75mm and 105mm howitzers quickly took enemy reserves moving to the front under fire, and there is no question that the artillery played an important role in helping establish the beachhead on W-Day.

Doing double duty in the beachhead, the 19th Marines (engineers) furnished shore party details and boat riders,³⁷ as well as supplying the infantry regiments with engineer support. A road was cut to provide the 21st Marines with a supply route. Demolition work on caves and the removal of mines from the beach area required time and patience, for the Japanese harassed the engineers constantly with mortar and sniper fire.

³⁵ 3d MarDiv SAR, OpNarrative, 2. Actually, Btry reported its registration piece in position and ready to fire at 1145.

³⁶ Ltr LtCol T. R. Belzer to CMC, 9Sept52, hereinafter cited as *Belzer*.

³⁷ One element of the shore party was made up of landing craft working party detachments consisting of a minimum of two men. These men were assigned permanently to each landing craft as boat riders to assist in the discharge of cargo from ships to boats in the transport area and from boats to landing vehicles at the reef. 3d MarDiv AdmPlan 2-44, Shore Party Annex, 13May44.

Equipment and supplies moved ashore with proficiency. As LVT's and DUKW's loaded with ammunition and supplies arrived on the beach, shore party personnel sent the vehicles directly to dumps that had been established. Heavy mortar fire fell all during the day, causing no end of trouble to parties working on the beach; yet things kept moving. Men from the 3d Service Battalion³⁸ and the 3d Motor Transport Battalion formed a combination hard to beat in the expeditious handling and movement of supplies.

At the end of the first day the 3d Marine Division, Reinforced, working as an efficient fighting team, had a foothold on Guam, (See Map 8) The day's operations had been costly (105 KIA, 536 WIA, and 56 MIA), but had troop leaders been less aggressive in moving their units off the beach, casualties would have been much heavier. Hundreds of rounds of enemy mortar and artillery shells had been observed exploding harmlessly in areas just previously occupied by advancing Marines.³⁹

THE SOUTHERN ASSAULT

The brigade operation plan called for landing Lieutenant Colonel Alan Shapley's 4th Marines and Colonel Merlin F. Schneider's 22d Marines as the assault units and holding the Army's 305th RCT (77th Division), commanded by Colonel Vincent J. Tanzola, as brigade floating reserve. (See Map 9, Map Section)

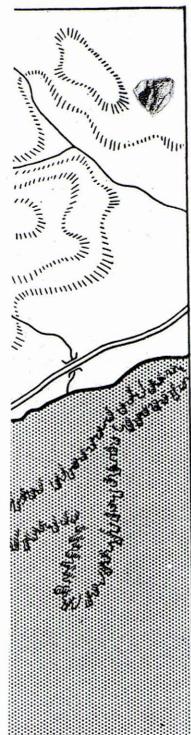
The 4th, on the right, was to establish a beachhead and protect the flank of the brigade. The 22d, after landing on the left, and securing Agat Village, would drive north and cut off Orote Peninsula. When committed, the 305th had the mission of being prepared to make a passage of lines of the 4th and protect that sector of the beachhead. The brigade would then make preparations for further offensive operations.⁴⁰

Beaches Yellow and White, target of General Shepherd's command, lay between Agat Village and Bangi Point. (See Map 10) As in the 3d

³⁸ 3d SerBn SAR, 1. Attached to 3d SerBn for the landing were the 2d AmmoCo and Co B, 5th FldDep.

³⁹ 3d MarDiv WD, July 1944, 6.

⁴⁰ 1st ProvMarBrig OpPlan 7-44, 11Jul44.



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ASSAULT WAVES of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade move toward the beach at Agat as the final rounds of the naval gunfire preparation explode ashore. (Navy Photograph.)

Division's sector, a wide reef protected the shore. Knowing this to be a natural obstacle, the Japanese had prepared to exploit it. Brutal mortar and artillery fire fell on approaching waves of LVT's as they crawled across the reef.

The enemy had his defenses ashore, consisting of numerous pillboxes built in coral outcroppings, well-organized. Concrete blockhouses, located on Gaan Point, held a 75mm⁴¹ and a 37mm gun which enfiladed the beaches. One 75mm field piece on Yona Island had not

⁴¹ This gun is constantly reported in war diaries and action reports as a 77mm field piece. Guns of the same caliber were supposedly encountered later in the campaign. However, an exhaustive search of records of captured and destroyed ordnance and of intelligence information of the Japanese armed forces reveals no such weapon. The probable explanation is that troops in heat of battle mistook the improved 75mm Model 94 with muzzle brake for a gun of larger caliber.

been knocked out. The emplacements did not show through the scattered clouds on aerial photographs available prior to the landing. The blockhouses formed large sand covered mounds, and the many palm trees made detection difficult.⁴²

These guns raked Beaches Yellow 1 and 2 as men of the 22d started to cross them. The regiment landed with the 1st and 2d Battalions in assault. The 3d, boated in LCVP's, remained at the line of departure in reserve. The loss of men and equipment at the water's edge made organization for the attack inland difficult.⁴³ But, as quickly as possible, units moved

⁴² Ltr LtCol R. W. Shaw to CMC, 29Sept52.

⁴³ Later, on Yellow Beach 2 alone, the bodies of 70 Marines were counted. B. G. Cass, ed., *History of the Sixth Marine Division*, (Washington, 1946), 14, hereinafter cited as *6th MarDiv History*.

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off the beaches and started toward their first objective.

On the right, the 2d (Lieutenant Colonel Donn C. Hart) advanced rapidly inland, overcame scattered resistance, and reorganized about 400 yards from the beach.⁴⁴ When the advance continued, a Japanese strong point in Company G's zone of action held up the battalion. However, the direct fire of regimental tanks,⁴⁵ fresh from the beach, helped eliminate this trouble. The companies then moved forward and secured the high ground about 1,000 yards inland.

After landing, the 1st Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Walfried H. Fromhold, wheeled left and commenced the drive toward Agat. As Company B, on the left flank next to the sea, reached the outskirts of the village, it met stiffened opposition. Naval bombardment had leveled the buildings, but the rubble furnished good protection for the Japanese defenders who had filtered back to the town.

⁴⁴ Initially, Japanese fires appear to have been concentrated on the beaches. Once units were 200-300 yards inland they were able to move more freely.

