

Phase 1 Continued

*PROGRESS OF LOGISTICAL SUPPORT*¹

Shortly after the L-Day landings, Radio Tokyo predicted that the beachhead on Okinawa would be wiped out.² From L-Day on, the impressive flow of troops and supplies ashore gave little support to this optimistic enemy forecast, however, as the Tenth Army hold on the island rapidly tightened. While the assault units fanned out to gain assigned initial objectives, battalion shore party commanders assumed control of their beach sectors. During L-Day, successively higher command echelons landed, and, by nightfall, divisions had assumed control of shore party operations.

A coral reef extending the length of the beaches was the only real obstacle to early unloading operations. During floodtide, a steady procession of DUKWs and LVTs shuttled cargo across the reef, and only within this 4-to-5 hour period of high tide could ships' landing craft make runs directly to a

few scattered places on the beaches. Low tide, however, exposed the coral outcroppings, and necessitated the establishment of offshore transfer points to maintain the flow of supplies to the beach. Barge cranes required at the transfer points to transship cargo were not available in appreciable numbers until L plus 2.

Increasingly intense *Kamikaze* raids posed a threat to the transport groups and caused delays in the buildup of supplies ashore. Additionally, the unexpected rapid infantry advances disrupted the unloading schedule. Meanwhile, shore party officers faced such other problems as the lack of suitable beach exits and the scarcity of engineering equipment to prepare them. Another critical matter of note was the shortage of transportation to clear the beaches of supplies. As the volume of cargo being landed increased, the number of trucks available for hauling to inland dumps decreased. According to the operation plans, organic assault division motor transport was to have supported the efforts of the shore parties initially. When frontline troops began to outdistance their support elements, the divisions were forced to withdraw their trucks

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *CNO Record*; *CTF 51 AR*; *Tenth Army AR*.

² IIIAC G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 2, dtd 3Apr45.

from the beaches to resupply forward assault units.³

The effort beginning on L-Day to bridge the reef barrier off the Hagushi beaches bore fruit by 4 April. In place opposite Yontan airfield on Red Beach 1 were ponton causeways that had been side-lifted to the target by LSTs. Earth fill ramps were constructed across the reef to Purple Beach 1 and the Orange Beaches near Kadena. Within the mouth of the Bishi Gawa, close to Yellow Beach 3, a small sand bar had been cleared of surface obstructions and enlarged. A loop access road was then cut through the beach cliff to the bar by engineers with Seabee assistance. As soon as these facilities were ready, cargo from landing craft as large as and including LCTs, could be unloaded directly over the two causeways and the improved sand bar.⁴

A total of 80 self-propelled barges, also side-carried to Okinawa, was in use constantly from the beginning of unload-

³ During logistics planning, it was assumed that, because of the immensity of the ICEBERG operation and the number of forces and equipment involved, there would be a commensurately huge consumption of fuels and lubricants (Class III supplies) by both ground and aviation units. Therefore, supplies for the construction of bulk storage facilities, and offshore pipelines to connect with tankers, were loaded for early delivery. Because the initial advance was so rapid and the resultant consumption of motor fuel unexpectedly high, the construction of these bulk handling facilities was expedited. Beginning 19 April, gasoline and diesel fuel was pumped to dumps from beached large gasoline barges. Four days later, tankers began pumping Class III supplies ashore; by 26 April, bulk storage facilities for aviation fuel had been established at Yontan and Kadena airfields. *Blakelock ltr 1965.*

⁴ *Ballance ltr.*

ing operations. The barges were employed in various ways, essentially at the discretion of the division commanders. One barge was assigned to each LST(H) as a landing float onto which the bow ramps of the landing ships were dropped to ease the transfer of casualties from small boats or amphibians. The majority of the barges served as floating supply dumps. These were particularly valuable for supplying critical items to the units ashore at night when cargo ships carrying needed supplies retired from the transport areas.

IIIAC mounted cranes on 12 of these self-propelled units and positioned them at the reef where netted cargo was transferred from boats to LVTs or DUKWs for the final run to inshore dumps. Referring to the demonstrated success of this method, one Marine shore party commander commented:

This was the [1st Marine Division's] innovation, first practiced successfully at Peleliu. Two of these barge-mounted cranes were loaned to [the] 6thMarDiv on [L plus 1] to facilitate their cargo handling, and XXIV Corps took up the method. That method accounted for the comparative lack of clutter on the 1st MarDiv beaches. That [the 1st Marine] Division had no beach dumps is a fact of prophetic import for future operations, for I believe establishment of such will invite their destruction in an assault landing.⁵

Encouraged by the satisfactory tactical picture, Admiral Turner authorized the use of floodlights and night unloading on all beaches starting 2 April, and directed that ships' holds be cleared of all assault cargo immediately. On the same day, he ordered that the personnel

⁵ *Ibid.*

and equipment of the aviation engineer battalions and the MAGs be expeditiously unloaded. On 3 April, General Geiger recommended to Turner that all priorities established for LSTs unloading over IIIAC beaches be suspended until every member of the airfield headquarters, service, construction, and maintenance units had arrived ashore.

Planned unloading priorities were upset, however, by Tenth Army insistence on getting Yontan and Kadena airfields operational at the earliest possible time, and by General Buckner's authorization on L plus 2 for corps commanders to bring garrison troops ashore at their discretion. Those on board control vessels and shore party personnel soon viewed many situations wherein low priority units and equipment intermingled with the shoreward flow of essential assault materiel. This interruption of supposedly firm unloading schedules was due, in part, to the natural desires of ships' captains to unload their vessels and to clear the vulnerable Hagushi anchorage as quickly as possible. The inadequacy of the motor transport available to the shore parties and the radical change in the unloading priorities, however, forced many ships to stand off shore with half-empty holds while awaiting the return of boats which were, meanwhile, stacked up at the control vessels.

Further complicating the critical control problem were the efforts of individual landing boat coxswains who, disregarding their instructions, attempted to "get to the beaches at all costs." Commenting on this matter, one transport group commander said:

There seemed to exist on the part of most coxswains an almost fierce determination to be first ashore with their individual boats, regardless of the orderly assignment to unloading points, which it is the function of the control vessel to carry out. Coxswains simply would not follow orders to form and remain in cargo circles, but jockeyed for positions of advantage from which to come along side the control vessel. Many even attempted to ignore the control vessel and bypass it, proceeding directly to whatever beach they had a preference for.⁶

Despite this, the control of ship-to-shore traffic was probably handled better at Okinawa than in previous Pacific operations, except those at Peleliu and Iwo Jima. After observing the assault landings in the Marianas, Admiral Turner was convinced that only "the most experienced personnel obtainable should be used in the Control Parties for assault landings."⁷ Consequently, the key members of the control groups which operated in the Palaus and Bonins served on board the control vessels at Okinawa, where their collective experience helped make ICEBERG a more efficient operation.

Although the ship-to-shore cargo transfer procedures were soon ironed out, problems at the beaches still existed. Organization of the northern landing beaches, for example, progressed slowly. In a critical but friendly evaluation of Marine shore party operations, experienced British observers stated that:

There seemed to be little or no traffic control, no sign posting of roads or dumps, and no orderly lay-out of the beach areas. It has been said already that the speed of advance inland outran the landing of

⁶ *CNO Record*, chap 7, p. 55.

⁷ CTF 51 OpRpt FORAGER, dtd 25Aug44, Recommendations, p. 2.

vehicles. The rapid landing of [motor transport] therefore became an imperative need and there is no doubt . . . that the rate of landing could have been greatly accelerated by proper organization. For instance, although vehicles were able to wade ashore at low tide on Yellow 2, they were only using one exit. This had no beach roadway on it, although its gradient and surface were such that a tractor was frequently required to pull vehicles through it. This considerably retarded progress. (It was noted both here and at other beaches that where beach matting had been laid down, it had usually been cut up by tractors. Separate exits for wheels and tracks is not one of the Marine Shore Party rules!)

It is easy to be critical, but the general impression remains that unloading organization in this sector was insufficiently flexible to cope with the unexpected military situation. However, the Shore Party work in this Corps [IIIAC] must be judged by results, and the fact is that after L-plus 1 day, no serious criticism of the unloading progress was made by the Corps Commander.⁸

The planned and orderly transition of shore party control to progressively higher troop echelons continued as the beachhead expanded. On 3 April, the XXIV Corps commander took charge of the southern beaches, and, three days later, the commander of the III Amphibious Corps Service Group assumed control for the unloading of the Marine divisions.⁹ After a conference of re-

⁸ British Combined Operations Observers POA Rpt to Chief of Combined Operations Representative, British Joint Staff Mission, Subj: Operations for the Capture of the Okinawa Gunto, dtd 18Apr45, p. 16 (OAB, NHD), hereafter *British Observers Rpt*.

⁹ Based on the post-operation recommendations of Lieutenant Colonel Francis M. McAlister, the commander of the Marine corps serv-

responsible fleet and troop logistics officers on board Admiral Turner's flagship on 8 April, arrangements were made for Tenth Army to take over all shore party activities on the Hagushi beaches the following morning. Major General Fred C. Wallace, the Island Commander, was placed in charge and his 1st Engineer Special Brigade was directed to assume control of all beaches, with the exception of the one which had recently been opened at Nago. In order to operate a much-needed forward supply dump for the far-ranging infantry units of the 6th Marine Division, the IIIAC Service Group retained control of this northern landing point.

Many of the shore party troops in the IIIAC zone of action were from replacement drafts. They had trained with the divisions as infantrymen and accompanied the assault echelon to the target. Until needed to replace casualties in the combat units, these Marines fulfilled a vital function while assigned to shore party and ships' working parties.

Although the weather remained perfect until the afternoon of L plus 3, heavy rain and winds during that night and most of the following day hampered unloading activities. With the abatement of high winds on 6 April, a stepped-up

ice group especially established for the landing on Guam, a like unit was organized for ICEBERG. Its mission was to operate all of the IIIAC shore installations and facilities required for debarkation, supply, and evacuation activities, and to provide local security in the service area. About 1 February 1945, the staffs of this service group and the Corps Shore Party assembled at Guadalcanal. Officers for these staffs came from IIIAC headquarters, FMFPac, and Tenth Army, and, on a temporary duty status, from the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions. *IIIAC AR*, chap 3, p. 21.



YELLOW BEACH 3 on L plus 2. As soon as LCTs and LCVPs are unloaded, others arrive to take their place. (USMC 118214)



CAUSEWAYS relieve logistical problems as tons of supplies are transported inland. (USMC 118304)

unloading pace resulted in the emptying of 13 APAs and AKAs, and 60 LSTs. The day before, in the midst of the storm, 32 empty cargo and transport vessels left the target area. Between L-Day and 11 April, when the first substantial increment of garrison shipping arrived, unloading over the Hagushi beaches was confined primarily to assault shipping. By noon of 11 April, 532,291 measurement tons of cargo had been unloaded, an amount greater than had been put ashore during the entire course of the Marianas campaign.¹⁰

SECURING THE EASTERN ISLANDS AND IE SHIMA¹¹

Since the rapid sweep of the Tenth Army had cleared the shoreline of Chimu Wan and a large section of the upper portion of Nagagusuku Wan by 5 April, Admiral Turner was anxious to utilize the beaches and berths on the east coast as soon as possible. Although minesweepers were clearing the extensive reaches of both anchorages, before unloading operations could be safely started the Japanese strength on the six small islands guarding the mouths of

¹⁰ "The first garrison shipping to arrive carried assault cargo that could not be lifted in the assault shipping" and, by 15 April, 577,040 measurement tons of cargo, mostly assault supplies, had been unloaded against an estimated beach capacity of 529,070 measurement tons. *Blakelock ltr.*

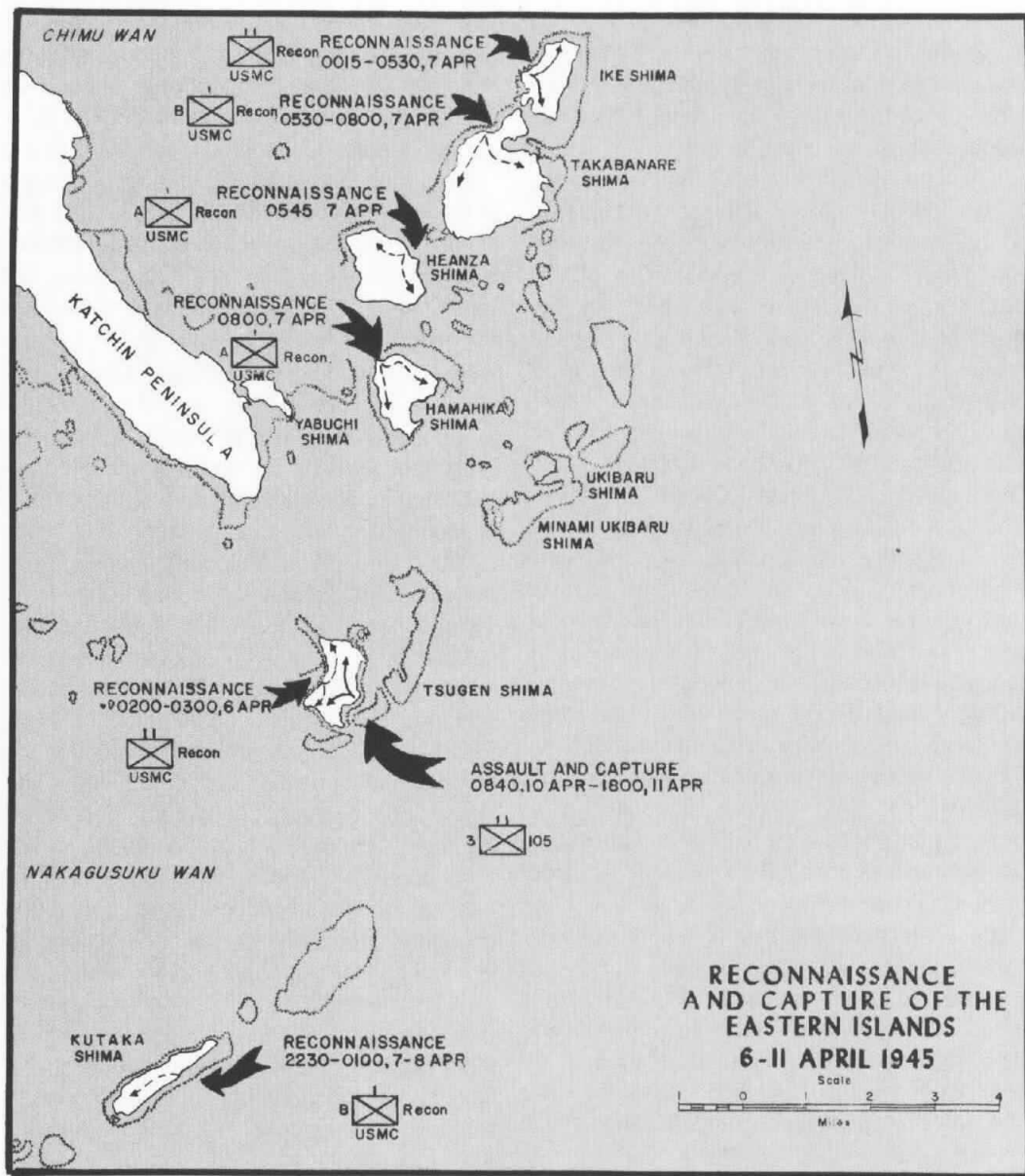
¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *CTF 52 AR*; *CTF 53 AR*; *27th InfDiv OpRpt*; *77th InfDivOpRpt*, Ie Shima; *PhibReconBn AR*; LtCol Max Myers (ed.), *Ours to Hold It High: The History of the 77th Infantry Division in World War II* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947), hereafter Myers, *77th InfDiv Hist.*

the two bays had to be determined. To acquire this information, the FMFPac Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion was attached to the Eastern Islands Attack and Fire Support Group and assigned the mission of scouting the islands. (See Map 11.)

Tsugen Shima, the only island suspected of being heavily defended, was the first target of the battalion. Although Tsugen is relatively small, its position southeast of the Katchin Peninsula effectively controls the entrances to Nakagusuku Wan. Aerial observers reported that the village of Tsugen and the high ridge overlooking it contained extensively developed strongpoints. After midnight, early on 6 April, high-speed APDs carrying the battalion arrived off the objective, and Companies A and B embarked in rubber boats to land on the western coast of the island at 0200. Just a short way inland from the landing point, four civilians were encountered; two were made prisoner, but the other two escaped to alert the garrison.¹²

Enemy reaction came almost immediately. Company A began receiving machine gun fire from the vicinity of Tsugen, while Company B was similarly taken under fire from a trench system in the northwest part of the island. Japanese mortars soon found the range of the landing party, whereupon the Marines withdrew to the beach under an unceasing shower of shells. Since the battalion assignment was to uncover enemy opposition and not engage it Major Jones reembarked his unit at

¹² Company B had rejoined the battalion on 3 April after its release at Iwo Jima by V Amphibious Corps.



MAP II

T. L. RUSSELL

0300. Although the Japanese claimed an easy victory over an "inferior" force,¹³ the scouts had accomplished their mission. Company A lost two Marines killed and eight wounded.

On the evening of 6 April, Major Jones' men resumed their investigation of the rest of the islands in the offshore group. At 0015 on 7 April, the entire battalion landed on Ike Shima, the northernmost island. When no sign of enemy troops or installations and only one civilian was discovered there, Company B went on to Takabanare Shima. Landing at 0530, it discovered that 200 thoroughly frightened Okinawan civilians were the island's only inhabitants. At about the same time, two platoons of Company A went to Heanza Shima and, using their rubber boats, crossed over to Hamahika Shima. Daylight patrols confirmed the absence of enemy soldiers, but 1,500 more civilians were added to those already counted. These islands were occupied later in April by 3/5.¹⁴

After nightfall on 7 April, Company B reboarded its APD, which then circled Tsugen Shima to land the Marines on Kutaka Shima, opposite enemy-held Chinen Peninsula. As the company paddled in to shore, the heavy surf capsized three of the boats and one man drowned. The island had neither enemy troops, installations, nor civilians, and the scouts withdrew shortly after midnight.

While the reconnaissance battalion was searching the rest of the Eastern Islands on 7 April, UDT swimmers checked the proposed landing beach on

the east coast of Tsugen Shima preparatory to the assault there. The capture of the Eastern Islands had been assigned to the 27th Infantry Division as its part in Phase I of the Tenth Army preferred invasion plan. The information gained from the 6-7 April reconnaissance indicated that commitment of an entire division was not warranted, and only one regiment was assigned for the operation.¹⁵

As the main body of the Army division was landing over the Orange beaches near Kadena on 9 April, the ships of the 105th RCT were rendezvousing at Kerama Retto with the command ship of the Eastern Islands Attack and Fire Support Group. The assault unit selected for the landing on Tsugen was 3/105, while the other two battalions of the RCT were designated floating reserve to be called up from Kerama if needed. Although Tsugen had been pounded intermittently by air and naval gunfire since L-Day, the ships' guns again blasted the island on 10 April, the day of the landing. Initial resistance was light when the soldiers landed at 0839, but the enemy, strongly entrenched in the stone and rubble of Tsugen, soon engaged the invaders in a day-long fire fight. The battle continued throughout the night, during which time the Army battalion sustained many casualties from the incessant enemy mortar fire coming from the heights above the village.

At daylight on the 11th, the rifle companies of 3/105 made a concerted

¹³ *Okinawa Operations Record*, pp. 72-73.

¹⁴ *1st MarDiv G-3 Jnl*, 17-23Apr45.

¹⁵ In response to General Hodge's request, on 8 April General Buckner ordered the remainder of the 27th Division landed on Okinawa to reinforce the XXIV Corps offensive.



MARINE RECONNAISSANCE *personnel prepare rubber boats for landings on Eastern Islands. (USMC 120002)*



DOMINATING *Ie Shima is Iegusugu Yama, beyond which are the airfields—the primary objectives of the operation. (USN 80-G-315059)*

attack against stubborn opposition which gradually died out. Organized resistance was eliminated by 1530, and the battalion was ordered to embark shortly thereafter to join the rest of the regiment at Kerama Retto. In a day and a half of fighting, the battalion lost 11 men, had 80 wounded, and 3 missing.¹⁶ An estimated 234 Japanese were killed and no prisoners were taken. The seizure of Tsugen Shima opened the approaches to Nakagusuku Wan, and ensured that XXIV Corps would receive supply shipments over the eastern as well as the western beaches. This operation also uncovered beaches in Chimu Wan which were developed by the Seabees and used for unloading the LSTs which brought construction supplies and equipment from the Marianas. This action relieved the load which had been placed on the Hagushi beaches, expedited base development, and hastened the building of additional unloading facilities.¹⁷

In its rapid advance leading to the capture of the Motobu Peninsula, the 6th Marine Division demonstrated that Okinawa north of the Ishikawa Isthmus could be taken by an attack overland. ICEBERG commanders were forced in turn to reappraise the original plans for Phases I and II. They found that naval requirements were now reduced to resupply and fire support operations, and that the ships which might have been needed for an amphibious assault of Motobu Peninsula—a possibility considered in all advance planning—were now available for the capture of Ie Shima. Losing no time, Admiral Turner

issued the attack order directing the seizure of the island and its vital airfield, and designated the Northern Attack Force commander, Admiral Reifsnider, as Commander, Ie Shima Attack Group.

Ie Shima was important because its size and physical features permitted extensive airfield development. Three and a half miles northwest of Motobu Peninsula, the island plateau was mostly flat land, broken only by low hills and scattered clumps of trees. Located in the middle of the eastern part of the island was a rugged and extremely steep 600-foot-high limestone mountain, Iegusugu Yama. There were few obstacles to widespread construction of airdromes besides this prominent terrain feature. This factor escaped the attention of neither Japanese nor American planners. The enemy had already laid out three runways, each a mile in length, on the central plateau, and the ICEBERG plan called for the expansion of these existing strips as well as the addition of others which would eventually accommodate an entire wing of very-long-range fighter aircraft.

The landing force selected for the invasion was General Bruce's 77th Infantry Division. After the Keramas landing, this unit spent two weeks on board ship in a convoy which steamed in circles approximately 300 miles southeast of Okinawa. Without warning, on 2 April enemy aircraft dove out of clouds which had hidden their approach and crash-dived four ships (three of which were command ships), before antiaircraft fire could open up on the intruders. The entire regimental

¹⁶ *27th InfDiv OpRpt*, p. 30.

¹⁷ *Blakelock ltr* 1965.

staff of the 305th Infantry was killed and wounded, and the total number of casualties listed in this one attack was 17 soldiers killed, 38 wounded, and 10 missing.¹⁸ Ten days after this disaster, the division was committed to land on 16 April, its second assault landing in less than a month. (See Map 12.)

Major Jones' Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion was assigned to execute the first mission of the operation. His unit was directed to seize and occupy Minna Shima, a small crescent-shaped island lying 6,500 yards southeast of the main target. Two 105mm and one 155mm howitzer battalions from 77th Division artillery were to be emplaced there to provide supporting fires during the Ie Shima battle.

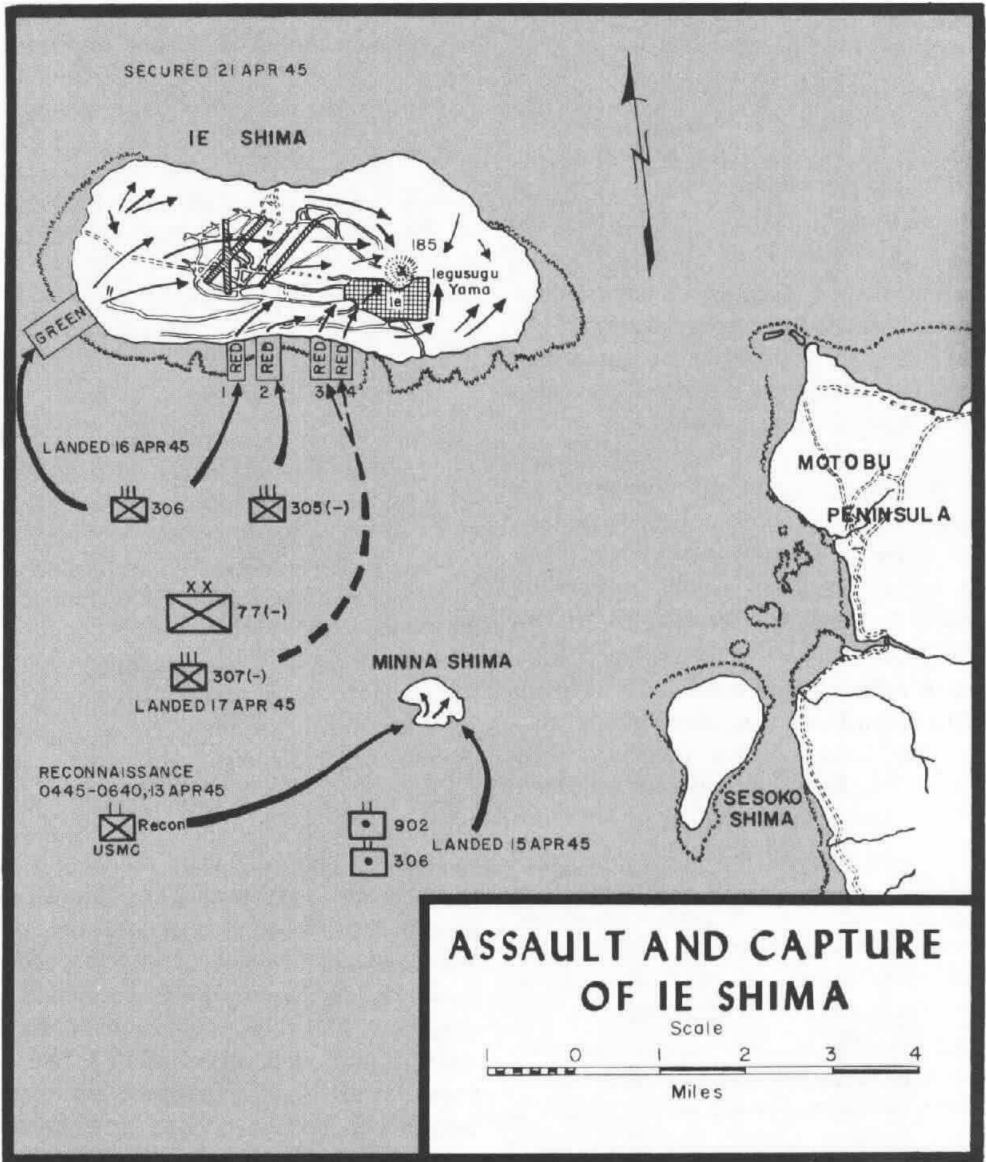
The Marine scouts landed at 0445 on 13 April and within two hours had swept the island. They discovered 30 civilians but found no enemy soldiers. The battalion remained on the island the rest of the 13th and, on the morning of the 14th, occupied positions from which it covered UDT preparations of the reef and beach for the landing of artillery. By noon of 14 April, Major Jones had reembarked his men on board the APDs. Three days later, the battalion was released from attachment to the 77th Division and attached to IIIAC.

As scheduled, the preliminary bombardment of Ie Shima began at dawn on 16 April and was stepped up at 0725 when missions in direct support of the landing were fired. Five minutes before S-Hour (as the landing time was designated for this operation), 16 fighter

planes made a strafing and napalm attack on the beaches while other fighters and bombers orbited over the island, ready to protect the attack group and support the ground assault.

Although there was little opposition to the landing, the troops experienced stiffening resistance by afternoon when enemy delaying groups, concealed in caves and fortified tombs, started to contest every yard of advance. For a period of six days, 77th Division ground forces struggled. Initially making only slight gains, in many cases, they fought hand-to-hand with defenders who contested every inch of ground. As the battle unfolded, it was found that Japanese defenses were centered about Iegusugu Yama and the small village of Ie, which lay at the foot of the southern slope of the mountain. A masterful camouflage job had been performed by the Ie Shima garrison, for nearly 7,000 people were concealed on the island. The mountain contained a maze of hidden firing positions; Ie itself had been converted into a veritable fortress. The ground approaching the mountain and the town was honeycombed with caves, tunnels, bunkers, and spider holes on which the Japanese had expended their great industry and defensive skills. The advance route to the core of enemy defenses was open land and uphill all the way, flanked by Japanese positions in the village and dominated by emplacements located in a reinforced concrete building on a steep rise facing the attacking troops. The infantry soon named this structure "Government House" and the terrain on which it stood "Bloody Ridge."

¹⁸ 77th InfDiv OpRpt, Ie Shima, p. 7.



MAP 12

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On 20 April, after a grim grenade and bayonet battle, the top of Bloody Ridge was finally gained and Government House taken. The island was declared secure on 21 April after the 77th Division had won a victory for which a heavy price was exacted; 239 Americans were killed, 879 wounded, and 19 missing.¹⁹ Japanese losses were 4,706 killed and 149 captured.

For the next four days, scattered Japanese and Okinawan soldiers were hunted down and, on the 25th, LSTs began shuttling units of the division to Okinawa, where their extra strength was needed in helping the XXIV Corps maintain pressure on enemy defenses in front of Shuri. Remaining in garrison on Ie Shima were the regimental headquarters and the 1st Battalion of the 305th. This force was considered adequate to handle the rest of the cleanup operations in the island.

THE MARINES' "GUERRILLA WAR" ²⁰

The capture of Motobu Peninsula constituted the major portion of IIIAC

¹⁹ *Tenth Army AR*, Corrections by CG, 77th InfDiv, dtd 11Oct45. Amongst those killed during the 18 April fighting was Ernie Pyle, the renowned war correspondent. He was buried on Ie Shima in the 77th Division cemetery. The division erected a marker in his memory near the spot where he was shot by a Japanese machine gunner. Inscribed simply, the marker reads: "On this spot the 77th Infantry Division lost a buddy, Ernie Pyle, 18 April 1945." Myers, *77th InfDiv Hist*, p. 265.

²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the material contained in this section is derived from: *IIIAC AR*; *IIIAC G-2 PeriodicRpts* Nos 1-30, 1Apr-1May45; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *1st MarDiv G-3 Jnl*; *6th MarDiv SAR*, *Ph I&II*; *6th MarDiv Jnl*, *Ph I&II*.

offensive operations in April. A lesser but continuing Marine task during the period was ridding the area of the pesky and omnipresent guerrillas. Irregulars attempted to harass, delay, and wear down American units by partisan tactics classically employed against patrols, convoys, or isolated detachments.

Once Yae Take fell and Marines advanced to the northernmost reaches of Okinawa, guerrilla activities increased in scope and intensity. Under the conditions offered by the rugged and primitive wilderness of the north, the lack of roads there, and a shortage of information, a modern force of superior strength and armament was unable to engage the guerrilla decisively in his own element.

In the southernmost area of the IIIAC zone, aside from picking off occasional stragglers, Marines were kept busy improving the road net, sealing burial vaults, and closing the honeycomb of caves. To the north, however, as advance elements of General Shepherd's fast-moving division approached Motobu Peninsula, and the lines of communication were extended progressively, guerrillas took advantage of the situation. During the night of 8-9 April, a group of marauders broke into the area of IIIAC Artillery, near Onna, and destroyed a trailer and a small power plant. Following this attack at dawn, other enemy groups attempted to disrupt north-south traffic passing through Onna by rolling crudely devised demolition charges down upon passing vehicles from the cliffs above.²¹

²¹ *Tenth Army G-2 Rpt No. 15*, 10Apr45.



MARINE ROCKET LAUNCHERS *in support of the drive south.* (USMC 121342)



AWACHA POCKET, *showing the gorge which was the scene of hard fighting by the 5th Marines.* (USMC 121104)

In the south of the 6th Division zone, on 7 April the 7th Marines (less 3/7), in corps reserve at Ishikawa, was assigned to patrol tasks.²² The northern half of the regimental patrol sector was covered by Lieutenant Colonel John J. Gormley's 1/7, which had moved to Chimu, while Berger's 2d Battalion and certain designated regimental troops, in a perimeter defense around the bombed-out ruins of Ishikawa, had a related mission of patrolling north and inland from the village.²³

One 7th Marines task was warding off nightly infiltration attempts by individual or small groups of Japanese and Okinawan irregulars in search of food. Most of them were killed or wounded either entering the village or leaving it. The initial patrols in the region were without incident, but, as pressure was applied to Colonel Udo's force in the mountain fastnesses of Motobu Peninsula, the quiet that had prevailed in the supposed-rear zone was dispelled. On 12 April, a 2/7 patrol fell victim to a well-planned ambush on Ishikawa Take, the highest point on the isthmus. By the time that the entrapped Marines were able to pull out under cover of the fires of the regimental weapons company, 5 men had been killed and 30 wounded.

The next day, Lieutenant Colonel Berger sent two companies into the ambush zone and occupied it against only token resistance. In customary partisan fashion, the elusive guerrillas had departed the area, seemingly swallowed

up by the heavy vegetation, deep gorges, and spiny ridges of the complex terrain.

After spending a quiet night on the twin peaks of the heights, the two companies, E and F, were withdrawn to approach the guerrilla lair from a different direction. While retiring, the Marines were fired upon from above by the reappearing enemy, and a number of men were hit. After circling to the far (west) side of the island and establishing a skirmish line, the two companies moved in on the commanding ground where the guerrillas were well dug-in and concealed. The irregulars were engaged, but "did not appear to be well organized."²⁴ Those of the enemy who escaped were hunted down by patrols.

This task proved to be painstaking and time-consuming, for the vegetation on the western slopes of Ishikawa Isthmus seriously hampered effective patrolling despite the fact that this section was the least precipitous in the neck of the island. Visibility off the trails frequently was limited to five feet, at most, by dense stands of bamboo and scrub conifer. Since flank security was impractical in this terrain, the war dogs accompanying the Marines proved a valuable asset in alerting their masters to enemy hidden in the undergrowth.²⁵ Lack of roads and the difficult terrain here raised resupply problems which were solved by the organization of supply pack trains²⁶ to support 2/7

²⁴ IIIAC G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 15, dtd 16Apr45.

²⁵ Capt Verle E. Ludwig memo for HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, dtd 28Oct54.

²⁶ Because of the difficulty of resupply under these conditions, a previous Tenth Army ban on the use of captured native horses was lifted.

²² BGen Edward W. Snedeker ltr to CMC, dtd 10Mar55, hereafter *Snedeker ltr II*.

²³ *7th Mar SAR*, pp. 2-3.

patrols. Enemy resistance continued here for nearly two weeks, during which time Berger's Marines killed about 110 of the guerrilla force.²⁷

As the 6th Marine Division closed in on the main Japanese position in the Motobu heights, the tempo of guerrilla activity on the fringe of the battle increased proportionately. A daily occurrence at dusk was the harassing of artillery positions by irregulars, who caused the registration of night defensive fires to be delayed.²⁸ When Major Pace's 1/15, in direct support of the 22d Marines, displaced to cover the infantry drive to the northernmost limit of the island, its perimeter was hit almost nightly by sporadic sniping and knee mortar fire. In addition, grenades, demolition charges, and even antipersonnel land mines were thrown into the defensive installations encircling the battalion area. The hills in the rear of the 1/15 position afforded the enemy excellent observation and apparently permitted him to coordinate his attacks on the Marines.²⁹

From 14 through 16 April, as the battle for Yae Take was coming to a climax, fires mysteriously broke out in various west coast villages from the southern extremity of Nago Wan to the northern tip of the island. On 17 April at dawn, Nakaoshi was struck by an enemy hit-and-run attack that simultaneously swept over the 6th Engineer Battalion command post (CP), water point, and supply installations nearby. Civilian collaboration with Japanese

military forces appeared to be a factor in these incidents, when evidence of native sabotage was uncovered during an investigation of the series of fires on the west coast.

The security threat presented by Okinawan civilians appeared to be pervasive, for it arose within the 1st Marine Division zone also. As early as 9 April, Lieutenant Colonel Miller, the 3/5 commander, reported that many civilians were destroying their passes and appeared to be roaming about freely at night. It was reasonable to assume that they were contacting the Japanese at this time.³⁰

For better zonal security control, the 1st Marine Division began rounding up all civilians on 11 April and herding them into stockades built on Katchin Peninsula. The following day, all able-bodied Okinawan males were taken into custody in order to determine their military status. The prevailing tactical situation in the north, at this time, required that organized resistance be broken before Marine control over civilians could be established and combat troops spared for this duty.

From the beginning of the 6th Division drive north, an increasing number of Okinawans was encountered on the roads. Only a few men were of obvious military age and were detained. The others, stopped and questioned, were allowed to continue on with their affairs. At the height of operations in the north, 12-16 April, the division was unable to collect able-bodied males methodically in the manner of the 1st Division in central Okinawa. Civilians

²⁷ *7th Mar SAR*, p. 3.

²⁸ *4/15 SAR, Ph I&II*, chap VII, n.p.

²⁹ *1/15 SAR, Ph I&II*, chap III, n.p.

³⁰ *5th Mar S-3 Jnl*, 9Apr45.

of doubtful character and background, however, were seized. When hostilities on Motobu ceased, the 6th Division organized a civilian control center at Taira where, beginning 16 April, from 500 to 1,500 natives were interned daily until operations in the north were ended.

On 15 April, Hurst's 3/7 (attached earlier to the 5th Marines) reverted to parent control and began active patrolling from its base at Chuda on the west coast. General del Valle regained the 7th Marines the next day, and, as the 6th Division began meeting increased resistance, the boundary between the Marine divisions was readjusted along the Chuda-Madaira road.³¹

From 17 to 19 April, it appeared that, parallel to the steady reduction of their positions on Yae Take, the Japanese were shifting from a tactical policy of defense to one based on partisan warfare. After the 6th Division took the mountain redoubt, and following a reorganization of Marine units, General Shepherd's command moved to assigned garrison areas. Here it began patrolling vigorously to fix and destroy remaining pockets of enemy resistance. To assist the division in securing northern Okinawa, the Amphibious Reconnaissance

Battalion, part of IIIAC since 17 April, was attached with a mission of seizing and occupying the small islands lying off Motobu Peninsula.

In a period of two days, 21-22 April, the battalion reconnoitered the islands of Yagachi and Sesoko with negative results. Though no enemy forces were encountered, the Marines found a leper colony containing some 800 adults and 50 children on Yagachi Shima. Before they landed on Sesoko, the scouts met more than 100 natives moving by canoe from islands to the west in search of food, and "considerable difficulty was involved in coralling and controlling" them.³² On the 23d, Walker's 6th Reconnaissance Company scouted Kouri Shima and found no enemy.

While the battle for Yae Take raged, and even after it had ended, 6th Division rear area patrols began making contacts with enemy troops attempting to escape from the fighting on Motobu. On 22 April, near Nakaoshi, 1/22 patrols killed 35 enemy in a fire fight. On the next day, this battalion met a strong force, estimated at three rifle squads, three light machine gun squads, and one mortar squad, firmly entrenched in previously prepared positions, including caves and pillboxes, in the mountainous area east of Nago. Two Marine companies assaulted the Japanese killing 52, before an ammunition shortage forced the battalion to break off the action. It returned to the battle scene on 24 April, this time with 4/15 (Lieutenant Colonel Bruce T. Hemphill) in direct support, and the strongpoint was

³¹ Lieutenant Colonel Sabol's 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, passed to General Shepherd's control this same day. After moving north, 3/1 was attached to the 22d Marines and ordered to Kawada. From this point, the battalion assisted the 22d Marines in patrolling the vast regimental zone of responsibility, an area which covered 140 square miles and included a 95-mile coast line. On 16 April, 1/22 moved to the vicinity of Awa, where it became 6th Division reserve on Motobu Peninsula. *22d Mar SAR, Ph I&II*, pp. 12, 14.

³² *PhibReconBn AR*, p. 12.

reduced.³³ The engagement ended towards evening with the deaths of a Japanese officer and two NCOs and the remainder of the group fleeing. The battalion continued patrolling the region on the next day and cleaned out the enemy pocket.³⁴

Intensified patrolling of the Ishikawa Isthmus began on 23 April after a small IIIAC military police group was extricated from an ambush by a 7th Marines detachment. The 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, reinforced the 7th, and all available 1st Division war dogs were attached to that regiment. At the same time, stricter travel regulations within the IIIAC area were enforced, and the movement of a single vehicles in the corps zone during hours of darkness was forbidden.

In the 6th Division zone, while the 29th Marines remained on Motobu Peninsula, the 4th Marines moved to its assigned area in the northern part of the island. At Kawada, 3/1 was relieved by Hochmuth's 3/4 and returned to parent control on the 23d. During the next two days, the rest of Colonel Shapley's regiment was disposed with Hayden's 2/4 at Ora, and Beans' 1/4, regimental troops, and the headquarters complement bivouacked in the vicinity of Genka, a small west coast village located about five miles north of the juncture between Motobu Peninsula and the rest of the island. From this point, Colonel Shapley's mission was to seek and exterminate stragglers in the southern half of what had been the 22d Marines area. Upon being relieved, 1/22 prepared to move to the west coast to a

point just south of Ichi, which had been the 3/22 patrol base since 16 April.

The mountainous interior of the north was combed continually by Marine patrols for *Udo Force* survivors and semi-independent guerrilla bands. The 6th Division learned from civilians in the area that small groups of Okinawan home guardsmen were in the hills of the northern part of the island and had been preparing to wage partisan warfare for nearly a year. As part of the preparations, they had reportedly established stockpiles of supplies in the interior. The civilians further stated that some of the guardsmen had returned to their homes and civilian pursuits. They also said that home defense units were being trained in the villages by Okinawan veterans who had served previously in China with Japanese forces.³⁵

Until the afternoon of 27 April, however, patrol results were negative with the exception of an occasional flushing out of individuals or small groups. At this time, a 3/4 reconnaissance patrol sighted a 200-man enemy column moving through the northeastern corner of the Marine regimental zone toward the east coast. It was believed that these Japanese had survived the Motobu Peninsula fighting by infiltrating in groups of 20 to 40 from the combat area by way of Taira and that they were going to try to join up with the main enemy force in the south.