⁴⁵ These tanks had eliminated the troublesome emplacement on Gaan Point, taking the position from the rear and blasting the surprised enemy gunners before they could offer effective resistance. TkCo, 22d Mar BAR, 3.

Colonel Fromhold committed his reserve, Company C, and the momentum of the attack carried the battalion to Harmon Road by 1130. About the same time regimental headquarters attached Company I (3/22), which had landed on Yellow Beach at 1010, to 1/22 as reserve.⁴⁶

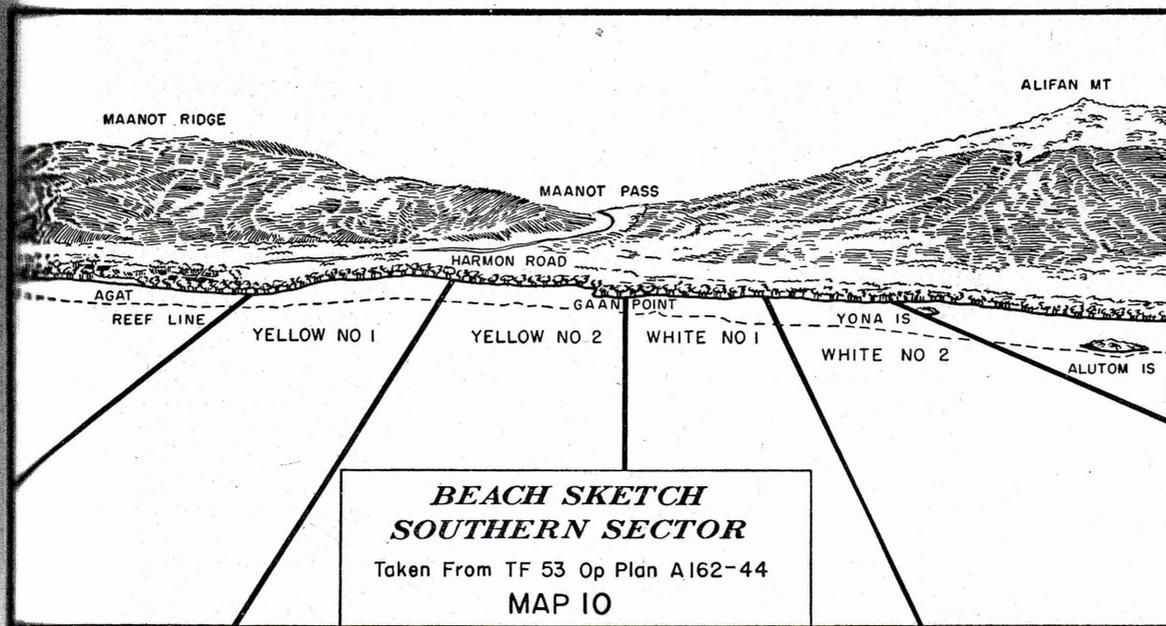
Fifteen minutes later General Shepherd, with his forward command echelon, disembarked and started toward the beach. After they arrived ashore brigade set up its command post in a coconut grove about 200 yards southeast of Gaan Point, and at 1350 Shepherd assumed control of all troops in his zone of action.⁴⁷

Other problems besides fighting the enemy confronted 1/22. Front line units started to run low on ammunition, and a message sent to the beach requesting a resupply brought an answer at 1350 of "Nothing on beach yet. Sent LVT's. Will have supplies when they return."⁴⁸ Evacuation of casualties also proved difficult. As it landed, an aid station party had received a direct hit from a 75mm field gun. Many medical supplies were destroyed and only one member of the medical team escaped uninjured. As a result, the battalion had no doctor until

⁴⁶ Ltr Maj S. A. Todd to CMC, 30Oct52.

⁴⁷ 1st ProvMarBrig WD, 1Jul-10Aug44, 4.

⁴⁸ 1/22 Jnl.



Company C (1/22) that night witnessed one of those enemy tactical moves that only the Japanese themselves can explain. Down the hill—the hill that had held up the company most of the afternoon—marched 12 enemy soldiers. The men of Nippon carried one light and three heavy machine guns and walked steadily toward the center of the position. If their mission was to die for the Emperor, the Marines helped them accomplish it. Machine-gun fire riddled the oncoming Japanese who made no attempt to set up their weapons and defend themselves, and most of the group never reached the front lines.

About 0515 a platoon of Ammunition Company, 5th Field Depot, repelled an enemy demolition group headed for the brigade ammunition dump. The raiders left 14 dead behind.

Much of the credit for repelling the night-long enemy attacks must go to artillery and naval gunfire. In addition, ship's 5-inch guns and the infantry's 60mm mortars furnished constant illumination, which increased the effectiveness of defensive fires as well as permitting good observation of the enemy's movements.⁶⁸

The last of the counterattacks designed to destroy the southern beachhead ceased at dawn. The enemy had thrown the 38th Infantry Regiment (less 3d Battalion) against the Marines in the night effort. One battalion had hit each of the brigade flanks, and the reinforcing units of the regiment had made the frontal assault against the 4th Marines. According to Japanese accounts, Colonel Suenaga, the regimental commander, was killed while leading the center attack.

Following the night's activities that had destroyed the 38th Regiment as a fighting force,⁶⁹ the brigade quickly restored its front lines by employing local reserves, and preparations got under way to resume the advance.

LANDING OF THE 305th RCT

The brigade operation plan called for one landing team (LT) of the Army's 305th Regimental Combat Team to be boated and at the

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Takeda.*

line of departure by 1030 on W-Day. Colonel Tanzola assigned this mission to the 2d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Adair). Shortly after the Marine assault waves cleared the line of departure, Colonel Adair ordered his men into their landing craft. A liaison team from the 305th Field Artillery Battalion also embarked into small boats to accompany the LT to shore.

After arriving at the control boat on schedule the commander found brigade headquarters had no immediate need for his troops. They began the monotony of waiting for orders. The artillery liaison party went ashore to select positions, but the 2d Battalion continued circling at the LD. After seemingly endless hours, 2/305 received a message at 1405 to land and assemble in an area 400 yards inland from Gau Point.⁷⁰

With no LVT's allotted or available, troops waded ashore through waist-deep water over a reef full of pot holes and shell craters. Weapons and equipment got water-soaked when men stumbled over submerged coral heads. If someone found good footing, everyone tended to move toward that sector of the reef. As a result, units became intermingled and forged about dispersion. Fortunately, the Marines kept the Japanese too busy to fire on the beach or reef. After quickly reorganizing on Beach White 1, the battalion moved into its assembly area where it set up defensive positions for the night and immediately started to make preparations for the next day's mission.