Steps were taken immediately to destroy the group. Two battalions of the 22d Marines were ordered to the south to block the column, while 3/4 moved

³³ 22d Mar SAR, Ph I&II, p. 14.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ IIIAC G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 28, dtd 29Apr45.

inland from Kawada. Further ringing the escape-minded enemy was Donohoo's 3/22, which proceeded toward the interior on a cross-island trail 1,000 yards north of, and parallel to, the 1/22 advance from Hentona. Since it was anticipated that the fugitives would be apprehended in the 22d Marines zone, 3/4 was attached to that regiment. Additionally, two artillery battalions were to support the pursuers.

The first contact was made just prior to noon on 28 April, when one of 3/4's companies engaged the escaping Japanese in a fire fight. At the end of the three-hour contest, 109 enemy soldiers were dead; 1 Marine was killed and 8 wounded.³⁶ The other pursuing units were unable to reach the scene of the action because of the difficult terrain; 1/22 encountered small scattered groups as it advanced, while 3/22 was still underway when 3/4 radioed that it had destroyed the enemy. Thereupon, Colonel Schneider ordered his 3d Battalion to continue on to the east coast, and Colonel Shapley's 3/4 returned to Kawada and parent control.³⁷

Even though the guerrillas in the IIIAC area had forced the Marines to remain constantly on the alert, General Geiger was able to declare the end of organized resistance in the north on 20 April. Continuous patrolling remained the general order, however. As usual in counterguerrilla operations, the number

of combat troops employed was out of proportion to the size and number of guerrillas hunted. In most cases, it was a one-sided fight, for a substantial percentage of the partisan ranks were filled with the poorly trained and equipped *Boeitai*. The primary contribution of native Okinawans to the guerrilla effort was a knowledge of the land over which they fought; their offensive efforts were limited mainly to night forays against supply installations, disrupting communications systems and centrals, and attacking water points and hospitals. Although these destructive attempts usually ended in failure, they forced friendly units to maintain extensive security detachments, sometimes in platoon or company strength.

As of the 20th, when Motobu Peninsula was reportedly cleared of enemy troops, the Tenth Army began to pay greater attention to the native population in occupied sections of the island. All civilians, irrespective of age or sex, found in the areas of combat units were to be interned. Furthermore, Okinawans were prohibited from moving about freely unless accompanied by an armed guard.³⁸ General Geiger established eight internment camps in the IIIAC zone, but the number of collection points in the Marine area was later re-

³⁸ This order could not be complied with immediately by the 6th Marine Division because of the large numbers of civilians in its zone, and emphasis continued to be directed towards the detention of able-bodied men. Adding to the difficulties in this area was the fact that many of the civilians "were already in the category of displaced individuals, having fled to the north from Naha and other southern areas well in advance of the assault." *IsCom AR*, chap 8, sec XXIV, pp. 2-3.

³⁶ 3/4 SAR, Ph I&II, p. 8.

³⁷ Regarding this small operation, General Smith commented that it "was an excellent example of alert patrolling; [a] rapid decision by the commander; and very effective execution of a difficult approach." Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 91.

duced to three; Katchin Peninsula, Chimu, and Taira.

Although tighter security controls prevailed in the corps zone, isolated incidents behind the battleline still occurred. In the last week of April, a 7th Marines patrol killed a Japanese corporal who was wearing a kimono over his uniform. Intelligence agencies found evidence of a Japanese-planned and -sponsored program of espionage and sabotage for the rear areas. In the XXIV Corps zone, the following document was recovered:

Permit

Army line probational officer Inoye Kuchi and two others: The above mentioned are permitted to wear plain clothes for the purpose of penetrating and raiding enemy territory from April 25, 1945, until the accomplishment of their mission.³⁹

TAF OPERATIONS IN APRIL AND THE KAMIKAZE THREAT⁴⁰

Owing to the early and unopposed capture of Yontan and Kadena airfields, Tactical Air Force, Tenth Army, began land-based operations sooner than expected. On 2 April, General

Mulcahy and his staff went ashore and selected a CP site midway between the two fields. General Wallace's ADC headquarters was dug in nearby.

While TAF personnel were kept busy constructing camp and repair facilities, Marine engineers and Seabees began repairing the runways on Yontan and Kadena. The airfields were found to be lightly surfaced and badly damaged by naval gunfire and bombings. Hurried grading permitted the use of Yontan by 7 April, but the problems at Kadena were more extensive. Damage here was greater, and the source of coral for surfacing was at some distance from the field. Nevertheless, the strips on Kadena were ready for dry-weather use two days after those on Yontan and, by 1 May, they were all-weather operational.

Three weeks earlier, the ADC Air Defense Control Center (ADCC) had come ashore and, on 7 April, begun operating from three LVTs specially rigged to serve as the defense command CP and to function as both an ADCC and the Air Defense/Fighter Command operations center. On 19 April, the center moved to more spacious quarters in an abandoned farmhouse nearby.

³⁹ Translated in IIIAC G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 28, dtd 29Apr45.

⁴⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the material contained in this section is derived from: CinCPac WarD, Apr45; Fifth Flt AR, 1Apr-17May45, Ryukyus Op, dtd 10Jul45, hereafter *Fifth Flt AR*; *CTF 51 AR*; *Tenth Army AR*; 2d MAW WarD, Apr45; *TAF AR*; TAF Periodic Rpts, Apr45; ADC (MAG-43) WarD, Apr45; *ADC IntelSums*, Apr45; G-2 Sec, ADC, TAF, Historical Summary of the Organization and Activities of the ADC, Okinawa, n.d., hereafter *ADC Hist*; MAG-31 WarD, Apr45; MAG-33 WarD, Apr45; MilAnalysisDiv, USSBS, *Air Campaigns of the Pacific War* (GPO, Jul47),

hereafter USSBS, *Air Campaigns*; MilAnalysisDiv, USSBS, *Japanese Air Power* (GPO, Jul46), hereafter USSBS, *Japanese Air Power*; Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*; Hayashi and Coox, *Kōgun*; Capt Rikihei Inoguchi and Cdr Tadashi Nakajima, former IJN, with Roger Pineau, *The Divine Wind: Japan's Kamikaze Force in World War II* (Annapolis: USNI, 1958), hereafter Inoguchi, Nakajima, and Pineau, *Divine Wind*; Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*; Masatake Okumiya and Jiro Horikoshi, with Martin Caidin, *Zero!* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1956), hereafter Okumiya, Horikoshi, and Caidin, *Zero!*; Sherrod, *Marine Air Hist.*

When General Wallace opened his CP on Okinawa, the air defense commander became the land-based agent of CASCU, which continued operating on board Admiral Turner's flagship. Under ADC operational control were land-based aircraft, radar air warning and control installations, and antiaircraft artillery units. It was the air defense commander's primary mission to coordinate the combined efforts of these three disparate support activities so that they meshed with the operations of the overall air defense system of the expeditionary force. ICEBERG plans had stipulated that TAF would assume full responsibility for the air defense of Okinawa when the amphibious landings were completed, but, because of "the all-out efforts of Japanese aircraft and the success of their *kamikaze* suicide attacks directed against naval units, operational control of aircraft in the Ryukyus remained with the Navy until the area was secured."⁴¹

General Wallace believed that the major tactical task of ADC was to meet the *Kamikaze* threat. From 7 April, when VMF-311 pilots scored the first TAF kill⁴² of a suicider as they flew in to Yontan from their CVE lift, ADC efforts were directed toward confront-

ing and stopping the destructive enemy air attacks. The fighter squadrons of MAG-31 and -33 mounted combat air patrols from Yontan and Kadena fields on the first days that they arrived at these bases.

As the battle was joined on Okinawa by the Tenth Army and General Ushijima's forces, the American fleet in surrounding waters was engaged in a desperate battle of its own. The Japanese air attacks on the Kerama Retto invasion group merely heralded even greater enemy attempts to destroy the radar pickets and support vessels safeguarding the troops on Okinawa. Many of these enemy aircraft were on either conventional bombing or reconnaissance missions; others in the aerial attacks were part of the *Special Attack Force*, the *Kamikazes*.

As the success of American operations in the Philippines became apparent and MacArthur's air strength reigned supreme, enemy naval air commanders saw that there was no prospect of any advantage to be gained in the sky while Japanese squadrons continued employing orthodox tactics. The *Kamikaze* effort evolved as a result of these considerations. Appearing first in the Philippines,⁴³ this was an organized and

⁴¹ *Tenth Army AR*, chap 11, sec VII, p. 5.

⁴² This event marked another "first" also, for it was the first time that Marine pilots had shot down an enemy plane with the package of four 20mm cannon newly installed in Corsairs in lieu of the six .50 caliber machine guns heretofore mounted in the planes. "All of the pilots expressed enthusiasm over the great destructive power of the new and heavier armament." IntelSec, DivAvn, HQMC (OpNav-37), *Marine Air Intel Bul*, May45, p. 2, hereafter *AirIntel-Bul*, with date.

⁴³ The authors of the official AAF history suggest that the first *Kamikaze* attack took place in April 1944 in the area of the Andaman Islands, when a Japanese pilot dived his plane into an American torpedo aimed at shipping in an enemy convoy. In official recognition of this act, the hapless aviator was posthumously decorated by Field Marshal Count Hisaichi Terauchi, the commander in chief of the *Southern Area Army*. Craven and Cate, *The Pacific*, p. 352. The point here is that the *Kamikaze* attacks in the Philippines were the first so organized of their type.

desperate attempt by suicide-bent Japanese naval aviators to deprive American shipping at Leyte of aerial protection by crashing the flattops of the covering carrier force. The enemy anticipated that the success of their tactics would then guarantee a Japanese surface victory in the event of an all-out engagement with United States naval forces. Although Japanese commanders felt that suicide missions were a "temporary expedient" only, used "because we were incapable of combatting you by other means . . .,"⁴⁴ initial success gave added impetus to their fuller employment.

Correctly anticipating that the next invasion attempts would be at Iwo Jima and, after that, Okinawa, *Imperial General Headquarters* withdrew the remnants of some Army and Navy air units from the Philippines in early January 1945 to strengthen the defense of the Home Islands and the Ryukyus. Upon completion of this transfer, designed to "produce a more unified [defense] strategy,"⁴⁵ brigades and regiments of the *Sixth Air Army* and naval squadrons of the *Fifth Air Fleet* were combined into a single tactical command on 19 March under Admiral Soemu Toyoda, Commander in Chief, *Combined Fleet*.⁴⁶

At the outset, it was determined that operations of this combined force of about 1,815 planes⁴⁷ were to be well planned and organized—a definite contrast to the sporadic, albeit somewhat successful, *Kamikaze* attacks at Leyte.

One of the first opportunities for the Japanese to mount coordinated suicide and conventional air attacks occurred during the TF 58 raids of 18–19 March 1945 on Japan. Although the carriers were damaged and there were some American casualties, the enemy lost 161 aircraft. Most of this damage, strangely enough, was not caused by *Kamikazes*. An important result of this raid was the destruction, while still on the ground on Kyushu, of many of the Japanese planes scheduled to be employed in the defense of the Ryukyus. This disaster forced the *Fifth Air Fleet* to reevaluate its plans. Moreover, a Tenth Army landing relatively unharassed by enemy air raids was guaranteed, for Toyoda's squadrons were unable to mount a major air offensive until after the beginning of April.⁴⁸

Scattered conventional and *Kamikaze* flights from Japan and Formosa carried the attack to the Western Islands Attack Group of the ICEBERG force first; later these planes began swarming all

⁴⁴ LtGen Torashiro Kawabe, *IJA*, quoted in USSBS, *Japanese Air Power*, p. 60.

⁴⁵ LtGen Michio Sugawara, *IJA*, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁴⁶ MilHistSec, Japanese Research Div., HQ-USAFFE, Japanese Monograph No. 123, Homeland DefNavOps, pt II, Mar43-Aug45, dtd Jun49, p. 73, hereafter *Homeland DefNavOps*.

⁴⁷ RAdm Toshiyuki Yokoi, IJN, "Kamikazes and the Okinawa Campaign," *USNI Proceedings*, v. 80, no. 5 (May54), p. 508, hereafter Yokoi, *Kamikazes*.

⁴⁸ HistSec, G-2, GHQ, FEC, Japanese Studies in the World War II, Monograph No. 86, History of the Fifth Air Fleet, Operational Record 10Feb-19Aug45, n.d., p. 35 (OCMH, DA), hereafter *Fifth AirFlt Hist*.

over the transports and picket line off Okinawa. During the first few days of April, the toll of ships damaged and sunk grew at a steady rate while naval casualties mounted in consequence. By 6 April, Admiral Toyoda was prepared to launch from Kyushu the first of ten carefully planned *Kamikaze* attacks, which were to be flown over a period ending 22 June. A total of 1,465 sorties emanated from Kyushu to sink 26 American ships and damage 164 others.⁴⁹ Not included in these loss figures are the victims of small-scale *Kamikaze* efforts by another 250 planes which rose from Formosa air bases, and the 185 additional sorties flown from Kyushu, independent of the mass attacks.⁵⁰

The Japanese decision to turn to large-scale air operations was arrived at after Toyoda had studied both his and the *Thirty-second Army* situations and had found that "it would be futile to turn the tide of battle with present tactics."⁵¹ He therefore dispatched the first and largest coordinated suicide attack—*Kikusui* Operation No. 1—⁵² against ICEBERG forces on 6 April.

⁴⁹ USSBS, *Campaigns*, p. 328.

⁵⁰ USSBS, *Japanese Air Power*, p. 23.

⁵¹ *Fifth AirF't Hist*, p. 41.

⁵² The attacks "were given the cover name *Kikusui* . . ." which ". . . literally means 'chrysanthemum water' and the characters making up the word were used in the crest of a 15th Century Japanese hero who took the side of the Emperor in a prolonged civil war against heavy odds." USSBS, *Japanese Air Power*, p. 66.

Spearheading the *Kamikazes* were 14 planes sent to bomb and strafe Okinawa airfields before dawn in order to destroy Allied aircraft suspected of being there. Apart from their nuisance value, the raids did little damage to the runways and none to TAF planes, for the squadrons had not yet flown ashore. Following the first group of enemy hecklers were more than 100 fighters and bombers sent to engage TF 58 off Amami-O-Shima in order to draw American carrier-based planes away from the suiciders heading for Okinawa.

For a 36-hour period, 6–7 April, the Japanese flew 355 suicide sorties, which were accompanied by nearly an equal amount of conventional cover, reconnaissance, and bombing planes. As these aircraft bore in to crash, torpedo, and bomb the ships at anchor in Hagushi transport area, crewmen in exposed positions and troops on the beaches were subjected to a deadly rain of anti-aircraft artillery shell fragments. Friendly fighters were not immune from the effect of the hundreds of guns firing from the beaches and ships; three American pilots were shot down when they followed Japanese planes too closely into the murderous barrage.

The main attack, which began about 1500 on 6 April, spread out all over the combat zone with the outer ring of radar pickets and patrol craft—lacking a protective smoke-screen cover—catching the full fury of the battle. Ships of all types, however, were fair game for

the *Kamikazes*.⁵³ Before the Okinawa landing, the Japanese confined the direction of their suicide attack efforts to American carrier task forces. After 1 April, the attacks were mounted against convoys, and, just prior to the first *Kikusui*, the enemy began hitting all surface forces. After the time of the 6-7 April attack, the Japanese reserved the carrier forces for *Kamikaze* attention while their conventional bombers and fighter craft were directed to hit other American vessels and transports around Okinawa.⁵⁴ In this first mass suicide attack, Admiral Turner's forces claimed to have shot down at least 135 Japanese planes, while the pilots from the Fast Carrier Task Force reported splashing approximately 245 more, bringing the total American claims of enemy losses to nearly 400 pilots and planes. Contemporary Japanese sources

⁵³ In the Kerama anchorage, an LST and two merchant cargo ships, the *Logan Victory* and the *Hobbs Victory*, were hit and eventually sank. The sinking of these two Victory ships was a serious matter and could have affected the course of the campaign critically. Because they had been loaded on the west coast with most of the 81mm mortar ammunition then available in the United States, these sinkings created a shortage of this type of ammunition in subsequent resupply shipments. In order to make up for the loss, at least partially, Army and Navy transport planes airlifted 117 tons of 81mm ammunition to Okinawa before the end of the campaign. To satisfy immediate needs, LSTs were loaded and dispatched to the target with stock taken from Marianas and South Pacific supply reserves. *Blakelock ltr; Tenth Army AR*, chap 11, sec IV, p. 12.

⁵⁴ *Homeland DefNavOps*, p. 113.

place the losses in *Kikusui* No. 1 at 335.⁵⁵

As a sidelight to the air battle over and the land fighting on Okinawa, the Japanese mounted their only real surface threat to the success of the American invasion. Intending to attack Allied shipping at Okinawa, the 69,100-ton battleship *Yamato* and a covering group steamed out of the Tokuyama Naval Base, on Honshu, at 1500 on 6 April. Less than two hours later, the enemy vessels were sighted by two U. S. submarines in the screen lying off the east coast of Kyushu. Within 24 hours, TF 58 pilots had administered death blows to the *Yamato* and a part of her group, and had forced the remainder to scurry home.

Since TAF pilots had not yet begun operations from Okinawa when *Kikusui* No. 1 struck, the four Marine squadrons on board the carriers *Bennington* (VMF-112 and -123) and *Bunker Hill* (VMF-221 and -451) carried the ball for Marine aviation during the time that General Mulcahy's planes and pilots were still on board their carrier transports. Until late in April, as much as 60 percent of the ground support missions flown for Tenth Army units were carried out by Navy and Marine carrier pilots, while the primary concern of TAF flyers was to blunt the

⁵⁵ Inoguchi, Nakajima, and Pineau, *Divine Wind*, pp. 225-226; Hattori, *War History*, v. IV, (table facing p. 132). Despite the extensive American and Japanese material available relating to their respective air losses in World War II, it is still difficult to reconcile this numbers conflict. For a discussion of this matter, see Shaw and Kane, *Isolation of Rabaul*, pt V, "Marine Air Against Rabaul," *passim*.

Kamikaze menace. To at least one TAF air group commander, "it seemed strange for planes off the carriers to come in for close-support missions, passing [Okinawa-based] Marine pilots flying out for CAP duty. . . ." ⁵⁶

Almost as soon as Colonel Munn's MAG-31 squadrons touched down at Yontan, a 12-plane combat air patrol was organized and launched to remain airborne until dark. Prior to the time that TAF joined the fighting, CAPs had been flown by planes from both the Support Carrier Group and TF 58. Originally, a large CAP, varying from 48 planes in relatively quiet periods to 120 or more during critical times, was flown to protect the surface forces from air attacks. Basically, the aircraft were deployed "in a circle in depth" over the invasion and picket craft. ⁵⁷

Generally, TAF planes were airborne from dawn to dusk on CAP flights, and they flew special early morning and twilight CAPs as well. On 14 April, the commander of the ICEBERG operation transferred the responsibility for flying night CAPs from TF 58 to TAF. In addition, TAF was to maintain another four planes constantly on patrol during the hours of darkness. This last mission was assigned alternately to the night fighters of VMF(N)-542 and -543 commanded by Majors William C. Kellum and Clair "C" Chamberlain, respectively. In order to guard the radar picket ships—special objects of the

Kamikaze attacks—General Wallace's fighter command was ordered on 14 April to maintain a continuous two-plane daylight CAP over each of the three picket ships that were stationed offshore northeast of TAF airfields. Each flight leader was to report directly to the captain of the ship he was guarding. In turn, the naval officer would control the flight and ensure that its planes were kept out of range of the ship's anti-aircraft guns. Two days after this mission was first initiated, the number of ships protected by this CAP was increased by two.

By the time that TAF had been established ashore, the three Marine Landing Force Air Support Control Units, commanded overall by Colonel Vernon E. Megee, had landed also. Although they were shore-based representatives of CASCUs and outside of the TAF chain of command, by the very nature of their functions the LFASCUs worked closely with the Marine aviation units. Once air support operations began, coordinating agencies relayed all orders concerning aircraft missions directly to General Mulcahy's command in a smoothly functioning system. At Tenth Army headquarters, Megee's LFASCU-3 screened all requests for air support received from LFASCU-1 (Colonel Kenneth H. Weir) and -2 (Colonel Kenneth D. Kerby) which were working with IIIAC and XXIV Corps respectively. If a review of TAF and carrier aircraft commitments indicated that an air support request was consistent with priority requirements, the mission was approved. At that time, if Marine planes were assigned, LFASCU-3 relayed the

⁵⁶ A fuller story of the operations of Marine carrier squadrons is found in pt III, chap 2, *infra.*, and Sherrod *Marine Air Hist.*, pp. 357-368.

⁵⁷ *CNO Record*, chap 1, p. 47.

order for the mission directly to the TAF operations section.⁵⁸

Frontline control of the ground support missions flown by both land- and carrier-based aircraft was provided by Air Liaison Parties (ALPs) from the Joint Assault Signal Companies attached to each division. Ground unit requests for air support were reviewed first with respect to the capabilities and availability of the other supporting arms to fulfill a specific mission, and then passed on to the LFASCU at corps headquarters. If the request was approved here, the LFASCU would requisition the necessary number and types of planes, and stipulate the armament they needed for successful completion of the mission. In addition, the LFASCU provided strike direction and supervised the scheduling of all air support in unit fire support plans.⁵⁹

Not all close air support missions were ground controlled in this campaign. Employed at Okinawa was an air coordinator, or airborne traffic director, who spotted and marked the ground target for the planes flying the mission. The coordinator would direct the flight to the best target heading, observe attack results, and correct subsequent runs if he decided that they were needed.⁶⁰ At times when smoke and weather conditions over the target denied the airborne controller suitable visibility, the support mission would be

run nevertheless, but directed by the ALP.

It took time to establish land-based radar reporting, control, and homing stations on Okinawa and the outlying islands. In addition to the problems involved in getting the Air Warning Squadrons (AWSs) and their equipment ashore rapidly, initially it proved difficult to net the ground-to-ground communications systems with the overall ship-to-shore warning system. Prior to the establishment of the ADCC, the individual radar stations had reported directly to CASCU aboard the *Eldorado*. After 8 April, the day on which the control center first began to provide shore-based operational homing facilities, AWS early warning teams began reporting directly to the ADCC which, in turn, passed on to Navy control the reported enemy and friendly plots.

Early warning teams were also assigned temporarily to each assault division and corps headquarters. They then operated in coordination with the AAA units already assigned to the defense of corps and division sectors. Here, the teams monitored ships' radar telling circuits and local air warning and inter-fighter director nets, from which air raid warning information was obtained and passed on to the ground units. In addition to radar coverage, the air warning squadrons provided radio monitoring services, the results of which figured prominently in and assisted the operation of the Air Defense Command.

The AWSs also worked very closely with and were, in fact, supervised by

⁵⁸ *TAF AR*, chap 6, sec III, p. 1.

⁵⁹ IIIAC Rpt, Air Support, encl H to CG, AirFMFPac ltr to CMC, Subj: Air Support, dtd 28Aug45.

⁶⁰ *ADC Hist*, p. 16.

the senior Marine AAA officer, Colonel Kenneth W. Benner, commanding the 1st Provisional Antiaircraft Group. He was responsible for coordinating the disposition and operation of his organic radar with that of the AWSs in order to ensure maximum surface and low-angle electronic surveillance for defense against enemy air attacks.⁶¹

Because theirs was a vital role in the overall air defense of the ICEBERG forces, land-based AAA units, although attached to the assault corps, were directly under the operational control of General Wallace's ADCC. On 20 April, the antiaircraft units reverted to the Tenth Army which then assigned the 53d Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade the mission of coordinating all AAA activities. At the same time, the brigade became the TAF agency for providing the ground forces with early air raid warning services while continuing to fulfill its AAA defense mission.

Initially, the 1st Provisional Antiaircraft Artillery Group was assigned to support IIIAC during Phases I and II of the operation by providing AAA defense for corps units, installations, and beaches, and the captured airfields in the corps zone.⁶² Additionally, the group was to provide anti-boat defense of corps beaches, supplement field artillery units in both direct and general support mission, and be prepared to fire seacoast artillery missions.⁶³

The assault elements of the group

were the 2d (Lieutenant Colonel Max C. Chapman) and 16th (Lieutenant Colonel August F. Penzoll, Jr.) Antiaircraft Artillery Battalions, which supported the 6th and 1st Marine Divisions respectively. Scheduled to land on order at later dates, the 5th (Lieutenant Colonel Harry O. Smith, Jr.) and 8th (Lieutenant Colonel James S. O'Halloran) AAA Battalions were to reinforce the group and extend antiaircraft defenses already existing.

Because of the rapid progress of the infantry and the assignment of higher priority to items needed ashore immediately, the landing of the Marine AAA battalions was delayed. Group and battalion reconnaissance parties landed on L plus 2 to select sites, and beginning on 5 April, the units themselves were given an unloading priority. By 12 April, the battalions were in position ashore.

Initially, one heavy and two light AAA batteries of the 2d Battalion were assigned a defense sector on 6th Marine Division beaches; the 16th Battalion supported the 1st Division with two heavy and two light batteries. The remaining five 90mm gun batteries of the group defended Yontan airfield.⁶⁴

When the 53d Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade assumed control of Tenth Army AAA units, it found that the defenses in the IIIAC and XXIV Corps zones were unbalanced. On 27 April, the brigade adjusted the dispositions and,

⁶¹ *Tenth Army TntvOplan 1-45*, anx 9, p. 4.

⁶² 1st Prov AAA Gru Gen AR, Okinawa Shima Op, Ph I&II, 1-22Apr45, dtd 18May45, p. 1, hereafter *1st Prov AAA Gru AR*.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ LtCol Peter J. Speckman ltr to CG, FMFPac, Subj: AAA Observer's Rpt on Okinawa Shima Op, n.d., encl A to CG, FMFPac ltr to DistrList, dtd 28Jun45, p. 4, hereafter *Speckman rpt.*

in addition, extended AAA defenses across the island to the east coast in order to break up enemy raids coming from that direction. The 1st Provisional Group continued the Yontan area defense, but was made responsible for defense of the entire Yontan-Kadena sector also. To aid in this last mission, Colonel Benner's group was augmented by two Army AAA-Automatic Weapons battalions.⁶⁵

Lieutenant Colonel O'Halloran's 8th Antiaircraft Battalion landed at Nago Wan on 17 April to defend IIIAC units and supply dumps in that area. Its most immediate problem, in view of the tactical situation on the Motobu Peninsula, was achieving ground security.⁶⁶ For that reason, battalion .50-caliber heavy machine guns and some .30-caliber light machine guns obtained locally were assigned a primary mission of ground defense.

Enemy air attacks on shore installations were directed at Yontan and Kadena airfields mainly, and usually took place at night. The only firing opportunities afforded shore-based anti-aircraft artillery during daylight occurred when Japanese aircraft, with the obvious intention of attacking the transport area, made their approaches from the landward side of the anchor-

age.⁶⁷ Usually, the illumination or visual sighting of an enemy plane, and sometimes even an American one, was the signal for a wave of wild uncontrolled firing both from shipboard and the island. "Carbines, rifles, and even .45 caliber pistols enthusiastically joined the fun on occasion."⁶⁸ Under these conditions, casualties and materiel damage resulted from falling shell fragments and wild shots until the Tenth Army insisted upon the enforcement of greater fire discipline by all unit commanders.

From the beginning of ADCC operations, there was no satisfactory communications and control system linking the fighter command and the anti-aircraft artillery units. When ADC was heavily engaged with enemy air attacks, liaison with AAA units weakened or broke down completely. At times, permission for the guns to fire on unidentified or enemy planes was withheld, even when the area was definitely under attack. On several occasions, air raid warning flashes were not relayed to the AAA command until after the infantry and shore party units had been informed.⁶⁹ Of necessity, an efficient control system was soon initiated. By the end of the month, Marine AAA units were credited with the destruction of 15 planes and 8 assists, 5 probably destroyed, and 6 damaged.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ It should be noted that Marine AAA battalions were a composite type of unit, containing both heavy and light AA weapons. The Army groups consisted of heavy and light AAA battalions, the former containing only the 90mm gun batteries and the latter being comprised entirely of automatic weapons units.

⁶⁶ 8th AAA Bn AR, dtd 22Apr45, encl E to 1st Prov AAA Gru AR, p. 6, hereafter *8th AAA Bn AR*.

⁶⁷ *Speckman rpt*, p. 1.

⁶⁸ *1st Prov AAA Gru AR*, p. 14.

⁶⁹ 53d AA Brig After-Action Rpt, dtd 21Jun45, p. 48, hereafter *53d AA Brig AAR*.

⁷⁰ 1st Prov AAA Gru AAA ARs for 6-16Apr45, dtd 23Apr45, and 17-30Apr45, dtd 10May45.

It was noted that, during enemy air attacks, Japanese aviators showed an increasing knowledge of radar evasion measures, and frequently used "window"⁷¹ in both conventional and *Kamikaze* attacks. In commenting on the enemy failure to mount air attacks on the ground forces, one observer stated that "it was difficult to understand why they had not resorted to formation bombing from low altitudes,"⁷² since low-angle radar detection of approaching aircraft was almost impossible. He concluded that the concentration on suicide attacks was too great; he might have added that the Japanese just did not have enough planes by this time to divert their air strength to missions other than the *Kamikaze* attacks.

While TAF fighter pilots added to the expanding bag of downed enemy planes, other types of air missions in support of the Tenth Army were performed at the same time by General Mulcahy's command. Upon its arrival, the Army Air Forces' 28th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron rephotographed the entire Okinawa Gunto area to obtain more accurate and complete coverage than had been available for the maps used on L-Day. The squadron also provided infantry commanders with enlarged aerial photographs of masked terrain features to their zones. As soon as Major Allan L. Feldmeier's VMTB-232 arrived on 22 April, it was given tasks other than its original mission of antisubmarine

⁷¹ "Window" is the name given to strips of cut metal foil, wire, or bars usually dropped from aircraft as a radar counter-measure.

⁷² *Speckman rpt*, p. 1.

warfare.⁷³ During the remainder of the month, the squadron flew numerous artillery observation missions daily, bombed and strafed enemy lines and installations in southern Okinawa, and conducted heckling raids in the same areas almost nightly.

The second mass *Kamikaze* attack took place during 12-13 April. Although as frenzied and almost as destructive as the first attack, it was mounted by only 392 planes, on both conventional and suicide missions,⁷⁴ as opposed to the 699 total in the first attack. As in *Kikusui* No. 1, TF 58 pilots downed most of the enemy, but carrier-based Marine flyers were active also. Flying Leathernecks from the *Bennington* shot down 26, and *Bunker Hill* Marines downed 25. Okinawa-based TAF pilots accounted for 16 more.

During the interval between the first and second mass raids, the Japanese command had recognized the threat presented to their air attacks by American land-based aircraft, so Kadena was bombed early on the 15th by planes that preceded the *Kamikazes*. TAF personnel and airplanes were endangered further when both of the fields occupied by Tenth Army squadrons were fired upon by an artillery piece, or pieces, nicknamed "Kadena Pete" in not-too-fond memory of

⁷³ On their arrival, the squadron pilots were pleased to discover that their primary mission had been cancelled since their planes were not equipped with sound-ranging equipment and they themselves had not been trained in its use. This mission was then given to Kerama-based seaplanes. VMTB-232 WarD, Apr45; *CTF 51 AR*, pt V, sec E, p. 5.

⁷⁴ Hattori, *loc. cit.*

“‘Pistol Pete’ at Henderson Field on Guadalcanal.”⁷⁵

TAF reports evaluating *Kikusui* No. 2 noted that the evasive tactics employed by the enemy “do not tend to indicate that the flyers were top-flight fighter pilots,” and that “a definite lack of aggressiveness” seemed “to confirm the belief that the pilots were green.”⁷⁶

A third mass raid of 498 aircraft (196 suiciders) occurred 15–16 April. As the furious air battle carried over into the second day, TAF planes began to score heavily. The largest bag made by land-based aircraft to that date was accomplished by VMF-441 (Major Robert O. White) pilots, who had shot down 17 of the 270 Japanese pilots and planes allegedly splashed on these two days.⁷⁷

In this attack, a TAF pilot made the first sighting of the so-called “Baka”

⁷⁵ *Henderson ltr.* General Henderson continues with a narration of the steps taken to discover and neutralize the artillery menace, which turned out to be not one but six 15cm guns cleverly hidden from aerial observation. “As I recall our attack, we first pounded all FA and AAA positions heavily with massed 155mm fire to immobilize the guns, so they couldn’t be moved that night and also [to] cause maximum casualties and incidental damage. Then we went to work with the 8-inch howitzers and 155mm guns to get positive destruction of each piece. When darkness came, we put heavy interdiction fire on the positions to keep [the guns from being moved] during the night. The next morning at first light we found them still there and went to work polishing them off. Kadena Pete didn’t bother us any more and the flyers and brass were all happy.”

⁷⁶ G-2 Sec, ADC, Analysis of Ops of Okinawa Based Fighter Aircraft, 1-30Apr45, n.d., hereafter *ADC AcftOpAnalysis* with month.

⁷⁷ Hattori, *op. cit.*, notes 182 planes were downed.

bomb⁷⁸ in its maiden appearance over Okinawa. This small, single-engined, wooden craft, powered by rockets, carried a one-man crew and over a ton and a half of explosives. Carried by a twin-engined bomber to a point near the target, the *Baka* was released when its pilot had verified the weapon’s target and position, oriented his own position, and started the rocket motors. Although the destructive powers of the *Baka* were real, its employment was erratic and it appeared too late in the war to be influential.

TAF operations for the rest of April tended to fall into a routine of CAPs and support missions. On 22 April, the dusk air patrol was vectored to a point over part of the radar picket line then being attacked by enemy aircraft. When the half-hour battle had ended, Marine pilots claimed 33 $\frac{3}{4}$ Japanese planes. Five days later, during the fourth mass *Kamikaze* attack (27–28 April), 115 suicide-bent Japanese pilots were launched against friendly shipping and the steadfast radar pickets. On the second day of the attack, at about 1600, the airborne TAF CAP and an additional 36 Corsairs were vectored out 40 miles northwest of Okinawa to intercept an approaching *Kamikaze* formation. After dark, when the two-hour fight was over, the Marine fighters were credited with downing 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ enemy planes. Upon

⁷⁸ This was a derisive term, meaning “foolish,” given the weapon by Americans. The Japanese named it *Ohka* (cherry blossom), and put it into full production late in 1944. Inoguchi, Nakajima, and Pineau, *Divine Wind*, pp. 140, 141. See also USSBS, *Japanese Air Weapons And Tactics* (GPO, Jan47), pp. 20–22.

being congratulated by the Tenth Army commander on the accomplishments of his pilots, General Mulcahy sent a message to the ADC: "Not only brilliant work by fighter pilots but excellent command control and most efficient re-servicing by ground personnel were

admiration of and inspiration to all." ⁷⁹ By the end of April, TAF pilots had flown 3,521 CAP sorties and shot down or assisted in the downing of 143 $\frac{3}{4}$ enemy aircraft.

⁷⁹ MAG-31 WarD, Apr45.

The Defense Stiffens

APPROACH TO SHURI¹

In the days immediately following the facing movement of the XXIV Corps and the beginning of its drive to the south, increasingly stiff and bitter resistance gave proof that the prepared enemy defenses were being uncovered. The nature of the contacts with the Japanese also heralded the end of the relatively easy and fast-moving XXIV Corps advance. By the morning of 6 April, it was evident that the Japanese "lines were drawn for a full-scale battle."² (See Map III, Map Section.)

What the 7th and 96th Divisions had encountered was a strong enemy position that extended the width of the island and roughly followed the line through Machinato, Kakazu, Kaniku, Minami-Uebaru, and Tsuwa. With flanks anchored on the East China Sea and the Pacific Ocean, the Japanese barrier was the outermost of a series of defense rings centering about Shuri, headquarters of the *Thirty-second Army*. The veteran troops of the *62d Division* were entrenched in this outpost sector, which was composed of well-prepared positions on high ground that was liberally studded with machine guns and mortars, and surrounded by barbed wire, antitank ditches, and mine-

fields. Unknown to the Americans, the enemy was prepared to fight a "prolonged holding action" here.³

Limited gains through highly developed defenses in the Nakama-Kakazu-Ouki area were made on 7 April. In the 96th Division zone, Army troops advanced over broken ground and wooded ridges to reach the approaches of Kakazu. By 1600, after a furious struggle, one infantry battalion—supported by three air strikes, four artillery battalions, and the 14-inch rifles of the *New York*—managed to penetrate to a point within 500 yards of the northern limits of Kakazu.

To break through the increased resistance, General Hodge had concluded that additional artillery support was essential, and on 5 April he had requested that Tenth Army give him whatever battalions were available. Because III Amphibious Corps Artillery could not be employed with maximum effect in the north, General Buckner ordered most of the 155mm units of IIIAC Artillery to be attached to XXIV Corps. On L plus 6 and 7, the 8th and 9th 155mm Gun Battalions and the 1st, 3d, and 6th 155mm Howitzer Battalions were detached from IIIAC and displaced south to support the attack there.

The howitzer battalions were assigned to the 419th Field Artillery Group and paired off with Army artillery battalions to form three firing

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *Tenth Army AR*; *XXIV Corps AR*; *XXIV Corps Arty AR*; *7th InfDiv AR*; *27th InfDiv OpRpt*; *96th InfDiv AR*.

² *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 72.

³ *Ibid.*

groupments, which were controlled by the Army battalion commanders. The Marine gun battalions, a IIIAC Artillery headquarters detachment, and the 749th Field Artillery Battalion (8-inch howitzers) were formed into a provisional group, named The Henderson Group after its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick P. Henderson, IIIAC Artillery Operations Officer.⁴ Brigadier General Josef R. Sheetz' XXIV Corps Artillery could now support the drive against the Shuri defenses with four 155mm gun battalions, one 8-inch and six 155mm howitzer battalions, and two 155mm gun battalions from the 420th Field Artillery Group.

During the night of 7-8 April, XXIV Corps units repulsed minor enemy infiltration attempts. The Japanese had planned that their first major counter-attack against Tenth Army troops would coincide with the *Kikusui* attack on 6 April, but when aerial reconnaissance reported the presence of a more lucrative target for aircraft, a large American convoy steaming south of Okinawa, the *Kamikaze* and ground attacks were rescheduled for the night of 8 April. This attack was cancelled indefinitely when another large convoy was spotted off the west coast of Okinawa just prior to the jumpoff. Because the situation was not favorable in either case, cooler heads amongst the *Thirty-second Army* staff prevailed and were able to stave off the launching of an unsupported Army counterattack. It was only a question of time, however, before the ad-

vocates of an all-out offensive would have their day.⁵

When it could no longer be employed profitably in the north, the 11th Marines was also sent south to provide additional Marine artillery in answer to Hodge's request of 5 April. The three 105mm howitzer battalions of Colonel Brown's regiment displaced southward on 9 April to reinforce the direct support battalions of the 7th and 96th Divisions. This reinforcement was in addition to the IIIAC artillery dispatched earlier. The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 11th Marines were attached to the 96th Division, and the 4th assigned to the 7th Division. On 12 April, the remaining battalion of the 11th Marines, 1/11, (75mm pack howitzers) was also attached to the 96th Division.⁶

Moving south at the same time as the Marine artillery were elements of the 27th Infantry Division (less RCT 105), which had landed at noon that day.

⁵ *Okinawa Operations Record*, pp. 70-76.

⁶ *11th Mar SAR*, n.p. The 11th Marines commander noted later that when his 105mm battalions joined the Army divisions: "The two Division Artillery Commanding Generals . . . did not want the 75mm Pack Howitzer Battalion. The Army had very little respect for 75s then. . . ." Shortly after the 11th displaced to the south, Colonel Brown "again asked Brigadier General [Robert G.] Gard of the 96th Division Artillery to use 1/11. Then, as happened throughout the campaign, there was a surplus of 75mm ammunition, and Brigadier General Gard was finally convinced that the Battalion would be valuable for harassing and interdiction fires, thus saving on his scarce 105mm ammunition." After 1/11 finally went south, Colonel Brown joined the staff of General Sheetz as liaison officer and remained there until 20 April, when his battalions reverted to his command. MajGen Wilburt S. Brown ltr to CMC, dtd 26Feb55, hereafter *Brown ltr II*.

⁴ *IIIAC Arty AR*, pp. 20-21.

Released from Tenth Army reserve, the division moved to a bivouac area just east of Kadena airfield, where it awaited a combat assignment.

Heavy enemy opposition and torrential rains driven by strong winds hampered the efforts of XXIV Corps when it resumed the attack on the 10th. On the corps front overall, the 7th Division was able to advance approximately 400 yards in its zone, but an antitank ditch and a minefield near Ouki, and mutually supporting caves and pillboxes on the right flank, seriously limited the division attack.

The 96th Division, which had begun the battle for Kakazu Ridge on the previous day, continued its attack against this key feature in the enemy's Shuri defense system. On 9 April, the division had attempted to take the position with two battalions in a predawn surprise attack. Frequent Japanese counterattacks and withering fire caused heavy casualties and forced the soldiers to relinquish their gains at 1630 and withdraw to positions from which the attack was launched. Nothing was left to chance on L plus 9, as all three regiments attacked after an intense artillery and naval gunfire bombardment lasting 30 minutes was placed on previously located positions. Air cover was not available because of the continuing bad weather, which turned the ground into a quagmire and bogged down the tanks scheduled to support the advancing infantry. When the day's fighting ended, the division had made an average gain of 300 yards along the entire front.

As night fell and the fighting died down all along the XXIV Corps lines, the *Thirty-second Army* issued orders

for a counterattack to be mounted on 12 April. Encouraged by the overly optimistic reports of the success of *Kikusui* No. 1 during the 6-7 April raids, the Japanese planned the counterattack to coincide with the second mass *Kamikaze* raid. Although the suicide flights began to pour into the skies above Okinawa at 1300 on 12 April, it was not until more than nine hours later that the ground effort was launched. The mission of the enemy assault units was to inflict as much damage as possible in rear areas, where their close proximity to Tenth Army troops would protect them from the devastating fire of American naval guns and artillery.

Under the cover of a mortar barrage, Japanese troops attempted the penetration of American lines. They were thrown back as artillery and small arms fire caught them fixed in the light of star shells thrown up by gunfire support ships. The enemy made several more attempts, but XXIV Corps units repulsed each one. On the night of 13-14 April, two lesser attacks occurred, but these also were driven off. In the two days' action, XXIV Corps reported 1,584 Japanese troops killed and four captured.⁷

A partial explanation for the failure of the counterattacks is found in the strength of American reaction to them. In addition, Japanese sources offer another approach:

When the Army chief of staff, after the opening of the offensive, visited the headquarters of the 62d Division, he learned that the senior staff officer [of the *Thirty-second Army*], Colonel Yahara, after the

⁷ Tenth Army G-2 Rpt Nos. 18-20, dtd 13-15Apr45.

issuance of the Army order for the attack, personally communicated to the responsible operational officers of both the 24th and 62d Divisions that commitment of a few shock troops would suffice for the attack instead of employing a major force, since the attack was bound to fail.⁸

Colonel Yahara's opposition to the attack sprung from his belief that it was not in keeping with the defensive mission of the *Thirty-second Army* and that it would result in a sheer waste of manpower. He was right, for, in effect, the attack was very costly to the Japanese, who concluded that "the night assault resulted in a complete failure."⁹

Although XXIV Corps estimated that its troops had destroyed 6,883 of the enemy by 14 April,¹⁰ its order of battle maps still indicated that the *12th*, *13th*, and *14th Independent Infantry Battalions* of the *62d Division's 63d Brigade* opposed the corps advance. Although Tenth Army intelligence agencies knew that elements of four new battalions had been added to the enemy line after the 12-13 April counterattack, the Americans were unable to explain the continued identification of those infantry units that had received enough casualties to be considered destroyed. Actually, the inability of the Tenth Army to maintain a current order of battle file stemmed directly from the replacement system of the *Thirty-second Army*. The Japanese gradually fed individuals and small groups coming from service and support assignments into forward units. At the same time, entire companies and battalions—as yet uncommitted—were absorbed tempo-

rarily, or permanently in some cases, into the existing defensive lineup, and were given the designation of the unit into which they had been incorporated.

The first reorganization of the *12th Independent Infantry Battalion* on 23 March serves as an excellent example of this practice. At that time, its organic strength was 1,043; attached special guard, labor, and naval elements raised the total to 1,333. The battalion was armed with 49 light and 9 heavy machine guns, 42 grenade launchers, and 2 75mm guns. On 12 April, after more than a week of continuous fighting against the XXIV Corps, *12th Independent Infantry Battalion* strength was listed by the Japanese as 1,257. Only 414 men remained of the original battalion and 61 from the unit attached originally, but the battalion had been strengthened by the addition of the *2d Battalion*, *22d Regiment* (less one rifle company) and the entire *1st Light Mortar Battalion*.¹¹ Surprisingly enough, the battalion was more heavily armed than it had been before L-Day, for it now had 45 light and 13 heavy machine guns, 45 grenade launchers, 19 90mm mortars, and 3 75mm guns.¹²

By the end of the second week of April, Tenth Army intelligence officers had obtained a fairly accurate picture of Japanese defense plans from captured enemy maps and documents. The Americans were forced to revise their L-Day estimate of enemy strength upward by 7,000 to a total of 72,000,

¹¹ IIIAC G-2 Rpt No. 38, JOB Suppl, dtd 9May45.

¹² "Organization of the 12th IIB, dtd 12Apr45," in 1st MarDiv G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 37, dtd 8May45, Trans No. 46.

⁸ *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 82.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Tenth Army G-2 Rpt No. 10, dtd 14Apr45.

which was "deemed a conservative minimum."¹³ It was apparent that the bulk of the *Thirty-second Army* had not yet been met.

As the Tenth Army prepared for this encounter, it became evident that the ammunition supply chain could not keep up with the demand, and it was necessary to apply command restrictions on ammunition expenditure as early as 9 April.¹⁴ Concerning this shortage, the Marine Deputy Chief of Staff of the Tenth Army noted:

The artillery, in fact, was used too freely. For a considerable period, artillery ammunition was being unloaded over the beaches at the rate of 3,000 tons per day. . . . It was considered normal to fire a concentration of four or five battalions. A good bit of TOT [time on target] firing was done.¹⁵

The nature of the Shuri defenses demanded the fullest employment possible of all available weapons. Artillery, especially, was needed to reduce prepared positions and denude them of their skillfully prepared camouflage, to seal off the firing ports, and to collapse the labyrinth of interconnecting tunnels

¹³ JOB Sum for 8-14Apr45, in Tenth Army G-2 Rpt No. 22, dtd 17Apr45.

¹⁴ For amplification of this artillery ammunition shortage, see section entitled "Logistical Progress" in chap 7, *infra*.

¹⁵ Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 95. Time on target is an artillery technique in which several units fire on the same target and so time their fire that all projectiles hit the target simultaneously. The point here is not that five battalions firing one volley will expend more ammunition than one battalion firing five volleys, but that the five-battalion TOT is much more effective. BGen Frederick P. Henderson ltr to Asst G-3, HQMC, dtd 28Oct65, hereafter *Henderson ltr 1965*.

that housed and protected the defending troops. Since their operations were not subject in the same degree to the restrictions of inclement weather and enemy air attacks, as were air and naval gunfire, corps and divisional artillery, of necessity, served as the support workhorses for assaults.

Because General Hodge knew that a maximum effort would be needed if *Thirty-second Army* lines were to be penetrated, he scheduled a corps attack, three divisions abreast, for 19 April. Beginning 15 April, four days were spent in preparation for the attack. While guns and howitzers steadily hammered at enemy forward positions and troop concentration areas, artillery ammunition reserves were stockpiled both at the batteries and distribution points. In the pre-attack period, planes from TAF, and Task Forces 51, 52, and 58 flew a total of 905 sorties in direct support missions for XXIV Corps. The pilots dropped 482 tons of bombs and expended 3,400 rockets and over 700,000 rounds of .50 caliber and 20mm ammunition on Japanese installations.¹⁶ Added to this firepower was that coming from the strong force of TF 51 battleships, cruisers, and destroyers that remained offshore both day and night.¹⁷

Prior to the attack, the frontline units attempted to improve their positions with small local attacks, while patrols were sent forward in order to pinpoint enemy positions and weapons emplacements. When the 27th Division entered the line on 15 April, a general

¹⁶ *XXIV Corps Arty AR*, Anx C, enc 2, p. 4.

¹⁷ *CTF 51 AR*, pt V, sec C, pp. 39-42.

reshuffling of the XXIV Corps front took place. (See Map III, Map Section.) On that date, General Griner assumed responsibility for the corps right flank and, on the following day, regained his 105th Infantry, which had been released from army reserve following the capture of Tsugen Shima. All initial XXIV Corps assault deployments were completed two days before the jump-off.

The support provided by air, naval gunfire, and artillery prior to the 19 April attack might seem pallid in comparison with the destructive potential of the nuclear weapons of a later era. To the assault force leaders and their troops, however, the immensity of the preparatory and supporting fires was awesome. The firepower of 6 battleships, 6 cruisers, and 9 destroyers was assigned to direct support of the attacking corps, and 650 Navy and Marine aircraft were directed to hit enemy defenses, assembly areas, and supply points.

Beginning at 0600 on 19 April, 27 battalions of artillery, covering the five-mile front with a density greater than one weapon to every 30 yards, fired in their pre-attack bombardment everything from 75mm to 8-inch howitzers. Regarding this massing of battalions, one observer remarked:

Not many people realize that the . . . artillery in Tenth Army, plus the LVT(A)s [mounting 75mm howitzers] and NGF equivalent gave us a guns/mile of front ratio on Okinawa that was probably higher than any U. S. effort in World War II. We look with awe on the Russian doctrine of 300 guns/mile of front for an attack. But if you take our Okinawa figures, and apply a reasonable multiplication factor for our flexible fire direction sys-

tem that rapidly enabled us to mass all guns within range on a target, we equalled or exceeded the Russians in effective available fire support.¹⁸

Equally impressive was the air support provided the ground troops during this offensive. At one time alone during 19 April, "we had 375 aircraft on station, and . . . LFASCU-2, controlling seven simultaneous air strikes on a ten-mile front, had literally reached the point of saturation." Commenting on this, the commander of the LFASCU stated that "I do not believe that we have ever exceeded, or since equalled, this magnitude of close air support on any given day."¹⁹

To the troops poised for the attack, it seemed incredible that anyone could survive in that terrible downpour of steel, yet it soon became apparent that almost all of the enemy did. The Japanese were hidden in caves and protected by solid limestone walls deep within the hill-ridge complex astride the XXIV Corps route of advance.

Initially, the assault infantry made moderate gains, but when the enemy remanned his positions, the attack slowed and then halted under the resumption of intense mortar, machine gun, and artillery fire. Generally, all along the line, advances were negligible to non-existent as enemy resistance stiffened. Kakazu Ridge, the formidable bastion opposing the 27th Division, proved to be as difficult to take at this time as it had been when the 96th Division made the attempt. The 27th mounted a battalion-size infantry attack, supported by a re-

¹⁸ *Henderson ltr.*

¹⁹ Gen Vernon E. Megee ltr to Asst G-3, HQMC, dtd 19Oct65.

inforced tank company, in an attempt to bypass the ridge through a cut between Kakazu and Nishibaru. Anticipating the probable use of this route, on the night of 18 April the Japanese had emplaced mortars, machine guns, antitank guns, and anti-aircraft cannon to cover the Ginowan-Shuri road, which crossed through the cut. The enemy cut off the tank company from its covering infantry by planned protective fire.²⁰

The tanks were able to get behind the ridge to shoot up the village of Kakazu, but without infantry support, they were forced to withdraw to their own lines. Only 8 of the original 30 tanks in the foray made it back through the cut; the remaining 22 fell victim to the fire of antitank and anti-aircraft guns, mines in Kakazu village, and satchel charges borne to the tanks by suicide-bent enemy soldiers.

By the end of the day, on the corps right flank, the 27th Division was halted at the western end of the Urasoe-Mura escarpment; the 96th Division, in the center, had pushed through Kaniku to gain positions on the forward slopes of Nishibaru Ridge; and the 7th Division, on the left, was held up by fanatic opposition and heavy fire, with the net result that it made no progress at all.

As the XXIV Corps ground out the second day of its offensive, the pattern of future fighting emerged—little yardage gained at a high cost in lives to both sides. Heavy casualties were sustained by all the attacking divisions, but the Japanese frontline units also were

punished and considerably reduced in size. Only the sheer courage and fanatic determination of the enemy and the strength of his natural defenses kept the XXIV Corps at bay. Action during the period 20–23 April consisted of heavily supported local attacks against key strongpoints.

When General Hodge renewed the XXIV Corps attack on 24 April, he was ready to throw the full weight of its power against the forces holding Shuri's outer defense ring. During the night of 23–24 April, however, unknown to the Americans and under cover of "the most intensive artillery fire yet experienced on the XXIV Corps front,"²¹ General Ushijima had withdrawn his defending units from the line that had held up the 7th and 96th Divisions for two weeks. All along the front, American forces now made sweeping and significant gains, and the heretofore-difficult Kakazu Ridge was taken with little effort.

After the 27th Division had entered the lines on the corps right flank in mid-April, 2/11 and 3/11 were re-assigned from support of the 96th Division to reinforce the fires of 27th Division artillery. This change was made because "General Sheetz thought, even then, that the 1st Marine Division would be needed in the south, on the coast."²² At this time, the 11th Marines commander, Colonel Brown, heavily reinforced his three 105mm battalions with regimental headquarters personnel so that as many men as possible could gain battle experience.²³

²⁰ "62d Div Battle Lessons, Priority Dispatch No 19, dtd 20Apr45," in CinCPac-CinCPOA Bul 212-45, Translations and Interrogations No. 39, dtd 30Aug45, pp. 47-49.

²¹ Tenth Army G-2 Rpt No. 30, dtd 25Apr45.

²² *Brown ltr II*.

²³ *Ibid.*

Firing battery crewmen were not the only Marines in the 11th to gain on-the-job training in the south, for regimental communications personnel were kept exceptionally busy. Although radio was depended upon primarily, wiremen laid telephone wires from Army fire direction centers to the Marine units supporting XXIV Corps after frequent interference in 11th Marines radio circuits had made reliance on wire communications necessary.

Owing to a shortage of trained wiremen in the Army battalions, these same Marines in addition had to lay and maintain all lateral wire communications for three Army divisional artillery headquarters. This communication system permitted the rapid massing of all XXIV Corps and attached artillery fire whenever all other means of communication broke down.²⁴ Forward observer teams of the 11th Marines also gained valuable experience when they went forward to the XXIV Corps infantry units their artillery battalions were supporting. The knowledge gained by the teams supporting the 27th Division was especially useful later when the 1st Marine Division relieved the 27th in the same general area.

Indications that greater Marine participation in the Shuri battle would be forthcoming occurred on 21 April when Tenth Army ordered General Geiger to make the 1st Tank Battalion available for attachment to the 27th Division. Although the IIIAC commander had no

compunction about his Marines fighting in the south, he was not happy at the prospect of their being committed piecemeal.²⁵ If Marine assistance was needed in the south, it was Geiger's opinion that the entire 1st Marine Division should be committed.²⁶ Although a warning order for the tank battalion displacement had been dispatched to the 1st Division, the actual movement orders were never issued and the matter was apparently dropped by Tenth Army.²⁷

General Buckner acknowledged the need for a substantial infusion of fresh troops into the main battleline, and directed General Geiger, on 24 April, to designate one IIIAC division as Tenth Army reserve. One regiment of that division was to be ready to assemble and move south on 12 hours' notice. General Geiger selected the 1st Marine Division, and General del Valle placed the 1st Marines on alert status.²⁸

At this point, the question arises why the 2d Marine Division, in Tenth Army reserve, was not committed in action on Okinawa when it was apparent that it was needed. On 9 April, Admiral Nimitz authorized General Watson's division to return and debark at Saipan; on the 14th, the division was released from Tenth Army reserve and reverted to IIIAC control, although it remained on Saipan. Both at this time, and in later critiques of the fighting on Okinawa, there was a strong body of senior offi-

²⁵ Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 88.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*; IIIAC G-3 Jnl, 1Apr-30Jun45, 22Apr45 entry, hereafter *IIIAC G-3 Jnl* with date of entry cited.

²⁸ *IIIAC AR*, p. 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.* General Brown added that "the 11th Marines used well over 1,000 miles of wire from April 29th to June 22d, having as a peak as much as 262 miles in operation at one time."

cers who felt that there was no sound reason why the 2d Marine Division could not have been employed to make an amphibious assault on the south-eastern coast of Okinawa. Possibly, a second landing could have succeeded in cracking the Shuri barrier where the attack of the XXIV Corps in mid-April failed.

General Vandegrift suggested that the 2d Division be employed when he visited Okinawa on 21 April with Brigadier General Gerald C. Thomas, Admiral Nimitz, and Nimitz' chief of staff, Rear Admiral Forrest P. Sherman. When, during a meeting at Geiger's CP, Buckner stated that he was going to commit IIIAC divisions in the south shortly, Vandegrift:

did not object to the Marines being committed to the main fight—they were on Okinawa for this purpose. But I did question Buckner's tactical plan. Instead of trying to slug it out with the enemy, Geiger, Thomas, and I argued for an amphibious landing in the rear or anyway on the flank of the enemy by Buckner's reserve, the 2d Marine Division on Saipan.

Forrest Sherman, among others, objected to a landing on the far east coast as impractical. We replied that the bay of our choice was the alternate landing area for the original operation, so apparently Buckner had thought it quite practical. Having been shot down on this point, Sherman claimed it would take too long to load out the 2d Division from Saipan. We promised him it could be underway in six hours.

Despite these and other arguments Sherman refused to back us, nor did Buckner seem impressed. I learned later that General Bruce, commanding the 77th Army Division which had fought so well on Guam, proposed a similar plan as did

Kelly Turner, whose transports were being hurt by the kamikaze tactic.²⁹

Although General Bruce had also pressed for a second landing, for his troops had all but captured Ie Shima, Buckner refused because his G-4 had told him that food but not ammunition could be supplied for this project. In addition, the site of the proposed 77th Division landing was so far south of the main Tenth Army line at that time, neither XXIV Corps artillery nor troops could support it. Besides, at the time that the 77th was available, it was needed in the line as the 7th, 27th, and 96th Divisions were in bad shape because of casualties and fatigue. Nor did Buckner want to use the 2d Marine Division for a second landing, for it was scheduled to invade Kikai Shima, north of Okinawa, in July.

The Tenth Army commander was evidently convinced that the greater need was for fresh troops on the Shuri front and that a landing on the south-eastern beaches was logistically infeasible. Despite the arguments presented by General Vandegrift in favor of such a tactic, he was not supported by either Nimitz or Sherman, and Buckner remained unmoved in his decision.

He faced the basic alternatives of a two-corps frontal attack against Shuri or an envelopment of the enemy forces facing his troops. Having decided against the landing in the enemy rear, his next step was to commit IIIAC in the south.

²⁹ Alexander A. Vandegrift and Robert B. Asprey, *Once a Marine* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1964), p. 290, hereafter Vandegrift and Asprey, *Once A Marine*.

The Marines were available to the Tenth Army commander as a result of change in the ICEBERG plan of operations. On 26 April, General Buckner was informed that Phase III of the plan, the projected invasion of Miyako Shima in the Sakashima Group east of Taiwan, was cancelled. This high-level decision by the JCS freed IIIAC from the Miyako operation and permitted Buckner to insert that corps into the southern Okinawa line.³⁰ The next day, the army commander declared his intent to attach the 1st Division to XXIV Corps at an early date in order to relieve the understrength and badly battered 27th Division for garrison duty under Island Command.³¹ Also on 27 April, the 77th Infantry Division completed its move from Ie Shima to Okinawa, and its leading elements moved into position to relieve the 96th the next day.

Matters concerning the future employment of IIIAC units were discussed at a conference held at Tenth Army headquarters on 28 April. Colonel Walter A. Wachtler, General Geiger's G-3, was informed that the 1st Marine Division was to be attached to XXIV Corps on the last day of April. General del Valle's troops would begin moving south to relieve the 27th Division on

that same day. Upon its relief, the 27th was to move north to relieve the 6th Marine Division, which would then move to an assembly area near Chibana to await further orders for the movement south. It was planned that, on or about 7 May, the IIIAC was to take over the zone held at that time by the 1st Marine Division and, simultaneously, Tenth Army would then assume tactical control of the two-corps front. A coordinated army attack would be made soon thereafter.³²

1ST MARINE DIVISION JOINS XXIV CORPS³³

While the XXIV Corps made preparations to relieve two of its frontline divisions, the attack to the south continued. The enemy reacted savagely to the grinding advance of the 96th Division, throwing counterattacks, repeated artillery and mortar barrages, and never-ending infiltration attempts in the soldiers' path. The division objective was the Maeda Escarpment. Retention of this position was vital to *Thirty-second Army* defense plans, because the terrain offered a commanding view of all of the Japanese positions as far as the Shuri foothills, and at the same time guaranteed continued enemy ob-

³⁰ Of this assault, the FMFPac commander informed the Commandant of the Marine Corps that it was his "opinion that the target is unnecessary—practically in a [Japanese] rear area and its capture will cost more than Iwo Jima." LtGen Holland M. Smith ltr to CMC, dtd 27Mar45 (Vandegrift Personal Correspondence File, HistBr, HQMC).

³¹ *1st MarDiv G-3 Jnl*, 27Apr45.

³² *IIIAC AR*, p. 44.

³³ Unless otherwise indicated, the material in this section is derived from: *Tenth Army AR*; *XXIV Corps AR*; *TAF AR*; *TAF PeriodicRpts*, Apr-May45; *ADC Daily IntelSums*, Apr-May45; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *7th InfDiv AR*; *27th InfDiv OpRpt*; *77th InfDiv OpRpt*, Okinawa; *96th InfDiv AR*; *1st Mar SAR*; *5th Mar SAR*, 22Apr-23Jun45, n.d., hereafter *5th Mar SAR*; *7th Mar SAR*.

servation into American lines.³⁴ The region surrounding Maeda, therefore, became the focus of ferocious fighting when the enemy attempted to retain the dominating ground of the second Shuri defensive ring. On 29 April, units of the 77th Division began relief of the 96th Division and immediately took up the attack. The soldiers of the 77th were very tired from the fighting they had just experienced on Ie Shima, and the division was far understrength because of casualty losses. As a result, it could make but slight gains against the highly developed defenses.

The 27th Division lines on the 29th had been pushed through Kuwan and Miyagusuku during a daylong drive, which exposed deeply dug-in, heavily mined Japanese positions. These extended throughout the rugged hills and ridges that bordered the east and southeast sides of Machinato airfield. At 0600 on the following day, the 1st Marine Division was attached to XXIV Corps. Immediately thereafter, march serials of the 1st Marines and 1st Tank Battalion began moving to the 27th Division area in the south. The Army division, meanwhile, continued its attack south of Machinato airfield. At 1000, the first of the Marine units began moving into 27th Division lines even as it halted its forward progress and disengaged its advance patrols, which had been caught in a heavy fire fight.

On the extreme right of the corps line, beginning at Kuwan, 1/1 took up positions, which made a half-circle around the south of Machinato and joined up with 3/1 just to the northeast

of Nakanishi. No orders were issued for the resumption of the attack in this area, so the Marines spent the rest of 30 April digging in, improving existing defenses, and registering defensive fires.³⁵ (See Map III, Map Section.)

The commander of 3/1 had been informed by the commander of the relieved Army battalion that some Japanese were still holed-up in Miyagusuku. Marines, dispatched to mop up, moved towards the village, whereupon enemy artillery and mortar fire began falling on them. Under this cover, Japanese troops began infiltrating back into Miyagusuku in some strength. After being pinned down in the village ruins by the concentrated fire, the Marines were forced to withdraw; they set up north of the village for the night. At dusk, the 3/1 reserve was committed on the left of the line, where it tied in with the one yet-unrelieved unit of the 27th Division.³⁶

The 77th Division completed the relief of the 96th at the same time the 1st Marines took over the right of the 27th Division lines. At noon, General Bruce assumed command of the zone from General Bradley and, throughout the day, 77th Division troops attempted to improve their positions on the escarpment. Despite heavy supporting fires, the sheer fury and fanatic determination of the defenders forced the attackers back to defensive positions of the previous night.

³⁵ 1st Bn, 1st Mar SAR, 23Feb-21Jun45, n.d., p. 3, hereafter 1/1 SAR.

³⁶ 3d Bn, 1st Mar SAR, Phase I and II of the Nansei Shoto Operations, dtd 10Jul45, p. 9, hereafter 3/1 SAR.

³⁴ *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 91.

By midafternoon of 1 May, two of the 1st Division assault regiments, the 1st Marines on the right and the 5th Marines on the left, had relieved the 27th Division; General del Valle assumed command of the former Army zone at 1400. (See Map 13.) Although this action marked the official entry of the 1st Division into the southern front, the 11th Marines had been in the vanguard when it supported the 7th, 27th, and 96th Divisions throughout most of the fighting in April.³⁷ The artillery battalions of the 27th Division remained in position to continue supporting the 1st and 77th Divisions in their attack to the south.³⁸

Even before completing relief of the 27th Division on 1 May, General del Valle's Marines saw clearly the results of combat in southern Okinawa, and soon learned of the tenacity of the defenders. When the 5th Marines relieved the remaining Army regiments during the afternoon of the 1st, they learned how hard these units had been hit. Each 2/5 infantry company replaced one depleted battalion of the 105th, and 3/5 took over the area held by the 106th. At 1400, while consolidating their posi-

tions south of Awacha, 2/5 Marines observed about a platoon of Army tanks moving south in the town. As soon as the tanks had emerged from the town, they were hit by 47mm AT fire within 20 yards of the Marine line.³⁹ Perhaps even more disturbing to the Marines was the news that their unit identification and the location of their front had already been noted on an enemy map captured just that day.⁴⁰

General del Valle's men continued their defensive activities on their first day in the south. By 1700, all lines had been tied in, and 1/5 had taken up positions in a reserve area. As the frontline Marines dug in, preparations were made for a fully supported division attack scheduled for the following day, with the north bank of the Asa Kawa (River) as the objective. The corps commander instructed General del Valle to exert constant pressure against the enemy and to support the 77th Division attack with fire and maneuver.⁴¹ Because it flanked the Army division, the 5th Marines was assigned this task.

In order to prevent an American penetration after the 27th Division had taken Gusukuma, the Japanese had been forced to reform their west coast battleline. It now was held by a major portion of the *62d Division*, which was positioned along a line that ran generally from Jichaku and Uchima through the ridges north of Dakeshi to Awacha. In addition, there were "powerful elements of the Division scattered and re-

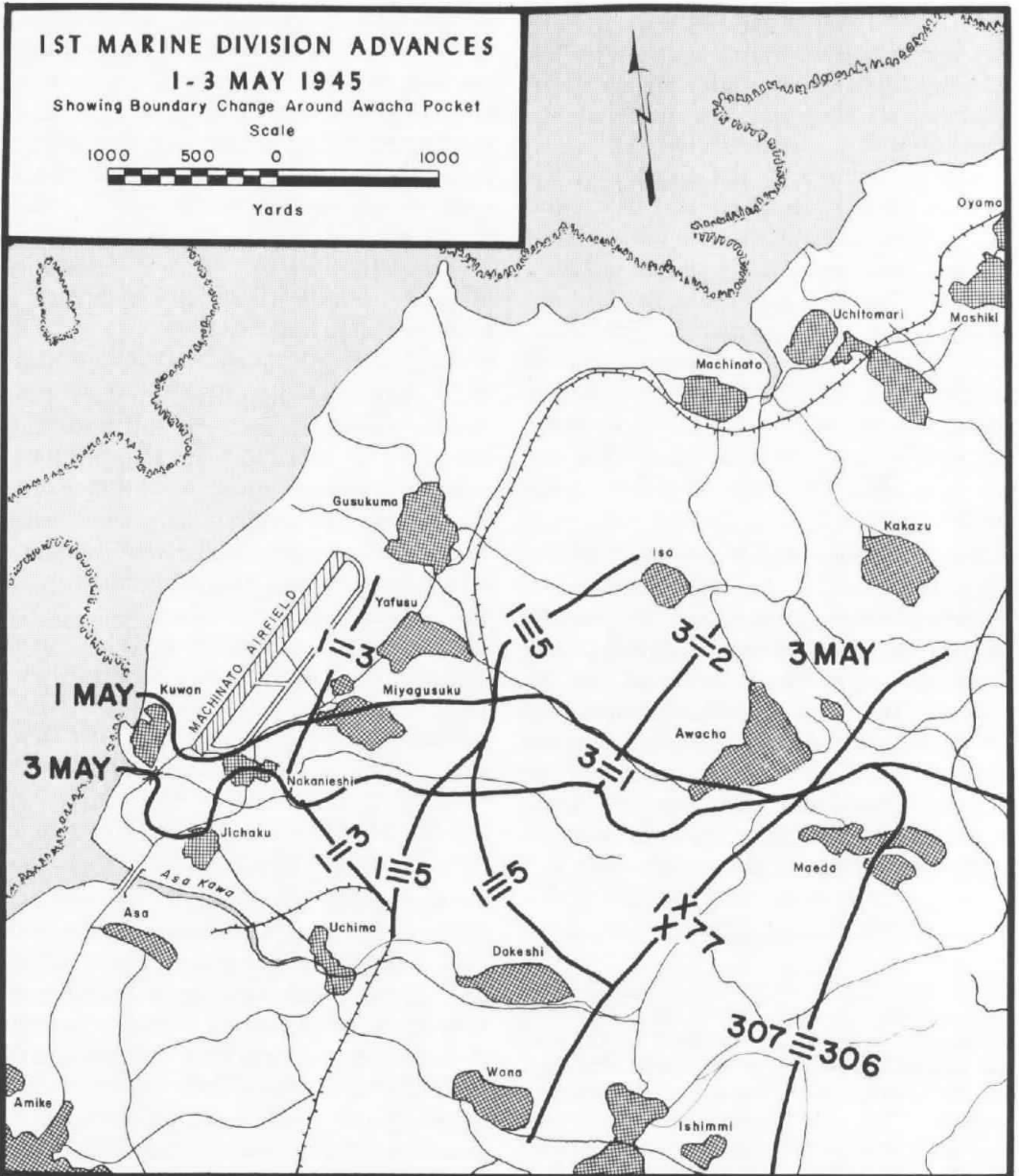
³⁷ "On 29 April, Headquarters, 11th Marines assumed command of its scattered battalions in the zone of and reinforcing the 27th Division, the two battalions with the 7th and 96th Divisions displacing into that area. All four battalions of the 11th Marines were commended by the Army divisions with which they served." *Brown ltr II*, copies of commendations appended.

³⁸ One battalion, the 249th Field Artillery, accompanied the 27th Division when it went north and furnished support during infantry mop-up activities. This unit returned south on 29 May to reinforce the fires of IIIAC Artillery.

³⁹ 2d Bn, 5th Mar SAR, Okinawa, 1Apr-22Jun45, n.d., pp. 2-3, hereafter *2/5 SAR*.

⁴⁰ *1st MarDiv G-3 Jnl*, 1May45.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*



MAP 13

T. L. RUSSELL

maining in the cave positions within the [American] lines still offering resistance.”⁴² It was these forces with which the 1st Marines would have to contend.

The 1st of May brought cloudy and cooler weather, and sporadic showers heralded the Okinawa rainy period, which, in itself, serves as a harbinger of the approaching typhoon season (July–November). During the previous night, all 1st Marines battalions had received intermittent mortar and artillery fire. The day was devoted by 1/1 to patrolling its front and attempting to readjust its lines. A reconnaissance patrol discovered that a deep L-shaped ravine cut across the entire battalion front and that it formed a natural barrier to the next logical objective. The Marines also found that the retreating enemy had blown out the fill where the main north-south highway crossed this chasm. Added to the enemy artillery and antitank guns registered on the area, this obstacle obviously would prohibit an armor-supported infantry penetration.

A patrol sent from one of the Marine rifle companies to the west of the ravine to scout out other approaches was taken under extremely heavy fire that came from the steep cliffs along the far side of the declivity. It was apparent that the enemy, from positions on the high ground to the south and southeast of the Asa Kawa, had excellent observation of the battalion approach route and that the Marines were going to have a difficult time reaching and crossing the river.

On the left of the regiment, meanwhile, 3/1 prepared for a second attempt to secure Miyagusuku, this time with the support of seven tanks from the 1st Tank Battalion, four of them mounting flamethrowers. The flat trajectory tank cannon fire blasted the houses and walls still standing, and 300 gallons of flaming napalm set the entire pyre aflame.⁴³ At 1045, when the fires had died down, a small patrol passed through without enemy opposition. Approximately two and a half hours later, the rest of the battalion followed, and, as it cleared Miyagusuku, there was a step-up in the intermittent Japanese mortar and artillery fire that had been falling since before dawn. Added to this fire was that of enemy riflemen and machine gunners. Increased casualties and the difficulties encountered in evacuating them forced the assault companies to withdraw under a smoke screen and mortar barrage once the battalion commander had given permission for such a move. By 1900, the battalion returned to the positions it had occupied on 30 April.

⁴³ 1st TkBn Summaries of Tank Action, 15Apr-23Jun45, hereafter *1st TkBn Sum*, with dates of action. According to the *3/1 SAR*, p. 10, the tanks supporting this action were Army mediums, but the 1st Tank Battalion lists them as belonging to its own Company A. The flame tanks came from Company B, 713th Tank Battalion, which was attached first to the 1st Marine Division and later to IIIAC. This battalion was one of the first Army armored units to be equipped with and trained in the use of an improved tank-mounted flame thrower, which replaced the 75mm gun in the medium tank. Appleman, *et. al.*, *Okinawa Battle*, p. 256.

⁴² *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 97.

The 1st Division attack to the Asa on 2 May began in driving rain which seriously limited visibility and reduced the amount of effective air support supplied that day. The two frontline Army divisions in XXIV Corps attacked enemy-held ridge positions containing pill-boxes and mutually supporting small arms and automatic weapons emplacements. Added to these barriers and the destructiveness of Japanese artillery fire was the foe's determined and ferocious refusal to yield any ground.

When the 5th Marines jumped off at 0900, following artillery, naval gunfire, and some air preparation, 2/5 on the extreme left came under flanking fire from positions in front of the 307th's lines. Within an hour, the 2d Battalion was pinned down, and, by 1100, heavy casualties forced its withdrawal under a smoke cover to its original positions. As soon as the 3d Battalion crossed its line of departure, it too came under the frontal and flanking fire that had driven 2/5 back. "The advance was untenable and had to be withdrawn to initial positions."⁴⁴ Because the 5th Marines was unable to advance, Company L of 3/1 (on the battalion left) was stopped in its attempt to move beyond Miyagusuku with Company K. The latter, however, was not pinned down and was able to progress beyond the edge of the ruins that were once a village. At 1446, the 1st Marines commander, Colonel Chappell, was ordered to change the axis of the regimental attack from due south to the southeast. General del Valle had

reasoned that the new attack direction, which would hit the flank of many of the positions holding up the 5th Marines, would enable both Company L and his left regiment to continue the advance.

After new attack orders had been issued, battalion boundaries adjusted, and a 10-minute artillery barrage laid, the 1st Marines attack was resumed at 1630 against very heavy fire. By dark, 3/1 had fought its way to a small series of hills approximately 300 yards south of Miyagusuku. Pouring rain, machine gun fire, and grenades began falling on the leading elements of the assault as the troops gained this ground. Here they began digging in at 2000 for the night. Almost immediately, the enemy began the first in a series of infiltration attempts which were to mark the hours of darkness. The violence of the hand-to-hand clashes on the hill held by Company K was reflected in a comment the next morning by one of the Marines, who said that this had been the grimmest night he had spent so far on Okinawa.⁴⁵

On the extreme right of the division, 1/1 ran into equally heavy resistance in its effort to cross the ravine facing it. Although one company had already passed through Nakanishi, and was in position by 1000 to plunge into the ravine where it angled north towards Miyagusuku, the slowness of the attack to the left of the 1st Marines presaged caution, and the 1/1 commander was told to be wary of exposing his troops to enfilade fire.

⁴⁴ LtCol Martin C. Roth ltr to CMC, dtd 18Mar55.

⁴⁵ 3/1 SAR, p. 13.

Despite all precautionary measures, including the blasting of enemy positions by self-propelled assault guns at the beginning of the attack, Japanese fire continued to pour from the caves and heights overlooking the defile to catch the advancing troops. Disregarding this fusillade and the casualties resulting from it, Company B managed to gain a defiladed position just short of the initial objective. At this point, however, the Marines were cut off both front and rear by enemy fire. At 1300, orders for a general withdrawal were issued, and the company disengaged and pulled back to high ground under the cover of smoke.

At 1630, when the attack was resumed in the new direction, the 1st Battalion attacked straight across the ravine in order to ensure flank protection before making the southeasterly move. The impetus of the drive carried Company A to the outskirts of Jichaku, where it dug in. By the end of a quiet but wet night, the assault units had established a firm line where the division awaited the joining of RCT-7.

The 7th Marines had displaced south on the morning of the attack, its battalions moving to the vicinity of Uchitomari. On the following day, 3 May, the regimental CP displaced forward to a point about 200 yards north of Gusukuma, while the 1st and 2d Battalions took up beach defense positions in the vicinity of Machinato airfield. The 3d Battalion was attached to the 5th Marines to assist the advance of that regiment.

Continuing the attack on 3 May, the division assigned intermediate and final

objectives to the 1st Marines. The first began at the railroad spur bridge crossing the Asa River between Asa and Uchima, and extended northeast, generally following the spur initially and then the main line itself, to a point just east of Miyagusuku. The second began at the same bridge, but ran generally east along the high ground between Dakeshi and Wana to the division boundary. The line between the attacking regiments, bent back to reflect the assignment given the 1st Marines, gave to the 5th the thankless task of clearing out the confused terrain that soon would be called Awacha Pocket.

Although the 5th Marines gained about 500–600 yards in its zone, the 1st became heavily engaged in fire fights all along the line and was restricted to limited gains. Forward elements of 1/1 ran into difficulty in every direction; Company F,⁴⁶ attacking Jichaku, was held up by a stubborn defense, and Company A was cut up in its attempt to reduce the ravine position that had stymied the battalion on the previous day. Neither company was able to move forward and both were forced to withdraw under the cover of smoke late in the morning, carrying with them the large number of casualties they had sustained. Because it appeared that the attack would not succeed without armor support, plans were made to use tanks after the road south of Kuwan had been cleared of mines. After dark, an engi-

⁴⁶ Because both Companies B and C were badly shot up on the previous day, Company F was attached to 1/1 prior to the redirected attack that had begun at 1630 on 2 May.

near mine-clearing team, protected by infantry began reconnoitering the proposed armor attack route.⁴⁷

Company L, on the left of the 1st Marines line, was unable to move until 3/5 had seized a high hill to the left front of the company. After it took the hill, the battalion was driven off at 1555 by a heavy enemy artillery concentration. Company L was ordered to retake the objective, and, following a 10-minute 81mm mortar barrage, gained the hill-top 20 minutes later. Here, the company was pinned down by Japanese fire coming from high ground to the front and on its flanks. When Company K was unable to close in on L and had to fall back, Company I was committed on the right of K to close a gap that had developed along the battalion boundary. The regiment then assigned Company G of 2/1 to back-up the 1,200-yard front of 3/1.

To escape the furious machine gun and mortar fire that had followed it after it was driven off the hill on the right of 3/1, 3/5 was forced to fall back another 100 yards; its advances on 3 May were limited to 200-300 yards. Passing through 2/5 that morning to begin its attack with two companies in the assault, the 1st Battalion, 5th

⁴⁷ This team removed all mines in the road until it came to a spot where a shell crater, flanked by rice paddies, would effectively block tank traffic. Upon returning to its lines, the troops were nearly cut off by a large enemy unit that had attempted to work its way around the rear of the patrol. After a brisk fire fight in which there were some Marine casualties, the patrol regained its lines. *1st Mar SAR*, p. 10.

Marines, was able to gain some 500-600 yards, but was forced in late afternoon to bend its lines back to tie in with 3/5. Immediately upon being relieved, 2/5 swung over to its left to take over part of the 307th Infantry lines on the outskirts of Awacha. (See Map 13.)

Once its 2d Battalion was relieved by 2/5, the 307th Infantry moved it to the left and, with all three of its battalions on line, mopped up the top of the escarpment—and the upper part of its reverse slope—during the day. By nightfall, the Army regiment held positions commanding the Japanese defensive alignment all the way back to the Shuri foothills. Despite having been pushed back, the enemy still determinedly refused the Americans further gains and fanatically resisted from reverse-slope caves, sometimes counterattacking in company and platoon strength to regain critical terrain.

The ferocity of Japanese resistance continued unabated all along the XXIV Corps line, for as veteran units were annihilated, they were quickly rebuilt with fresh rear area troops, or replaced with new infantry elements. General Hodge's dire prediction at the beginning of the 19 April attack that "it is going to be really tough . . . and that I see no way to get [the Japanese] out except blast them out yard by yard. . . ." ⁴⁸ was being all too grimly substantiated.

⁴⁸ CG, XXIV Corps ltr to CGAFFOA, dtd 17Apr45, quoted in Appleman *et. al.*, *Okinawa Battle*, p. 185.

THE JAPANESE COUNTERATTACK ⁴⁹

During the grueling see-saw battle in the south, both sides suffered heavily. The slow but perceptible American gains were costly, but the Japanese paid the higher price. The *62d Division* bore the brunt of the April attack and by the end of the month its combat strength was less than half of what it had been originally. Although many *Thirty-second Army* officers viewed the Japanese cause on Okinawa as hopeless, they were buoyed up by the fact "that after thirty consecutive days of systematic fighting the main body of [our] fighting forces should remain intact. . . ." ⁵⁰ Not yet bloodied in the fight for Shuri were most of the units of the *24th Division*, *44th IMB*, and *5th Artillery Command*. An attitude favoring the offense permeated General Ushijima's command, whose members considered that commitment of these fresh troops in one major effort would effectively blunt the American drive.

Prior to the landings on the west coast, the expectation of an American amphibious assault at Minatoga had caused the *Thirty-second Army* commander to deploy a considerable portion of his strength in that area. But, by the

end of April, the steady attrition of the forces manning the Shuri outer defense ring caused General Ushijima to re-appraise his situation and reexamine his mission. Since he had been ordered to prolong the battle as long as possible and inflict heavy casualties on the invaders, Ushijima decided to utilize the units immobilized in the southeast to reinforce the Shuri positions.

Implementing this decision, the *24th Division* and the *44th IMB* were ordered to begin a movement north on 22 April. The *24th*, recovering control of its *22d Regiment* from the *62d Division*, was to occupy defensive positions in a line from Gaja on the east coast to Maeda at the eastern end of the Urasoe-Mura escarpment. The depleted battalions of the hard-hit *62d Division* were to concentrate in the area from Maeda to the west coast near Gusukuma. Taking up blocking positions behind the *62d* on the high ground to the south and east of the Asa River, the *44th IMB* was to cover Naha and the ridges and draws flanking to the west of Shuri.

To protect the area south of the Naha-Yonabaru valley, and to forestall further American landings on the west coast, both Admiral Ota's force and a provisional guard group, formed to guard the Chinen Peninsula, were kept in place. The Chinen units were not to make a last-ditch stand, but were to make a fighting withdrawal to Shuri if the southeastern beaches were invaded.

In less than a week, by 27 April, the new enemy defensive setup had been established. But even small local Japanese counterattacks failed, despite the reconstitution of the frontlines and the infusion of fresh troops. Steadily,

⁴⁹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *Tenth Army AR*; *XXIV Corps AR*; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *7th InfDiv AR*; *77th InfDiv OpRpt*, Okinawa; *1st Mar SAR*; *5th Mar SAR*; *Okinawa Operations Record*; *IntelMono*; *Shimada Interrogation*; *Yahara Interrogation*; Hayashi and Coox, *Kōgun*.