Trouble seemed to be following the 305th. About 1430 General Shepherd ordered the rest of Colonel Tanzola's combat team to land. But communication difficulties delayed the message until 1530;⁷¹ then the regiment only had enough craft available to land one battalion. The 1st (Lieutenant Colonel James E. Landrum) embarked in its landing craft and proceeded to the control boat for clearance to the beach. Naval officers refused to dispatch the boats because of lack of landing instructions. By the time the brigade had verified the movement the hour was 1730.⁷²

⁷⁰ 1st ProvMarBrig WD, 1Jul-10Aug44, 4.

⁷¹ 305th Inf Jnl.

⁷² 305th Inf Action Rpt, 1.

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In the meantime, Colonel Tanzola, becoming quite concerned about the fast-approaching darkness, sent a message to brigade headquarters:

Order to 305th Infantry conflicting. Was ordered to land entire CT. Cannot complete unloading of team before dark. Instructions received by TD 38 [Transport Division 38] differ. Suggest suspension of unloading. Request clear order be issued. Expedite reply.⁷³

The reply came promptly, "Land your CT at once in accordance with previous instructions."⁷⁴

Lieutenant Colonel Landrum and his men found conditions very similar to those which had faced the 2d Battalion. The RCT still had no LVT's, and upon starting across the reef the troops encountered the same holes, shell craters, and coral heads. Incoming tide raised the water chest-high, and men had to swim out of the deeper holes. Darkness added to their difficulties; they swerved south, landing dangerously near enemy-held territory. The battalion commander had planned to be in the center of his leading waves to keep control. However, because of the coral and depth of the water he landed on the left of the first wave, complicating the problem. Troops groped in search of their units, causing further disorder. But swift and decisive action by officers and NCO's resolved the confusion. Colonel Landrum located his assembly area and with his staff and guides moved approximately 60 percent of the battalion to it.

By 2130 the work of digging in for the night was well along. In the meantime, military police had stopped the remainder of the battalion on the beach fearing the movement forward during darkness might bring about unnecessary casualties. Consequently Landrum could not assemble his entire unit until after daylight the next day.⁷⁵

The 3d Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Edward Chalgren, Jr., was delayed even more. While waiting for the return of

landing craft, the unit's transport (USS *Alpine*) suddenly received orders to get under way. A report of an enemy submarine in the area kept the ship at sea until 2120.⁷⁶ Darkness slowed debarkation and a shortage of boats (over half of the ship's boats had not been recovered when the *Alpine* put to sea) delayed unloading. Shortly after midnight the first wave started toward the beach, but failure of boat compasses caused crews much difficulty in maintaining the correct direction in proceeding the 12,000 yards from ship to shore. About 0200 the leading waves hit the reef that was concealed by high tide and darkness. After several boats nearly capsized in an attempt to cross the reef approximately 800 yards off White Beach 2 the battalion commander ordered the ramps lowered and troops began to wade ashore. Battalion and company guides, previously dispatched in daylight, met the men of 3/305 as they trudged through the shoulder-deep water and led them to assembly areas where they remained for the night.

To reduce confusion and danger for later waves, Lieutenant Colonel Chalgren and his staff borrowed five LVT's from the Marines and stationed the vehicles at the reef line. One LVT acted as control boat to direct incoming traffic while the remaining four amphibious tractors ferried troops across the treacherous coral. By dawn most of the battalion had landed, but some elements did not hit dry land until 0600. Men were seasick, wet, and tired, and harrassed by occasional mortar rounds landing in or near the beach assembly area where congestion and coral rock generally prevented digging even shallow trenches. By 0700 all men had been accounted for and companies had reorganized.⁷⁷

Colonel Tanzola and his staff had their troubles too. They disembarked about 2330 and upon reaching the reef found no transportation. As they waded and swam to the beach, a rubber raft drifted near. The regimental commander immediately put the raft to use and floated to shore on it.

⁷³ 1st ProvMarBrig Jnl.

⁷⁴ 305th Inf Jnl.

⁷⁵ Ltr Col J. E. Landrum, Jr. to CMC, 22Oct52, hereinafter cited as *Landrum*.

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⁷⁶ 305th Inf Jnl.

⁷⁷ Ltr Col E. A. Chalgren, Jr. to author, 23Jan53, hereinafter cited as *Chalgren*.



A scene from Clint Eastwood's **'Letters From Iwo Jima'**

Eastwood Achieves Grandeur In 'Letters From Iwo Jima'

Elegiac Epic Leads the Pack Among Holiday Releases; 'Rocky Balboa,' Aging Bull

By JOE MORGENSTERN

The first sign of an American presence in Clint Eastwood's "Letters From Iwo Jima" is a squadron of gull-winged Navy Corsairs that roars out of a cloudy gray sky to attack a Japanese installation. In another film, at another time, American audiences would have thrilled to the sight of enemy troops scattering, falling and dying on the ground below. In this film we are on the ground looking up through the eyes of those troops, who see the Corsairs as the enemy. The reversal is unsettling to say the least, and exactly as intended, but then fascinating, absorbing and deeply affecting.

The release of "Letters" follows Mr. Eastwood's recent "Flags of Our Fathers," which dramatized America's horrifically costly battle for the small Pacific island in World War II, and the fates of the young men who planted the Stars and Stripes on the summit of Mount Suribachi. "Letters" can be seen as a companion piece—a chronicle of the battle, in Japa-

nese with English subtitles, from the Japanese point of view. In a larger sense, though, it is the second, and artistically superior, half of a single epic film that springs from a single, stunning act of compassionate imagination.

The pace is deliberate and the style is austere, with bleached color photography (by Tom Stern) that could almost pass for black-and-white, yet the feeling is intimate. This is a claustrophobic epic, set mostly inside the elaborate network of caves and tunnels that the Japanese have dug in Iwo Jima's sandy hillsides. The Japanese soldiers aren't depicted as anonymous Others, but as men who might be, but for their faces and uniforms—and for their uncommon individuality—the GIs and officers of American war movies.