⁵⁰ *Okinawa Operations Record*, 92-93.

XXIV Corps units encroached upon enemy positions and forced their defenders back. In the *Thirty-second Army* headquarters deep below Shuri Castle, General Cho led other firebrands in an attempt to convince the army commander that conditions were favorable for an all-out, army-sized counter-attack, employing the relatively intact *24th Division* as the spearhead.

Colonel Yahara was a lone dissenter to the plan. His belief that the Japanese attack would end in abject failure and certain defeat was based on several factors. He noted that the Americans, positioned on commanding ground, were materially and numerically superior. Fatalistically prophesying an inevitable Japanese defeat no matter what, the colonel reasoned that the army should "maintain to the bitter end the principle of a strategic holding action."⁵¹ Any other course of action would doom the army, be detrimental to its mission, and open the way for an otherwise earlier invasion of the Japanese homeland.

Despite Colonel Yahara's impassioned and reasoned arguments, General Cho, backed by other proponents of the offensive—the division and brigade commanders—swayed Ushijima to their way of thinking, and, in the end, prevailed. In scope and desired objectives, the attack plan was exceedingly ambitious; it called for nothing less than the destruction of XXIV Corps and capture of Futema and its environs.⁵²

⁵¹ *Okinawa Operations Record*, pp. 76-77.

⁵² Mistakenly, the Japanese believed that Tenth Army headquarters was located at Futema; actually, this is where the 96th Division CP was sited.

(See Map IV, Map Section.)

The counterattack was to begin at 0500 (Y-Hour) on 4 May (X-Day). The Japanese believed it would be successful because they knew a relief of the American lines was then taking place.⁵³ At Y-Hour, the *89th Regiment* (on the right) would begin a penetration of the 7th Division front to gain its objective, the Minami-Uebaru foothills, by sunset. In the center, the *22d Regiment* was to hold its positions near Kochi and Onaga, where it would support the assaulting units with fire. When the *89th Regiment* formed an east-west line at Tanabaru, the initial objective, the *22d* would move out, destroying any American unit remaining to its front, and follow up in rear center of the division main effort to be made by the *32d Regiment*. At Y-Hour, the *32d* would drive forward to seize 77th Division positions southeast of Maeda, and then continue on to gain the heights west of Tanabaru by sunset also.

Armored support of the attack was to be supplied by the *27th Tank Regiment*, after it had moved from positions near Ishimmi to penetrate the 77th Division lines west of Kochi. Here, the tanks would take up new positions to assist the *22d* and *32d Regiments*. The day before the attack, the *44th IMB* was to move to the area northwest of Shuri, where the brigade would provide left-flank security until the initial objective was taken. Immediately thereafter, the *44th* would swing north to Oyama and the coast just beyond, to isolate the 1st Marine Division from the battle. This task would be supported by the hereto-

⁵³ Hayashi, *Kōgun*, p. 142.

fore-uncommitted *62d Division*. To make certain that the Marines would be cut off, the Japanese planners had reinforced the *44th IMB* with a considerable number of armored, artillery, and antitank elements. On the night of 3–4 May, the guns, mortars, and howitzers of the *5th Artillery Command* were to move out of their hidden positions into the open to provide the Japanese attack with full gunfire support. The *Thirty-second Army* also called upon Admiral Ota to participate in the massive counter-attack, for he was directed to form from his naval command four infantry battalions to be used as army reserve in exploiting the breakthrough.

The Japanese attack plan provided also for hitting the open flanks of the XXIV Corps. Embarking from Naha on the night of 3–4 May, a makeshift navy of landing barges, small craft, and native canoes was to land a major portion of the *26th Shipping Engineer Regiment* behind 1st Marine Division lines at Oyama. Concurrently, elements of the *26th, 28th, and 29th Sea Raiding Squadrons* were to wade the reef on the Marine flank, go ashore in the vicinity of Kuwan, and more inland to support the counterlanding of the *26th*. Committed to the west coast attack was a total of approximately 700 men.

Another envelopment was to be attempted on the east coast where about 500 men from the *23d Shipping Engineer Regiment* and the *27th Sea Raiding Squadron* would land behind the 7th Division at Tsuwa. The mission of both regiments was to infiltrate American rear areas in small groups and to destroy equipment and harass CPs with grenades and demolitions. No concerted

attacks were to be made unless assault groups numbered more than 100 men. If all went according to plan, the two counterlanding elements would join up near the center of the island to assist the *24th Division* advance.⁵⁴

A never-changing assumption in ICEBERG intelligence estimates was an enemy capability to mount a large-scale counterattack. As of the evening of 3 May, however, an analysis of recent enemy tactics indicated that he was more likely to continue fighting a series of delaying actions from successive positions, defending each one “until the troops on the position are nearly annihilated.”⁵⁵ Since the American order of battle of enemy elements facing XXIV Corps was then current, and each enemy move and countermove had been viewed with respect to the related tactical situation, indications of an imminent major attack were not perceptible. Local counterattacks and stiffened resistance were merely attributed to the infusion of new strength into Japanese lines. XXIV Corps troops were not caught offguard, however, when the attack was finally mounted.

Preceding the two-day struggle—called by Colonel Yahara “the decisive action of the campaign”⁵⁶—the fifth mass *Kamikaze* attack struck at dusk on 3 May. Tokyo had notified the *Fifth Air Fleet* on 30 April of the impending

⁵⁴ “POW Interrogation No. 38, Superior Pvt, Hq, 2d Co., 26th ShpgEngrRegt (CO’s orderly),” in 1st MarDiv G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 39, dtd 10May45.

⁵⁵ Tenth Army G-2 Rpt Nos. 33 and 39, dtd 28Apr and 4May45 respectively.

⁵⁶ *Yahara Interrogation*.

Thirty-second Army attack.⁵⁷ The Japanese air command then issued orders for a mass suicide raid to be launched on 3 May, prior to the beginning of the ground assault. *Kikusui* No. 5 targets were to be American supply areas, airfields, and the ever-suffering radar pickets.⁵⁸

Although they were to have played only a secondary role in the overall attack, the *Kamikaze* pilots were more destructive and successful in what they did than was the Japanese infantry. In two hours, however, 36 of the 125 suiciders in this raid were shot down according to the claims of antiaircraft gunners ashore and afloat, and those of carrier- and land-based American pilots.⁵⁹ Japanese sources note that a total of 159 planes of all types participated in the 3–4 May raid.⁶⁰

Although a barrier of antiaircraft fire kept the conventional bombers at such heights over the airfields and the anchorage that they could cause only superficial damage, the suiciders bore in to inflict wide-spread havoc on the radar pickets. A destroyer and an LSM were sunk; two minelayers and a support landing craft (LCS) were damaged.⁶¹ Enemy bombers again appeared over the island shortly after midnight to hit Tenth Army rear area installations, but as before, accurate AAA fire kept them high over their potential targets and caused the bombing to be

erratic. A string of bombs fell near Sobe, however, and crashed through the overheads of IIIAC Evacuation Hospital No. 3, destroying two dug-in surgery wards, killing 13 and wounding 36 patients and medical personnel.⁶² Radar-directed TAF night fighters were unable to close with the enemy bombers because American electronic early-warning equipment was disrupted by “window” that had been dropped by four Japanese reconnaissance aircraft.⁶³

Beginning on 4 May at 0600, and for four hours thereafter, the *Kamikazes* pushed a murderous onslaught against the radar pickets to coincide with the *Thirty-second Army* ground effort. By the time that the morning forays and the one later at dusk against the escort carrier group were over, the number of naval casualties and ships damaged and sunk was sobering. There were 91 Americans killed, 280 wounded, and 283 missing on the 4th,⁶⁴ and on the picket line, two destroyers and two LSMs were sunk; two other destroyers, a minesweeper, a light minelayer, and an LCS were damaged.⁶⁵ A turret on the cruiser *Birmingham* was hit by a suicider in the morning attack, and another enemy pilot succeeded in crashing the flight deck of the carrier *Sangamon* in the afternoon, causing an explosion which damaged both elevators and destroyed 21 planes.

⁵⁷ Tenth Army G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 40, dtd 5May45.

⁵⁸ *Fifth AirFlt Hist*, p. 72. Japanese use of “window” enabled many of their night sorties to reach Okinawa relatively unscathed.

⁵⁹ *CTF 51 AR*, pt III, pp. 77–79; pt V, sec H, pp. 7–10.

⁶⁰ For a closer view of the radar pickets’ sufferings, see Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*, pp. 251–256.

⁵⁷ *Fifth AirFlt Hist*, p. 68.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *CTF 51 AR*, pt III, pp. 75–76; TAF pilots downed 3 planes to bring their claimed total to 145¼ kills. TAF Periodic Rpt No. 4, 3May45.

⁶⁰ Hattori, *op. cit.*, table facing p. 132.

⁶¹ *CTF 51 AR*, pt III, pp. 75–76.

Enemy air did not go unpunished on the 4th, for American pilots claimed to have destroyed a total of 95 Japanese aircraft. ADC flyers had their second most successful day, next to 12 April, for their claims totalled 60 $\frac{3}{4}$ kills, bringing TAF claims overall to 206 in less than a month of operations.⁶⁶

The Navy was not concerned solely with helping to beat off the aerial attacks, for Admiral Turner alerted his surface force to the possible threat accruing from suiciders in the enemy *Sea Raiding Squadrons*. He cautioned his "flycatcher"⁶⁷ screen of cruisers, destroyers, and gunboats on both coasts to be especially watchful. It was this screen that discovered the shipping engineer regiments attempting to slip behind American lines and assisted the ground forces in combating the counterlandings by illuminating and shelling them. When daylight of 4 May revealed the extent of the Japanese ground effort, the two battleships, five cruisers, and eight destroyers assigned as daytime gunfire support for XXIV Corps joined with artillery and air to blunt the Japanese infantry advance and silence its weapons support.

The Japanese ground offensive began shortly after dark on 3 May with a

⁶⁶ TAF PeriodicRpt No. 5, 4May45.

⁶⁷ The supporting force assigned craft nightly to a anti-small boat screen. The heavier fire support ships were designated to control the screen, to illuminate points of activity on request, and to harass suspected boat locations. These ships were nicknamed "flycatchers" as the result of their success one night following Admiral Turner's admonition to "be particularly alert as this looks like a fine night to catch flies." *CTF 51 AR*, pt V, sec C, pp. 6, 16.

steadily accelerating rate of artillery fire placed mainly on the frontlines of the 7th and 77th Divisions. As American guns replied in kind, the normal battlefield sounds became an almost unbearable cacophony. In a comparatively less noisier sector near Machinato airfield, LVT(A) crews on guard opened up on unidentified individuals they heard on the beach, and shortly thereafter, support craft were seen firing at targets in the water just offshore.⁶⁸ Less than an hour after this outbreak of firing, the 1st Marines reported enemy barges heading in for shore at Kuwan.⁶⁹

The landing took place here, instead of at Oyama as originally planned, because the landing craft carrying the bulk of the attack force had trouble negotiating the route through the reefs and lost their way.⁷⁰ This error was further compounded by the fact that the troops went ashore at the exact point where Company B, 1/1, had anchored its night defense position.

The stealthy enemy approach went undetected by beach sentries and became known only when a clamorous babble signalled the opening of the Japanese attack. This alert resulted in an immediate response from the Marines; they opened up immediately at the overcrowded barges with fire from machine guns and mortars, previously sited to cover the reef. A combination of burning barges, flares, and tracers soon gave the battle scene an infernal glow. This illumination over the reef

⁶⁸ 3d ArmdAmphBn SAR, Nansei Shoto Operation, dtd 1Jul45, pp. 12-13.

⁶⁹ 1st MarDiv G-3 Jnl, 4May45.

⁷⁰ "POW Interrogation No. 38, Superior Pvt, Hq, 2d Co, 26th ShpgEngRegt," *op. cit.*

revealed Japanese heads bobbing in the water and provided the Marine riflemen and machine gunners with targets which they raked unmercifully, blunting the raid.⁷¹ The 1st Marines commander immediately reinforced the threatened area, and LVT(A)s from the 3d Armored Amphibian Battalion took up blocking positions on the reef above Kuwan.

By 0245, those survivors of the ill-fated landing attempts who had gained the beach were being pounded steadily by all available weapons. Despite the immediate Marine reaction to the attempted Japanese envelopment from the sea, some enemy troops managed to infiltrate to the rear of 1/1 before the fighting began on the beach. These raiders were engaged by Company F, 2/1, in an intense fire fight, which ended with 75 enemy dead lying where they had fallen around the Marine positions.⁷²

Because he was left with but one rifle company as his regimental reserve, Colonel Chappell requested the attachment of a 7th Marines battalion to his regiment. Division approved the request and ordered 2/7 to move south to report to 1/1 for orders. Preceding the rest of his battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Berger and his staff arrived at the 1/1 CP at 0500 to find all in order and the Japanese threat contained. With the exception of scattered enemy remnants holed up in Kuwan, most of the 300–400 Japanese who had attempted the landing were dead, and were seen either lying on the beach or floating aimlessly in the

water amidst the flotsam of the early-morning battle. Lieutenant Colonel Berger's battalion, assigned to mop up the counterlanding area, began relieving the right flank elements of 1/1 at 0645 so that the 1st Battalion could continue the attack to the south.⁷³

Other enemy landings were attempted before dawn behind 1st Division lines farther up the west coast. Most of these Japanese efforts were doomed to failure either when the combined fire of naval vessels, LVT(A)s, infantry, and service troops caught the boats in the water or when, by light of day, the few Japanese able to reach shore were hunted down and killed. An estimated 65 enemy landed near Isa in the vicinity of the division CP; some who hid in the cane fields survived until dawn, only to be tracked down by 1st Reconnaissance Company scouts accompanied by war dogs and their handlers.

On the east coast, the counterlanding met with the same lack of success, for the "flycatchers" and 7th Division troops cut the shipping engineers to pieces, killing an estimated 400.⁷⁴ Thus, the *Thirty-second Army* gambit failed; there was little indication that the rest of Ushijima's counterattack plan could be fulfilled.

Japanese artillery fire continued through the night of 3–4 May, reaching a deafening thunder at 0430, when a half-hour cannonade was fired in preparation for the *24th Division* attack. Added to the bursting fragments of the high-caliber shells were those of many

⁷¹ 1/1 SAR, p. 8.

⁷² 2d Bn, 1st Mar Narrative Rpt-ICEBERG, 23Feb-22Jun45, n.d., p. 4, hereafter 2/1 SAR.

⁷³ 2d Bn, 7th Mar SAR, 2May-22Jun45, dtd 2Jul45, p. 4, hereafter 2/7 SAR.

⁷⁴ Tenth Army POW Interrogation Rpt No. 10, Sgt Hiroshi Tamae, Hq, 23d ShpgEngRegt.

thousands of mortar projectiles which fell on the frontlines when the attackers attempted to breach XXIV Corps defenses. The Japanese assault units suffered heavily as they moved through their own fire to gain the American lines. The attack was blunted, however, under a blanket of steel laid down by naval gunfire, air, and 16 battalions of divisional artillery, backed up by 12 battalions of 155mm guns and 155mm and 8-inch howitzers from XXIV Corps artillery.

Beginning at daybreak, the first of 134 planes to fly support for XXIV Corps made its initial bombing run. By 1900, 77 tons of bombs, 450 rockets, and 22,000 rounds of machine gun and cannon ammunition had been expended on Japanese troop concentrations and artillery positions.⁷⁵ Even in the face of the *Kamikaze* attacks, gunfire support vessels, from battleships to patrol and landing craft, ranged the coastal waters delivering observed and called fires on enemy targets.⁷⁶

The heavy smoke that *Thirty-second Army* had ordered laid on American lines obscured from the Shuri heights the enemy's view of the progress of the battle. Despite the fact that it was a bald-faced lie, good news, telling of "the success of the offensive carried out by the 24th Division,"⁷⁷ poured into the

⁷⁵ *XXIV Corps Arty AR*, p. 8; Anx C, encl No. 2, p. 8.

⁷⁶ *CTF 51 AR*, pt V, sec C, p. 53.

⁷⁷ *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 98. Students of the Pacific War will note that, in general, Japanese battle commanders consistently were unable or refused to report their failures or the prospect of an imminent defeat until long after these were all but accomplished facts.

army command post at the opening of the attack.

The initial impetus of the attack on the Tenth Army left flank by the *89th Regiment* was blunted by 7th Division troops, who had begun mopping up isolated pockets by noon. In the center, the *22d Regiment*, unable to maintain attack momentum by following up what were to have been "successful" advances by right flank units, spent the day locked in a violent fire fight with 7th Division infantry in the Kochi-Onaga region.

The major drive of the *24th Division*, mounted by the *32d Regiment*, was towards the Urasoe-Mura escarpment, where the *44th IMB* was to exploit and pour through the break it made to hit the rear of the 1st Marine Division. A day-long series of enemy attacks in strength all along the line fell far short of General Ushijima's goals, and darkness found Tenth Army units still in firm control of the escarpment. An inescapable conclusion was that the Japanese push had failed. Not only had XXIV Corps troops securely retained their original positions, but in some cases, even in the face of withering enemy fire and stubborn Japanese resistance, the Americans had attacked and captured some enemy territory.

The 1st Marine Division attack on 4 May was delayed twice, from 0800 to 0900 and then to 1000, owing to the need for its units to be reorganized and resupplied. As soon as the assault battalions of the 1st and 5th Marines resumed their advance, heavy and well-placed fire from the *62d Division* pinned down the left flank company of 1/1 east

of Jichaku, and caused heavy casualties. The left flank of 3/1 received machine gun fire from both its front and from its flanks, and was unable to advance. By 1700, however, except for a short stretch of enemy territory extending from the gap in the left center of 3/1 lines to the eastern edge of Jichaku, the leading elements of the 1st Marines were only a few hundred yards away from the final regimental objective, the north bank of the Asa Kawa. In mid-afternoon, division attached 3/7 to the 5th Marines, and Colonel Griebel moved the battalion into blocking positions behind his 3d Battalion.

As darkness fell on the evening of 4 May, its gloom was no greater than that already pervading *Thirty-second Army* headquarters. As the shambles of the thwarted counterattack were surveyed by the staff, it was quite apparent that the effort was a failure. The commander of the *24th Division*, General Amamiya, nonetheless, ordered the *32d Regiment* to try again after dark what it had failed to accomplish earlier that day. Following an extremely heavy artillery and mortar barrage, the regiment hit the frontlines of the 77th Division at 0200 on 5 May in an attempt to penetrate the 306th Infantry positions. Despite the blunting of its initial attack by American artillery, the *32d* returned at dawn, this time with armored support. The assaulting force received the same reception it had been given earlier; six tanks were destroyed and the remnants of the regiment forced to withdraw. In the course of these attacks, 3/32 had suffered crippling casualties

and the *1st* and *2d Battalions* of the regiment had been wiped out.⁷⁸

The survivors of the several counterattacks were hunted down by Tenth Army troops at the same time the frontline divisions consolidated their positions and prepared to resume the advance. Only in the 1st Marine Division zone was the pattern of enemy opposition consistent with that occurring before the counterattack of the 4th. Desperation arising from the failure of the major *24th Division* effort further spurred the shaken troops of the *62d Division* to make a more steadfast stand against Marine advances. Japanese strength was concentrated on the left of the 1st Division zone, where last-ditch attempts were made to guard the vital western approaches to Shuri. Attacking platoons were hit from all sides by fire emanating from caves, pillboxes, and fortified tombs.

Overcoming this opposition with difficulty, General del Valle's troops made substantial gains during the day. On the left flank, the 5th Marines registered encouraging progress, advancing up to 600 yards in some parts of its zone. Following close behind the 1st Marines, the 7th filled the gap on the right flank which resulted from the eastward swing of the division. In the course of the day's action, the 1st Marine Division succeeded in reaching the Asa Kawa; and by evening, frontline units began digging in on the commanding ground overlooking the river line,

⁷⁸ *Okinawa Operations Record*, "Record of the 24th Division," pp. 174, 177, states: "The 2d Battalion was completely enveloped by the enemy and its escape became impossible."

awaiting new enemy counterattacks which never materialized.

Casualty figures following these two days of battle revealed that the 7th and 77th Divisions, which had felt the full fury of the counterattack, lost a total of 714 soldiers killed, wounded, and missing in action.⁷⁹ The 1st Marine Division, which had continued its southerly drive in the same period, suffered corresponding losses totalling 649 Marines.⁸⁰ Reflecting the fury with which the enemy had fought and the punishment that he had sustained, the Japanese losses were at least 6,227 men,⁸¹ all dead and almost all of them irreplaceable veteran infantry troops.

Checked by the tremendous firepower of the Tenth Army, each Japanese division in the attack had been chopped down to approximately 20 or 25 percent of its original strength, and enemy artillery strength was halved. In addition to these losses, Ushijima lost 59 artillery pieces destroyed in American air-naval gunfire-artillery bombardments. As a result, never again in the Okinawa campaign did Tenth Army troops receive such intensively destructive Japanese artillery fire as that which had preceded

⁷⁹ Appleman, *et. al.*, *Okinawa Battle*, p. 302.

⁸⁰ 1st MarDiv WarD, May45.

⁸¹ This is the number of enemy dead that was counted in front of XXIV Corps lines. It may be considered a minimum figure, since the Japanese undoubtedly evacuated some of their dead and some of the wounded who died later.

the doomed enemy counterattacks. The net result of this two-day Japanese effort was that the *Thirty-second Army* was compelled to abandon the offensive on the evening of the 5th and to return to its old positions.⁸²

In the end, the decisive defeat of the Japanese counterattack bore out the dire predictions of Colonel Yahara. The senior operations officer also won a tearful promise from his army commander that his, Yahara's, counsel would be followed in the future. The defensive pattern then in effect in the *62d Division* zone was to be duplicated across the entire army front. Additionally, the *24th Division* and the *5th Artillery Command* were to reorganize; their tactics would be revised to consist of holding actions in previously prepared and strongly fortified positions. This revision would force the Americans to advance in the face of withering fire, gaining little. The final judgment on the worth of the Japanese counterattack was given by its strongest proponent, General Cho. "After this ill-starred action," Ushijima's chief of staff was reported by a reliable observer as having "abandoned all hope of a successful outcome of the operation and declared that only time intervened between defeat and the 32d Army."⁸³

⁸² Hayashi and Coox, *Kōgun*, pp. 142-143.

⁸³ *Shimada Interrogation*.

Forging Ahead

IIIAC ON THE LINES¹

On 5 May, Tenth Army ordered the attack to the south continued on the 7th with two corps abreast; IIIAC on the right, XXIV Corps on the left.² (See Map IV, Map Section.) With two corps now poised for the assault, Tenth Army assumed direct command of the southern front. The day before the attack, 6 May, General Geiger's CP opened at a new location near Futema, where the operation order was received. Effective at 0600 on the 7th, the 1st Division would revert to IIIAC control and the latter would then take over the zone of action for which General del Valle had been responsible previously.³ The 7 May attack was a prelude to a second and major assault to be launched on 11 May. (See Map 14.) The objective of the first attack was to gain favorable jump-off positions for the second one, which was to be directed against the Shuri defenses. Before IIIAC units could get into position for the scheduled 7 May attack, the Marines had to get across the Asa River estuary.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *Tenth Army AR*; *XXIV Corps AR*; *IIIAC AR*; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *6th MarDiv SAR*, Ph III; *7th InfDiv AR*; *77th InfDiv OpRpt*, Okinawa; *96th InfDiv AR*; *1st Mar SAR*; *5th Mar SAR*; *7th Mar SAR*; *22d Mar SAR*, Ph III.

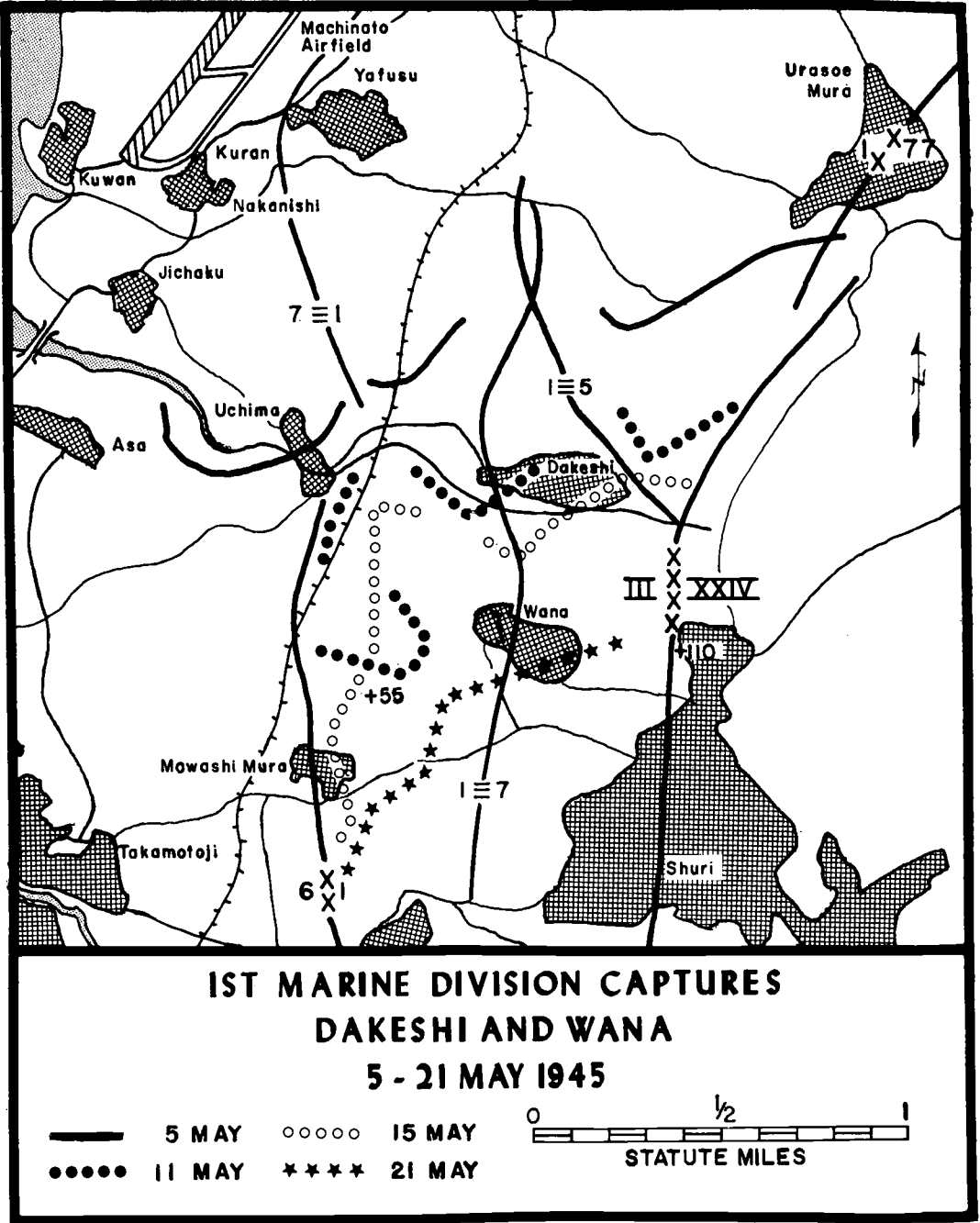
² Tenth Army OpOrd 7-45, dtd 5May45, in *Tenth Army AR*.

³ *IIIAC AR*, p. 46.

General Geiger ordered the 1st Division to attack south on the 7th, with the main effort on its left. The 6th Division was to relieve the 1st on the right of the corps zone with one regimental combat team before 1600 on 8 May. Both Marine divisions spent 6 May readying for the next day's work; General Shepherd's division moved to assembly areas preparatory to its commitment, and the 1st maintained pressure on the enemy. During the course of this day, as 2/7⁴ stood fast along the Asa River estuary line, other elements of the division were unable to budge virtually a stonewall defense. Despite accurate counterbattery fire, enemy artillery activity increased noticeably. Two tanks working in front of the 5th Marines lines were knocked out by well-placed Japanese antitank fire as they blasted enemy cave positions at close range.

The 1st Marines attack zone was narrowed considerably when new regimental boundaries were established. A concentration of the force of the Marine attack against enemy positions in the western approaches to Dakeshi hill defenses was necessary because the 1st Marines line cut back sharply from the Asa Gawa to the 5th Marines positions north of the Awacha Pocket. This situation subjected attacking units of the 1st Marines to punishing frontal and

⁴ The 7th Marines took over the division right (coastal) flank at 0730 on the 6th, at which time 2/7 relieved 1/1.



MAP 14

T. L. RUSSELL

flanking fire from a well-organized maze of hills and ridges protecting Dakeshi.

In a downpour which lasted two days, 3/1 attacked on 6 May. Its attempts to breach the Dakeshi defenses were unavailing and easily fended off by *62d Division* troops. Similarly, the efforts of 2/1 were stymied. Fierce enemy fire held up the attacking Marines and forced elements that had been able to gain even a little ground to withdraw.

Despite an intense four-battalion artillery preparation,⁵ and air and naval gunfire bombardment, the 5th Marines could penetrate only slightly into the Awacha Pocket, then held by *23d Independent Infantry* and *14th Independent Machine Gun Battalions*.⁶

On the left, 2/5 moved its lines forward about 200 yards to tie in with the 307th Infantry, after which the Marines coordinated their advance with that of the soldiers. When 2/5 resumed the assault, it called for mortar and artillery fire on enemy reverse slope positions impending the advance of the units on the regimental right flank.

At 0600 on 7 May, General Geiger assumed IIIAC command responsibility for the 1st Marine Division zone and regained control of his corps artillery battalions which had been attached to XXIV Corps up to this time.⁷ General

⁵ This was just one of the many examples of interservice artillery missions fired in support of the southern drive. In this particular case, the fires of 2/11 (1st Marine Division) were reinforced by those of the 104th Field Artillery Battalion (27th Infantry Division), 3d 155mm Howitzer Battalion (IIIAC Artillery), and the 145th Field Artillery Battalion (XXIV Corps Artillery). *11th Mar SAR*, S-3 Periodic Rpt for 7May45.

⁶ *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 107.

Nimmer then reorganized his command into three groups: the IIIAC artillery battalions comprised the first; XXIV Corps Artillery made up the second; and the third group consisted of the 27th Infantry Division Artillery (104th, 105th, and 106th Field Artillery Battalions), which had remained in position when the rest of the division headed north to relieve the 6th Marine Division. The purpose behind Nimmer's action was to provide IIIAC divisions with maximum effective tactical support.

Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Custis Burton, Jr., the 2d Provisional Field Artillery Group (3d and 6th 155mm Howitzer Battalions and XXIV Corps 145th Field Artillery Battalion) was given the mission of providing general support to the 1st Division and reinforcing the fires of the 11th Marines. Similarly, the 27th Division Artillery under Brigadier General William B. Bradford, USA, was to support the 6th Marine Division and the 15th Marines.⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Ernest P. Foley commanded the third group—named after him—consisting of the 7th, 8th, and 9th 155mm Gun Battalions, which were to deliver long-range reinforcing, counterbattery, interdiction, and harassing fires in support of IIIAC generally.

The Marine 1st 155mm Howitzer Battalion remained under XXIV Corps

⁷ *1st MarDiv G-3 Jnl*, 7May45.

⁸ "If the wording of the orders didn't spell this out—this is what happened in practice. . . . The heavier calibers (2d Provisional Field Artillery Group) were put in support of the 1st MarDiv because [the latter's] 105s and 75s couldn't blast out the Jap caves and bunkers on the Shuri Hill mass." *Henderson ltr* 1965.

Artillery control until 23 May, when it reverted to its parent unit, IIIAC Corps Artillery. During the period that Marine artillery units had supported XXIV Corps (7 April to 6 May), they fired 53,988 rounds in a total of 2,344 missions.⁹

As the 1st Marine Division once again came under IIIAC control, it could look back on the six difficult days of combat it had been with XXIV Corps. During this period, the division sustained 1,409 battle casualties, including 199 men who were either killed or subsequently died of wounds in the fighting to gain the northern bank of Asa Kawa and the outer reaches of the Dakeshi defense system.¹⁰

The attack of the 1st Marines, scheduled to begin at 0900 on 7 May, was held up because muddy terrain prevented supporting armor from arriving on time. In the meanwhile, Colonel Arthur T. Mason, the 1st Marines new commander,¹¹ ordered his 3d Battalion to support the attack of 2/1 on Hill 60—a height commanding the battalion front—by bringing all available fire to bear on the reverse slope positions of this enemy-held hill. The supporting fires continued until 1400, when tanks arrived at the front to assist in the attack.

As mortars and assault guns pounded the top and reverse slope of the hill, and artillery fire covered the foot of the objective, the coordinated tank-infantry assault was launched against determined, fanatic, and well dug-in Japanese

troops. In less than half an hour, Company E, spearheading the attack, swept to the hilltop in a practical application of “the effect of properly massed supporting fires in front of the assault troops.”¹² A hand-grenade duel ensued when the enemy defenders emerged from their caves after the fires supporting the attack were lifted. Almost immediately, the volume of Japanese fire of all types “grew noticeably stronger and progressively more intense so that it was evident that the enemy was receiving large reinforcements.”¹³ In view of this potential threat, the position was adjudged untenable by the battalion commander, who withdrew his company to their lines of the previous night.

It had become apparent by the morning of 7 May that the deep draw cutting across the front of 1/5 and to the right of 2/5 positions contained the bulk of the enemy's Awacha defenses. At 0900, General del Valle and Colonel Griebel conferred with the commanders and staffs of the two assault battalions, and discussed the methods by which the Japanese positions rimming the draw and studding its steep slopes were to be reduced. It was decided that an extensive air, artillery, and rocket preparation would precede the infantry jump-off scheduled for 1200; a reinforced tank company was moved up in time to support the assault.

¹² 2/1 SAR, p. 5.

¹³ *Ibid.* It was at this time that General Ushijima attached the 3d Battalion, 2d Infantry Unit to the 62d Division “in order to relieve the crisis of the troops fighting in the vicinity of Dakeshi.” *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 106.

⁹ IIIAC Arty AR, pp. 22–26.

¹⁰ XXIV Corps AR, p. 29.

¹¹ Colonel Mason relieved Colonel Chappell on 6 May.

The fighting that afternoon was marked by tactics which "General Buckner, with an apt sense of metaphor, called . . . the 'blowtorch and corkscrew' method. Liquid flame was the blowtorch; explosives, the corkscrew."¹⁴ Marine flamethrower and demolition teams burnt out and sealed many of the enemy cave installations in their zone. By 1700, the time the battalions dug in for the night, 1/5 had gained 300-400 yards in the center, but 2/5 and 3/5 could do little more than attempt to straighten their lines. Even though 62d Division troops holding this area gave way slightly during the day, it was obvious that Awacha Pocket was not going to be taken quickly or easily.

News of the collapse of Nazi Germany and the announcement of V-E Day on 8 May, the day of the Allied victory in Europe, drew little response of any sort from either side on Okinawa. Most of the cold, rain-soaked Americans and Japanese in the frontlines were concerned only with that very small but vital part of the war where their own lives were at stake. Still, V-E Day did not go unnoticed. The Americans conducted Thanksgiving services on board many of the ships off Okinawa. In addition, the voices of naval guns and artillery pieces helped in the celebration. At exactly noon, every available fire support ship directed a full-gun salvo at the enemy;¹⁵ in addition, three battalions from IIIAC Artillery massed fires on a suspected Japanese CP.¹⁶ The results of the noontime shoot were not

ascertained, but, in the words of one observer, "It made one hell of a big noise."¹⁷

Heavy, driving, and cold rains on the 8th continued to immobilize Tenth Army troops. The attack was bogged down in the 1st Marine Division zone; but in the area directly in front of the lines, numerous caves and pillboxes were destroyed in a general mop-up. The 1st and 5th Marines each received a battery of 75mm pack howitzers that were manhandled up to the front in an unsuccessful attempt to place direct fire on enemy dispositions.¹⁸

General Shepherd's 22d Marines, selected to lead his 6th Division drive in the south, moved out from Chibana on 8 May, and by 1530 the same day its 1st and 3d Battalions had relieved the 7th Marines along the Asa Kawa.¹⁹ At 1600, the 6th Division commander assumed

¹⁷ CTF 51 AR, pt V, sec C, p. 21.

¹⁸ 1st MarDiv SAR, pt VII, p. 3. "One battery was sent to the 1st Marines, another to the 5th Marines (over artillery protest). Since neither the organic M-7's of the infantry nor the tanks would function satisfactorily [in the mud], it was obvious that the truck-drawn pack howitzers could not. Neither battalion accomplished anything. The battery with the 5th Marines was never used. Both batteries were returned on 11 May, but their parent battalion was emasculated throughout the period of their absence. 1/11 was then built up to a strength of 24 guns by adding LVT(A)'s. 75mm ammunition was plentiful, as contrasted with the heavier calibers, so 1/11 (reinforced) was used to fire interdiction, harassing, and 'appeasement' missions across the front. Later, two more batteries of LVT(A)'s were formed as artillery to thicken the fires of 2/11 and 3/11." *Brown ltr II.*

¹⁹ The 7th Marines moved to an assembly area just east of Nakama where it became 1st Division reserve.

¹⁴ Appleman, *et. al.*, *Okinawa Battle*, p. 256.

¹⁵ CTF 51 AR, pt III, p. 84.

¹⁶ IIIAC Arty AR, p. 23.

responsibility for his zone in the corps front. Once in position opposite the Asa Kawa estuary, the 6th spent 9 May in patrolling and reconnoitering before the crossing was attempted. A patrol from 3/22 (on the division right) inspected a ruined bridge crossing the river and later reported that it was not passable to either foot or vehicular traffic, that the water in the estuary was four feet deep at high tide in its most shallow portion, and that the river bed had a thick mud cover. Other patrols, also from 3/22, were sent out at noon to discover possible crossing sites and to determine enemy strength and dispositions. These patrols drew fire from positions across the river, but noted that other caves and pillboxes farther south appeared to be unmanned. The Marines also reported that the soft stream bed could not support a tank ford.

To the left of 3/22 was the 2d Battalion in positions near Uchima. Its only enemy contact during the day took place when a patrol that crossed the river drew heavy enemy fire. Before withdrawing, the Marines rescued both the pilot and observer of an artillery spotting plane that had been shot down in enemy territory. As a result of the information collected by the patrols, both the division and regiment were better able to plan for an effective exploitation of a beachhead following the crossing of the Asa River.

The 6th Engineer Battalion moved light bridging material up to the 22d Marines line in daylight, and under the cover of darkness began constructing a footbridge near the site of a ruined bridge. At 0300, 10 May, 3/22 was to

cross the river with 1/22 in support, and then attack the high ground overlooking the south bank of the Asa at dawn. The 2d Battalion was to provide fire support from a strongpoint set up on high ground southwest of Uchima. This river crossing was only a part of the all-out army attack scheduled for 11 May. Envisioned in the objectives of the plan were the envelopment and destruction of enemy forces occupying the Shuri bastion, and finally, the total annihilation of General Ushijima's command.²⁰

General del Valle's division made fairly substantial gains on 9 May, even in the face of miserable weather conditions which prevented the attack from being launched until 1200. When armor support became available and was able to move forward over the muddy terrain, the troops advanced 200-300 yards and generally straightened the division line. Until this attack, Colonel Mason had kept 1/1 in reserve, where the battalion took in 116 replacements for the 259 casualties it had sustained in the period between 30 April and 6 May.

On 9 May, the immediate objective of 1/1 was to penetrate and destroy enemy defenses on Hill 60. Just before the attack began, the assault battalion moved behind 2/1, which was to exploit the successful penetration by seizing and consolidating the captured positions; 3/1 was to support all of this action with fire.

Because there was no contact with the 5th Marines on the left, a general shift was made into its zone to wipe out the

²⁰ Tenth Army OpO 8-45 was placed into effect on 9 May. *Tenth Army AR*, chap 7, sec III, p. 19.

sources of enemy fire that were taking a heavy toll of troops in 1/1. As a result of a combination of heavy casualties and exhaustion occurring in the ranks of 1/1, its attack almost bogged down, but was revitalized at 1600, when the Marines swept forward over the difficult final 150 yards to gain the initial objective line.²¹

Following a thorough air, artillery, naval gunfire, and mortar preparation, the 5th Marines attacked the mouth of Awacha Draw at noon on the 9th, with 3/5 and 3/7 in the assault; 1/5 and 2/5 furnished fire support from positions facing the draw. Initially, the attack moved rapidly and the first objective—the same ridgeline that had faced 1/1—was soon reached, but fire in large volume on 3/7 from the left of its exposed flank held up the attack. At 1515, 1/7, which had moved up from Gusukuma that morning, was committed in the line to fill the gap that had appeared between 3/7 and 1/5.²²

²¹ In late afternoon, the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Murray, Jr., was inspecting his night defenses when he was hit by a sniper. Before being evacuated to the rear, he appointed the Company B commander, Captain Francis D. Rineer, temporary battalion commander; Rineer directed the 1/1 night defense until relieved the next morning (10 May) by the 1st Marines executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Richard F. Ross, Jr. The latter, in turn, was relieved by Lieutenant Colonel Austin C. Shofner, formerly Division Provost Marshal, on 13 May, and then returned to his duties as regimental executive officer, *1/1 SAR*, p. 14; *1st Mar SAR*, p. 14.

²² 1st Bn, 7th Mar SAR, 22Apr-22Jun45, dtd 29Jun45, p. 5, hereafter *1/7 SAR*. On 9 May, both 1/7 and 3/7 were attached to the 5th Marines. The CP of the 7th Marines(-) remained near Nakama. Late that afternoon, 3/5 was attached to the 7th.