These fighting men, like any others, write let-

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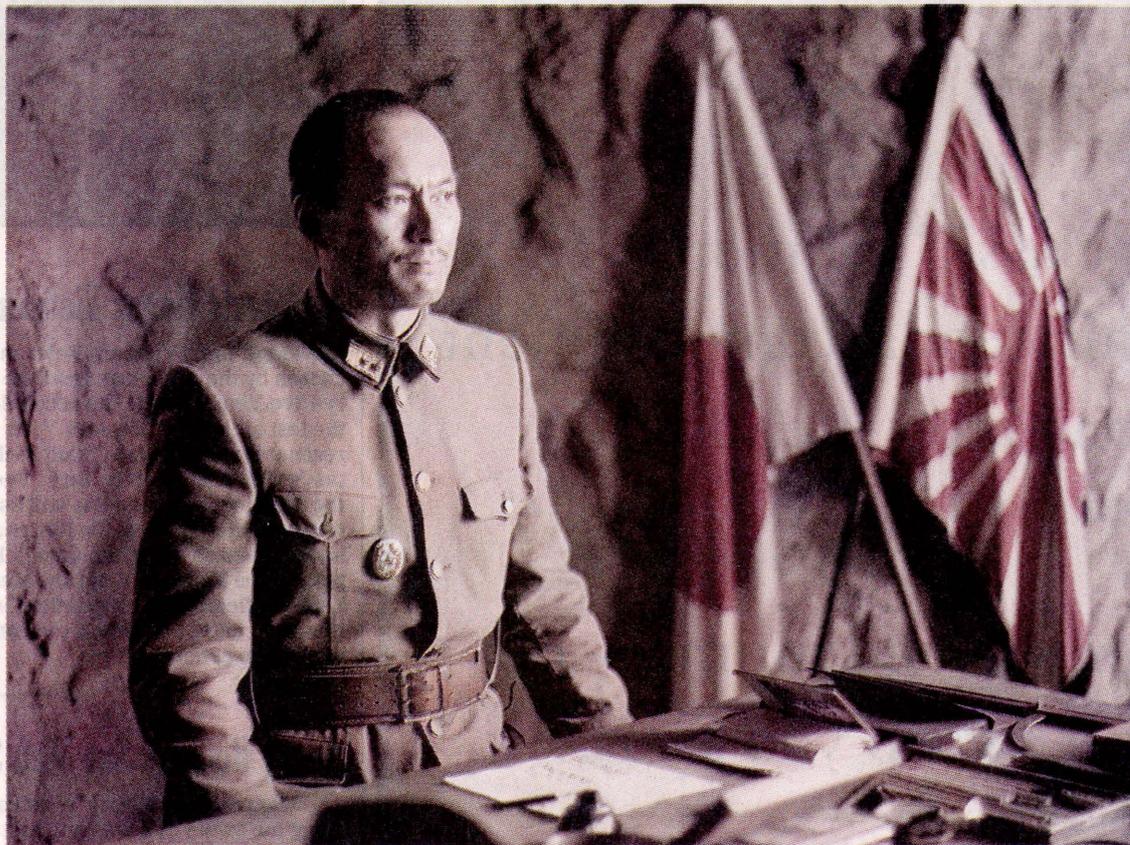
ters to their mothers, girlfriends and wives. They've been taught blind obedience to the emperor, but their loyalty collides with their instinct for survival as they come to understand that they're destined to die inside their caves. Some of the officers certainly qualify as fanatics, but others who have lived in the U.S., and counted Americans as friends, take a tragic view of their plight. They know they are doomed, yet they fight furiously and heroically all the same. (As the island's commander, Gen. Kuribayashi, Ken Watanabe gives a performance that's commanding in every way—taciturn, fiery on occasion, forthright yet self-effacing.)

The view taken by Clint Eastwood, directing from Iris Yamashita's exemplary screenplay, is elegiac, but—and this is remarkable, given the nature of the production and the sweep of his ambition—not at all didactic. He lets the film speak for itself, and so it does—of humanity as well as primitive rage and horror on both sides of the battle. And the production as a whole, "Flags of Our Fathers" together with "Letters From Iwo Jima," speaks more eloquently still—of epic folly and shared tragedy, of purblind imperatives and dire necessity. Just as usefully, if not more so, the two parts illuminate each other in intricate, specific ways, explaining why, for instance, a Japanese prisoner of war went berserk, or what happened to a GI after he was taken captive. The sum of both parts is a war movie unlike any other.

Nicola Dove/Miramax

The New York Times

Blurring the Line in the Bleak Sands of Iwo Jima



Merie W. Wallace/Warner Brothers Pictures

Ken Watanabe as Lt. Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi in Clint Eastwood's "Letters From Iwo Jima."

There are certain assumptions that American audiences, perhaps without realizing it, are likely to bring to a movie about World War II. The combat picture has been a Holly-

A.O. SCOTT
FILM REVIEW

wood staple for so long — since before the actual combat was over — that it can sometimes seem as if every possible story has already been told. Or else as if each individual story, from G.I.

Joe to Private Ryan, is at bottom a variation on familiar themes: victory against the odds, brotherhood under fire, sacrifice for a noble cause.

But of course there are other, contrasting stories, a handful of which form the core of "Letters From Iwo Jima," Clint Eastwood's harrowing, contemplative new movie and the companion to his "Flags of Our Fathers," which was released this fall. That film, partly about the famous photograph of American servicemen raising the flag on the barren volcanic island of Iwo Jima, complicated the standard Hollywood combat narrative in ways both subtle and overt. It exposed the heavy sediment of individual grief, cynicism and frustration beneath the collective high sentiments of glory and heroism but without entirely debunking the value or

Letters From Iwo Jima

Opens today in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

necessity of those sentiments.

"Letters," which observes the lives and deaths of Japanese soldiers in the battle for Iwo Jima, similarly adheres to some of the conventions of the genre even as it quietly dismantles them. It is, unapologetically and even humbly, true to the durable tenets of the war-movie tradition, but it is also utterly original, even radical in its methods and insights.

In December 2004, with "Million Dollar Baby," Mr. Eastwood almost nonchalantly took a tried and true template — the boxing picture — and struck from it the best American movie of the year. To my amazement, though hardly to my surprise, he has done it again; "Letters From Iwo Jima" might just be the best Japanese movie of the year as well.