To overcome the determined stand of Awacha's defenders, and spurred on by the need to continue the division attack to gain the objectives assigned by Tenth Army, General del Valle issued a new operation order late in the afternoon of the 9th. Assigned a limited zone on the left of the division front, the 5th Marines (less 3/5) was to reduce the Awacha Pocket beginning with an attack the next morning. New boundaries were given the 1st and 7th Marines (with 3/5 attached) which placed them in jump-off positions across the division front for the planned 11 May attack.²³ Colonel Snedeker assumed responsibility for the new 7th Marines zone at 1855, relieving the 5th, and placed 3/5, 3/7, and 1/7 on line for the 10 May attack. (See Map 14.)

As an aftermath to the unsuccessful 4-5 May counterattack, the Japanese attempted to readjust and reinforce their lines against expected American reprisals and a continuation of the Tenth Army onslaught. To gain the time and breathing space needed to rebuild the *62d Division* somewhat, General Ushijima gradually withdrew the division from the tangled Maeda-Asa Kawa complex toward Shuri where replacements from the *Naval Base Force*, service and supply troops, and *Boeitai* could join. Remaining in front of the 96th Infantry Division in positions extending from Dakeshi to Gaja were the *22d* and *89th Regiments* of the *24th Division*, which had been reinforced in the second week of May by division troops and the now-defunct sea raiding base battalions.

IIIAC forces were opposed by the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade*, which

²³ 1st MarDiv WarD, May45, p. 8.

was built around a nucleus composed of the *15th IMR*, now at full strength, and fresh replacements from the *3d Battalion*, *2d Infantry Unit*, *7th Independent Antitank Battalion*, *1st and 2d Independent Battalions*, and the *26th Shipping Engineer Regiment*. Although American forces were in close contact with the enemy and fully engaged by them at Dakeshi, it was difficult to determine Japanese troop strength in the area because the core of this strength was screened by outposts and scattered strong defensive positions still held by remnants of the *62d Division*.

During the night of 9-10 May, the enemy was particularly active in the 1st Marine Division zone, and he made numerous attempts to infiltrate the 5th Marines area. Between 0200 and 0300, 1/5 fought off two counterattacks in which the Japanese had closed to bayonet range; enemy troops were driven off only after an extended hand-to-hand battle. After daybreak, upwards of 60 enemy bodies were found in front of the battalion lines. Despite this early-morning action, the division continued the attack at 0800, following a heavy artillery and smoke preparation, with three infantry regiments abreast.

Although General del Valle's troops encountered stiff opposition all along the line, the 5th Marines, on the corps left, received the most violent enemy reaction from positions centered around the Dakeshi Ridge and the high ground running generally along the corps flank. Armor assigned to support the 5th Marines attack did not arrive in time for the jumpoff; poor roads had again bogged down the tanks and prevented them from aiding the infantry.

Less than an hour after the attack began, 1/5 was pinned down by heavy enemy machine gun and mortar fire that skyrocketed casualty figures. At 1700, the battalion was withdrawn under the cover of smoke. Although 1/5 was unable to move forward, the rest of the regiment made inroads into enemy positions. Supported by artillery and flame-thrower tanks, 2/5 overran all enemy resistance in that portion of Awacha Draw which lay in its zone. This action placed the regiment in the heart of the Awacha defenses; it did not account for the many other remaining Japanese pockets which the 5th Marines was to meet in the next few days.

As the 5th fought its battle, the 7th Marines attacked with the 1st and 3d Battalions in the assault, 2/7 and 3/5 in reserve. On the right, 3/7 was immobilized at its line of departure by accurate mortar and artillery shelling, and heavy small arms fire from pill-boxes and caves to its front. The 1st Battalion, however, attacked on time; by noon, its forward elements were on the low ground north of the Dakeshi Ridge, where visual contact was re-established with 1/5. Japanese fire on this advanced position increased as the morning wore on, and shortly before noon, machine gun fire from a draw in the 5th Marines zone began hitting the 1/7 assault company. This fire continued unabated and finally halted the attack. When 1/5 was forced to withdraw, 1/7, exposed on both flanks, found its position untenable. The 7th Marines assault units were pulled back to their original lines at 1754.

For the 10 May attack, Colonel Mason's 1st Marines was given the task

of gaining the road leading west out of Dakeshi. Although 3/1 jumped off and reached its planned intermediate objective on time, it was forced to hold up and wait for the 1st Battalion, which did not begin its scheduled advance because of the late arrival of its supporting armor.²⁴ At 1020, both battalions resumed the attack, now supported by armor, and reached a low ridge overlooking the Dakeshi road at 1600.

All attempts by assault companies to move beyond this point were met by extremely heavy machine gun fire from Dakeshi ridge, driving back the combat patrols attempting to bypass the nose of the ridge. It soon became painfully evident that no further advance would be possible until the ridge was taken.

While the 1st Division set in its defenses for the night, the 6th Division remained active. As soon as it became dark on 9 May, the 6th Engineer Battalion began building a footbridge for the planned infantry crossing over the Asa Kawa estuary. At 0530, two and a half hours after 22d Marines assault elements had crossed over to the south bank of the river, a Japanese two-man suicide team rushed out of hiding to throw themselves and their satchel charges onto the south end of the footbridge; both the bridge and the enemy soldiers were destroyed. Prior to this destructive act, however, 1/22²⁵ and 3/22 each had succeeded in moving two assault companies across the river under

the cover of darkness, and to positions for a continuation of the attack to the south. The loss of the bridge, therefore, posed no great hardship; included in the attack plans were contingency provisions that were to go into effect if this, in fact, took place. Therefore, when the bridge was blown up, engineer demolition teams with the assault elements breached the seawalls on the south bank of the river to permit immediate access to the frontlines to supply- and troop-laden LVT(A)s.

At 0520, under the cover of a protective smoke screen and an artillery preparation, the attack south of the Asa began. The assault companies were at first hampered by fog and the smoke of battle. During the early morning hours, enemy resistance was moderate and limited to small arms and machine gun fire. Soon, however, Japanese artillery shells began falling on the bridgehead area.

By noon, the Marines had succeeded in driving only 150 yards into enemy defenses, while, at the same time, the volume of both small arms and artillery fire increased steadily. Under the cover of heavy supporting fire, each assault battalion brought its reserve company across to join the attack. Even with continuous artillery and naval gunfire support, the ground troops could not crack the Japanese line.

The only weapons capable of breaching these defenses—tank-mounted flat trajectory cannon—were not available because supporting armor was unable to ford the mud- and silt-bottomed stream despite its numerous attempts to do so. The tanks were then forced to withdraw to the northern bank of the

²⁴ The 1st Battalion was held up when a tank from the 6th Tank Battalion hit a mine and blocked the only tank road into the 1/1 area.

²⁵ Company A of 1/22 crossed over by wading the shallow eastern portion of the stream.

Asa, there to await the construction of a Bailey bridge, which the 6th Engineers were to begin building after dark on the night of 10–11 May.

The 22d Marines advanced along their entire front during the afternoon; the 1st Battalion made the greatest gain, 350 yards. As darkness fell, the division halted and forward companies dug in for the night. The engineers began work on the Bailey bridge at 2200, stopping only when the crossing site was shelled. This intermittent shelling successfully delayed completion of the bridge by six hours. The first Marine tanks did not cross the river until 1103 on 11 May, some four hours after the coordinated, two-corps Tenth Army attack had begun.²⁶

AIR OPERATIONS IN MAY ²⁷

A mass *Kamikaze* raid on 10–11 May, the fifth of the campaign, unintention-

²⁶ 6th MarDiv Unit Jnl, Okinawa Operation, Ph III, 23Apr-30Jun45, dtd 11May45, hereafter *6th MarDiv Jnl, Ph III*. In commenting later on the 6th Engineers' effort, the 6th Division Commander noted that "the task of constructing the Bailey bridge across the Asa Kawa Estuary was a splendid feat of combat engineering. It was not only built under observed fire, both artillery and small arms, but it was built in a difficult locality where the actual engineering constituted a considerable problem. Even the dump site where the bridging material was stacked was occasionally under fire." *Shepherd memo II*.

²⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *CNO Record*; *CTF 51 AR*; *TAF AR*; *ADC AcftOper-Analysis*, 1-31May45; *ADC IntelSums*, May45; Morison, *Victory in the Pacific*; Sherrod, *Marine Air Hist*. Also, May45 WarDs of following organizations: TAF, 2d MAW, ADC, and MAG-14, -22, -31, and -33.

ally served to preface the 11 May ground attack of the Tenth Army. There was no indication that the Japanese had prior knowledge of the impending attack or that their air assault had been planned to forestall the American push. An enemy air raid should have been anticipated, however, because the first relatively clear weather since the previous *Kikusui* attack appeared at this time.

Between midnight of 10 May and 0420 on the following day, the Air Defense Control Center plotted 19 enemy raids approaching Okinawa, each one ranging in size from one to nine aircraft. Most of the planes orbited over the water about 40 miles northwest of the island, where they formed up for a furtive pass at American targets. None, however, approached any closer than 10 miles to Okinawa.

This situation soon changed on the 11th, when, at 0630, TAF pilots intercepted the first in a series of suiciders attempting to crash targets in the Ie Shima and Hagushi anchorages. By the time of this mass raid, enemy air tactics generally followed the pattern previously observed during the major landings in the Philippines, but with an increased emphasis on the use of the *Kamikaze*. Like the tactics employed at Leyte, at Okinawa attacking groups approached at altitudes ranging from 9,000 feet to sea level; the low-level approach was usually made during periods of limited visibility. Japanese pilots also would approach a target at low altitudes if their attack was covered by clouds and poor visibility, or when they felt that American radar units could not detect their planes. While this indicated

some training in low-level evasive tactics, it did not show that enemy pilots had a proper appreciation of the range and coverage of American radar.²⁸

At Okinawa, enemy air activity usually began when the final night CAP had withdrawn to home fields, and ended when the early morning patrol flight approached. As successful as the alert American air patrols had been in protecting assault shipping and radar picket vessels, it was impossible to prevent losses as long as even a single Japanese plane penetrated the ICEBERG air screen. In at least five instances in May, *Kamikazes* that had been so seriously damaged by fighter aircraft that they could not have possibly returned to home bases—and conceivably could not have even recovered level flight—managed to remain on course, break through the American screen, and hit their targets.²⁹

On-station planes from TF 51 and TAF fended off the raids of 11 May, but not before a Dutch merchantman, two American destroyers, and an LCS had been hit. A total of 217 Japanese planes were employed in *Kikusui* No. 6; 104 of these were suiciders.³⁰ The claims of opposing sides regarding the number of planes their pilots had downed conflict similarly in this particular engagement as they did in others. Uniquely enough, the number the Japanese admitted losing in this air battle was in excess of the number that the Americans claimed that they had shot down. A Japanese source lists 109 of their planes shot down or

missing,³¹ while ICEBERG forces claimed only 93. Of this number, the two destroyers that were under attack have been credited with blasting 34 enemy aircraft out of the sky; ships' AAA and defending air patrols claimed the remainder. TAF pilots downed 19 planes of this last portion in slightly more than two hours of fighting in the morning, and increased the score of the Tenth Army air arm to 234.³²

A sidelight of the 11 May raid occurred when USS *Hugh W. Hadley*, a radar picket, was under direct attack from *Kamikazes*. Protecting the destroyer overhead was a two-plane CAP maintained by VMF-323 pilots.³³ The conduct of these Marine flyers is best described by the ship's action report: "One very outstanding feat by one of these two planes . . . was that, though out of ammunition, he twice forced a suicide plane out of his dive on the ship, and the third time forced him into such a poor position that the plane crashed through the rigging but missed the ship, going into the water close aboard. This was done while all guns on the ship were firing at the enemy plane . . . His wingman also stayed at masthead height in the flak and assisted in driving planes away from the ship."³⁴

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² TAF PeriodicRpt No. 6, 11-17May45.

³³ VMF-323 WarD, May45; Sherrrod, *Marine Air Hist*, p. 394. Although the Aircraft Action Report for this particular sortie, included in the war diary, did not specifically describe the feat noted above, Sherrrod deduced that these were VMF-323 planes because he later identified the call letters, which appeared in the 11 May ship's log entry relating to this action, as theirs.

³⁴ Quoted in *ADC AcftOpAnalysis*, 1-31May-45, p. 8.

²⁸ *CNO Record*, chap 3, p. 1.

²⁹ *ADC AcftOpAnalysis*, 1-31May45, p. 7.

³⁰ Hattori, *op. cit.*, table facing p. 132.

On the day before, Captain Kenneth L. Reusser and First Lieutenant Robert R. Klingman of VMF-312 destroyed an enemy plane in a manner described as "one of the most remarkable achievements of the war."³⁵ Several times earlier in the month, extremely fast Japanese reconnaissance craft—apparently on photographic missions—had been encountered at high altitudes, usually 30,000–38,000 feet. Klingman was flying wing on Reusser, division leader of a four-plane CAP, which was then at an altitude of 10,000 feet. Reusser noticed the presence of vapor trails at about 25,000 feet, and obtained permission to investigate. He led his division in a climb to 36,000 feet, where two of the planes were forced to disengage after reaching their maximum altitude. Klingman and Reusser continued to climb and close with the Japanese intruder only after they had fired most of their ammunition to lighten their aircraft.

At 38,000 feet, they intercepted the enemy and Reusser opened fire first. Expanding all of his remaining ammunition in one burst, he scored hits in the left wing and tail of the enemy plane. Klingman then closed in, but was unable to fire because his guns had frozen at this extreme altitude. After a two-hour air chase, he finally downed the Japanese plane by cutting off its tail control surfaces with his Corsair's propeller. Although Klingman's plane had holes in the wing and engine, and the propeller and engine cowling were damaged, he managed to land the plane

intact and without injury to himself.³⁶

An almost tragic aftermath to this encounter occurred two days later, when Klingman was flying another mission. His plane's hydraulic system failed and he chose to bail out over the water rather than attempt a crash landing on one wheel. A destroyer escort recovered the lieutenant from the water and carried him to the *Eldorado*, where he had dinner with the Expeditionary Force commander, Admiral Turner.

Marine and Navy night fighter aircraft came into their own during May, especially with the arrival at Okinawa on the 10th of Lieutenant Colonel Marion M. Magruder's VMF(N)-533 following its long over-water flight from Engebi, Eniwetok Atoll, in 15 F6F-5Ns (radar-equipped Grumman Hellcats) and 5 transport planes.³⁷

³⁶ *Ibid.*; *ADC AcftOpAnalysis*, 1-31May45, p. 8.

³⁷ VMF(N)-533 WarD, May45. Before Lieutenant Colonel Magruder had received orders to take his squadron to Okinawa, the pilots who had been with the unit since arrival overseas in May 1944 were scheduled to be replaced. The relief pilots arrived at Engebi on the same day that VMF(N)-533 was ordered to the Ryukyus. According to Lieutenant General Louis E. Woods, who commanded the 4th MAW, of which the squadron was a part: "The higher echelon of command did not feel that [Magruder's planes] had the range to fly from Engebi, but [the squadron] had very accurate fuel consumption records that proved beyond a doubt that they could." After Magruder received permission to fly the squadron to Okinawa, Woods "went to Engebi personally and talked to all the pilots, telling them they were badly needed in the war zone even though their tour of duty was up and their replacements were present. All concerned agreed that the original members of the squadron should go." LtGen Louis E. Woods ltr to Asst G-3, HQMC, dtd 30Oct65, hereafter *Woods ltr I*.

³⁵ Unknown source quoted in MAG-33 WarD, May45.

Prior to the Okinawa operations, the quality of the direction and conduct of night CAPs was poor and the results of most operations negligible. As an example, in the first year of night fighter operations—November 1943 through October 1944—Navy and Marine pilots accounted for only 39 enemy aircraft; in less than two months of the Okinawa campaign, night fighters shot down 35 Japanese planes,³⁸ and VMF(N)-533 fliers claimed 30 of them. Noteworthy is the fact that, with six enemy planes to his credit, Captain Robert Baird of 533 was the only Marine night fighter ace in the war.³⁹

The drastic change for the better in night fighter squadron operations resulted from improved electronic equipment, techniques, and performances of both pilots and the ground director crews. The new Hellcats also were a large factor in this improvement. With the arrival of additional air warning squadrons and their radar equipment on Okinawa, and their establishment on outlying islands as they were captured, the intricacies of guiding night fighters to targets were overcome. Within a short time after their appearance in the Okinawa battle zone, fighter directors could bring a pilot to within 500 feet of an enemy plane, at which point the flyer could establish visual contact with the intruder aircraft and down it.

³⁸ Naval Aviation Confidential Bul No. 4-45, pp. 11-13, quoted in *ADC AcftOpAnalysis*, 1-31May45, pp. 10-11.

³⁹ For a more complete story of the early development and organization of Marine night fighter squadrons, see Sherrod, *Marine Air Hist*, chap 11, pp. 159-169.

One of the most spectacular, unique, and perhaps the only air-to-air rocket kill in the war occurred in the early-morning darkness of 17 May, when VMTB-232 pilot First Lieutenant Fred C. Folino spotted an unidentified plane while flying his TBM (Avenger) on a night heckling mission. He radioed an ICEBERG control ship for information and identification of the stranger, all the while climbing to gain altitude to get into attack position. Assured by the controller that there were no friendly planes in the area, and having requested and received permission to attack, the Marine pilot dove on the now-fleeing enemy. Folino expended all of his ammunition as the torpedo bomber strained to close the gap. He then began firing his rockets. The first was short of the target, the next one struck the plane, and a third tore off a large portion of the wing. "Momentarily lost to the TBM, the plane next appeared on the beach below, a blazing wreck."⁴⁰ Acknowledging this act, Admiral Spruance sent his personal congratulations to Lieutenant Folino.

After dark on 17 May, TAF pilots extended the range of their operations to Japan for the first time. The arrival of AAF fighter squadrons and their Thunderbolts (P-47s) on Ie Shima in mid-May provided General Wallace's ADC with a long-range strike capability. This was demonstrated when a pair of Thunderbolts rocketed and strafed three airfields on southern Kyushu on this first extended mission, and then added to the insult by strafing the brightly lit streets of Kanoya before

⁴⁰ TAF WarD, May 45.

returning to home base unchallenged by enemy pilots. Following this night run, AAF pilots began making daylight runs over southern Japan. Judging by the quality of the opposition they received, it became apparent that the Japanese had been holding back their more skillful pilots and newer and faster aircraft for the close-in defense of the Empire. The American pilots reported that they were encountering "pilots who were . . . skillful and aggressive. . . ." ⁴¹

The majority of the enemy planes rising to meet the Army Air Force's flyers were Zekes, but some were the newer single-seat fighters, the faster Jacks and Franks, ⁴² which had just begun to appear in the air war over Okinawa and Japan. In the final analysis, the AAF Thunderbolts outperformed the Japanese aircraft without exception. They outclimbed and outturned the enemy planes and especially excelled in the high altitudes, where Japanese aircraft performance had been superior earlier in the war. If nothing else, these performance factors and the raid on Kyushu further dramatized the complete ascendancy of American air power. This evidence, however, did not convince the Japanese that continuation of the mass *Kamikaze* raids was merely an exercise in futility.

⁴¹ TAF, Tenth Army, AirOpNotes, No. 2, dtd 15Jun45.

⁴² For a fuller discussion of American nomenclature for Japanese aircraft, see Shaw and Kane, *Isolation of Rabaul*, p. 450; also, Sherrod, *Marine Air Hist*, pp. xiv, 135n. A primary source of information for both of the books noted above was Vern Haugland, *The AAF Against Japan* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), pp. 367-371.

American planes rising from crowded fields on Yontan and Ie Shima successfully blunted the suicide attacks, and as a result, *Special Attack Force* aircraft and pilot losses mounted all out of proportion to the results achieved. IGHQ then decided that the only way to reverse the situation was by destroying the U. S. planes at their Okinawa fields. A surprise ground attack mission was therefore assigned to the *Giretsu* (Act of Heroism) *Airborne Raiding Force*. Armed with demolition charges, grenades, and light arms, the commandos of this unit were to land on Kadena and Yontan fields, where they would make one desperate effort to cripple American air operations—even temporarily—by destroying or damaging planes and air-field facilities. The men undertaking this raid were to be flown to Okinawa on the night of 24 May ⁴³ in planes that would accompany those in the formation of *Kikusui* No. 7. ⁴⁴

The *Giretsu*, consisting of 120 men, was divided into five platoons and a command section, and was transported to the assigned target in 12 twin-engine

⁴³ While intercepting an enemy flight in the early evening twilight of 24 May, a VMF-312 pilot reported sighting and downing a Tony (single engine fighter). Interestingly enough, the Marine flyer reported that the Japanese plane was dark gray and had a black cross painted on the underside of each wing, very much like the Maltese Cross markings on German military aircraft. VMF-312 WarD, May-45, Although the configuration of the Tony and the Messerschmitt ME-109 were similar, a search of available records does not indicate the presence of either German pilots or planes in the Pacific, nor is any reason given for a Japanese plane to be painted in this fashion.

⁴⁴ Hattori, *War History*, p. 129.

bombers.⁴⁵ The general attack began at about 2000, when Yontan and Kadena fields were bombed as a prelude to the airborne raid. Approximately two and a half hours later, anti-aircraft artillerymen and aviation personnel based at Yontan were surprised to see several Japanese bombers purposely but rashly attempting to land. With one exception, the planes that were shot down over the field either attempted to crash ground facilities and parked aircraft or went plummeting down in flames, carrying entrapped troops with them.

The plane that was the one exception made a safe wheels-up landing, and troops poured out even before it had come to a halt. As soon as the raiders deplaned, they began to throw grenades and explosive charges at the nearest parked aircraft, and sprayed the area with small arms fire. The confusion which followed this weird gambit is difficult to imagine. Uncontrolled Amer-

ican rifle and machine gun fire laced the airfield and vicinity, and probably caused most of the ICEBERG casualties. TAF pilots and ground personnel, as well as the men in the units assigned to airfield defense, took part in the general affray, which saw the death of 2 Marines and the wounding of 18 others.⁴⁶

When the attack was over, no prisoners had been taken and 69 Japanese bodies were counted. Despite his losses, the enemy accomplished one part of his mission: he had destroyed 8 planes (including the personal transport of Major General James T. Moore, Commanding General, AirFMFPac, who had arrived that morning), damaged 24 others, and set fire to fuel dumps, causing the loss of some 70,000 gallons of precious aviation gasoline.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, approximately 445 aircraft, of which nearly one-third were suiciders, struck at the American naval forces, concentrating on the radar pickets. The first phase of the attack was broken off about 0300 on the 25th, only to resume at dawn with a renewed fury that continued during the day. At the end, the enemy planes had damaged an APD and a LSM, both so severely that the former capsized later and the latter had to be beached and abandoned. Eight other vessels, generally destroyer types, were also damaged, but in varying degrees. In this action, the Japanese pilots exacted a toll of 38 Americans

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* There is some discrepancy regarding the number of men and planes involved in this abortive foray. *ADC IntelSums* states that there were three planes, 2d MAW WarD, May45, counts four, and *Tenth Army AR*, chap 7, sec III, pp. 23-24, indicates five planes attacked the field. Hattori, *op. cit.*, notes that four of the planes in the airborne mission either made forced landings elsewhere—Japanese territory assumed—or turned back, and that the remaining eight succeeded in landing their passengers. The last part of this statement is contradicted by the numbers cited above in the American sources, which all agree that only one plane landed, a crash landing at that, to disgorge its shaken passengers, and that the other aircraft—whatever their numbers, two, three, or four—were shot down while approaching Yontan field.

⁴⁶ 2d MAW WarD, May45.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

killed, 183 wounded, and 60 missing in action.⁴⁸

The raiders suffered also, for friendly air claimed the shooting down of over 150 enemy planes. Of this number, ADC planes claimed an all-time high to date, 75 destroyed in this 24-hour period, to bring the total of TAF claims to 370. High scorer during the 24–25 May raid was the 318th Fighter Group with 34 kills listed, followed by MAG-31.⁴⁹ Post-war Japanese sources dispute these statistics, stating that only 88 planes failed to return to base.⁵⁰ Regardless of this conflict in numbers, enemy air continued to suffer.

The last mass *Kamikaze* attack in May began just two days later, 27 May, and lasted until the evening of the 28th. The raid caused TAF to establish the longest single enemy air alert of the campaign thus far—9 hours and 16 minutes. Japan sent up 292 aircraft, of which nearly one-third again were suiciders.⁵¹ Heavy antiaircraft artillery fire and combat air patrols fought off the invaders, but not before a destroyer had been sunk and 11 other ships damaged in varying degrees. As before, per-

sonnel losses to the fleet were great: 52 men killed, 288 wounded, and 290 missing.⁵² The enemy did not escape unscathed, for ICEBERG forces claimed to have splashed more than 100 intruders, and of these, TAF fliers claimed 40. Japanese sources again show figures that differ from those in American records, and show losses of only 80 planes for *Kikusui* No. 8.⁵³

By the end of May, ADC fighter pilots had added 279¼ claimed kills to April figures. This gave TAF a total of 423 enemy aircraft destroyed in the air in 56 days of operations.⁵⁴ In this same period, 7 April through 31 May, only three American planes were shot down by Japanese pilots out of the 109 aircraft lost to such other causes as pilot error, aircraft malfunctions, and cases of mistaken identity by friendly AAA units.

Prevailing bad weather during most of May had limited air activity, although both sides flew a number of missions even under minimal flying conditions. TAF records for this period indicate that its planes were grounded nine days in May, while cloud cover of varying degree existed during the other 22 days.⁵⁵ In addition, the continuing rain that bogged down wheeled and tracked vehicles also turned fighter strips into quagmires. On Ie Shima, for example, a total of 20.82 inches of rain fell from 16 May to the close of the month, causing one Marine air unit to note that “the resultant mixture of water and Ie

⁴⁸ ComFifthPhibFor AR, Capture of Okinawa Gunto, Phases I and III, 17May-21Jun45, pt III, pp. 20–26, hereafter *CTF 31 AR*. On 17 May, Vice Admiral Harry W. Hill, who had earlier relieved Admiral Turner as Commander, Fifth Amphibious Force, in addition became Commander Task Force 51. This numerical designation changed 10 days later to Task Force 31, when Admiral Halsey took over the Fifth Fleet and it became the Third Fleet.

⁴⁹ *ADC IntelSums*, May45.

⁵⁰ Hattori, *War History*, table facing p. 132.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *CTF 31 AR*, pt III, pp. 30–34.

⁵³ Hattori, *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ *ADC AcftOpAnalysis*, 1-31May45, p. 1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Shima soil produces mud of a character that surpasses description."⁵⁶

Towards the middle of May, TAF strength was increased when pilots and planes of Marine Aircraft Group 22 and the Army Air Forces' 318th Fighter Group arrived and began operations.⁵⁷

Although the ground troops showed a partisan interest in the aerial dogfights high above them and the vivid pyrotechnical displays occurring during the air raids at night, the infantry was more vitally concerned with winning its own battle and with the assistance the air units could give in the drive southward. Out of a total of 7,685 sorties flown by TAF pilots in May, 716 (against an April figure of 510) were in support of the ground forces. Included in the May figure were night heckler and intruder missions flown away from Okinawa. The majority of the ground support sorties were directed against enemy troop concentrations, caves, and truck parks.⁵⁸ As the campaign progressed, and as the pilots gained experience with their planes and improved ordnance and a greater familiarity with the area, the ground

support effort became increasingly effective. By the middle of May, TAF had reached the state where it was fully prepared to assist the forces of the Tenth Army, then poised to strike the heart of the Shuri defenses.

ON SHURI'S THRESHOLD⁵⁹

Although the enemy chose 11 May to mount a mass *Kamikaze* attack and many Japanese planes were, in fact, then diving on American surface forces off Okinawa, both corps of the Tenth Army launched a coordinated assault at 0700. Two and a half hours earlier, enemy infantry units had attempted a counterattack following a heavy mortar and artillery barrage on the center of the 1st Marine Division line. Unfortunately for the attackers, the barrage lifted too soon and they were caught by American prearranged defensive fires while still forming. Though the enemy force sustained heavy casualties, the remnants attempted to reform and continue the assault, only to be wiped out by Marine close-range small arms fire.

The 6th Engineers had not yet bridged the Asa Kawa when the attack was to begin; nevertheless, the 6th Division jumped off on time before this vital support route was completed. With the 22d Marines in the lead, the assault troops advanced slowly against a stubborn and well-organized defense built

⁵⁶ MAG-22 WarD, May45.

⁵⁷ Both groups were based on Ie Shima. The flight echelon of the AAF group (19th, 73d, and 333d Fighter Squadrons) began arriving on the island on 13 May; Colonel Daniel W. Torrey, Jr.'s Marine squadrons flew in over a 10-day period, 21-30 May, from Engebi where the group had been part of the 4th MAW. MAG-22 consisted of HqSqn-22, SMS-22, VMF-113, -314, and -422, and VMTB-131—all of which were to operate from fields on Ie—and VMF(N)-533, which was based at Yontan airfield on its arrival. *ADC AcftOpAnalysis*, 1-31May45, p. 1.

⁵⁸ *ADC AcftOpAnalysis*, 1-31May45, p. 15.

⁵⁹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *CTF 31 AR*; *CTF 51 AR*; *Tenth Army AR*; *IIIAC AR*; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *6th MarDiv SAR*, Ph III; *77th InfDiv OpRpt*, Okinawa; *96th InfDiv AR*; *1st Mar SAR*; *5th Mar SAR*; *7th Mar SAR*; *22d Mar SAR*, Ph III; *29th Mar SAR*, Ph III.

around machine guns and mortars concealed in cave mouths. In early afternoon, enemy troops hidden in a particularly formidable coral hill formation held up the movement of 1/22 on the left. All attempts to envelop the position from either flank failed. The battalion then halted to permit a heavy naval gunfire shelling of the Japanese defenses, after which the Marines resumed the advance under the cover of armor support which had crossed the now-completed bridge shortly before noon.

Flamethrowers, demolitions, and direct tank fire were employed when the attack again began; the position was reduced after a bitter close-in fight. Upon inspection, this hill proved to be a key feature of the Asa Kawa defense system, and contained a vast network of headquarters and supply installations within a large tunnel and cave complex.

Continuing on, the 22d Marines took nearly 1,000 yards of strongly defended enemy territory by 1800, after which mopping up operations continued well into the night. All during the day, the Bailey bridge had remained under continuous enemy artillery and sniper fire, in the face of which reinforcements and supplies poured over the crossing to support forward elements and maintain the momentum of the advance.

To the left of the 6th Division, the 1st Marine Division attacked following an intense air, artillery, and naval gunfire preparation. Substantial gains were made all along the line against a defiant enemy who contested every inch of the advance. Behind the continuing bombardment, the 1st Marines pushed forward along the railroad near the division right boundary, while the 7th

Marines made slower progress in the center and left of the line as it reached positions west of the high ground protecting Shuri.

As 2/1 attacked towards its objective, the high ground west of Wana, it began receiving some of the heaviest enemy resistance experienced in the division zone that day. When the battalion passed the nose west of Dakeshi, troops on the left came under heavy flanking machine gun fire from the village. Unable to continue the advance in the direction of the objective, the battalion attacked in column down the west side of the railroad, taking advantage of the cover furnished by the high embankment. At 1600, 2/1 had advanced about 900 yards and was partially on its goal, but held up so that the 22d Marines could come up on the right. Here, the 2d Battalion became subject to accurate long-range flanking artillery fire which soon took a heavy toll in casualties. The situation became more difficult when supply and evacuation were prevented because all possible routes of approach were covered. It finally became necessary for the companies to dig in for the night where they stood.

The 3d Battalion jumped off at about the same time as 2/1, and moved out to cover a gap that had occurred between the latter and the 7th Marines, which was still fighting in the middle of Dakeshi. As the foremost elements of 3/1 reached the point where 2/1 was first fired upon, they were likewise hit and their supporting tanks were unable to get past the draw because of heavy and accurate 47mm antitank fire. Finally, the 3d Battalion negotiated the

gap and took up positions just east of the railroad embankment, where it was subjected to frequent artillery and mortar shelling for the rest of the afternoon and all through the night.

Meanwhile, the 7th Marines continued the attack on Dakeshi, where enemy reaction to all forward movement proved costly to both sides. Because 3/7 had been held up throughout most of 10 May, the regiment jumped off the next day with 1/7 and 2/7 in the assault to envelop the strong positions in front of the 3d Battalion. While 3/7 contained the enemy to its front and the regimental reserve, 3/5, protected the rear, attacking forces pushed forward to gain troublesome Dakeshi Ridge.

On the right of the 7th's zone, 2/7 advanced in the face of Japanese mortars, grenades, and automatic weapons fire—the latter coming from pillboxes and coral caves—to gain approximately 800 yards and seize the ridge overlooking and running through Dakeshi. At 1800, the battalion attack was halted on the positions then occupied. As the men dug in for the night, some of the veterans of the Peleliu campaign were reminded of how much the fight for the ridge that day resembled the action at Bloody Nose Ridge.⁶⁰ Throughout the night of 11–12 May, the new defenders of Dakeshi Ridge fought off numerous Japanese attempts to infiltrate under cover the constant artillery and mortar barrages coming from enemy emplacements on Wana Ridge.

The fall of aggressively defended and vital Dakeshi Ridge, and its occupation

by Marines, meant that one more barrier to the heart of the Shuri defenses had been raised. In addition, the Japanese were now denied the use of commanding ground from which the terrain from Shuri and Naha to Machinato Ridge, and the entire coastal area in between, could be covered by observation and fire. The taking of Dakeshi Ridge effectively and decisively breached the enemy's Naha-Shuri-Yonabaru line, and raised some question as to how much longer he could hold it before Shuri itself was threatened.

Dakeshi was further endangered by the maneuver of 1/7, which swung towards the town from the northeast and placed the fanatically defended village in between a rapidly closing pincers. Although Dakeshi was now ripe for capture, positions on the reverse slope of the ridge, in the village itself, and a pocket of resistance to its north continued to be held by soldiers who were determined to defend to the death.

In the 1st Division rear, 2/5 eliminated the last remaining organized resistance in the Awacha Pocket, and 1/5 moved up behind 1/7 to wipe out scattered enemy remnants bypassed during the day. At 1800, 3/5 reverted to parent control.

Tanks providing close-in fire support to the 7th Marines on 11 May had been pressed into service to evacuate casualties. Some wounded were taken up into the tanks through the escape hatches; others rode on the rear deck of the tracked vehicles, which backed out of the battle area in order to provide an armored shield between the stretcher cases and enemy fire.

⁶⁰ 2/7 SAR, p. 4; also, see that part dealing with the Peleliu campaign in Garand and Strobridge, "Western Pacific Operations."

By nightfall, 1/7 was positioned and linked on its left with the 305th Infantry of the 77th Infantry Division to form a solid line at the division boundary. The major effort of XXIV Corps was made in the left center of its zone by the 96th Infantry Division, which had completed the relief of the 7th the previous day. While the 77th pressed the enemy through central Okinawa towards Shuri, the 96th approached a hill mass directly northwest of Yonabaru. This terrain feature controlled the eastern reaches to Shuri, completely dominated the east-central coastal plain, and was the easternmost anchor of the enemy's main battle position. All natural routes to the hill were constantly under observation and thoroughly covered by Japanese fire.

Conical Hill, as this bastion was soon named, commanded a series of ridges and other lesser hills, whose capture was to be costly and time-consuming. Murderous fire during the 11 May attack forced the frontline units of the 96th Division to relinquish whatever gains were made that day, although the 383d Infantry on the division left had battled forward 600 yards to establish a foothold on the northwest slopes of Conical. On the same day, assault battalions of the 77th Division gained but 400–500 yards. Strongly entrenched enemy took advantage of the broken terrain to take the flanks, and at times the rear, of the advancing soldiers under fire. At nightfall, the division halted, consolidated its gains, and dug in to the accompaniment of sporadic mortar and artillery fire.

Enemy small-boat activity during the night of 11–12 May increased notice-

ably over that of previous nights. American patrol boats reported making many radar and visual contacts off Naha, and some enemy craft were spotted apparently heading for the Hagushi transport area. The “fly-catchers” remained vigilant, however, and efficiently thwarted these Japanese surface ventures. Seven enemy boats were sunk between midnight of the 11th and 0400 the next day. Several other Japanese craft were fired upon with unknown results.⁶¹

These coastal skirmishes were tame in comparison to the bloody land battle which continued with unabated violence. When the Tenth Army attack resumed on the 12th, Marine assault elements found Japanese resistance undiminished. On the right of the 6th Division zone, 3/22 moved out in the face of small arms fire pouring down from positions in rocky cliffs overlooking its route of advance, and from the mouths of Okinawan tombs dug in the hillsides that lined it. By 0920, the battalion reached its objective, the high ground commanding a view of Naha below, and sent out patrols through the suburbs of the city to the banks of the Asato Gawa. Here, the Marines found the bridge demolished and the river bottom muddy and unfordable. Patrols from 1/22 also were sent down to the river bank after the battalion had reached the heights in its zone at 1400. Both battalions dug in for the night in firm control of the terrain on the northern outskirts of Naha.

The 2d Battalion was unable to keep pace with or match the advances of the

⁶¹ *CTF 51 AR*, pt III, pp. 91–92.

troops coming down the west coast; for, in addition to fighting the enemy in its path, 2/22 was forced to contend with the telling effect of Japanese fire coming out of the 1st Division zone from positions on the dominating terrain standing between the division boundary and the Shuri hill mass. Nevertheless, at 1400 Company G reached the battalion objective, the high ground overlooking Naha. Because the left flank of 2/22 was overextended, at 1350 General Shepherd attached 3/29 to the 22d Marines and alerted the rest of the regiment for commitment into the lines. By the end of the day, 6th Division troops occupied positions from which they were to fight for pretty much the rest of the month.

After first having repulsed a counter-attack, at 0730 on 12 May, 1/7 together with 2/7 launched a converging attack aimed at closing a 400-yard gap existing between the two battalions. As this assault force moved into the ruins of Dakeshi village, the enemy mortar and artillery fire that had been falling steadily since the Tenth Army advance had begun increased sharply. At 1522, however, the adjacent flanks of the two units made contact, and the battalions consolidated their positions for the night along the northern outskirts of the village and on the high ground to its east and west.

The 1st Marines attack to improve positions west of Wana was held up for three hours, while 2/1 was given an air-drop of rations, water, ammunition, and medical supplies. During the interim, this battalion came under extremely heavy and accurate mortar and small arms fire, which caused many casualties. At 1030, the battalion jumped off, but

all companies reported that they had run into a swarm of sniper and heavy machine gun fire coming from positions in the vicinity of Wana. Casualty evacuation and resupply soon became increasingly difficult because all routes were exposed to enemy observers located on the heights to the left of the 2/1 advance. As the day wore on, the assault companies were forced to dig night defenses on ground then held, not too many yards ahead of their 11 May positions.

Attacking to the southeast on the left of 2/1, the 3d Battalion was partially protected by the overhanging bank of an Asa Kawa tributary, and penetrated 300 yards towards the mouth of Wana Draw. Forward movement ceased at 1630 and the 1st Division dug in for the night, 2/1 tying in with 3/29 on the right. All the while, 2/1 remained in an isolated forward position. An undetermined number of the enemy counter-attacked the Marines at 2230, causing General del Valle to alert the 5th Marines for possible commitment in support of the 1st, but 3/1 contained the attack without need of reinforcement.

Enemy small boats were again active on the night of 12-13 May. An attempted counterlanding on the coast between the Asa and Asato Rivers was broken up by American patrol craft. The approximately 40 surviving Japanese were eliminated by 3/22 at the edge of the reef.

When the 6th Division attack resumed at 0730 on the 13th, the task of 3/22 was to reconnoiter the northern outskirts of Naha. As one patrol approached a village that another patrol had passed through safely on 12 May,

it was turned back by enemy fire. Battalion 81mm mortars were laid on the settlement's houses, and an infantry platoon accompanied by a tank platoon was sent in at 1400 to overcome all resistance. Well-concealed and determined defenders, however, stymied this attack. One tank was disabled by a satchel charge placed by a suicidally inclined Japanese soldier and the rest of the Shermans were forced to turn back.

Another infantry and tank platoon teamed up, this time attacking from the north of the village, but this effort, too, was thwarted by the combination of heavy machine gun fire, an enemy determination to hold, and the narrow village streets which restricted tank movement. Regiment then ordered the enemy blasted out and the village burned. After levelling the buildings, and killing approximately 75 defenders, the Marine tanks and troops withdrew at 1630. In its zone, 1st Battalion Marines met resistance from enemy outposts holed up in houses on the north bank of the river.

The main division effort was made on the left by 2/22, with 3/29 assigned to clear high ground overlooking the Asato River from which the enemy fired into the left flank elements of 2/22. Because of the difficulty in getting essential supplies and the rocket trucks scheduled for preparation fires forward to the front, the attack was delayed until 1115. Despite the heavy rocket and artillery preparation, intense enemy resistance grew yet more determined as the day wore on, making the tank-infantry assault teams' way difficult. By the end of the day, the two assault battalions had gained no more than

200-300 yards. Just before dark, Company H, 3/29, rushed and seized the troublesome hill on the left, quieting the heavy flanking machine gun fire that had been coming from that sector.

At the close of the day, it was clear that the 22d Marines had been worn out and its battle efficiency sapped in the fighting that brought the division down to the outskirts of Naha. During the 2,000-yard advance south from the Asa Kawa, the regiment had suffered approximately 800 Marines killed and wounded. Therefore, General Shepherd ordered the attack resumed on 14 May with the 29th Marines making the main effort on the left, supported by the 22d Marines on the right. The 3d Battalion, 29th Marines, reverted to parent control at 1800, at which time the regiment officially assumed responsibility for its new lines. To take over the positions vacated by the 29th, the 4th Marines—IIIAC reserve—moved south, where it would guard the division rear and back up the LVT(A)s guarding the open seaward flank of the 6th Division.

In the 1st Marine Division zone on 13 May, the 1st Marines was forced to repel two predawn counterattacks in platoon to company strength before launching its own attack. The Marine assault was first delayed until supporting tanks got into positions, and then held up again until the 7th Marines had cleared Dakeshi. Organic crew-served weapons of the 1st Marines fired upon observed enemy positions in the village in support of the 7th. The 1st Marines attack finally began at 1230, when 3/1 jumped off to extend the battalion line to the right into the 2/1 sector and to

clean up bypassed enemy positions. Primarily, the 3d Battalion objective was the high ground at the mouth of Wana Draw. Heavy machine gun fire from three sides and a deadly hail of mortar, grenade, and rifle fire greeted the tank-infantry assault teams as they gained the hill. Finding the position untenable, the attackers were forced to withdraw under the cover of smoke and fire furnished by the tanks, which also evacuated casualties. The same formidable obstacle of flying steel that met 3/1 forced 2/1 back and prevented the latter from moving its left flank up to extend its hold on the high ground west of Wana.

After first blunting a predawn enemy attack on 13 May, Colonel Snedeker's 7th Marines jumped off at 0730 with 2/7 in the assault, 1/7 and 3/7 in reserve. The 2d Battalion cleaned out Dakeshi, the 1st Battalion eliminated snipers and sealed caves on the ridge overlooking the village, and the 3d Battalion protected the rear of the regiment. Despite the employment of tanks, self-propelled 75mm guns, and 37mm antitank guns, the enemy was not subdued until late in the afternoon.

Opposing 2/7 on the reverse slope of Dakeshi Ridge was a honeycomb of caves centering around one which was later found to be the command post of the *64th Brigade*. These positions were discovered late in the afternoon and taken under close assault; so close, in fact, that Japanese postwar records note that even the brigade commander and his CP personnel took part in the fighting. After dark, the enemy ordered

survivors of the last-ditch stand to attempt to infiltrate American lines in order to reach Shuri and reform.⁶²

In the XXIV Corps zone, assault elements of the 96th Infantry Division executed a flanking maneuver west of Conical Hill and gained a foothold from which the stronghold could be reduced. On 13 May, the division captured the western and northern slopes of Conical, thus opening the way for the capture of Yonabaru and the unlocking of another door to Shuri's inner defenses.

Both corps of the Tenth Army attacked at 0730 on 14 May to clear the eastern and western approaches to Shuri and to envelop the flanks of that bastion. Fighting was especially bitter in the IIIAC zone, where the Marine divisions were unsuccessful in their attempts to break through the enemy line west of Wana and northwest of Naha. It soon became apparent that the Marines had run into the Japanese main line of resistance. This assumption was borne out by the heavy losses sustained by attacking infantry units and the number of tanks, 18, in the two Marine tank battalions destroyed, disabled, or damaged by enemy antitank, mortar, and artillery fire, mines, and suicide attacks.

General Shepherd's troops had jumped off at 0730 on the 14th to seize the high ground running generally along the north bank of the Asato Gawa. From the very beginning of this attack, the assaulting forces met strong, well-coordinated, and unremitting opposition. Attacking in conjunction with the

⁶² *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 107.

29th Marines, the 22d succeeded in seizing approximately 1,100 yards of the bank of the Asato, despite the presence of numerous machine gun and sniper positions in the path of the advance.

It was on the regimental left, however, that the going was roughest and the fighting most savage. In the face of mounting casualties during the day, the attack of 2/22 finally ground to a halt at 1500, when the battalion ran into a system of strongly defended and thoroughly organized defenses. These guarded a rectangularly-shaped hill, dominating and precipitous, that was quickly dubbed "Sugar Loaf." (See Map V, Map Section.) This hill itself was at the apex of an area of triangularly shaped high ground that pointed north. A concentration of Japanese power here had turned back 2/22 in the two previous days. Enemy dispositions on Sugar Loaf were so organized that the defenders could cover the front, rear, and flanks of any portion of the position with interlocking bands of automatic weapons fire and devastating barrages from mortar, artillery, and grenade launchers.

Although the intensity of Japanese resistance increased proportionally as assault troops approached this bastion—already recognized as a key defensive position—it was not realized at first that this bristling terrain feature and its environs constituted the western anchor of the Shuri defenses. At the time that the 22d Marines reached Sugar Loaf, the regimental line was spread thinly and excessive casualties had reduced combat efficiency to approximately 62 percent.

Nonetheless, despite the factors which forced the halt, 2/22 received direct orders from division at 1515 to seize, occupy, and defend the battalion objective—including Sugar Loaf Hill—this day at any cost.⁶³ In answer to the battalion commander's earlier request for reinforcements, Company K, 3/22, was attached to back up the attack. Moving out at 1722 behind a line of tanks and an artillery-laid smoke screen, Company F attacked Sugar Loaf for the second time on the 14th. In a little more than two hours later, some 40 survivors of Companies F and G were in position at the foot of the hill under the command of the battalion executive officer, Major Henry A. Courtney, Jr.

Snipers were everywhere, and the group also came under fire from mortars on the flanks as well as the reverse slopes of Sugar Loaf. To carry supplies and much-needed ammunition up to the exposed Marines, and to reinforce Major Courtney's pitifully small force, Lieutenant Colonel Horatio C. Woodhouse, Jr., 2/22 battalion commander, sent 26 newly arrived replacements forward. All during this time, the Japanese were rolling grenades down on the Marine position from the heights above, and Courtney saw no other alternative to remaining where he was than to attack up the hill to seize its crest. All American illumination of the area was stopped when Courtney and his 40-odd Marines stormed the hill at 2300, throwing grenades as they scrambled up the slopes. As soon as they carried the crest, they dug in to wait out a night of ex-

⁶³ 2/22 SAR, Ph III, pp. 5-6.

pected counterattacks and the enemy's customarily heavy mortar fire.

On the left of 2/22, enfilade fire from flanking hills in the zone of the 29th Marines undoubtedly contributed to the battalion's hard going during this day. After 3/29, the regimental assault battalion, had jumped off at 0730 on the 14th, it tried to bypass Japanese strong-points on its left to draw abreast of 2/22 on its right. The 3d Battalion was forced to halt and fight around this center of resistance the rest of the morning and part of the afternoon, when Japanese fire on its rear proved troublesome. At about 1630, the 29th Marines' commander regrouped his assault elements and moved 1/29 into the line on the left of 3/29. The attack was renewed with Companies A and H working over the flanks of the enemy position, slowly compressing and neutralizing it. Company G, in the meanwhile, continued the attack southward, and, after fighting its way 200 yards across open ground, gained the forward slopes of a hill northwest of Sugar Loaf, where it tied in with the lines of 2/22.

In the 1st Division zone, the objective of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, on 14 May was Wana Ridge. The battalion jumped off at 0730, with 1/7 prepared to pass through and continue the attack if 2/7 was unable to continue. As soon as the left element of 2/7 cleared past Dakeshi village and entered open terrain, it was pinned down by Japanese fire. While Company E was held up, Company G, followed by F, swung through the zone of 1/1 to approach a

point within 100 yards of Wana Ridge. Before they could take cover, concentrated enemy machine gun and mortar fire inflicted heavy casualties upon these leading elements of 2/7, and they were ordered to hold their positions until relieved by 1/7.

At 1107, Colonel Snedeker ordered the relief of the 2d Battalion by the 1st, which was ready to effect the relief at 1252. At that time, however, the commander of 1/7 requested that all supporting arms under the control of 2/7 be transferred to him, and before the transfer had been completed the renewed attack was delayed until 1615. When this designated H-Hour arrived, and following an intensive naval gunfire, artillery, rocket, and 4.2-inch mortar preparation, 1st Battalion assault units moved out behind tanks and under the cover of a protective smoke screen. The main effort was made by Company B, which advanced through Dakeshi to the south into open terrain. Immediately upon coming into this clearing, these Marines were taken under the same fire that had pinned down Company E earlier.

When enemy fire from Wana and Shuri prevented the company from advancing further, it was ordered to withdraw to Dakeshi to set up a night defense. In the meanwhile, moving south in unfamiliar territory to take over the positions of Company G, Company A ran into numerous enemy groups attempting to penetrate Marine lines. The relief was finally effected at 1900, but not before the commander and

executive officer of Company A had become casualties.⁶⁴

Coordinated with the attack of the 7th Marines against Wana Ridge was the one launched that same day by the 1st Marines. The regiment's major effort was made by 1/1, with the western tip of the ridge as the initial objective; the 2d and 3d Battalions supported the assault by fire. By noon, Company C secured the objective and began digging in and consolidating the newly won position despite heavy enemy fire. There was no contact on the left with the 7th Marines, which was moving up slowly against bitter opposition. Meanwhile, the portion of the ridge to have been occupied by the 7th soon was swarming with Japanese soldiers forming for a counterattack. Because he could not be reinforced in time, the commander of Company C requested and

⁶⁴ In commenting upon the Japanese machine gun fire that prevented Company C from coming up to the line to fill in the gap and tie in with Companies A and B, the S-3 of 1/7 stated that this was "a standard Japanese tactic that gave our forces trouble throughout the war. There was always a reluctance on our part to withhold [hold back] an attack that was continuing to gain ground. Also, there was a general tendency to tie in the defenses and establish ourselves in a defensive posture prior to dark. These two factors often overlapped and we found ourselves in the position of frantically establishing a night defense in the few remaining minutes of twilight. The Japanese, of course, had long since reacted to this procedure and were wont to send infiltration groups and LMG teams against us in the awkward period between BENT [Beginning of Evening Nautical Twilight] and EENT [End of Evening Nautical Twilight]. It was in this period that the relief of G/2/7 by A/1/7 took place." Maj Don P. Wyckoff ltr to CMC, dtd 25Mar55.

received permission to withdraw. After doing so in good order, the company set up a strong line for night defense on the battalion left, where contact was made with the 7th Marines. Units of the 5th Marines began relieving assault companies of the 1st at 2200, so that the 1st Division could renew its attack against Wana the next morning with a relatively fresh regiment.

With the coming of darkness on 14 May, Tenth Army assault troops were probing deeply into the Japanese main line of resistance all along the island. Almost flying in the face of indisputable evidence indicating that nearly half of the enemy garrison had been killed—the heaviest losses consisting of first-rate infantrymen—was the undeniable fact that there were no signs of Japanese weakness anywhere along the Tenth Army front. Conversely, the nature of operations in the south promised that enemy defenses were not going to be breached without grinding, gruelling, and unrelenting tank-infantry combat.

LOGISTICAL PROGRESS ⁶⁵

All ICEBERG assault and first echelon transports and landing ships had been unloaded by the end of April and released for other assignments. Compared to that provided in Central Pacific operations earlier, the magnitude of the logistical support furnished the Okinawa invasion force can be best seen in the following table:

⁶⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *CTF 51 AR; Tenth Army AR.*

Operation	No. of ships	Personnel	Measurement tons
Gilberts	63	35,214	148,782
Marshalls	122	85,201	293,792
Marianas	210	141,519	437,753
Leyte ⁶⁶	110	57,411	214,552
Palaus	109	55,887	199,963
Iwo Jima	174	86,516	280,447
Okinawa	458	193,852	824,567

As stated earlier here, the complexities of logistical support operations were compounded by several factors, not the least of which was the disrupted unloading schedule. Additionally, the jammed condition of the beach dumps and the shortage of shore party personnel and transportation gave the Tenth Army supply problems, also. The primary concern, however, was with the inability of the Tenth Army to maintain an adequate artillery ammunition reserve on the island. This situation arose because of the rapid expenditure of shells of all calibers and types needed in the drive to reduce the positions protecting Shuri. Beginning with the major XXIV Corps attack on 19 April, the initial Tenth Army ammunition support was quickly expended and replenishment shipments were gobbled up as soon as they arrived.

Although "ammunition resupply had

⁶⁶ "The number of ships and cargo tonnage listed under 'Leyte' represents that loaded for the Palau-Anguar-Yap Operation which was diverted to the Leyte Operation but which was unloaded under direction of Com3dPhib-For." *CTF 51 AR*, pt V, sec I, p. 33.

been based on an estimated 40 days of combat," ⁶⁷ it was necessary to revise shipping schedules upwards drastically in order to meet the increased demands. On 17 April, General Buckner made the first of many special requests for ammunition in short supply. Specifically, he asked CinCPOA to load five LSTs at Saipan with 155mm howitzer and gun ammunition for arrival at Okinawa by 27 April. The fulfillment of this request was a stop-gap measure and in no way guaranteed that the critical artillery ammunition shortage would be alleviated for the rest of the campaign.

Kamikazes played a large part in creating this shortage by sinking a total of three ammunition ships in April with a loss estimated at being well in excess of 22,000 tons of vitally needed cargo. Even after the release of a considerable amount of ammunition late in April, when contingent operations for Phase III of ICEBERG were cancelled, the shortage remained critical throughout the fighting. Artillery commands were never able to maintain more than a minimally satisfactory reserve level of shells in their ammunition points.

Although initial shipments consisted of "balanced loads" of ammunition, as the supply requirements of the Tenth Army became clearer it also became apparent that there would be a greater

⁶⁷ *Tenth Army AR*, chap 11, sec IV, p. 21. "In the preliminary planning the Tenth Army Ordnance Officer envisaged heavy ammunition expenditures. Original requests far exceeded the supplies made available initially and had to be drastically modified downward to fit availability of ammunition stocks and shipping to transport same." BGen David H. Blakelock, USA, ltr to CMC dtd 22Mar55, hereafter *Blakelock ltr 1955*.

demand for artillery shells than for small arms ammunition. Accordingly, logistics officers were able to schedule resupply shipments that more suitably filled the needs of the ground forces on Okinawa.

But even as L-Day ended, unloading facilities on the Hagushi beaches were already overtaxed. Because some of the assault beaches were not capable of sustaining heavy and continuous shore party operations, and other sites selected for eventual use were either not suitable or not uncovered on schedule, the program of beach unloading as set up in the logistics plan proved totally unrealistic. The most satisfactory tonnage unloading figure that could be attained under the then-present conditions was reached on 5 May, and the figures never equalled the planned goals thereafter.⁶⁸

Four new beaches were opened up between 17 April and 17 May on the east coast of the island in Chimu and Nakagusuku Wan to support the southern drive of XXIV Corps and base development activities. Unfortunately, the gap between actual and planned unloading tonnage was never closed, even with the addition of these new points.

⁶⁸ "One of the most important factors in preventing the unloading from reaching planned goals after 5 May was the weather. Frequent interruptions were also caused by Red alerts and enemy air raids. During May there were 17 days of heavy seas and torrential rains (14.68 inches fell in May with over 11 inches falling between 20 and 30 May) which materially interfered with unloading operations. During June there were 15 days when typhoon warnings and heavy weather materially interfered with unloading." *Ibid.*

Because Phase III was cancelled and the mission of IIIAC changed, General Buckner could mount a four-division attack on Shuri. This increased ground activity vastly accelerated the consumption of all classes of supplies, and caused more supply ships to be called up than could be handled efficiently.⁶⁹ In essence, this move was a calculated risk in the face of numerous mass and individual *Kamikaze* attacks on the transport areas. Nonetheless, the risk had to be taken if an adequate reserve of essential supplies was to be maintained in the immediate area.

As the insatiable appetites of the ground units for supplies increased in late April and early May, quartermaster and shore party units made extensive efforts to speed the unloading and processing of all goods. To help ease the situation, Rear Admiral John L. Hall, Jr., Senior Officer Present Afloat at Hagushi, and General Wallace, the Island Commander, recommended to General Buckner that more cranes, transportation, and personnel be employed to empty beached landing ships and craft; that more LVTs and crane barges be used at the reef transfer line; that intermediate transfer dumps be established to prevent excessively long hauls by shore party vehicles; and that the requirements for ammunition and fuel oil dispersion be modified somewhat to conserve personnel and transport. The admiral made one other recommendation: that the beach at Nago Wan be transferred from the control of IIIAC

⁶⁹ According to the resupply schedule established before the landing, a six-day delay occurred between call-up and arrival of the replenishment echelons.

to that of the Island Command. General Buckner approved these recommendations almost immediately, but any gains made by these improvements were quickly minimized by the increasing size and variety of logistics tasks.⁷⁰

At no time after the landing was there any prospect that the Tenth Army had not come to Okinawa to stay, but the problem of sustaining the momentum of the ground offensive became quite acute in late April and early May. In addition to his tactical responsibilities as commander of the Joint Expeditionary Force, during this early phase of the campaign Admiral Turner also had a logistic responsibility for maintaining adequate levels of all classes of air, ground, and naval replenishment stocks needed to support a successful Tenth Army operation.

Admiral Spruance, acting in accordance with the ICEBERG operation plan, announced that the amphibious phase of the Okinawa landing was ended on 17 May. At 0900 on that day, Vice Admiral Harry W. Hill, Commander, V Amphibious Force, relieved Admiral Turner as Commander, Task Force 51, and took over the control of his naval activities, and of air defense. In the shift of command responsibilities, Ad-

miral Hill was directed to report to General Buckner, who took command of all forces ashore and assumed Turner's former responsibility to Admiral Spruance for the defense and development of captured objectives. At this time, all of Turner's former logistics duties were taken over by a representative of Commander, Service Squadron Ten, the Navy logistical support force in forward areas.

Admiral Turner's successful period of command responsibility at Okinawa was marked by his direction of the largest amphibious operation of the Pacific War. Forces under his command had killed 55,551 and captured 853 Japanese troops in ground action, and had claimed the destruction of 1,184 enemy aircraft. During the first 46 days of the campaign, *i.e.*, until 16 May, 1,256,286 measurement tons of assault, garrison, maintenance, and ground ammunition cargo had been unloaded over island beaches. Gunfire support force guns, from 5- to 16-inch in caliber, had fired over 25,000 tons of ammunition while covering Tenth Army ground troops and protecting the ships of TF 51.⁷¹

In the course of six weeks of incessant fighting, the enemy had exacted a terrible price for every inch of ground he

⁷⁰ "Another factor contributing to the lower rate of unloading was the increased need of service troops, particularly engineers, to improve roads and to endeavor to make existing roads passable as a result of the extremely heavy rains. These additional troops came from airfield construction projects and the beach areas, the latter causing [a] corresponding slow down of unloading. The arrival of engineer and service troops on the island never kept pace with the requirements for unloading." *Blakelock ltr 1955.*

⁷¹ The immensity of this support may be seen in comparing the Okinawa figure with the tons of naval ammunition expended in Central Pacific operations earlier: Tarawa (1,833); Makin (1,800); Kwajalein (3,937); Roi-Namur (2,251); Eniwetok (2,020); Saipan (10,965); Tinian (3,627); Guam (8,000); Peleliu (5,579); and Iwo Jima (14,190). ComPhibsPac Amphibious Gunnery Bul No. 2, Assault on Okinawa, dtd 24May45.

yielded. On 17 May, Tenth Army casualty figures included 3,964 men killed, 18,258 wounded, 302 missing, and 9,295 non-battle casualties. Of these casualties, hospital ships had evacuated 10,188; APAs 4,887; and air transport, 5,093. The hard-hit naval forces had lost 1,002 men killed, 2,727 wounded, and 1,054 missing. Air defense units, both TAF and carrier-based squadrons, lost 82 planes to all causes, while TF 51 had 156

ships sunk or damaged in action with the enemy.

Despite the fact that a major portion of Okinawa had been taken, and Tenth Army ground units had punished the enemy unmercifully, all evidence pointed to a continuation of the hard fighting. Nevertheless, the tactical situation on the fringes of Shuri almost imperceptibly showed signs that the Japanese defenses were slowly giving way.

Reduction of the Shuri Bastion

As conceived in Tenth Army plans, the object of the full-scale attack beginning on 11 May was to destroy the defenses guarding Shuri. In the end, this massive assault took the lives of thousands of men in two weeks of the bloodiest fighting experienced during the entire Okinawa campaign. For each frontline division, the struggle to overcome enemy troops on the major terrain feature in the path of its advance determined the nature of its battle. Facing the front of the 96th Infantry Division was Conical Hill; the 77th Division fought for Shuri itself. Marines of the 1st Division had to overcome Wana Draw, while Sugar Loaf Hill was the objective of the 6th Marine Division. (See Map V, Map Section.)

BATTLE FOR SUGAR LOAF HILL¹

Sugar Loaf Hill was but one of three enemy positions in a triangularly shaped group of hills which made up the western anchor of the Japanese Shuri defense system. Sugar Loaf was the apex of the triangle, which faced north, its flanks and rear well covered by extensive cave and tunnel positions in Half Moon Hill to the southeast and the Horseshoe to the southwest. The three elements of this system were mutually supporting.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *Tenth Army AR*; *IIIAC AR*; *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*; *6th MarDiv Jnl, Ph III*; *4th Mar SAR, Ph III*; *22d Mar SAR, Ph III*; *29th Mar SAR, Ph III*.

In analyzing these defenses, the 6th Marine Division pointed out that:

... the sharp depression included within the Horseshoe afforded mortar positions that were almost inaccessible to any arm short of direct, aimed rifle fire and hand grenades. Any attempt to capture Sugar Loaf by flanking action from east or west is immediately exposed to flat trajectory fire from both of the supporting terrain features. Likewise, an attempt to reduce either the Horseshoe or the Half Moon would be exposed to destructive well-aimed fire from the Sugar Loaf itself. In addition, the three localities are connected by a network of tunnels and galleries, facilitating the covered movement of reserves. As a final factor in the strength of the position it will be seen that all sides of Sugar Loaf Hill are precipitous, and there are no evident avenues of approach into the hill mass. For strategic location and tactical strength it is hard to conceive of a more powerful position than the Sugar Loaf terrain afforded. Added to all the foregoing was the bitter fact that troops assaulting this position presented a clear target to enemy machine guns, mortars, and artillery emplaced on the Shuri heights to their left and left rear.²

Following its successful charge to seize the crest of Sugar Loaf, Major Courtney's small group had dug in. An unceasing enemy bombardment of the newly won position, as well as the first in a series of Japanese counterattacks to regain it, began almost immediately. At midnight, 14-15 May, there were sounds of enemy activity coming from the other

² *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III, p. 5.*

side of the crest, signifying an impending *banzai* charge to Courtney. He forestalled the charge by leading a grenade-throwing attack against the reverse slope defenders, in the course of which he was killed.

At 0230, only a handful of tired and wounded Marines remained on the top of Sugar Loaf, and Lieutenant Colonel Woodhouse ordered his reserve, Company K, to reinforce the depleted group. With the coming of dawn, the forces on Sugar Loaf had been reduced again by enemy action and fire, while 2/22 itself had been hit by numerous Japanese counterattacks and attempts at infiltration all along the battalion lines. At 0630, Company D of 2/29 was attached to the 22d Marines to help mop up the enemy in the rear of 2/22.

There were less than 25 Marines of Courtney's group and Company K remaining in the 2/22 position on Sugar Loaf when daylight came; at 0800, the seven survivors of the Courtney group were ordered off the hill by the battalion commander. Within a short time thereafter, the enemy launched another attack against the battered position. During the height of this attack, a reinforced platoon of Company D arrived on the hilltop and was thrown into the battle. Suffering heavy casualties while en route to the position, the Company D platoon was hit even harder by the charging Japanese as soon as it arrived at the top of the hill. At 1136, the few survivors of Company K and the 11 Marines remaining of the Company D platoon were withdrawn from Sugar Loaf. The Company D men rejoined their parent unit, which was manning a hastily constructed defensive line or-

ganized on the high ground just in front of Sugar Loaf.

The enemy counterattack was the beginning of a series which soon reached battalion-sized proportions, and which, by 0900, had spread over a 900-yard front extending into the zones of 1/22 and 3/29. An intensive naval gunfire, air, and artillery preparation for the division assault that morning temporarily halted the enemy attack, but it soon regained momentum. By 1315, however, the Japanese effort was spent, though not before the 22d Marines in the center of the division line had taken a terrific pounding. In an incessant mortar and artillery bombardment supporting the enemy counterattack, the battalion commander of 1/22, Major Thomas J. Myers, was killed, and all of his infantry company commanders—and the commander and executive officer of the tank company supporting the battalion—were wounded when the battalion observation post was hit.³

Major Earl J. Cook, 1/22 executive officer, immediately took over and reorganized the battalion. He sent Companies A and B to seize a hill forward of the battalion left flank. When in blocking positions on their objective—northwest of Sugar Loaf—the Marines could effectively blunt counterattacks expected to be mounted in this area. Because the possibility existed of a breakthrough in the zone of 2/22, the regimental commander moved Company

³ Upon learning of the death of Major Myers, General Shepherd commented: "It's the greatest single loss the Division has sustained. Myers was an outstanding leader. Whenever I called on him for a job he never failed me." Cass, *6th MarDiv Hist*, p. 117.



*SUGAR LOAF HILL, western anchor of the Shuri defenses, seen from the north.
(USMC 124983)*



*TANKS evacuate the wounded as the 29th Marines continue the attack on Sugar Loaf.
(USMC 122421)*

I of 3/22 into position to back up the 2d Battalion. At 1220, Lieutenant Colonel Woodhouse was notified that his exhausted battalion would be relieved by 3/22 as soon as possible, and would in turn take up the old 3d Battalion positions on the west coast along the banks of the Asato. The relief was effected at 1700 with Companies I and L placed on the front line, and Company K positioned slightly to the right rear of the other two. Company D, 2/29, reverted to parent control at this time.

During the ground fighting on the night of 14–15 May, naval support craft smashed an attempted Japanese landing in the 6th Division zone on the coast just north of the Asato Gawa. Foreseeing the possibility of future raids here, General Shepherd decided to strengthen his beach defenses. In addition to a 50-man augmentation from the regiment, 2/22 was also reinforced by the 6th Reconnaissance Company to bolster its night defenses. To further strengthen Lieutenant Colonel Woodhouse's command, he was given operational control of 2/4, which was still in corps reserve.

The objective of the 29th Marines on 15 May was the seizure of Half Moon Hill. The 1st and 3d Battalions encountered the same bitter and costly resistance in the fight throughout the day that marked the experience of the 22d Marines. A slow-paced advance was made under constant harassing fire from the Shuri Heights area. By late afternoon, 1/29 had reached the valley north of Half Moon and became engaged in a grenade duel with enemy defenders in reverse slope positions. Tanks supporting the Marine assault elements came under direct 150mm howitzer fire at this point.

Several of the tanks were hit, but little damage resulted. At the end of the day, the lines of the 29th Marines were firmly linked with the 22d Marines on the right and the 1st Division on the left.

Facing the 6th Marine Division was the *15th Independent Mixed Regiment*, whose ranks were now sadly depleted as a result of its unsuccessful counterattack and because of the advances of 1/22 and the 29th Marines. More than 585 Japanese dead were counted in the division zone, and it was estimated that an additional 446 of the enemy had been killed in the bombardments of supporting arms or sealed in caves during mopping-up operations.⁴ Expecting that the Americans would make an intensive effort to destroy his Sugar Loaf defenses, General Ushijima reinforced the *15th IMR* with a makeshift infantry battalion comprised of service and support units from the *1st Specially Established Brigade*.⁵

The success of the 6th Division attack plan for 16 May depended upon the seizure of Half Moon Hill by the 29th Marines. (See Map VI, Map Section.) Once 3/29 had seized the high ground east of Sugar Loaf, 3/22 was to make the major division effort and capture the hill fortress. Immediately after the attack was launched, assault elements on the regimental left flank encountered heavy fire and bitter opposition from enemy strongpoints guarding the objective. The 1st Battalion was spearheaded by a Company B platoon and its supporting armor. After the tank-infantry

⁴ 6th MarDiv G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 45, dtd 16May45.

⁵ *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 109.

teams had passed through the right flank to clear the reverse slope of the ridge held by Company C, devastating small arms, artillery, mortar, and anti-tank fire forced them to withdraw. The fury of this fire prevented Company C from advancing over the crest of the ridge and the other two platoons of Company B from moving more than 300 yards along the division boundary before they too were stopped by savage frontal and flanking fire.

The night defenses of the battalion remained virtually the same as the night before; however, the units were reorganized somewhat and their dispositions readjusted. At 1400 that afternoon, Lieutenant Colonel Jean W. Moreau, commander of 1/29, was evacuated after he was seriously wounded by an artillery shell which hit his battalion OP; Major Robert P. Neuffer assumed command.

Continuously exposed to heavy enemy artillery and mortar bombardment, 3/29 spent most of the morning moving into favorable positions for the attack on Half Moon. Following an intensive artillery and mortar preparation, tanks from Companies A and B of the 6th Tank Battalion emerged from the railroad cut northeast of Sugar Loaf and lumbered into the broad valley leading to Half Moon. While Company A tanks provided Company B with direct fire support from the slopes of hills just north of Sugar Loaf, the latter fired into reverse slope positions in the ridge opposite 1/29, and then directly supported the assault elements of the 3d Battalion.

At about the same time that their armor support appeared on the scene, Companies G and I attacked and quickly raced to and occupied the northern slope

of Half Moon Hill against slight resistance. The picture changed drastically at 1500, however, when the Japanese launched a violent counteroffensive to push the Marines off these advanced positions even while they were attempting to dig in. The enemy poured machine gun, rifle, and mortar fire into the exposed flanks and rear of the Americans, who also were hit by a flurry of grenades thrown from caves and emplacements on the south, or reverse, slope of the hill. As evening approached, increasing intense enemy fire penetrated the smoke screen covering the digging-in operations of the troops and they were ordered to withdraw to their earlier jump-off positions to set in a night defense.

On the right of the division, when the 22d Marines attack was launched at 0830 on the 16th, assault elements of the 1st Battalion were immediately taken under continuous automatic weapons fire coming from the northern edge of the ruins of the town of Takamotoji, just as they were attempting to get into position to support the attack of 3/22. The fact that this previously quiet area now presented a bristling defense indicated that the Japanese had reinforced this sector to confound any American attempt to outflank Sugar Loaf from the direction of Naha. In the end, because of the criss-crossing fires coming from the village, Half Moon Hill, and the objective itself, the 3d Battalion was unable to fulfill its assignment.

The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Malcolm "O" Donohoo, had planned to attack Sugar Loaf from the east once the flank of the attacking unit, Company I, was safeguarded by a successful 3/29 advance. Company L, 3/22,

was to support the attack by covering the south and east slopes of Sugar Loaf with fire, while 1/22, in turn, would take the high ground west of Sugar Loaf, where it would support the Company L movement by fire. The success or failure of the attack on the hill hinged on the success or failure of 3/29.

At 1500, despite the fact that 3/29 had not fully occupied the high ground, Company I moved out with its tank support and reached Sugar Loaf without serious opposition. Once the troops in the van attempted to gain the crest, however, they began receiving heavy enemy mortar and machine gun fire. In an effort to suppress this fire, the tanks began flanking the hill, but ran into a minefield where one tank was lost. Company I, nevertheless, gained the top of the hill at 1710 and began digging in. The situation was in doubt now, because both 1/22 and Company L were pinned down and 3/29 was forced to withdraw from Half Moon. Company I, therefore, was in an exposed position and its precarious hold on Sugar Loaf had become untenable. With both flanks exposed and its ranks depleted by numerous casualties, the company had to be pulled back from the hill under the cover of fire of both division and corps artillery. As 3/22 reorganized for night defense, enemy batteries bombarding the Marine lines wounded Lieutenant Colonel Donohoo, who was replaced by Major George B. Kantner, the battalion executive officer.

This day was categorized by the 6th Division as the "bitterest" of the Okinawa campaign, a day when "the regiments had attacked with all the effort at their command and had been unsuccess-

ful."⁶ One infantry regiment, the 22d, had been so sorely punished that, in assessing his losses for the day, Colonel Schneider reported that the combat efficiency of his unit was down to 40 percent.⁷ Because the fighting of the preceding eight days had sapped the offensive capabilities of the 22d Marines and reduced the regiment to a point where its continued employment was inadvisable, it became apparent that the 29th Marines would have to assume the burden of taking Sugar Loaf. On 17 May, the regimental boundary was shifted west to include the redoubt in its zone and thereby lessen control problems in the attacks on both it and Half Moon.

In an effort to neutralize the seemingly impregnable Japanese defenses here, the attack of 17 May was preceded by an intensive bombardment of 29th Marines objectives by all available supporting arms. In this massive preparation were the destructive fires of 16-inch naval guns, 8-inch howitzers, and 1,000-pound bombs. Following this softening up, and spearheaded by a heavy and continual artillery barrage, the 29th Marines launched a tank-infantry attack with three battalions abreast. The 1st and 3d Battalions on the left had the mission of taking Half Moon, while 2/29, with Company E in assault, was to take Sugar Loaf.

Company E made three attempts to take its objective, and each proved costly and unsuccessful. The first effort, involving a wide flanking movement in which the railroad cut was utilized for cover, was stymied almost immediately when the troops surged onto open

⁶ *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*, p. 7.

⁷ *22d Mar SAR, Ph III*, p. 5.

ground. A close flanking attack around the left of the hill characterized the second effort, but the steep southeastern face of the height precluded a successful climb to the top. The axis of the attack was then reoriented to the northeast slope of Sugar Loaf, and the lead platoon began a difficult trek to the top, all the while under heavy mortar fire coming from covered positions on Half Moon. Three times the assaulting Marines reached the crest, only to be driven off by a combination of grenades and bayonet charges. Almost all fighting was at close range and hand-to-hand.

After quickly reorganizing for a fourth try, the now-fatigued and depleted company drove to the hilltop at 1830, when it was met again by a determined Japanese counterattack. This time, however, the Marines held, but heavy casualties and depleted ammunition supply forced the battalion commander to withdraw the survivors of the company from Sugar Loaf. Thus, the prize for which 160 men of Company E had been killed and wounded on that day fell forfeit to the Japanese. Some small sense of just retribution was felt by Company E Marines when the enemy foolishly and boldly attempted to reinforce Sugar Loaf at dusk by moving his troops to the hill along an uncovered route. Artillery observers immediately called down the fire of 12 battalions on the unprotected Japanese, decisively ending their reinforcement threat.

So well integrated were the enemy defenses on Half Moon and Sugar Loaf, capture of only one portion was meaningless; 6th Division Marines had to take them all simultaneously. If only

one hill was seized without the others being neutralized or likewise captured, effective Japanese fire from the uncaptured position would force the Marines to withdraw from all. This, in effect, was why Sugar Loaf had not been breached before this, and why it was not taken on the 17th.

A combination of tank fire, flame, and demolitions had temporarily subdued the Japanese opposing the 1/29 approach on the 17th and enabled Companies A and C to advance swiftly across the valley and up the forward slopes of Half Moon. While Company C mopped up remaining enemy defenders, Company A renewed its attack across the valley floor and raced to the forward slopes of Half Moon. When Company B attempted to cross open ground to extend the battalion lines on the left, it was stopped cold by accurate fire coming from the hill, Sugar Loaf, and Shuri. At this time, the positions held by the exposed platoons of Company A became untenable. The battalion commander authorized their withdrawal to a defiladed area approximately 150 yards forward of their line of departure that morning.

By 1600, 3d Battalion companies had fought their way to Half Moon under continuous fire and begun digging in on the forward slope of the hill. They were not able to tie in with 1/29 until 1840, two hours after Company F had been ordered forward to fill in the gap between the battalions. Following a crushing bombardment of these hastily established positions on Half Moon and the exposure of the right flank of 3/29 to direct and accurate fire from enemy-held Sugar Loaf, the entire battalion

was pulled back when Company A was withdrawn from its left. Strong positions were established for night defense—only 150 yards short of Half Moon. The gaps on either side of 3/29 were protected by interlocking lanes of fire established in coordination with 1/29 on its left flank and 2/29 on its right.

On 18 May at 0946, less than an hour after the 29th Marines attacked, Sugar Loaf was again occupied by 6th Division troops. (See Map VII, Map Section.) The assault began with tanks attempting a double envelopment of this key position with little initial success. A combination of deadly AT fire and well-placed minefields quickly disabled six tanks. Despite this setback and increasingly accurate artillery fire, a company of medium tanks split up and managed to reach and occupy positions on either flank of Sugar Loaf, from which they could cover the reverse slopes of the hill.

In a tank-infantry assault, Company D, 2/29, gained the top of the heretofore-untenable position, and held it during a fierce grenade and mortar duel with the defenders. Almost immediately after subduing the enemy, the company charged over the crest of the hill and down its south slope to mop up and destroy emplacements there. Disregarding lethal mortar fire from Half Moon that blanketed Sugar Loaf, Company D dug in at 1300 as well as it could to consolidate and organize its newly won conquest.

All during the attempts to take Sugar Loaf and Half Moon, the enemy on Horseshoe Hill had poured down never-ending mortar and machine gun fire on the attacking Marines below. To destroy these positions, Company F was com-

mitted on the battalion right. Supported by fire from 1/22 on its right and Marines on Sugar Loaf, the company pressed forward to the ridge marking the lip of the Horseshoe ravine. Here it was stopped by a vicious grenade and mortar barrage coming from the deeply entrenched enemy. Because of this intense resistance, the company was forced to withdraw slightly to the forward slope of the ridge, where it established a strong night defense.

Implicit in the 6th Marine Division drive towards the Asato Gawa was a threatened breakthrough at Naha. To forestall this, General Ushijima moved four naval battalions to back up the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade*. Few men in the rag-tag naval units were trained for land combat, much less combat at all, since the battalions were comprised of inexperienced service troops, civilian workers, and Okinawans who had been attached to Admiral Ota's *Naval Base Force*. The commander of the *Thirty-second Army* thought that the lack of training could be compensated in part by strongly arming the men with a generous allotment of automatic weapons taken from supply dumps on Oroku and the wrecked aircraft that dotted the peninsula's airfield.⁸

⁸ *IntelMono*, pt I, sec B, pp. 15-16; *CICAS Trans* No. 202, Naval Attack Force T/O&E, dtd 4May45. No standards for the organization or equipping of these units had been established prior to their organization; but the makeup of one of them, found in the translation of the above-noted T/O&E, fairly well reflects the composition of the others. As of 4 May 1945, the *3d Battalion* of the *Iwao Force*, a three-battalion group organized to reinforce the *Thirty-second Army*, was composed of 415 men in two companies armed with a total of 28 machine guns, 258 rifles, 27 grenade dischargers, and 1,744 grenades.

Despite their lack of combat experience, the naval force was to perform a three-fold mission with these weapons: back up the Sugar Loaf defense system, hold the hills northwest of the Kokuba River, and maintain the security of Shuri's western flank in the event that the defenses of the 44th *IMB* collapsed. The furious Japanese defense of the buffer zone stretching from the Naha estuary of the Kokuba to the western outskirts of the town of Shuri indicated their concern with the threat to the left flank of the Shuri positions.⁹

The coming of darkness on 18 May was not accompanied by any noticeable waning in the furious contest for possession of Sugar Loaf, a battle in which the combat efficiency of the 29th Marines had been so severely tested and drained. In the nearly nine days since the Tenth Army had first begun its major push, the 6th Marine Division had sustained 2,662 battle and 1,289 non-battle casualties,¹⁰ almost all in the ranks of the 22d and 29th Marines. It was patently obvious that an infusion of fresh blood into the division lines was a prerequisite for the attack to be continued with undiminished fervor. Accepting this fact, General Geiger released the 4th Marines to parent control effective at 0800 on 19 May, at which time General Shepherd placed the 29th Marines in division reserve, but subject to IIIAC control.

At 0300 on the morning of the sched-

uled relief, a strong Japanese counter-attack hit the open right flank of Company F, 2/29, poised just below the lip of the Horseshoe depression. The fury of the enemy attack, combined with an excellently employed and heavy bombardment of white phosphorous shells, eventually forced the advance elements of Company F to withdraw to the northern slope of Sugar Loaf.¹¹ At first light, relief of the three exhausted battalions of the 29th began, with 2/4 taking up positions on the left, 3/4 on the right.

Despite the difficult terrain, constant bombardment of the lines, and opposition from isolated enemy groups which had infiltrated the positions during the night, the relief was effected at 1430 at a cost to the 4th Marines of over 70 casualties—primarily from mortar and artillery fire. At approximately 1530, a counterattack was launched against 2/4, which then was in a precarious position on Half Moon Hill, on the division left flank. After nearly two hours of fighting, the attack was broken up. The advance Marine company was then withdrawn from its exposed point to an area about 150 yards to the rear, where the battalion could reinforce the regimental line after tying in with 3/5 and 3/4.

The area from which the attack had been launched against Company F, 2/29, was partially neutralized during the day by the 22d Marines. Under its new com-

⁹ *Okinawa Operations Record*, pp. 110–111.

¹⁰ *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*, p. 9. The division defined battle casualties as killed and wounded; non-battle casualties included the loss of men due to exhaustion, sickness, and combat fatigue.

¹¹ "Close examination of the aerial photo available was the cause of some concern since it appeared that the long ridge occupied by Co F was honeycombed with caves at, and slightly above, the level of the valley floor. . . . The counterattack which dislodged Co F apparently was initiated by Japanese from those caves." *Fraser ltr.*

mander, Colonel Harold C. Roberts,¹² the regiment pushed its left flank forward 100–150 yards to the high ground on the left of Horseshoe. Disregarding heavy artillery and mortar fire as well as they could, the Marines dug in new positions which materially strengthened the division line.

After a night of this heavy and accurate enemy bombardment, the two assault battalions of the 4th Marines jumped off at 0800 on 20 May. Preceded by a thorough artillery preparation and supported by the 6th Tank Battalion, the 5th Provisional Rocket Detachment, and the Army 91st Chemical Mortar Company, the Marines moved rapidly ahead for 200 yards before they were slowed and then halted. The determined refusal of the Japanese infantry entrenched on Half Moon and Horseshoe Hills to yield, and fierce machine gun and artillery fire from hidden positions in the Shuri Hill mass, where enemy gunners could directly observe the Marine attack, blocked the advance.

It soon appeared as though the fight for Half Moon was going to duplicate the struggle for Sugar Loaf. To reinforce the 2/4 assault forces and to maintain contact with the 5th Marines, Lieutenant Colonel Reynolds H. Hayden, commander of 2/4, committed his reserve rifle company on the left at 1000. In face of a mounting casualty toll, at 1130 he decided to reorient the axis of the battalion attack to hit the

flanks of the objective rather than its front. While the company in the center of the battalion line remained in position and supported the attack by fire, the flank companies were to attempt an armor-supported double envelopment. At 1245, when coordination for this maneuver was completed, the attack was renewed.