This is not only because the Japanese actors, speaking in their own language, give such vivid and varied performances, but also because the film, in its every particular, seems deeply and un-self-consciously embedded in the experiences of the

Continued on Page 10

Blurring the Line in the Sands of Iwo Jima: A Japanese View of the War

Continued From First Arts Page

characters they play. "Letters From Iwo Jima" is not a chronicle of victory against the odds, but rather of inevitable defeat. When word comes from Imperial headquarters that there will be no reinforcements, no battleships, no air support in the impending fight with the United States Marines, any illusion of triumph vanishes, and the stark reality of the mission takes shape. The job of these soldiers and their commanders, in keeping with a military ethos they

A second war picture that looks at the same fight, this time from the opposing side.

must embrace whether they believe in it or not, is to die with honor, if necessary by their own hands.

The cruelty of this notion of military discipline, derived from long tradition and maintained by force, is perhaps less startling than the sympathy Mr. Eastwood extends to his characters, whose sacrifices are made in the service of a cause that the American audience knows to be bad as well as doomed. It is hard to think of another war movie that has gone so deeply, so sensitively, into the mind-set of the opposing side.

Since the fighting that Mr. Eastwood depicts is limited to a single, self-contained piece of the Japanese homeland, the bloody roster of Japanese atrocities elsewhere in Asia and the South Pacific remains off screen. But this omission in no way compro-

Letters From Iwo Jima

Opens today in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Directed by Clint Eastwood; written (in Japanese, with English subtitles) by Iris Yamashita, based on a story by Ms. Yamashita and Paul Haggis; director of photography, Tom Stern; edited by Joel Cox and Gary D. Roach; music by Kyle Eastwood and Michael Stevens; production designers, Henry Bumstead and James J. Murakami; produced by Mr. Eastwood, Steven Spielberg and Robert Lorenz; released by Warner Brothers Pictures and DreamWorks Pictures. Running time: 141 minutes.

WITH: Ken Watanabe (Lt. Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi), Kazunari Ninomiya (Saigo), Tsuyoshi Ihara (Baron Nishi), Ryo Kase (Shimizu), Shidou Nakamura (Lieutenant Ito) and Nae (Hanako).

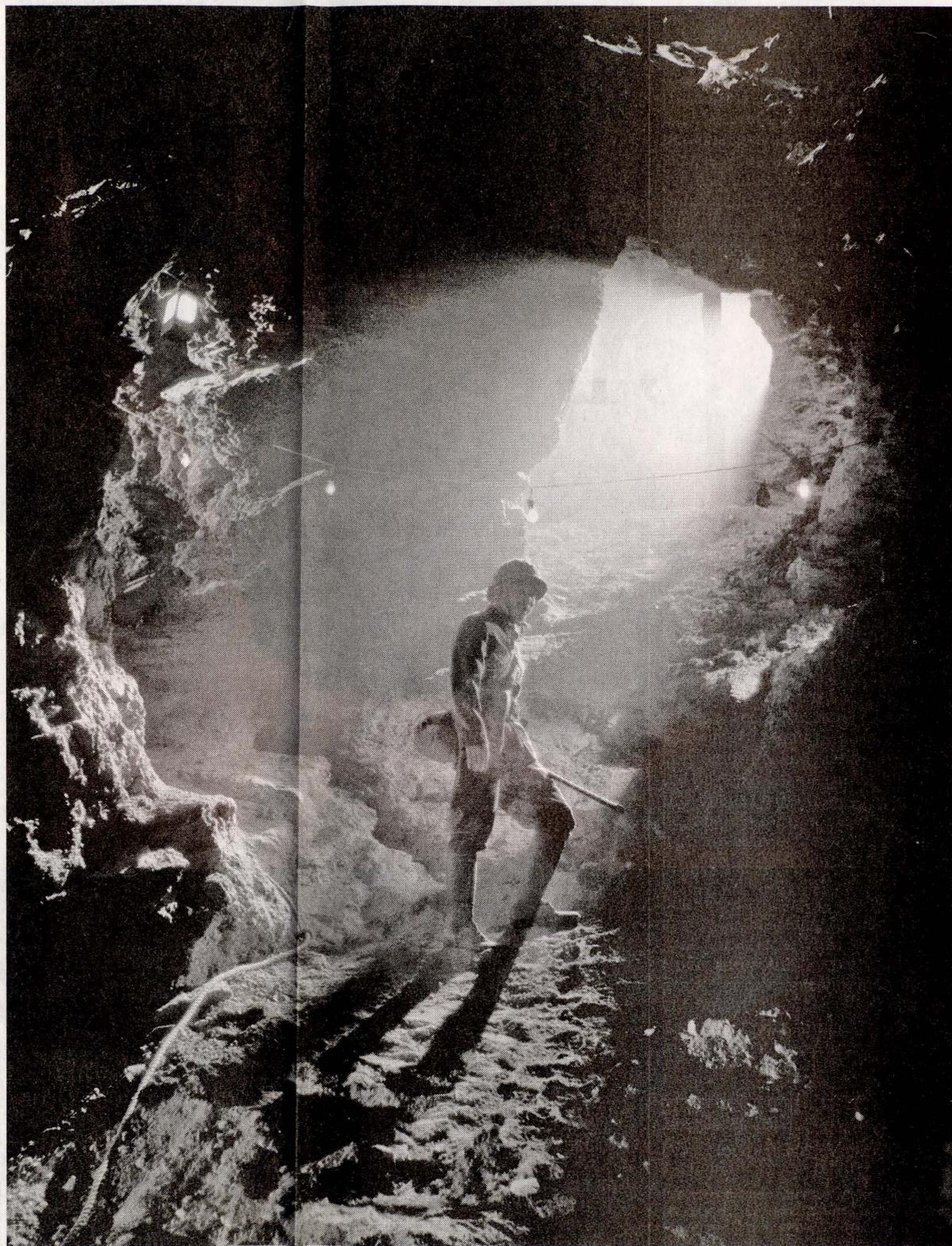
mises the moral gravity of what takes place before our eyes. Nor does it diminish the power of the film's moving and meticulous vindication of the humanity of the enemy. (Mr. Eastwood also, not incidentally, exposes some inhumanity on the part of the American good guys, a few of whom are shown committing atrocities of their own.)

Any modern military organization depends, to some extent, on the dehumanization of its own fighters as well as their adversaries. (In "Flags of Our Fathers" the Japanese are all but faceless, firing unseen from bunkers and tunnels dug into the mountainside; in "Letters From Iwo Jima" we see the grueling work and strategic inspiration that led to the digging of those tunnels.)