Company G, on the right, moved out smartly, and, following closely behind the neutralizing fires of its supporting tanks, it seized and held the western end of Half Moon. While traversing more exposed terrain and receiving fire from three sides, the left wing of the envelopment—Company E—progressed slowly and suffered heavy casualties. Although subjected to a constant barrage of mortars and hand grenades, the company reached the forward slope of its portion of the objective, where it eventually dug in for the night. The night positions of 2/4 were uncomfortably close to those of the Japanese, and separated only by a killing zone along a hill crest swept by both enemy and friendly fire. Nonetheless, the battalion had made fairly substantial gains during the day and it was set in solidly.

Earlier that day, as 3/4 attacked enemy positions on the high ground forming the western end of Horseshoe, it had received fire support from the 22d Marines. The 4th Marines battalion employed demolitions, flamethrowers, and tanks to burn and blast the honeycomb of Japanese-occupied caves in the forward (north) slope of Horseshoe Hill. When the regiment halted the attack for the day at 1600, 3/4 had gained its objective. Here, the battalion was on high ground overlooking the

¹² Colonel Roberts and Lieutenant Colonel August C. Larson had relieved Colonel Schneider and Lieutenant Colonel Karl K. Louther, as commander and executive officer, respectively, of the 22d Marines at 1430 on 17 May.

Horseshoe depression where the Japanese mortars, which had caused so many casualties that day, were dug in.

To maintain contact with 2/4 and to strengthen his line, Lieutenant Colonel Bruno A. Hochmuth, 3/4 commander, had committed elements of his reserve, Company I, shortly after noon. Anticipating that a counterattack might possibly be mounted against 3/4 later that evening, Colonel Shapley ordered 1/4 to detail a company to back up the newly won positions on Horseshoe. Company B was designated and immediately briefed on the situation of 3/4, routes of approach, and courses of action to be followed if the Japanese attack was launched.

The sporadic mortar and artillery fire that had harassed 4th Marines lines suddenly increased at 2200, when bursts of white phosphorous shells and colored smoke heralded the beginning of the anticipated counterattack. An estimated 700 Japanese struck the positions of Companies K and L of 3/4. As soon as the enemy had showed themselves, they were blasted by the combined destructive force of prepared concentrations fired by six artillery battalions.¹³ Gun-

¹³ The commanding officer of 4/15, who controlled the artillery fires directed at the counterattack and whose unit was in direct support of the 4th Marines, related an interesting incident of the action. He said that "I was able to talk directly to the front line commander of 3/4, LtCol Bruno Hochmuth, during the entire action. . . . This proved to be very handy indeed, because as usually happens when a large number of artillery units are firing in close proximity to our own front [15 battalions were firing by 2315], 3/4 started receiving an uncomfortably large number of our own rounds. Because of the fact that I was talking directly to LtCol Hochmuth, who was observing the

fire support ships provided constant illumination over the battlefield. Company B was committed to the fight, and "with perfect timing,"¹⁴ moved into the line to help blunt the attack.

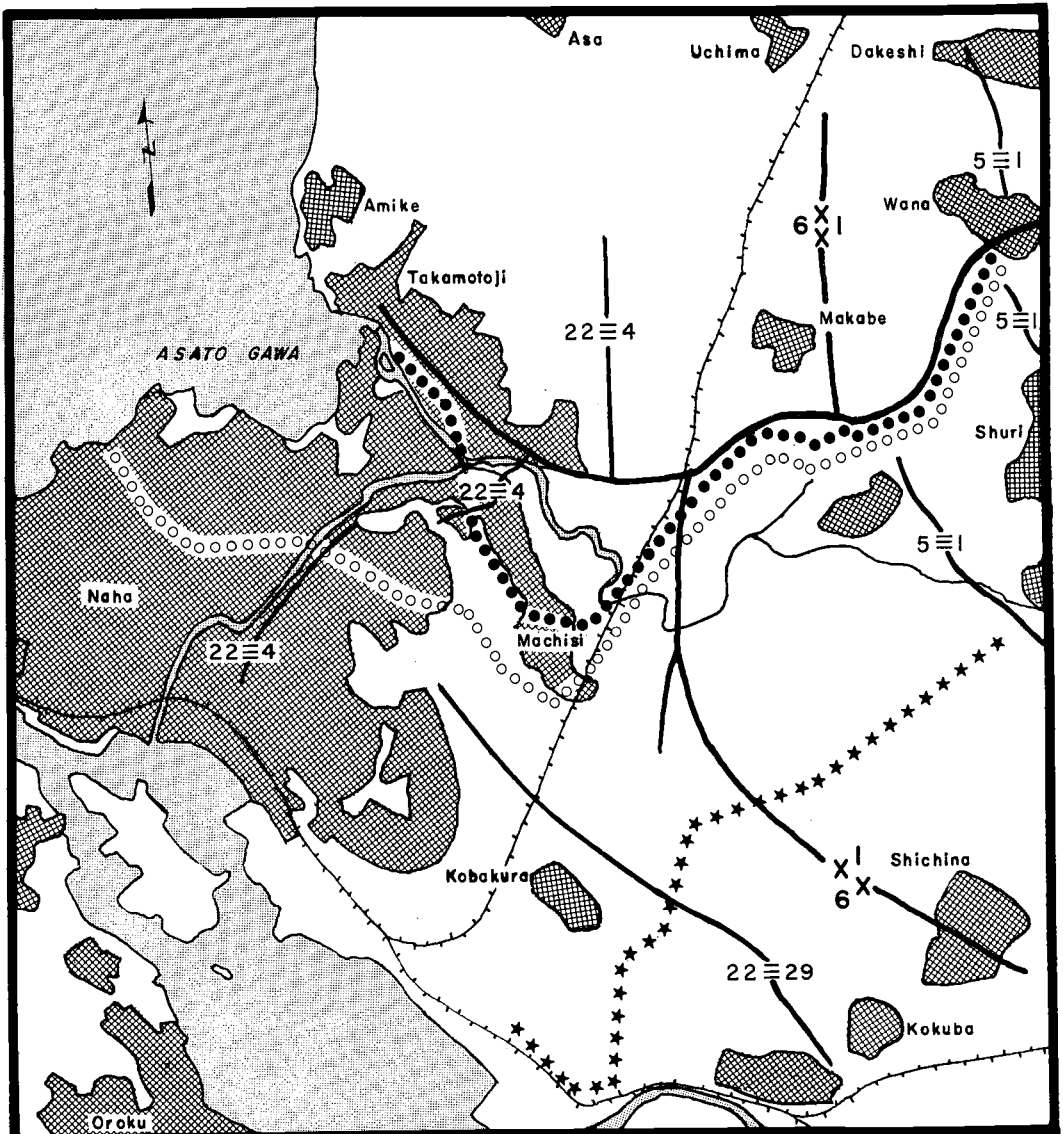
Star shells and flares gave a surrealistic cast to the wild two-and-a-half hour fracas, fought at close quarters and often hand-to-hand. The fight was over at midnight; the few enemy who had managed to penetrate the Marine lines were either dead or attempting to withdraw. The next morning, unit identification of some of the nearly 500 Japanese dead revealed that fresh units—which included some naval troops—had made the attack. The determination of the attackers to crush the Americans re-emphasized the extremely sensitive and immediate Japanese reaction to any American threat against Shuri's western flank.

On 21 May, the main effort of the 6th Division attack was made by the 4th Marines, with the 22d Marines pacing the attack and giving fire support. The objective was the Asato River line. (See Map 15.) Under its new commander, Lieutenant Colonel George B. Bell, 1/4 attacked in the center of the line.¹⁵ Forward progress down the southern slopes of Sugar Loaf towards the easternmost limit of Horseshoe was slowed by both bitter fighting and the

action from his OP, we were able to pick a lull in the fight, straighten out our 'shorts,' and still continue the very heavy artillery support he had requested early in the attack." Col Bruce T. Hemphill ltr to CMC, dtd 28Feb55.

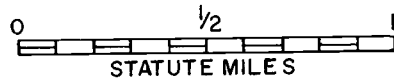
¹⁴ 3/4 SAR, Ph III, p. 3.

¹⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Beans had been replaced on 1 May, when he resumed his duties as executive officer of the 4th Marines.



**CAPTURE OF NAHA
21-31 MAY 1945**

—	21 MAY	ooooo	27 MAY
●●●●●	24 MAY	*****	31 MAY



MAP 15

T. L. RUSSELL

rain that fell during the morning and most of the afternoon. This downpour turned the shell-torn slopes into slick mud-chutes, making supply and evacuation over the treacherous footing almost impossible. But the fresh battalion overcame the combination of obstacles placed in its way by the weather, terrain, and numerous remaining enemy pockets all along the river front, to advance 200 yards.

Demolition and flamethrower teams blasted and burned the way in front of 3/4 as it drove into the extensive and well-prepared enemy positions in the interior of Horseshoe. By midafternoon, Companies K and L had destroyed the deadly mortars emplaced there, and were solidly positioned in a defense line that extended approximately halfway between Horseshoe Hill and the Asato Gawa.

Intensive mortar and artillery fire from the heights of Shuri combined with the rugged terrain within the 2/4 zone of action restricted the use of tanks and prevented that battalion from advancing appreciably on 21 May. After five days of furious fighting and limited gains in the Half Moon area, General Shepherd concluded that the bulk of enemy firepower preventing his division from retaining this ground was centered in the Shuri area, outside of the division zone of action.

Thoroughly estimating the situation, he decided to establish a strong reverse slope defense on the division left, to concentrate the efforts of the division on a penetration in the south and southwest, and to make no further attempts at driving to the southeast, where his troops had been meeting withering fire

from Shuri. The division commander believed that this new maneuver would both relieve his forces of a threat to their left flank and at the same time give impetus to a drive to envelop Shuri from the west.

The sporadic rain which fell on the 21st, came down even more heavily and steadily that night. Resupply of assault elements and replenishment of forward supply dumps proved almost impossible. The unceasing deluge made southern Okinawa overnight a veritable mudhole and a greater obstacle to all movement than the unrelenting enemy resistance.

*THE BATTLE FOR WANA DRAW*¹⁶

When the 1st Marine Division smashed the Japanese outpost line at Dakeshi, the battleground for General del Valle's Marines shifted to the foreboding Wana approaches to the Shuri hill mass. (See Map 14.) All evidence now signified that the main Japanese defenses in southern Okinawa consisted of a nearly regular series of concentric rings whose epicenter was protected by some of the most rugged terrain yet encountered in the drive south. The mission of breaching the Wana defenses fell to the 1st Marine and 77th Infantry Divisions at the same time that the 6th Marine and 96th Infantry Divisions attempted to envelop enemy flanks.

A somewhat crude Japanese propaganda attempt appeared in a leaflet discovered on the body of an infiltrator in the rear of the 1st Division on 14

¹⁶ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from *IIIAC AR*; *IIIAC AR*; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *1st MarDiv G-3 Jnl*; *1st Mar SAR*; *5th Mar SAR*; *7th Mar SAR*.

May. Purportedly a letter from a wounded 96th Division soldier in enemy hands, it warned in fractured English that:

. . . the battles here will be 90 times as severe as that of Yusima Island [Iwo Jima]. I am sure that all of you that have landed will lose your lives which will be realized if you come here. The affairs of Okinawa is quite different from the islands that were taken by the Americans.¹⁷

An analysis made of the Wana positions after the battle showed that the Japanese had "taken advantage of every feature of a terrain so difficult it could not have been better designed if the enemy himself had the power to do so."¹⁸ Utilizing every defense feature provided by nature, General Ushijima had so well organized the area that an assault force attacking to the south would be unable to bypass the main line of resistance guarding Shuri, and would instead have to penetrate directly into the center of the heretofore unassailable defenses of the *Thirty-second Army*.

The terrain within and immediately bordering the division zone was both varied and complex. The southernmost branch of the Asa Kawa meandered along the gradually rising floor of Wana Draw and through the northerly part of Shuri. Low rolling ground on either side of the stream offered neither cover nor concealment against Japanese fire coming from positions along the reverse slope of Wana Ridge and the military crest in the southern portion of the ridge. Approximately 400 yards wide at

its mouth, Wana Draw narrowed perceptibly as the stream flowing through it approached the city. Hill 55,¹⁹ a dominating piece of terrain at the southern tip of the ridge, guarded the western entry into the draw. Bristling with nearly every type of Japanese infantry weapon, the positions on the hill had clear fields of fire commanding all approaches to the draw. Manning these guns were troops from the *62d Division's 64th Brigade*, and an ill-assorted lot of stragglers from remnants of the *15th, 23d, and 273d Independent Infantry Battalions*, the *14th Independent Machine Gun Battalion*, and the *81st Field Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion*, all under command of the *Brigade*.²⁰

By 0400 on 15 May, elements of the 5th Marines had relieved 2/1 and most of 3/1. At 0630, the relief was completed and Colonel Griebel assumed command of the former 1st Marines zone west of Wana. The 5th Marines commander placed 2/5 in assault with the 3d Battalion in support and the 1st in reserve. Acting on the recommendations of battalion and regimental commanders of both the 1st and 5th Marines, General del Valle decided to neutralize the high ground on both sides of Wana Draw. Tanks and self-propelled 105mm howitzers were to shell the area thoroughly before 2/5 tried to cross the open ground at the mouth of the draw.

¹⁹ Because the first two versions of the official battle map had incorporated incorrect topographical data, this terrain feature was identified first as Hill 57 and then 59. A third and more accurate map, issued in late May designated this point as Hill 55, which shall be used in this text.

¹⁷ 1st MarDiv G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 44, dtd 15May45.

¹⁸ 1st MarDiv G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 47, dtd 18May45.

²⁰ 1st MarDiv G-2 PeriodicRpts Nos 44-50, dtd 15-21May45.



WANA RIDGE, rugged barrier in the path of the 1st Division, is shown looking southeast toward Shuri. (USMC 148651)



105MM HOWITZER of the 15th Marines is swamped, but still in firing order after ten days of rain. (USMC 122735)

Fire teams from Company F protected nine Shermans of the 1st Tank Battalion against possible attacks from suicide-bent enemy soldiers as the tanks worked over the Japanese positions in the mouth of the draw during the morning. Because tanks invariably drew heavy artillery, mortar, and AT fire, the Marines guarding them were forced to take cover. Nevertheless, the open ground of the battle area permitted the infantry teams to cover the tanks with fire from protected positions at long range. The mediums received heavy and intense fire from the sector to their front and from numerous cave positions on both sides of the draw. Some respite was gained when naval gunfire destroyed a 47mm AT gun which had hit three tanks at least five times each.

About midafternoon, the tanks withdrew to clear the way for a carrier-plane strike on the draw. Following this attack, the nine original tanks, now reinforced by six others, continued the process of neutralizing the draw. Another 47mm AT gun opened up late in the afternoon, but it was destroyed before it could damage any of the tanks.

After a day spent probing the mouth of Wana Draw, 2/5 infantry companies set up night defenses east of the railroad, dug in, and established contact all along their front. At the CP that night, the 5th Marines commander observed that "Wana Draw was another gorge like the one at Awacha. . . . It was obvious that the position would have to be thoroughly pounded before it could be taken,"²¹ and ordered the softening-up

operations of the 15th repeated the next day.

Colonel Snedeker's 7th Marines spent the 15th in reorganizing its infantry companies, improving occupied positions, and mopping up in the vicinity of Dakeshi.²² During the day, air liaison parties, gunfire spotters, and forward observers were kept busy directing concentrated artillery and naval gunfire bombardments and air strikes on known enemy strongpoints on Wana Ridge. At 2100, 1/7 was ordered to prepare a feint attack on 16 May, when all supporting arms were to fire a preparation and troops were to concentrate as though preparing to jump off in an assault.

The battalion was already positioned for the feint when preparatory fires began at 0755. At this time, 4.2-inch and 81mm mortars smoked the area immediately in front of 1/7 to heighten the deception. Fifteen minutes after it had begun, the barrage was lifted for another fifteen-minute period in an attempt to deceive the Japanese. The Marines believed that the enemy, fooled into thinking that an attack was imminent, would rush from covered caves to reoccupy their battle positions, where they would again be blasted. When there was no apparent reaction to the feint, supporting arms resumed firing at 0825 with undetermined results.

²¹ While returning to his jeep from a visit to the 7th Marines OP near Dakeshi, Brigadier General Smith "passed a battalion coming up to go in the lines. . . . These men were not going into combat for the first time. They were veterans. There was no singing and laughing. They were deadly serious and business like. The men had already been separated from the boys." Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 110.

²¹ *5th Mar SAR*, p. 4.

At 0950, regiment notified Lieutenant Colonel John J. Gormley, the 1/7 commander, that an air strike on Wana Ridge was scheduled for 1000, immediately following which he was to send patrols forward to determine what remaining enemy resistance existed on the target. Having learned that the strike was delayed, at 1028 Lieutenant Colonel Gormley requested that the mission be cancelled and sent the patrols out after he had ordered a mortar barrage placed on the ridge.

The Company C patrols moved forward unopposed until they reached the western end of Wana Ridge. Here they received intense grenade and machine gun fire which was answered by their battalion 81mm mortars and supporting fire from the 5th Marines. Rushing forward when this fire had been lifted, the patrols carried and occupied the troublesome objective.

Lieutenant Colonel Gormley then ordered the newly won position held and reinforced by troops he sent forward for this purpose. Once leading elements began to move out again, enemy troops lodged in burial vaults and rugged coral formations showered grenades down upon the advancing Marines. Unsuccessful in halting the advance, the enemy tried but failed to mount a counterattack at 1605. Although supporting arms of 1/7 blunted this attempt, enemy resistance to the Marine attack continued.

Nightfall forced the battalion commander to withdraw the troops spearheading the assault and move them to more secure positions on a plateau almost directly north of the ridge for night defense. Contact was then estab-

lished on the right with 2/5 and on the left with 3/7. At 2400, 3/7 effected a passage of the lines to relieve the 1st Battalion, which then went into regimental reserve.

During the 16th, 15 tanks, two of them flamethrowers, had supported the attack of 1/7 from positions on Dakeshi Ridge, while a total of 30 tanks—including 4 flamethrowers—supported 2/5 by burning and blasting enemy strongpoints in Wana Draw. At 0900, the 2/5 armored support drew antitank, mortar, and artillery fire that disabled two tanks, and damaged two others, which withdrew after evacuating the crews of the stalled cripples. Two of the AT positions which had been spotted in the morning were destroyed that afternoon when the main battery of the USS *Colorado* was brought to bear on them. Generally, when a Marine tank was damaged and abandoned temporarily, efforts to retrieve it later were usually stymied by enemy fire. Disabled tanks remaining in the field overnight usually were either destroyed by enemy demolition teams or occupied by snipers, who converted them into armored pillboxes.

Before retiring at nightfall on 16 May, the 1st Tank Battalion had expended nearly 5,000 rounds of 75mm and 173,000 rounds of .30 caliber ammunition, and 600 gallons of napalm on targets on Dakeshi Ridge and in Wana Draw that day.²³ Following the two-day process of softening up provided by all supporting arms, the 5th Marines prepared to run the gantlet of Wana Draw on 17 May.

²³ *1st TkBn Summary*, 16May45.

“Under the continued pounding of one of the most concentrated assaults in Pacific Warfare,”²⁴ cracks appeared in the Shuri defenses on 17 May. On that day, 2/5 made the main regimental effort, sending tank-infantry teams to the mouth of Wana Draw, where they worked over the caves and pillboxes lining its sides. The 2/5 attack was made in conjunction with a 7th Marines effort to gain the pinnacle ridge forming the northern side of the draw.

When a terrific mortar and artillery barrage drove the 7th back at 1200, 2/5 assault troops—also under heavy fire—were forced back to their original positions, where they could protect the exposed flank of the 7th Marines battalion.

On the right of 2/5, Company E finally succeeded in penetrating the Japanese defenses. After having been driven back earlier in the day, the company established a platoon-sized strong-point on its objective, the west nose of Hill 55. Because the low ground lying between this point and battalion front-lines were swept by heavy enemy fire, tanks were pressed into use for supply and evacuation purposes.

Having relieved 1/7 at 0600, 3/7 attacked towards Wana Ridge from Dakeshi Ridge with two companies in assault: Company I on the right, K on the left. A total of 12 gun and 2 flame-thrower tanks supported Company K as it attempted to secure the low ridge crest northwest of Wana. Meanwhile, Company I gained and held a plateau that led to the western nose of the Wana Ridge line.

Extremely heavy resistance plagued Company K efforts to move forward, as the enemy concentrated his fire on the leading infantry elements. Attempting to lessen the effectiveness of the Marine tank-infantry tactics, the Japanese employed smoke grenades to blind the tanks and drastically restricted their supporting fires. Before the tanks could be isolated in the smoke and cut off from their infantry protection, and when the flanks of Company K became so threatened as to make them untenable, both tanks and infantry were withdrawn—the latter to Dakeshi to become 3/7 reserve. Late in the afternoon, the 3/7 commander ordered Company L forward to reinforce I for the night and to assist in the attack the next morning.

Following a period of intermittent shelling from enemy mortars and artillery during the night 17–18 May, 3/7 again attacked Wana Ridge. Supporting arms delivered intense fire on the forward slopes and crest of the ridge all morning; the attack itself began at noon. Reinforced by a platoon from L, Company I succeeded in getting troops on the ridge, but furious enemy grenade and mortar fire inflicted such heavy casualties on the assault force that Lieutenant Colonel Hurst was forced to withdraw them to positions held the previous night, where he could consolidate his lines. An abbreviated analysis by the division fairly well summarized that day’s fighting: “gains were measured by yards won, lost, then won again.”²⁵

²⁴ *1st MarDiv SAR*, pt VII, p. 5.

²⁵ *1st MarDiv SAR*, pt VII, p. 6.

Pinned down by heavy enemy fire on the reverse slope of its position on Hill 55, the isolated platoon from Company E, 2/5, could neither advance nor withdraw. Tanks again supplied ammunition and rations to the dug-in troops. Six mediums initially supported the early-morning operations of 2/5 by firing into caves and emplacements in the terrain complex comprising the draw. This tank fire was coordinated with that coming from Shermans in the Wana Draw sector. In addition to this day-long tank firing, the artillery battalions expended over 7,000 rounds of 105mm and 75mm artillery ammunition on selected point targets.²⁶

Under the cover of tank fire, at 1200 Company F sent one infantry platoon and an attached engineer platoon with flamethrowers and demolitions into the village of Wana to destroy enemy installations there. The party worked effectively until 1700, when it was recalled to Marine lines for the night because Wana Ridge, forming the northern side of the draw behind and overlooking the village, was still strongly infested by the enemy. Before leaving Wana, Marines destroyed numerous grenade dischargers, machine guns, and rifles found in the village and in the tombs on its outskirts.

The 1st Marine Division's bitter contest for possession of Wana Draw continued on 19 May along the same bloody lines it had run on the four previous days. Colonel Snedeker's regiment again made the major effort for the division, and the 5th Marines continued to punish the mouth of Wana Draw. As

before, attacking Marines were sorely beset by enemy fire, which answering artillery, tank, mortar, and regimental 105mm howitzer concentrations had failed to neutralize.

The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, attacked that afternoon in a column of companies, Company I in the lead, followed by Companies L and K in that order. Resistance to the attack was immediate, although the vanguard managed to reach the nose of the coral ridge to its front under a blanket of mortar shells falling all about. Then, because 3/1 was to relieve 3/7 and it was too risky to effect a relief right on the ridge under the conditions then prevailing, the leading elements withdrew about 75 yards to the rear.

Earlier in the day, 1/7 and 2/7 had been relieved in position near Dakeshi by 1/1 and 2/1 respectively. With the relief of the 3d Battalion, the 7th Marines relinquished the responsibility for the capture of Wana Ridge to Colonel Mason's 1st Marines, and Colonel Snedeker's regiment went into division reserve. In the five-day struggle for Wana, the 7th Marines had lost a total of 44 men killed, 387 wounded, 91 non-battle casualties, and 7 missing. Of this number, the 3d Battalion sustained 20 Marines killed and 140 wounded. In a supporting and diversionary role for the five-day period, the 5th Marines suffered 13 men killed and 82 wounded.

Despite the punishment they had received from the 5th Marines and its supporting tanks, the Japanese built new positions in Wana Draw daily, and reconstructed and recamouflaged by night old ones that Marine tank fire had exposed and damaged by day. As the

²⁶ 2/5 SAR, p. 13.

assault infantry plunged further into the draw, and as the draw itself narrowed, an increasing number of Japanese defensive positions conspired with the rugged terrain to make passage more difficult. Dominating the eastern end of Wana Ridge, on the northwestern outskirts of Shuri, was 110 Meter Hill,²⁷ commanding a view of the zones of both the 1st Marine and 77th Infantry Divisions. Defensive fire from this position thwarted the final reduction of Japanese positions in Wana Draw and eventual capture of the Shuri redoubt.

Tanks, M-7s (self-propelled 105mm howitzers), 37mm guns, and overhead machine gun fire supported the attacks which jumped off at 0815. The assault troops moved rapidly to the base of the objective, tanks and flamethrowers clearing the way, while enemy mortar and machine gun fire inflicted heavy casualties in the ranks of the onsurging Marines.

Initially, 3/1 moved to the southeast and up the northern slope of Wana Ridge, where it became involved in hand-grenade duels with Japanese defenders. The Marines prevailed and managed to secure approximately 200 yards of this portion of the ridge. By 1538, 2/1 reported to regiment that it was on top of the objective and in contact with 3/1, and had secured all of the rest of the northern slope of the ridge with the exception of the summit of 110 Meter Hill. A considerable gap between the flanks of 2/1 and the 305th Infantry on the Ma-

rine left was covered by interlocking bands of machine gun fire and mortar barrages set up by both units. Confronted by intense enemy fire from reverse slope positions, 2/1 riflemen were unable to take the hillcrest and dug in for the night, separated from the enemy by only a few yards of shell-pocked ground.

After it tied in with 2/1 for the night of 19-20 May, Lieutenant Colonel Stephen V. Sabol's 3d Battalion moved out at 0845, and was again within grenade-throwing range of Wana Ridge defenders. Burning and blasting, tanks supported the assault by destroying enemy-held caves and fortified positions blocking the advance. When 3/1 had gained the northern slope of the ridge and could not budge the Japanese troops in reverse-slope defenses, Colonel Mason decided to burn them out by rolling split barrels of napalm down the hill into Japanese emplacements in Wana Draw, and then setting them afire by exploding white phosphorous (WP) grenades on top of the inflammable jellied mixture.

Working parties began manhandling drums of napalm up the hill at 1140, and had managed to position only three of them by 1500. At 1630, these were split open, sent careening down the hill, and set aflame by the WP grenades. An enemy entrenchment about 50 yards down the incline halted the drums; in the end, the Japanese sustained little damage and few injuries from this hastily contrived field expedient. The proximity of the combatants that night led to considerable mortar, hand grenade, and sniper fire, as well as the usually lively and abusive exchange of curses, insults, and threats of violence

²⁷ Various named 100 Meter Hill, Knob Hill, and Conical Hill by combat troops who viewed it from different points on the ground, the designation found in the 2/1 SAR will be used hereafter.

that often took place whenever the protagonists were within shouting distance of each other.

On the division right, 2/5 jumped off in attack on 20 May at 0900, supported by artillery and M-7 fire and spear-headed by tanks. The battalion objective was the area running roughly from Hill 55 southwest to the Naha-Shuri road. A continuous artillery barrage was laid on Shuri Ridge, the western extension of the commanding height on which Shuri Castle had been built, as assault units quickly worked their way towards the objective. At 0930, lead elements were engaged in close-in fighting with enemy forces in dug-in positions bordering the road. Under constant and heavy enemy fire, engineer mine-clearing personnel preceded the tanks to make the road safe for the passage of the mediums. Working just in front of the advancing troops, the Shermans flushed a number of enemy soldiers from their hidden positions and then cut them down with machine gun fire. Close engineer-tank-infantry teamwork permitted the Marines to secure the objective by noon.

Heavy small arms and mortar fire poured into the advance 2/5 position, which Company E held all afternoon. The sources of this fire were emplacements located on Shuri Ridge. Continued artillery and pointblank tank fire, and two rocket barrages, finally silenced the enemy weapons. By 2000, Company E had established contact all along the line and dug in for the night. Except for the usual enemy mortar and artillery harassment, there was little activity on the front. Just before dawn, 1/5 relieved the 2d Battalion in place; 2/5 then went into regimental reserve.

Once in position, 1/5 was ordered to patrol aggressively towards Shuri Ridge and on the high ground east of Half Moon Hill. It maintained a sufficient force in the vicinity of Wana Ridge and Hill 55, at the same time, to assist the 1st Marines attack. Tank-infantry teams again reconnoitered the area south of the division line against a hail of machine gun and mortar fire. In addition to providing the tanks protection from Japanese tank-destroyer and suicide units, Marine ground troops directed the tank fire on targets of opportunity. Tank commanders in vehicles that were sometimes forward of foot troops often called down artillery fire on point targets at extremely close ranges. In spite of fierce resistance that became most frenzied as Marines closed in on Shuri, the 5th Marines positions on Hill 55 were advanced slightly in order to give the division more favorable jumping off points for a concerted effort against General Ushijima's headquarters.

At dawn on 21 May, 2/1 moved out against heavy opposition to secure the summit of 110 Meter Hill and the rest of Wana Ridge. Although some small gains were made, the objectives could not be reached. Tank support, which heretofore had been so effective, was limited because of the irregular and steep nature of the ground. Though armor could provide overhead fire, the vehicles were unable to take reverse slope positions under fire because a deep cleft at the head of the draw prevented the Shermans from getting behind the enemy. Reconnaissance reports indicated that as the draw approached Wana, its walls rose to sheer heights of from 200 to 300 feet. Lining

the wall faces were numerous, well-defended caves that were unapproachable to all but the suicidally inclined. It was readily apparent that no assault up the draw would be successful unless preceded by an intense naval gunfire, air, and artillery preparation. Included also in the reports was the fact that the steep terrain forward of Wana did not favor tank operations.

On the left of 2/1, Company G mopped up opposition in the small village on the northern outskirts of Shuri. Resisting the attempts of the company to turn the flank of 110 Meter Hill were elements of the *22d Independent Infantry Battalion*, the sole remaining first-line infantry reserve of the *Thirty-second Army*—thrown into the breach to hold the area around the hill.²⁸ Advancing down the draw were two companies abreast, E and F, whose attack was initially supported by the massed fires of battalion mortars and then by all other supporting arms.

Darkening skies and intermittent rain squalls obscured the battle scene to friendly and enemy observers alike. Although it was apparent that 2/1 was right in the middle of a preregistered impact area, judging from the accuracy of enemy mortar and artillery fire, the battalion held its forward positions despite mounting casualties. A gap existing between 2/1 and the 77th Division was covered by fire, and Company F linked with Company C of 1/1, which had been temporarily attached to the 3d Battalion for night defense.

²⁸ 1st MarDiv G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 50, dtd 21May45.

Under its new commander, Lieutenant Colonel Richard F. Ross, Jr.,²⁹ 3/1 attempted to clear out reverse slope positions on Wana Ridge in a concerted tank-infantry effort. According to the plan, Company L and the tanks—each to be accompanied by one fire team—would attack up Wana Draw. Supporting this assault from the crest of the ridge would be the other two infantry companies in the battalion, prepared to attack straight across the ridge on order. Their objectives were Hill 55 and the ridge line to the east.

Company C, 1/1, was ordered to take over the 3d Battalion positions, when Lieutenant Colonel Ross' men jumped off in the assault. At about 1415, Company L began the slow advance against bitter opposition. Almost immediately, several of the escorting tanks were knocked out by mines and AT guns. Company K moved across the draw to Hill 55 at 1500, followed by I, which was pinned down almost immediately by extremely heavy mortar and machine gun fire and unable to advance beyond the middle of the draw. By 1800, Company K was on Hill 55 and tied in with 1/5, but could not push further east towards Shuri.

Because the rampaging enemy fire prevented Companies I and L from reaching the ridgeline and advancing up Wana Draw, they were withdrawn to that morning's line of departure positions. Company C of 1/1 was placed

²⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Sabol was relieved on 21 May, when he was transferred to the 7th Marines to become regimental operations officer.

under the operational control of 3/1 for the night and occupied the positions held by Company I on 20 May. Here, it tied in with Company L on the right and on the left with Company F, 2/1.

The miserable weather prevailing all day on 21 May worsened at midnight when the drizzle became a deluge and visibility was severely limited. Taking advantage of these conditions favoring an attacking force, an estimated 200 Japanese scrambled up Wana Ridge to strike all along the Company C line. In the midst of a fierce hand grenade battle, the enemy managed to overrun a few positions. These were recaptured at dawn, when the Marines regrouped, re-occupied the high ground, and restored their lines. In the daylight, approximately 180 enemy dead were counted in front of Marine positions.³⁰

Torrential rains beginning the night of 21-22 May continued on for many days thereafter. This downpour almost halted the tortuous 1st Division drive towards Shuri. Seriously limited before by terrain factors and a determined stand by the enemy in the Wana area, tank support became nonexistent when the zone of the 5th Marines, the only ground locally which favored armored tactics, became a sea of mud. Under these conditions aiding the Japanese defense, the 1st Division was faced with the alternatives of moving ahead against all odds or continuing the existing stalemate. To make either choice was difficult, for both presented a bloody prospect.

³⁰ 1st MarDiv G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 52, dtd 23May45.

THE ARMY'S FIGHT ³¹

For IIIAC, the period 15-21 May was marked by the struggles of its divisions to capture two key strongpoints—Wana Draw and Sugar Loaf Hill. During this same seven days, XXIV Corps units fought a series of difficult battles to gain the strongly defended hills and ridges blocking the approaches to Shuri and Yonabaru. (See Map IV, Map Section.) These barriers, incongruously named Chocolate Drop, Flat Top, Hogback, Love, Dick, Oboe, and Sugar, gained fleeting fame when they became the scenes of bitter and prolonged contests. But, when XXIV Corps units had turned the eastern flank of Shuri defenses and anticipated imminent success, the Army attack—like that of the Marines—became bogged down and was brought to a standstill when the rains came.

On 15 May, the 77th Division continued its grinding advance in the middle of the Tenth Army line against the hard core of *Thirty-second Army* defenses at Shuri; 96th Division troops, in coordination with their own assault against Dick Hill, supported the 77th Division attack on Flat Top Hill. Fighting on the left of the 96th, the 383d Infantry found it difficult and dangerous to move from Conical Hill because of overwhelming fire coming from a hill complex southwest of their location. In addition, the *89th Regiment* tenaciously held formidable and well-organized defenses on the reverse slope of Conical,

³¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material contained in this section is derived from: *Tenth Army AR*; *XXIV Corps AR*; *77th InfDiv OpRpt*, Okinawa; *96th InfDiv AR*.

and prevented the soldiers from advancing farther south.³²

On 16 May, 2/383 attacked down the southeast slope of the hill, but murderous enemy crossfire again prevented the soldiers from making any significant gains. A supporting platoon of tanks, however, ran the gantlet of fire sweeping the coastal flat and advanced 1,000 yards to enter the northwestern outskirts of Yonabaru, where the Shermans lashed the ruins of the town with 75mm and machine gun fire. Heavy Japanese fire covering the southern slopes of Conical prevented the infantry from exploiting the rapid armor penetration, however. After having exhausted their ammunition supply, the tanks withdrew to the line of departure.

On the division right flank, the 382d Infantry attempted to expand its hold on Dick Hill. In a violent bayonet and grenade fight, American troops captured some 100 yards of enemy terrain, but heavy machine gun fire from Oboe Hill—500 yards due south of Dick—so completely covered the exposed route of advance, the soldiers were unable to move any farther.

Fire from many of the same enemy positions which had held back 96th Division forces, also effectively prevented the 307th Infantry from successfully pushing the 77th Division attack on Flat Top and Chocolate Drop Hills. Both frontal and flanking movements, spearheaded by tanks, were held up by extremely accurate and vicious Japanese machine gun fire and mortar barrages.

Somewhat more successful on the 16th was the 305th Infantry, which threw the

full weight of all of its supporting arms behind the attack of the 3d Battalion. Flamethrower tanks and medium tanks mounting 105mm howitzers slowly edged along the ridges leading to Shuri's high ground. Barring the way in this broken terrain were Okinawan burial vaults which the Japanese had occupied, fortified, and formed into a system of mutually supporting pillboxes. At the end of a ferocious day-long slugging match, this armored vanguard had penetrated 200 yards of enemy territory to bring the 77th Division to within 500 yards of the northernmost outskirts of Shuri.

A very successful predawn attack by the 77th Division on 17 May surprised the Japanese, forcing them to relinquish ground. Substantial gains were made and commanding terrain captured, including Chocolate Drop Hill and other nearby hills. Advancing abreast of each other, 3/305 and 2/307 dug in at the end of the day only a few hundred yards away from Shuri and Ishimmi. Although outflanked by 3/307, Flat Top defenders sent down a heavy volume of machine gun and mortar fire on the soldiers as they attempted to move across exposed country south of the hill. Troops following the assault elements spent daylight hours mopping up, sealing caves and burial vaults, and neutralizing those enemy strongpoints bypassed in the early-morning surprise maneuver.

Practically wiped out that day was the enemy *22d Regiment*, which had defended Chocolate Drop, and whose remnants were still holding the reverse slopes of Flap Top and Dick Hills. Reinforcing these positions was the *1st*

³² *Okinawa Operations Record*, "Record of the 24th Division," p. 177.

Battalion of the 32d Regiment. On 17 May, this regiment was ordered by the *24th Division* commander, Lieutenant General Tatsumi Amamiya, to take over the ground formerly held by the *22d Regiment*, and to set in a Shuri defense line that would run from Ishimmi to Dick and Oboe Hills. Taking advantage of the natural, fortress-like properties of the region which they were to defend, the depleted *32d Regiment* and survivors of the *22d* were disposed in depth to contain potential American penetrations.³³ Few reserves were available to the defenders should the Americans break through.

On 17 May, the 96th Division ordered the 382d Infantry to attack and capture the hill mass south of Dick Hill and centering about Oboe. The failure of this effort indicated that the ground here needed to be softened up further before the infantry could advance. In the sector of Conical Hill held by the 383d, steady pressure from reverse slope defenders forced the division to commit into the line a third regiment—the 381st Infantry—to maintain the positions already held by the 96th. At this time, 3/381 assumed control of the left portion of the 2/383 sector on the eastern slope of the hill, and brought up its supporting weapons in preparation for a new attack.

While the remainder of 96th Division assault battalions held their lines and tank-infantry, demolition, and flame-thrower teams mopped up in their immediate fronts, 3/381 made the division main effort. Operating to the west of the coastal road, medium tanks supported

the attack by placing direct fire on machine gun positions on Hogback Ridge, a terrain feature running south from Conical Hill. Hogback's defenders disregarded the tank fire to place heavy machine gun and mortar barrages against the battalion attacking up finger ridges sloping down to the ocean. Although this heavy resistance limited the advance to only 400 yards, the division commander believed he could successfully attack through Yonabaru to out-flank Shuri.

Both frontline divisions of XXIV Corps progressed on 18 May. Units of the 77th penetrated deeper into the heart of Shuri defenses by driving 150 yards farther south along the Ginowan-Shuri highway and advancing up to 300 yards towards Ishimmi. On 19 May, the 77th Division began a systematic elimination of Japanese firing positions in 110 Meter Hill, Ishimmi Ridge, and the reverse slopes of Flat Top and Dick Hills. All of these positions provided the enemy with good observation and clear fields of fire, commanding terrain over which the American division was advancing. Every weapon in the 77th arsenal capable of doing so was assigned to place destructive fire on the enemy emplacements. While these missions were being fired, the infantry fought off a series of counterattacks growing in size and fury as darkness fell. The enemy was finally turned back at dawn on 20 May when all available artillery was called down on them.

In the 96th Division zone on the 19th, the left regiment again made the main effort while the center and right regiments destroyed cave positions and gun emplacements in the broken ground be-

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 179–181, Map 5.

tween Conical and Dick Hills. Hogback Ridge and Sugar Hill, which rose sharply at the southern tip of this ridge to overlook Yonabaru, were bombarded by two platoons of medium tanks, six platoons of LVT(A)s, artillery, and organic infantry supporting weapons. The attack following this preparation failed, however, in the face of overwhelming enemy fire. Destruction of enemy positions spotted the day before did serve, however, to weaken further the faltering *89th Regiment* defense.

Returning to Hogback Ridge on 20 May, the attacking infantry made a grinding, steady advance down the eastern slopes of the ridge and finally reached Sugar Hill. Other 96th Division units also registered some significant gains that day; 383d Infantry assault battalions fought to within 300 yards of Love Hill, destroying those strongpoints that had blocked their progress for a week. The 382d Infantry finally reduced all enemy defenses on the southern and eastern slopes of Dick Hill, while it supported a successful 77th Division attack on Flat Top at the same time.

On gaining Flat Top Hill, the 307th Infantry was then ready to continue the attack south to Ishimmi Ridge and then on to Shuri. Coordinating its attack with the 1st Marines on its right, the 305th advanced down the valley highway 100-150 yards or to within 200 yards of the outskirts of Shuri. As a result of these gains, the 77th Division commander planned another predawn surprise attack, only this time on a coordinated division-wide level across the front.

Assault troops of the 307th Infantry jumped off at 0415 on 21 May in the zone of the 305th, advancing 200 yards

without opposition. (See Map VIII, Map Section.) An hour later, leading elements had entered the northern suburbs of Shuri and were fighting their way up the eastern slopes of 110 Meter Hill. The 306th Infantry, which relieved the 305th later that morning, sent its 2d Battalion to the right of the line where visual contact was made with the 1st Marines. By nightfall, having spent most of the day mopping up bypassed positions, the 306th set up a night defense on a line running from the forward slopes of Ishimmi Ridge, through the outskirts of Shuri, to 110 Meter Hill.