An army needs personnel, not personalities, and one of the functions of the art and literature of war — especially on film, which exists to consecrate the human face — is to compensate for this forced anonymity by emphasizing the flesh-and-blood individuality of the combatants. Think of the classic Hollywood platoon picture, with its carefully distributed farm boys and city kids, its quota of blowhards and bookworms, all superintended by a wise, crusty commander. Even as they approach stereotype, those characters give names, faces and identities to men who have gone down in history mainly as statistics.

Historians estimate that 20,000 Japanese infantrymen defended Iwo Jima; 1,083 of them survived. (The Americans sent 77,000 Marines and nearly 100,000 total troops, of whom close to 7,000 died and almost 20,000 were wounded.) The Japanese commander was Lt. Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi, whose illustrated letters to his wife and children, recently unearthed on the island, were a source for Iris Yamashita's script. Played by Ken Watanabe, Kuribayashi, who arrives on Iwo Jima with a pearl-handled Colt and fond memories of the years he spent in America before the war, is a dashing, cosmopolitan figure. He arouses a good deal of suspicion among the other officers for his modern ideas and for the kindness he sometimes displays toward the low-ranking soldiers.

The general is a practical man (those tunnels are his idea) in an impossible circumstance, and Mr. Watanabe's performance is all the more heartbreaking for his crisp, unsentimental dignity. He anchors the film — this is some of the best acting of the year, in any language — but does not dominate it. Much as the Imperial Army may have been rigidly hier-



A Japanese officer in a scene from "Letters From Iwo Jima," a companion to "Flags of Our Fathers."

archical, Mr. Eastwood's sensibility is instinctively democratic. As the battle looms, and even as the bombs, bullets and artillery shells begin to explode, he takes the time to introduce us to Saigo (Kazunari Ninomi-

ya), a guileless baker with no great desire to give his life for the glory of the nation; Lieutenant Ito (Shidou Nakamura), who will settle for nothing else; Baron Nishi (Tsuyoshi Ihara), an Olympic equestrian who once

hobnobbed with Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks; and Shimizu (Ryo Kase), who Saigo suspects is an agent of the secret police.

It is customary to use the word epic to describe a movie that deals

with big battles, momentous historical events and large numbers of dead. But while some of Mr. Eastwood's set pieces depict warfare on a large scale, the overall mood of "Letters From Iwo Jima," as the title suggests, is strikingly intimate. Even though the movie has a blunt, emphatic emotional force, Mr. Eastwood also shows an attention to details of speech and gesture that can only be described as delicate.

He is as well acquainted as any American director (or actor) with the language of cinematic violence, but he has no equal when it comes to dramatizing the ethical and emotional consequences of brutality. There is nothing gratuitous in this film, nothing fancy or false. There is the humor and the viciousness of men in danger; there is the cool logic of military planning and the explosive irrationality of behavior in combat; there is life and death.

As in "Flags of Our Fathers," nearly all the color has been drained from the images, a technique that makes the interiors of the caves and tunnels look like Rembrandt paintings. The anxious faces seem to glow in the shadows, illuminated by their own suffering. At other times, in the hard outdoor light, Tom Stern's cinematography is as frank and solemn as a Mathew Brady photograph.

A few scenes serve as hinges joining this movie to "Flags of Our Fathers." While "Letters From Iwo Jima" seems to me the more accomplished of the two films — by which I mean that it strikes me as close to perfect — the two enrich each other, and together achieve an extraordinary completeness. They show how the experience of war is both a shared and a divisive experience, separating the dead from the living and the winners from the losers, even as it binds them all together.

Both films travel back and forth in time and space between Iwo Jima and the homelands of the combatants. In "Flags of Our Fathers" the battle itself happens mainly in flashback, since the movie is in large measure about the guilt and confusion that survivors encountered upon their reluctant return home. In "Letters From Iwo Jima" the battle is in the present tense, and it is home that flickers occasionally in the memories of men who are certain they will not live to see it again.

"Letters From Iwo Jima" is rated R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian). It includes extremely graphic combat violence.

DO NOT FORGET THE NEEDiest!

A Long Struggle to Preserve a Hawaiian Archipelago and Its Varied Wildlife

By CHRISTOPHER PALA

MIDWAY ATOLL, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument — As the pilot of the Coast Guard C-130 transport plane banks and circles over atoll after deserted atoll on a five-hour, 1,400-mile flight from Honolulu, the sheer emptiness of the world's largest nature reserve becomes starkly apparent.

Yet two of the most powerful men in the world — first President Bill Clinton and then President Bush — struggled for eight years to upgrade the area into a true reserve, in a process that involved more than 100 public meetings and 52,000 public comments, most of them supportive. The main obstacle was a tiny, marginally profitable fishing fleet composed of eight boats and employing fewer than 20 people, most of them part-time, but vigorously defended by a powerful senator and an entrenched federal bureaucracy.

"Rarely have so many fought so hard for so long for so few," said Jay Nelson, the Northwest Hawaiian Islands project director of the Pew Charitable Trusts and one of many environmentalists who worked to support the presidents' efforts.

This national monument is so remote that only two dozen people at a time will be able to visit, and only here in Midway, one of two populated islands.

Though the combined land surface of what some officials call the American Galápagos is a minuscule 3,328 acres, just four times the size of Central Park, the coral surrounding them, in hues ranging from magenta to aquamarine, stretch out for miles from each atoll and total more than 5,000 square miles, larger than Connecticut.

This was the real stake: a vast collection of some of world's least damaged reefs and the home to the endangered Hawaiian monk seal. Its population of about 1,200 is falling by 4 percent a year, so scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are making extraordinary efforts to stem the decline. When twins were born in

Today, under the tutelage of Fish and Wildlife Service biologists, the islands are slowly recovering from the depredations of humans and the plants and creatures they introduced, including rabbits, rats and ironwood.

What some jokingly call the second Battle of Midway began innocuously enough early in the second Clinton administration, when Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt hired William Y. Brown, a former chairman of the Ocean Conservancy, and asked him to look into expanding the department's role in protecting the oceans.

"It became clear that the most important coral reef complex in American waters that needed protection was the Northwest Hawaiian Islands," Mr. Babbitt said in an interview.

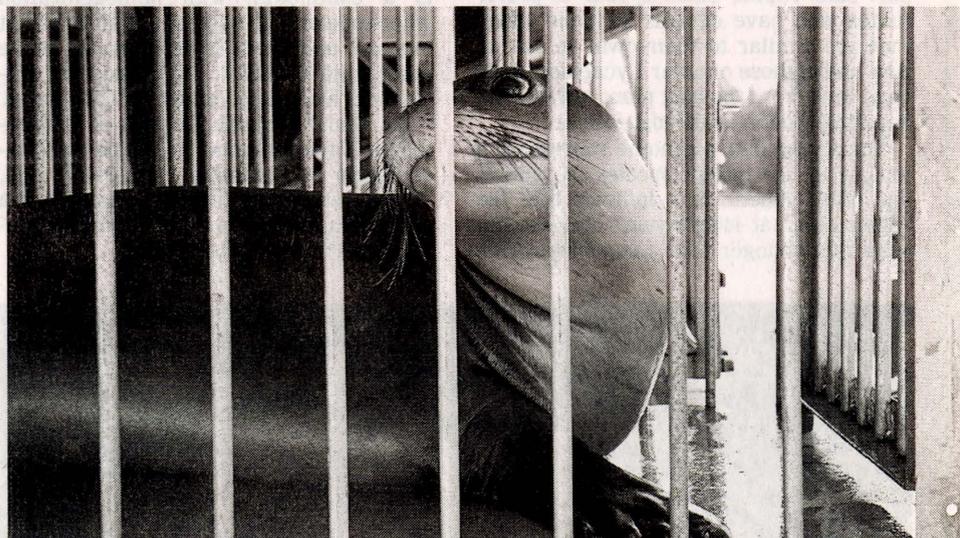
The Interior Department includes the Fish and Wildlife Service, which had already banned fishing in the archipelago's near reefs to a depth of 60 feet. Beyond that, the first three miles of water belonged to the State of Hawaii, which opposed an end to fishing, according to the Democratic governor at the time, Benjamin J. Cayetano. The waters extending from there to 200 miles were managed by NOAA, which is part of the Commerce Department.

Dr. Brown recalled that the islands were being intensively fished for lobster, and that Fish and Wildlife Service officials in Honolulu were saying there was nothing they

REMOTE RESERVE A Coast Guard plane over Midway, near right, and one of the monk seals being returned, below. The atoll is home to many marine species, including spinner dolphins, below right. During World War II, part of the atoll was highly militarized, and the impact of humans is evident: far right, the remains of an albatross that ate plastic debris.



Photographs by Linny Morris for The New York Times

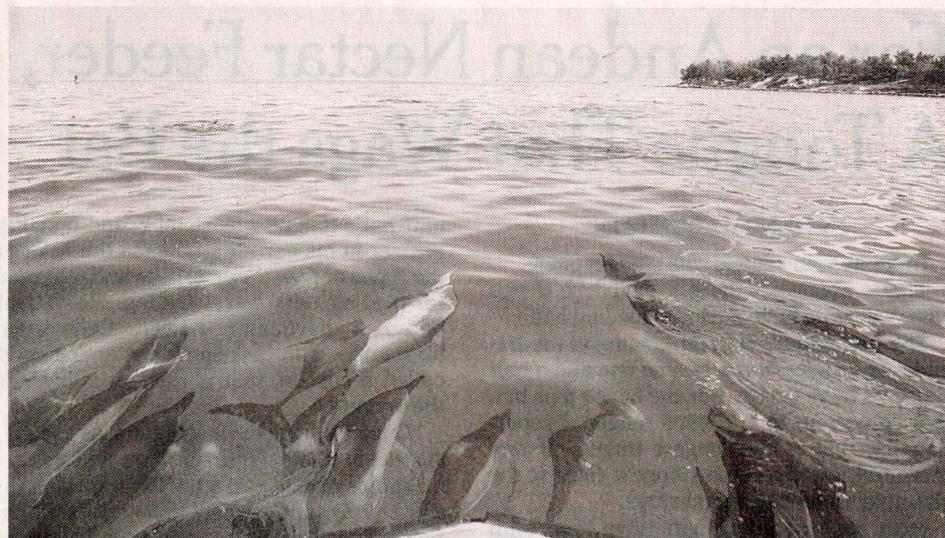


Midway this summer, the scientists, knowing that twins rarely survive in nature, captured them and took them to Honolulu, where they were fattened up with herring.

They were returned on this special Coast Guard flight to Midway, where they will be released, probably next spring, once they

could do about it since the fishing was in waters deeper than 60 feet. A second, smaller fishery of bottom fish like pink snapper and Hawaiian grouper was also being depleted, he said.

Mr. Babbitt had enlisted Mr. Clinton's support for designating the islands a national monument, along with



documentary "Voyage to Kure," named after the northwesternmost of the islands. Elliott A. Norse, president of the Marine Conservation Biology Institute, said that he spoke to Mr. Bush before and after the screening and that Mr. Bush made clear he wanted all fishing to end as quickly as possible, though he did not say how he planned

Bush signed it the next day.

Mr. Inouye declined to be interviewed for this article or to release his letter to Mr. Babbitt.

For Mr. Babbitt, the strong resistance put up by NOAA and Mr. Inouye was not about saving those 20-odd jobs. "They were afraid that this is the beginning of a slippery slope, leading the American public to understand that our oceans are in serious trouble from overfishing," he said, "and that having started in one place, we will expand our vision to stronger regulation of the entire ocean."

Kitty Simonds, the longtime executive director of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, which advises NOAA on fishing policy, said the bottom fish in the islands remained plentiful.

"We're not asking the president to get rid of the monument, but we want to continue our bottom-fish fishery because it's perfectly healthy, that's the bottom line," she said. "And we think it should be possible to start a sustainable fishery for reef fish and to har-



vest coral."

Dennis Heinemann, senior scientist at the Ocean Conservancy, disagrees. He led a study in 2004 that found that the population of the commercial species of bottom fish in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands had dropped by roughly half in 15 years. The popular pink snapper fell by 84 percent in 10 years, with other snappers also showing declines in population and size. Samuel Pooley, director of NOAA's Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, confirmed these estimates but said they were compatible with a healthy fishery.

The 2004 study acquired new relevance after an analysis of Hawaiian monk seals' fatty tissues, commissioned by NOAA and led by Sara Iverson, a biology professor at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, revealed that "bottom fish, particularly snapper and boarfish, are their main prey," she said in a telephone interview. The study, which debunked earlier notions that the seals ate mostly shallow-water reef fish and lobsters, is undergoing peer review and is expected to be released early next year.

While Mr. Connaughton was encouraged by a Pew offer to buy out the fishermen, five of the eight remaining holders of fishing licenses for the islands' bottom-fish fishery refused to negotiate, saying they were hon-

composed of eight boats and employing fewer than 20 people, most of them part-time, but vigorously defended by a powerful senator and an entrenched federal bureaucracy.

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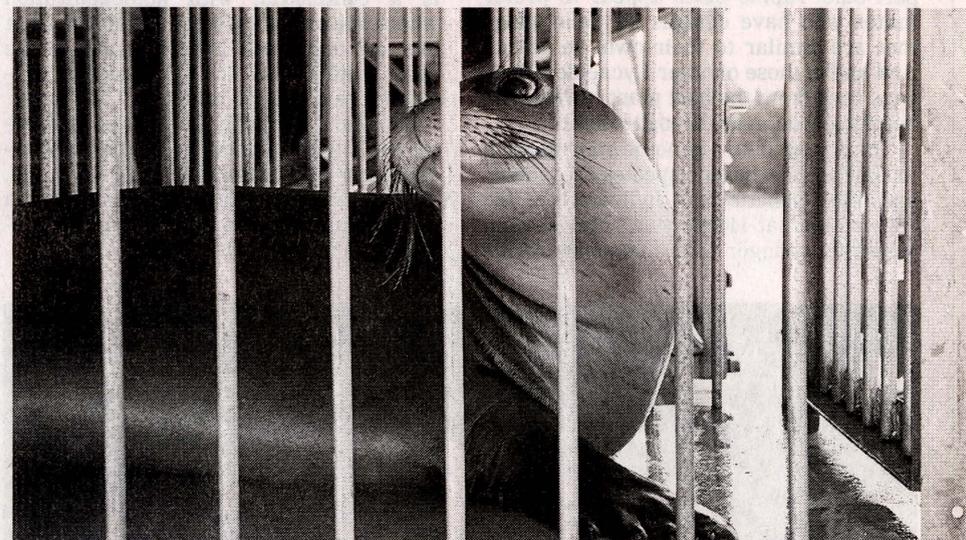
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The archipelago also harbors some of the highest densities in the world of so-called apex predators, the sharks, groupers and jacks who have no natural predators of their own but whose numbers have been depleted elsewhere by fishermen. If all fishing stops, scientists say, these reefs could be returned to a truly pristine state within a decade.

"The islands don't have as diverse marine life as, say, Indonesia, because they're so far north," extending up to the latitude of New Orleans, said Russell Brainard, NOAA's chief coral reef scientist in Hawaii. "But in terms of their size and the low level of interference from man, they're already unique."

With the exception of highly militarized Midway and Tern Island during World War II, the 10 islands or island groups have been nature reserves of one sort or another since President Theodore Roosevelt established the Hawaiian Islands Reservation in 1909.

could do about it since the fishing was in waters deeper than 60 feet. A second, smaller fishery of bottom fish like pink snapper and Hawaiian grouper was also being depleted, he said.

Mr. Babbitt had enlisted Mr. Clinton's support for designating the islands a national monument, along with a dozen or so other places, and in 2000, Mr. Babbitt proposed the idea to Hawaii's senior senator, Daniel K. Inouye. Mr. Inouye, the ranking Democrat on the Commerce Committee, replied with a strongly worded letter that Mr. Babbitt summarized as saying, "Don't you dare."

Instead, Congress approved a measure that gave the president authority to move toward turning the islands into a sanctuary, a much weaker designation that generally allows continued fishing, to be administered by NOAA.

In 2001, James L. Connaughton, Mr. Bush's chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, picked up where the Clinton administration left off. But, Mr. Nelson and other participants said, the process of creating a marine sanctuary dragged on for years because of Mr. Inouye's and NOAA's unwillingness to curb fishing.

But several groups continued to press for protection for the islands, including Kahea, a Hawaiian environmental group; the Ha-



wai Audubon Society; and the Washington-based group Environmental Defense. In September 2005, Gov. Linda Lingle, a Republican, reversed the previous administration's pro-fishing policy and declared the three-mile state waters off limits to all extraction.

Last April, Mr. Bush held a private White House viewing of Jean-Michel Cousteau's

documentary "Voyage to Kure," named after the northwesternmost of the islands. Elliott A. Norse, president of the Marine Conservation Biology Institute, said that he spoke to Mr. Bush before and after the screening and that Mr. Bush made clear he wanted all fishing to end as quickly as possible, though he did not say how he proposed to achieve that. "I think he wanted to do something spectacular for the environment that didn't conflict with existing policies," Mr. Norse said.

Mr. Connaughton said Mr. Bush had been following the travails of the sanctuary-creation process, and when a signing ceremony was scheduled for June 15, Mr. Connaughton met with him the morning before it. The measure to be signed, more than five years into the administration's efforts to turn the islands into a sanctuary, was only an intermediate document.

To Mr. Connaughton's "surprise and delight," Mr. Bush told him that given the time spent and the public support elicited, he had decided to designate the islands a national monument the next day, naming the state, NOAA and the Interior Department as co-managers and ending all fishing in five years. "It was exciting," Mr. Connaughton said.

"The lawyers worked through the night" to draft the declaration, he said, and Mr.

vest coral."

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While Mr. Connaughton was encouraged by a Pew offer to buy out the fishermen, five of the eight remaining holders of fishing licenses for the islands' bottom-fish fishery refused to negotiate, saying they were hoping for a bigger payoff in the form of a Congressional earmark appropriation, according to their leader, Gary Dill.

Regardless of whether a buyout occurs, Zenen Ozoa, another fisherman with a Northwest Hawaiian Islands license, said the cost of fuel had made fishing in such far-away areas less and less profitable. "I think the fishing will end within a couple of years, even without a buyout," he said.

As for the twin seals, they were curious and alert during the long flight to Midway and plunged with relish into a fenced-in area of water with a white-sand beach. NOAA scientists say they have a good chance of reaching maturity once they are released.

Monk seals, which have not changed in 15 million years and are the oldest in the pinniped family, are considered living fossils, and every individual counts. The day before the flight to Midway, a freshly weaned pup, the first born on Oahu Island in eight years, entangled itself in an illegally set gillnet and drowned.