The assault battalions of the 307th Infantry, the other 77th Division front-line regiment, jumped off at 0300 to take the regimental objective, a triangularly shaped mass consisting of three hills located in open ground about 350 yards south of Flat Top. The lead elements reached the objective at dawn, but following units were unable to exploit the successful maneuver when they were discovered by the enemy and pinned down by his frontal and flanking fire. Any further move forward was prohibited by this continuous and accurate fire, and the battalion was forced to dig in at nightfall on the ground then held.

Overall, the most important advances on 21 May in the XXIV Corps zone were made by 96th Division units. As 1/383 moved out against moderate opposition to take Oboe Hill, 2/383 paced the advance by attacking over exposed terrain to its southeast to take a hill approximately 400 yards from Shuri. At 1130, when enemy elements were noticed pulling out of their positions in front of the attacking infantry, the Japanese were fired upon as they retreated to-

wards higher ground. Despite this withdrawal of the enemy, American forces were prevented from advancing any further during the day by isolated enemy counterattacks along the regimental lines.

On Love Hill, enemy defenders who had successfully refused to yield ground during the past week again steadfastly maintained their positions on the 21st. They called down heavy and accurate artillery concentrations on American tank-infantry teams reaching the base of the hill and forced them to turn back.

The western slopes of Hogback Ridge were secured by 2/383 as the 3d Battalion, 381st Infantry, fought its way up the eastern slopes to the top of Sugar Hill. Every yard acquired during the day came because of the individual soldier's efforts in the face of fanatic enemy determination to hold. Nevertheless, advance elements of 3/381 were in position about 200 yards from the Naha-Yonabaru highway by nightfall. As a result of this hard-won success, a 700-yard-long corridor down the east coast of Okinawa was secured, giving promise that the final reduction of the Shuri redoubt might be launched from this quarter.

To strengthen the attack on Shuri, which General Hodge believed could be outflanked when he viewed the progress of the 96th Division, he alerted the 7th Infantry Division and ordered it to move to assembly areas immediately north of Conical Hill on 20 May. Two days later, the division was committed in the line and attacked to take the high ground south of Yonabaru.

Intermittent rain beginning on 21 May increased steadily to become

soaking torrents before the assault infantry of the 7th Division was in jump-off positions. In no time at all, "the road to Yonabaru from the north—the only supply road from established bases in the 7th Division zone . . . became impassable to wheeled vehicles and within two or three days disappeared entirely and had to be abandoned."³⁴ Like the Tenth Army divisions on the west coast, those on the east were effectively stymied by the mud and the rain, which now seemed to be allied with General Ushijima and his *Thirty-second Army*.

FIGHTING THE WEATHER³⁵

The Naha-Yonabaru valley served as a funnel through which American forces could pass to outflank Shuri. A major obstacle blocking the entrance to this route is the Ozato Hills, a rugged and complex terrain mass paralleling Nakagusuku Wan and lying between Yonabaru and the Chinen Peninsula. Since strong blocking positions were needed in the Ozato Hills to safeguard the left flank and rear of the force assigned to assault Shuri, the 184th Infantry of the 7th Division was ordered to take Yonabaru on 22 May and secure the high ground overlooking the village.

In a surprise attack at 0200, 2/184 spearheaded a silently moving assault force which passed through Yonabaru

³⁴ *XXIV Corps AR*, p. 31.

³⁵ Unless otherwise indicated, the material in this section is derived from: *Tenth Army AR*; *IIIAC AR*; *XXIV Corps AR*; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*; *7th InfDiv AR*; *77th InfDiv OpRpt, Okinawa*; *96th InfDiv AR*; *1st Mar SAR*; *4th Mar SAR, Ph III*; *5th Mar SAR*; *22d Mar SAR, Ph III*; *29th Mar SAR, Ph III*.

quickly, and was on the crest of its objective—a hill south of the village—by daylight. When the enemy arose at dawn and emerged from cave shelters to man gun and infantry positions, he met sudden death under American fire. The *Thirty-second Army* was completely taken aback, for an American night attack was totally unexpected in this sector, much less an attack unsupported by armor.³⁶ When the commander of the 184th saw that his initial effort was successful, he committed a second battalion and drove forward to secure other key points in the zone. By the end of the day, the regiment had advanced 1,400 yards and gained most of its objectives, even though rain and mud drastically hampered all phases of the operation.

While the 7th Division scored for the Tenth Army on the east coast, IIIAC units pushed forward on the west. In the 6th Marine Division zone, the 4th Marines attacked to gain the northern bank of the Asato Gawa. (See Map 15.) The 1st and 3d Battalions advanced as 2/4 maintained positions on Half Moon Hill and kept contact with the 1st Marine Division. Assault troops seized the objective by 1230, when patrols crossed the shallow portion of the Asato and moved 200 yards into the outskirts of Naha before drawing any enemy fire.³⁷ Front-

line Marines dug in reverse slope positions along the northern bank of the river under the sporadic fire of heavy caliber artillery weapons and mortars. At 6th Division headquarters, plans were drawn for a river crossing on 23 May.

Although the flank divisions of the Tenth Army were making encouraging progress, the three divisions in the center of the line found success to be an elusive thing during the week of 22 May. A fanatic Japanese defense compounded the difficulties arising because of the steady rain. Supply, evacuation, and reinforcement were all but forestalled by the sea of mud, which caused the troops to wallow rather than maneuver. Under these conditions, infantry units could only probe and patrol ahead in their immediate zones.

The rain continued for nine days, and ranged from light, scattered showers to driving deluges. In the end, the entire southern front became a morass that bogged down both men and machines. Footing was treacherous in the mud swamps appearing in valley floors, and all slopes—from the gentlest to the most precipitous—were completely untrafficable. Because TAF planes had been grounded and could not fly airdrop missions, all supplies had to be manhandled to the front. Tired, wornout foot troops from both frontline and reserve units were pressed into action and formed into carrying parties.

Despite the unrelenting round-the-clock efforts of engineers to keep the road net between forward supply dumps

captured, Naha itself [was] a no-man's land in which only patrols operated." Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 105.

³⁶ *Yahara Interrogation*.

³⁷ By this time, "Naha was no longer tenable by the Japanese as it had been thoroughly flattened by prior bombardment and its flat terrain offered no cover from our fire from the high ground north of Naha. However, the Japanese held the hills south of the narrow harbor of [the city] and to have put any great number of troops in Naha would have invited severe casualties. Therefore, until such time as the hill mass south of the harbor . . . was

and the frontlines in operating condition, continued use by trucks and amtracs finally caused the roads to be closed, but only after the mud itself had bemired and stalled the vehicles. As a result, division commanders found it impossible to build up and maintain reserve stocks of the supplies needed to support a full-scale assault. With the movement of American forces all but stopped, the entire front became stale-mated.

During the advance to the south, responsible Tenth Army agencies had reconnoitered both the east and west coasts of Okinawa behind the American lines in an attempt to find suitable landing and unloading sites. When discovered and found secure from enemy fire, they were developed and LSTs and other landing vessels were pressed into use to bring supplies down the coasts from the main beaches and dumps in the north.³⁸ The two divisions deriving the major benefits from use of the over-water supply routes were the 6th Marine and 7th Infantry Divisions anchored on the open coasts. Behind the 1st Marine and 77th and 96th Infantry Divisions, in the center of the Tenth Army line, was a mired road net which prevented any resupply effort by vehicles coming both from the north and laterally from the coasts.

A sanguine outlook for continued advances by the Tenth Army flanking divisions was dispelled when they ran into resistance of the same type and intensity offered to the center units. A combination of this increased resistance and the appalling weather forestalled the poten-

tial envelopment and isolation of the main forces of the enemy, and forced the two coastal divisions into the same sort of deadlock the rest of the Tenth Army was experiencing.

Attacking to the west on 23 May, the 7th Division immediately ran into heavy resistance in the hills just north of the Yonabaru-Naha road. Both division assault regiments met increasingly stiff opposition during the day, because: "The Japanese realized that this advance along the Yonabaru-Naha road threatened to cut off the Shuri defenders. . . ." ³⁹ Even in the midst of the American attacks, the enemy attempted to infiltrate and counterattack.

At the same time that the 184th Infantry moved into the Ozato Hills and towards the mouth of the valley leading to Shuri, the 32d Infantry struck out to the west and southwest through Yonabaru to isolate the forces protecting the *Thirty-second Army* redoubt. Units spearheading the regimental drive were slowed and unable to advance in the face of the considerable machine gun and mortar fire coming from positions in the low hills east of Yonawa. Here, a mile southwest of Yonabaru, the regiment was forced to halt and dig in a line for the night because tanks, urgently needed to sustain the drive, had become immobilized by the mud.

On the west coast, despite the continuing rain during the night of 22-23 May, 6th Division patrols crossed and recrossed the Asato almost at will to feel out the enemy. (See Map 15.) Scouts from the 6th Reconnaissance Company patrolled the south bank of

³⁸ *Blakelock ltr 1965.*

³⁹ Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 111.

the upper reaches of the river, and reported back at 0718 that the stream was fordable at low tide, resistance was light, and no occupied positions had been found.⁴⁰

Because the patrol reports of this and other units indicated "that it might be feasible to attempt a crossing of the Asato without tank support,"⁴¹ early that morning General Shepherd ordered the 4th Marines to increase the number of reconnaissance patrols south of the river, and to be ready to cross it if enemy resistance proved light.

Between dawn and 1000 on the 23d, Marine lines received long-range machine gun and rifle fire from high ground near Machisi, but the patrols met no determined resistance at the river bank. General Shepherd decided to force a crossing here with two assault battalions of the 4th wading through ankle-deep water to the other side. At 1130, a firm bridgehead was established against only light resistance; 1/4 was dug in and prepared to continue the attack on the right, 3/4, on the left.

The regimental objective was a low ridge, running east to west, about 500 yards south of the river in the vicinity of Machisi. The attacking Marines approaching this point began to meet sharply increased opposition. Previous suspicions concerning the nature of the defenses here were confirmed when the infantry neared the height. In addition to reverse-slope mortar emplacements, the face of the height was studded with many Okinawan tombs that had been fortified. Darkness halted the attack 100

yards short of the objective, where the troops were ordered to organize and defend the high ground they held.

Although the Asato could be waded at the time of the assault crossing,⁴² strong, steady rain had turned it into a chest-high raging torrent by the next day. Supply and evacuation, difficult enough over the muddy terrain, now became almost impossible. At least 12 men were required to carry a stretcher case safely across the river to the rear.⁴³ Supplies were sent forward under the same conditions; men stood in the water hour after hour under intense artillery and mortar fire, forming a human chain in a successful attempt to supply the advance companies.⁴⁴ By midnight, the 6th Engineer Battalion had constructed two footbridges and was to have begun building a Bailey bridge, but heavy enemy fire during the afternoon prevented the engineers from bringing the components of the bridge forward.

General Geiger shifted the boundary between the two IIIAC divisions slightly to the right (west) to concentrate the corps attack on the right flank. At the same time, 2/4 could both contract its overexpanded lines and better protect the left flank and rear of the regimental bridgehead. As a result of this change, 3/5 relieved 2/4 at 1400, and the latter moved laterally to its right to ease the tension on the strained lines of 1/4.

No forward progress was marked in the center of the Tenth Army line on 23 May by the assault regiments of the 1st

⁴⁰ 6th MarDiv G-3 Jnl, Ph III, 23May45.

⁴¹ 6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III, p. 12.

⁴² 6th MarDiv G-3 Jnl, Ph III, 23May45.

⁴³ 3/4 SAR, Ph III, p. 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Marine and 77th and 96th Infantry Divisions. Activity in the immediate front of each division was limited to patrol action.

Assessing the threat to Shuri by the American advances down both coasts, General Ushijima, his commanders, and his staff believed that the *Thirty-second Army* was "still able to halt the collapse of all positions by holding positions in depth to the line of Shichina and Kokuba" even though Marines "had broken into the city of Naha."⁴⁵ This evaluation was tempered somewhat by the realization that *Thirty-second Army* troops would "be unable to maintain their Shuri front"⁴⁶ if the American spearhead in the Naha-Yonabaru valley was not blunted. To stem the tide of the XXIV Corps attack against his positions north and east of Shuri, General Ushijima threw every available man into a defense line that began on the southwest slopes of Conical Hill, ran through Yonawa, and was anchored at the road junction in the village of Chan.

When the 7th Division attempted to expand its hold on the valley and the high ground to the south, the soldiers received ample proof of the presence of enemy reinforcements. Following increased and determined Japanese stands, which reach a climax in a series of counterattacks on the night of 24–25 May, the 7th Division ground to a halt, unable to push any further west. In sharp contrast to the stubborn and immediate reaction aroused by these efforts to gain the road net east of Shuri,

a few American patrols progressed slightly towards the Chinen Peninsula against only sporadic interference.

A break in the weather on 24 May was too short-lived to enable the Tenth Army to build up supply reserves, repair roads, or to attack in any great force. The enemy, however, took advantage of the brief respite to counter-attack the 7th Infantry Division. In support of this ground action was *Kikusui* No. 7 and the airborne attack against Yontan airfield on 24–25 May.

Although their participation in the air defense of Okinawa was often more glaringly spectacular than destructive, on the night of 24 May, Marine and Army anti-aircraft artillery battalions guarding Yontan and Kadena airfields scored heavily against *Kamikaze* raiders over the island. Marines manning 1st Provisional Anti-aircraft Artillery Group guns were credited with destroying five planes, damaging six, downing one probable, and assisting in the destruction of another plane during this action.⁴⁷

In the entire month of May, Marine AAA gunners destroyed 8 planes, damaged 15, scored 5 probables, and had 1 assist.⁴⁸ For the same period, the 53d AAA Brigade was alerted to 53 air raids in which 88 planes were tracked by its radar, gun directors, and guns. The May score of the brigade overall was 24 planes destroyed, 15 damaged (all by Marine AAA units), and 5 probables.⁴⁹

⁴⁵*Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 111.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *53d AA Brig AAR*, pp. 40–43.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 39–43.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 34.

The clear weather permitting the flurry of enemy air activity held for a brief time only. The rains came again. Gravely concerned over the effects the weather was having on his division supply system, General Shepherd believed it necessary to establish firm vehicular and foot crossings over the now-rampaging Asato if 6th Division assault battalions were to be provided with adequate rations, ammunition, and medical supplies. In addition to replenishing Marine forces at the bridgehead, a well-stocked supply reserve would be required to support a continued attack to the south.

At the same time that the 4th Marines sent probing patrols south to the vicinity of Machisi on the 24th, the regimental objective was bombarded by a heavy artillery concentration and an air strike—one of the first to be flown in clearing skies that day in support of ground forces. The 6th Engineer Battalion bridge builders who had labored throughout the night to erect some sort of crossing over the Asato,⁵⁰ began putting together a Bailey bridge at dawn. Working all morning and part of the afternoon under enemy artillery and mortar shelling, the Marine engineers finished the bridge at 1400 and opened it for traffic 45 minutes later.⁵¹ A pile bridge, to be utilized as a tank bypass, was completed at 1840. Informing the division commander that the passage

⁵⁰ "An attempt . . . made during the night to install a makeshift bridge built on LVTs . . . was unsuccessful due to the large number of enemy mines encountered along the river bank. During the effort two LVTs were seriously damaged." *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*, p. 12.

⁵¹ *6th MarDiv G-3 Jnl, Ph III*, 24May45.

was open, the commanding officer of the engineer battalion matter-of-factly added: ". . . tanks should cross as soon as possible as arty [artillery] is falling in area."⁵²

To intensify 4th Marines efforts south of the river, 3/22 moved into the line on the division left, relieving 2/4 at 1000 on the 24th. Once in position, Lieutenant Colonel Clair W. Shisler's battalion tied in with 3/5 and 1/4. At this time, the 2d Battalion moved across the river "to relieve the battered 3/4 on the right" of the 4th Marines line.⁵³ The 3d Battalion became regimental reserve and moved to an assembly area in the rear where it held muster; none of its companies had over 90 men.⁵⁴ Major Walker's 6th Reconnaissance Company, which had been attached to the 4th Marines on 23 May as regimental reserve, reverted to division control when the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, was ordered to an assembly area just south of the Asato. In order to beef up Colonel Shapley's reserve for the continuation of the drive south, 1/29 was attached to the 4th in place of the scouts.

With the rain beating down once again, the 4th Marines attacked on 25 May to capture that part of the regimental objective near Machisi not taken on the 23d. Although severely restricted by the deep mud and limited visibility, assault infantry seized the greater part of the north-south ridgeline lying west of the village. At 1030, the 4th overcame determined Japanese defenders en-

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *4th Mar SAR, Ph III*, p. 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

trenched on the reverse slope and occupied the objective. Once the captors had reorganized their forces and consolidated the newly won positions, they prepared to carry on further. The attack now progressed slowly as assault troops forged ahead against a storm of frontal and flanking fires.

When the regiment halted for the day at 1630, the battalions established firm contact along the line and dug in night defenses. During the preinvasion rehearsal phase, 6th Division training had emphasized village and street fighting. This training was first put into practical use on the 25th when attacking troops entered the eastern outskirts of Naha and came under fire from Japanese-defended houses. The heavy fire from these as well as from the many burial vaults along the ridges in this area inflicted numerous casualties in the Marine units.

Effectively dividing this section of Naha into two separate zones of action was a canal connecting the Asato River and the estuary of the Kokuba. The waterway was 20 yards wide, had a thick mud bottom, and stone banks 3 to 5 feet high.

As the 4th Marines fought in the eastern portion of Naha, the 6th Reconnaissance Company crossed the Asato to enter the once-urban, now-razed, area of Naha west of the canal. Major Walker's men quickly cleared a sector of snipers and a few disorganized troops, and set up defenses for the night. At 1900, the engineers completed construction of a footbridge across the mouth of the Asato. The bridge was anchored on the southern bank behind

the defense perimeter of the scouts, and on the northern bank in front of 2/22, which manned the lines of the 22d Marines. Company G of the battalion was assigned as a clutch unit to relieve or support the reconnaissance company upon order.

Although the reconnaissance company had experienced a relatively quiet night, the two assault battalions of the 4th Marines spent the hours of darkness in fighting off counterattacks. At 2000, 1/4 reported that the enemy was forming up approximately 200-250 yards in front of its positions and had begun smoking Marine lines. A Japanese mortar barrage preceded the counterattack, which was broken up almost immediately under a mixed artillery and mortar shelling that continued on for another two hours without letup. Later, at midnight, when Company E, 2/4, was hit by a counterattack, it was immediately reinforced by a platoon from 1/29. After a two-hour-long hand grenade duel, in which the Marines suffered only light casualties, the enemy was successfully repelled.

Across most of the rest of the Tenth Army front on the 25th, high water and mud limited activity to patrol actions. The 7th Infantry Division, however, which had forced the enemy from commanding terrain features and inserted an opening wedge into the southeastern defenses of Shuri on 24 May, continued its vigorous drive on the 25th. Additional key positions were secured against ever-stiffening resistance and under conditions of terrain and weather that favored the enemy. Limiting the 7th Division attack was the problem of get-

ting supplies forward, after its only supply route to the front sank in a sea of mud under the ravages of continuous use.

In the 96th Division zone, troops holding positions south and west of Conical Hill were all but isolated from rear area facilities of the division. Suffering serious losses under a rash of small counter-attacks and continual attempts by the enemy to infiltrate, the depleted infantry companies holding the line were forced to utilize all available manpower from battalion and regimental service and support units. The frontline units put these soldiers into the line as riflemen or assigned them to the tremendously wearing task of hand-carrying supplies forward over the muddy ground. Descriptive of these agonized efforts is a comment made by one of the 96th's officers, who said: "Those on the forward slopes slid down. Those on the reverse slopes slid back. Otherwise, no change."⁵⁵

A happy change in these gloomy reports of a bogged-down campaign—and possibly a favorable portent for the future—occurred on 26 May, when it appeared as though the enemy was pulling out of Shuri. Observers at the 1st and 5th Marines regimental observation posts (OPs) reported that there was a good deal of enemy movement south, and thus prompted the 1st Marine Divi-

⁵⁵ Quoted in Orlando R. Davidson, *et. al.*, *The Deadeyes: The Story of the 96th Infantry Division* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947), p. 159, hereafter Davidson, *et. al.*, *96th Inf Div Hist.*

sion G-2 to request air observation of the suspected area at 1200.⁵⁶

Despite hazardous flying conditions in rain and poor visibility, which in themselves would limit the value and amount of information gained, a spotter plane was catapulted from the *New York* almost immediately after receipt of the G-2 request. Upon arrival over the target area, the airborne observer confirmed the presence of a large number of Japanese troops and vehicles clogging the roads leading south from Shuri.

Within 13 minutes after this sighting, the USS *New Orleans* had fired the first salvo in a continued devastating barrage that was brought to bear on the withdrawing enemy by artillery, mortars, the main and secondary batteries of gunfire support ships, and the machine guns and bombs of Marine aircraft that had risen from rain-sodden fields to harry the enemy from above.⁵⁷ Commenting on the part played by gunfire support ships at this point, the naval gunfire officer in the IIIAC staff recalled:

. . . the *New York* was some distance from the beach but the *New Orleans* was close in. The *New Orleans* heard the report of the *New York's* plane and asked the spotter for coordinates. She positioned herself and began adjustment by full salvos of main battery. . . . Other firing ships and support craft with H&I [Harassing and Interdiction] missions or otherwise in the area, noticed the increased activity, sent up planes, and got into the act. Ships without planes asked to be cut in with ships that did have them and often a plane

⁵⁶ IIIAC G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 56, dtd 27May45.

⁵⁷ CTF 31 AR, pt III, p. 27.

spotter was firing two or more ships at the same time.⁵⁸

Enemy hopes for a successful withdrawal under the inclement weather conditions were shattered by the massed fires which caught and blasted some 3,000–4,000 Japanese troops with their tanks, vehicles, and artillery pieces in the open. The pilots of observation planes zoomed through the overcast to treetop height and lower to count and report back an estimated 500 enemy killed.⁵⁹

The continuing stubborn reluctance on the part of some Japanese to give way to the Americans seemed to belie the fact that General Ushijima's forces were indeed withdrawing. The Tenth Army found that only local attacks and patrols could be accomplished in the rain against enemy resistance. Even limited forward movement directed towards the heart of Shuri aroused heavy and immediate response, and indicated that Japanese inner defenses were holding firm. Light resistance was found only along the coasts; in the IIIAC zone on the right, where the 6th Reconnaissance Company held the levelled and deserted Naha, and in the

east, where patrols of the 184th Infantry approached Chinen Peninsula.

Following the discovery of the enemy withdrawal and the initial bombardments placed on his movements, artillery batteries and gunfire support ships fired continuous harassing and interdiction missions on all routes, road junctions, and crossroads in the area leading south from Shuri. To keep the enemy disorganized and unable to make a stand, and to exploit the implications inherent in the Japanese withdrawal, General Buckner sent the following message to his two corps commanders on 27 May:

Indications point to possible enemy retirement to new defensive position with possible counteroffensive against our forces threatening his flank. Initiate without delay strong and unrelenting pressure to ascertain probable intentions and keep him off balance. Enemy must not repeat not be permitted to establish himself securely on new position with only nominal interference.⁶⁰

Continued rains and their subsequent effect on the terrain precluded a full-scale attack all along the front. Therefore, the Tenth Army settled for aggressive patrol action against the remaining Japanese strongpoints facing its lines. Apparently contradicting what influence the previous day's withdrawal

⁵⁸ LtCol William M. Gilliam ltr to CMC, dtd 16Mar55. During this and other incidents in the Okinawa campaign, gunfire support from all arms was superb. "It was not uncommon for a battleship, tanks, artillery, and aircraft to be supporting the efforts of a platoon of infantry during the reduction of the Shuri position." *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Commending TAF and the LFASCUs for their day's work, General del Valle sent a message reading "Congratulations and thanks for prompt response this afternoon when Nips were caught on road with kimonos down." 2d MAW WarD, May 45.

⁶⁰ *Tenth Army AR*, chap 7, sec III, pp. 24–25. "During the period of May 22d to 30th when the southern front was engulfed in mud, General Buckner chafed at the slow progress being made" and constantly urged his corps commanders to greater speed. "He was under considerable pressure to make faster progress, as the Navy was sustaining heavy casualties by being forced to remain in the vicinity of Okinawa," exposed to the damaging *Kamikaze* raids. Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 123.



AERIAL VIEW of Shuri on 28 April before it was bombed. (USAF 83751)



SHURI, one month later. (USAF 83752)

should have had on the tactical situation, patrol reports reading "Does not appear that resistance has lessened," or "No indication of Japanese withdrawal," implied that Shuri would not yet, if ever, fall easily.⁶¹

Assault units of the 7th Infantry Division, driving west from Yonabaru, ran into *62d Division* elements hastily committed by General Ushijima to shore up his threatened right flank. On the far left flank of the Tenth Army, advance patrols of the 184th Infantry reached Inasomi, approximately two miles southwest of Yonabaru, without meeting any organized resistance. To contain the overall threat this potentially deep penetration posed to Japanese defenses in the south, the *Thirty-second Army* moved additional troops of the *62d Division* down from Shuri.⁶²

On the opposite flank of Tenth Army, early on the 27th, Company G, 2/22, moved across the Asato, passed through reconnaissance company lines, and pressed well into Naha against only slight resistance. At the same time, patrols from the 4th Marines moved 200–300 yards ahead of regimental lines to take advantage of the apparent enemy weakness here. Lieutenant Colonel Woodhouse was ordered at 0915 to move the rest of his battalion across the river, and nearly two hours later 2/22 was directed to attack and seize the high ground approximately 100 yards north of the Kokuba estuary. The 4th Marines received the same order to seize the rest of Naha. Colonel Shapley attacked with 1/4 on the left, 2/4 on the right; 3/4

filled in on the left flank between 3/22 and 1/4.

Following a pre-attack nine-battalion artillery preparation, 6th Division forces advanced abreast at 1230 against light opposition, reached the objective at approximately 1700, and dug in for night defense at 1900, when regimental lines were tied in all around.⁶³ Actually, occupation of the objective in force amounted to the same thing that had been accomplished by patrols that morning. Badly in need of rest after a 10-day tour in the lines, the 4th Marines was alerted that it would be relieved by the 29th Marines; the changeover was scheduled to begin at 0630 the next morning.

Another important change in the ICEBERG command structure occurring in May took place on the 27th, when the Fifth Fleet once again became the Third Fleet and Admiral Halsey took over the responsibility for supporting the ICEBERG campaign from Admiral Spruance. As in February, when the latter had taken over from Halsey, the ships and men of the fleet remained the same, only the numerical designations of the task groupings changed (*i.e.*, TF 58 became TF 38, etc.). At the same time that this command change was effected, General Buckner became directly responsible for CinCPOA for the defense and development of captured positions in the Ryukyus.⁶⁴

⁶³ At 1630, Major Walker's company was attached to 2/22 for the night; at 2000, 1/29 reverted to parent control.

⁶⁴ ComFifthFlt AR, 1Apr-27May45, Ryukyus Operation, dtd 21Jun45, pt III, p. 7; see also section entitled "The Task Defined" in chap 2, *supra*.

⁶¹ *1st MarDiv G-3 Jnl*, 27May45.

⁶² *Okinawa Operations Report*, pp. 116–119.

Large-scale movements were still impracticable on 28 May because of the mud, although: "The morning . . . was clear with no rain."⁶⁵ Despite the limited trafficability of both roads and terrain, local commanders hewed to the concept of General Buckner's directive of the previous day and maintained constant and continuous pressure on enemy forces. In the XXIV Corps zone, the 184th Infantry deepened the 7th Division salient in the Ozato Hills by moving to within 1,000 yards of Shinzato, a village located where Chinen Peninsula joined the mainland.

Less satisfactory progress was registered for the units driving west, as *62d Division* blocking forces held up other 7th Division troops. Strongly held positions southwest of Conical Hill frustrated 96th Division attempts altogether, and the 77th Division made little or no headway against a determined defense of Shuri heights. At the end of the day, XXIV Corps gains were negligible and inconclusive. Despite reports of increased troop withdrawals, the enemy's obstinate reluctance to yield indicated that General Ushijima either had established a strong rear-guard to protect the withdrawal or that he was in fact not abandoning Shuri.

In the IIIAC sector, Marines were no more successful in prosecuting their portion of the war and had no easier time of it than had the Army units. In its attack on 110 Meter Hill, 2/1 was covered by the fires of 3/1 and 3/306. Once 2/1 had gained its objective, 3/1 was to advance down Wana Draw. The 2d Battalion gained the hilltop twice,

only to be thrown back by mortar barrages coming from reverse slope emplacements and vicious machine gun fire raking positions on the crest from three directions. Lieutenant Colonel James C. Magee, Jr., believed that, even if his battalion succeeded in carrying the hill, "it could not possibly hold it against a strong counterattack."⁶⁶ Heavy casualties had depleted the size of the battalion to a point where its total effective strength was 277 men; no rifle company could muster more than a total of 99 Marines.⁶⁷

At first glance, it would appear as though reinforcement of the battalion at this time might possibly have tipped the scales of victory in favor of the Marines and enabled them to capture 110 Meter Hill. Replacements were available; the 1st Marine Division had received a total of 53 officers and 1,255 enlisted men in the three-day period of 27-29 May, when the 57th, 59th, and 63d Replacement Drafts arrived at Okinawa.⁶⁸ The division was precluded by IIIAC orders, however, from inserting these fresh troops into the line during a battle situation, the course of which depended upon close teamwork by experienced veterans. Only after several days of indoctrination and training in reserve areas could the men be sent forward. Infantry replacements were at a premium in any case because of the heavy losses sustained by the rifle regiments. This condition existed even though over 350 emergency replace-

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* The authorized T/O strength of a Marine rifle company at this time was 7 officers and 235 enlisted Marines.

⁶⁸ *1st MarDiv SAR, Pers Anx, p. 7.*

⁶⁵ *2/1 SAR, p. 11.*

ments had been assigned from division special and service troops to the infantry regiments in mid-May and the regular "flow of Marine replacements was beyond expectations. . . ." ⁶⁹ Nonetheless, despite this constant infusion of new Marines, at no time during the drive to the south were 1st Division infantry regiments able to exceed more than 85 percent of effective T/O strength.⁷⁰

To the commanders of undermanned companies and battalions in this period of the campaign, immediate reinforcement was not only desirable—it was of paramount importance. From the point of view of senior commanders, such as the regimental commander of the 1st Marines:

. . . the existence of a replacement pool which could not, at the moment, be used for combat proved to be extremely valuable. At the end of May, when the rainy period had rendered the roads and the countryside impassable to anything on wheels or tracks, the supply of forward troops became most critical. Something like 500 replacements, if any recollection is correct, were available to the 1st Marines; these men were formed into man-pack trains, under the direction of the executive officer. Their exhausting struggles, heavily laden, through mud which even an unburdened man found difficult to negotiate were the solution to the supply problem at this time, though with no margin to spare.⁷¹

Even though 2/1 and other assault units could not be reinforced, supply support from non-committed elements permitted them to concentrate on the immediate problem of fighting the enemy. Late on the 28th, after being withdrawn

to that morning's jump-off position, organic crew-served weapons of 2/1 worked over the reverse slopes of 110 Meter Hill as the battalion lines were themselves raked by the continual fire of Japanese flat-trajectory cannon. With unabated fury and determined fanaticism, the enemy stood his ground and even sought to infiltrate 2/1 lines after dark when many Japanese soldiers were killed.

Also on 28 May, patrols from 3/1 penetrated some 300 yards into Wana Draw under intense machine gun and rifle fire. At 1600, Colonel Mason ordered the battalion to clear all Japanese troops from the draw, but the battalion commander's request that the attack be delayed until the following morning instead, in order that he might organize and concentrate his forces for the drive, was approved.

The 1st Division concluded that: "The beginning of the end for Shuri came on the 28th."⁷² Although rear-guard action continued unrelentingly in the high ground north of the city in the 77th Division zone, the 5th Marines attacked at 0730, captured the village of Asato, and 1/5 patrolled 300 yards beyond that without appreciable opposition. During the same day, the 306th Infantry managed to mop up the area approximately 150 yards in front of its lines. On the corps boundary, 3/306 sent strong patrols forward, coordinating their movements with those of 2/1. By dark, 1/307—to the left of the 306th—attacked the high ground east of Shuri against determined opposition. Despite the fact that it was bitterly opposed and repulsed by heavy mortar fire initially, the bat-

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Col Arthur T. Mason ltr to CMC, dtd 10Mar47.

⁷² *1st MarDiv SAR*, p. 7.

talion inched forward under the cover of smoke and managed to dig in for the night.⁷³

While the 1st and 77th Divisions were moving slowly forward, the 29th Marines began relieving the 4th in position. Enemy shelling during the relief added to the more-than 1,100 casualties already sustained by Colonel Shapley's regiment. Beginning at daylight, 3/29 relieved 1/4 and 3/4, the elements on the left of the 4th Marines line, 1/29 moved into the western portion of Naha relieving 2/4, and 2/29—in regimental reserve—moved to an assembly area near Colonel Whaling's CP. Upon its relief, the 4th Marines marched and motored to beach areas near Machinato airfield, where it became 6th Division reserve.

Continuing to advance after passage of the 2/4 lines, 1/29 moved abreast of and then paced the attack of the 22d Marines. The direction of the battalion attack changed to the southwest when Company C pivoted on Company A—on the right boundary—and gained 250 yards through the rubble of Naha. Heavy small arms fire and a scattered mortar and artillery shelling followed the Marines, who finally set in a night defense along a line 800 yards from the Kokuba. Here visual contact was established with the 22d Marines across the canal on the right, and with 3/29 on the left flank.⁷⁴

The 22d Marines had moved out on the 28th before dawn. At that time, 1/22 passed through the lines of the 2d Bat-

talion to take up the assault in the direction of the banks of the Kokuba estuary, west of the canal running through Naha. Moving rapidly against only slight resistance, its flanks and rear protected by 2/22, the battalion captured its objective by 0845.

General Shepherd then assigned the task of defending western Naha to his reconnaissance company in order to release the 22d Marines for further offensive action to the east against Japanese positions in the Kokuba hills. Major Walker was first notified of the scouts' new assignment at 1030, when he received the following message from the division G-3, Lieutenant Colonel Victor H. Krulak:

Reposing great confidence in your integrity and political ability you are hereby named acting mayor of Naha. The appointment effective 281600 carries all pay and emoluments accruing to office. To be collected from Imperial Treasury.⁷⁵

Shortly after midday, the 6th Engineer Battalion was ordered to reconnoiter all bridge crossings over the canal. Also, it was to install a jeep crossing and at least two foot bridges over the canal prior to 0400 on the 29th to facilitate the 22d Marines attack east of the Kokuba. The engineers worked in the dark in front of Marine lines under a constant downpour of rain and shells, as they manhandled the bridge construction material up to the various bridging sites. The task was completed at 0420. At 0430, elements of 1/22 were across the canal and organized on the

⁷³ *77th InfDiv OpRpt*, Okinawa, p. 61.

⁷⁴ *1/29 SAR, Ph III*, p. 3. Lieutenant Colonel Samuel S. Yeaton relieved the temporary battalion commander, Major Robert P. Neuffer, who then became battalion executive officer.

⁷⁵ *6th MarDiv G-3 Jnl, Ph III*, 28May45. The new "Naha City Command" was reinforced by 1 officer and 40 Marines from the 6th Motor Transport Battalion. *Ibid.*

eastern shore. This was the division's third opposed river crossing in 20 days.⁷⁶

The attack began a half hour later and the Marines made some immediate progress against scattered machine gun and rifle fire. Supporting the assault was 2/22, while the 3d Battalion followed in reserve. At 0845, 1/22 made contact with 1/29 and the two infantry battalions pushed on abreast of each other. As spearhead elements approached the hills north of Kokuba, increased resistance indicated that the enemy was positioned there in strength. Because of the hard fighting and numerous casualties experienced by 1/22, at 1500 2/22 was alerted to relieve it, when the situation permitted, on the ground then held. Since the 1st Battalion was heavily engaged at the time, its commander advised against the relief being effected then. Instead, Companies E and G were committed into the line at 1800 to reinforce the night defenses of the regiment.

Until darkness fell the 6th Division assault regiments continued the attack in an effort to reduce the strong enemy position encountered earlier that afternoon. Aggravating the situation was the fact that the routes of approach to these Japanese emplacements were across open ground that afforded the attacking Marines little or no cover from the fire of well-dug-in machine guns and mortars. The position itself was centered on a small group of hills on which were located several radio towers that had been demolished in air raids when the rest of Naha was razed earlier. Rain and

mud precluded the use of vital armor support. It still remained an infantryman's war.

On the same day, 29 May, the 29th Marines attacked to the south and then cut east in order to come abreast of the 22d Marines; the 29th's objective was the high ground immediately northwest of Shichina. Like the 22d Marines approach route, that of the 29th was over low and open ground, causing the regimental commander to comment that the terrain was "about as suitable to fighting as a billiard table."⁷⁷ The 1st Battalion maintained a slow, steady pace against moderate resistance, and dug in at dark slightly to the left rear of 3/22, on the regimental boundary. The 3d Battalion of the 29th paced the advance of 1/29, but 3/5 on the left had advanced so rapidly during the day that 3/29 was forced to bring its lines forward some 600 yards at the end of the day to maintain firm contact with the 5th Marines.

Tuesday, 29 May 1945, is a significant date in the history of the Okinawa campaign, for it was on this day elements of the 1st Marine Division captured Shuri Castle. This ancient redoubt, once the seat of the rulers of Okinawa, had served as General Ushijima's center for controlling the defense of the island.

The 5th Marines attack began at 0730; 1/5 on the left, 3/5 on the right. The 3d Battalion jumped off with Company L in assault. Enemy machine gun, mortar, and small arms fire was placed on the attacking Marines but was unable to prevent them from advancing a total of 600 yards at day's end. Follow-

⁷⁶ *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III, pt III, p. 14.*

⁷⁷ *6th MarDiv G-3 Jnl, Ph III, 29May45.*



CORKSCREW: *Marine assault team attacks a Japanese cave after a satchel charge has exploded. (USMC 120272)*



BLOWTORCH: *A flame tank burns out Japanese positions in hillside tombs during the drive for Naha. (USMC 122153)*

ing Company L, Companies I and K moved out later in the morning in an attempt to strengthen and protect the left of the battalion line, but enemy mortars positioned west of Shuri fired a furious barrage that seriously limited forward movement. Despite the efforts to destroy them by bazooka fire, the mortars remained active and held the companies back. The battalion night defense set up at dusk showed 3/5 lines cutting back sharply from the left of Company L's exposed position to tie in with 1/5 at Shuri Ridge.

The 1st Battalion moved rapidly over muddy terrain against little opposition and immediately occupied Shuri's ridge crest in close proximity to the castle. From this position, at approximately 0930, Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Shelburne, the battalion commander, requested permission to send one of his assault companies to storm the apparently lightly manned fortification. Despite the fact that the castle itself was within the zone of the 77th Infantry Division, General del Valle granted the request when it was forwarded to him for approval. He believed that the capture of this enemy strongpoint would favorably effect and shorten the campaign; this opportunity, therefore, had to be seized at once. Shortly after the island was secured, General del Valle offered the opinion that "at that time the position of the 77th Division was such that it would have taken several hard days' fighting through enemy resistance,"⁷⁸ if he had waited for the tactical situation to unfold normally.

⁷⁸ MajGen Pedro A. del Valle, "Old Glory on Shuri," *Marine Corps Gazette*, v. 29, no. 8 (Aug45), p. 17.

Bowling over the few Japanese that were in their way, Marines from Company A, 1/5, drove east along the ridge and right into the castle itself, securing it at 1015. The 77th Division had programmed an air strike and a heavy artillery bombardment on the bastion for 29 May and had received warning of the attack of the 5th Marines only a few short minutes before it was mounted. Fortunately for the Marines, General Bruce and his staff worked frantically to contact all supporting arms and were just "barely able to avert called strikes in time."⁷⁹

The air and artillery preparation of Shuri by the 77th Division resulted from General Bruce's decision on the 28th to attack the next day, weather permitting. The 1st Marine Division had given him no indication that it planned to enter the zone of the 77th, for: "Had timely notice been given and the move been properly coordinated," the Army commander believed "the 77 Div could have rendered adequate support to the Marines. . . ."⁸⁰

Overshadowing this near tragedy was the fact that Company A success resulted from the close teamwork of Tenth Army support and assault troops who had not permitted the enemy to relax for an instant. Without this unrelenting pressure, the breakthrough would not have been possible.

To profit from the 1/5 gain, General del Valle quickly revised his attack plan and sent 3/1 through the lines of the

⁷⁹ Myers, *77th InfDiv History*, p. 357; "However, arrangements had been made to see that our own artillery did not come down on these troops." Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 114.

⁸⁰ *77th InfDiv OpRpt*, Okinawa, p. 62.

5th Marines to relieve 1/5. At 1400, the relief had been effected and 1/5 continued the attack south. The commander of 3/1 immediately set up his battalion in perimeter defense around the battered walls of the castle. Augmenting this defense were two companies from 1/1 which fought their way into assigned positions that faced north, and tied in with the lines of 3/1.

Upon the 5th Marines sweep into Shuri, the 1st Marines was ordered to follow the attack closely; 3/1 was to relieve 1/5, and 1/1, tailing 3/1 around Hill 55, was to attack east into the yet-unoccupied sector north of Shuri. Moving out in a column of companies, the battalion crossed the line of departure in front of Hill 55 where the leading element came under intensive fire from a heavy machine gun hidden in a deep and rugged cut a few hundred yards south of bypassed Wana Draw. Unable to either silence the weapon or attack through its curtain of fire, the battalion axis of advance was angled to the right and the troops eventually made contact with 3/1 south of Shuri. While 1/1 and 3/1 hit Shuri from the west, the 2d Battalion was ordered to hold Wana Ridge, from which it was to provide fire support to regimental assault ele-

ments. To augment and increase this effort, "all battalion headquarters personnel, cooks, wiremen, and stretcher bearers were sent forward to help man the lines."⁸¹

At no time after the capture of Shuri Castle was there any indication that the Japanese defenders of the hills north of the city were either being worn down or concerned with the Americans positioned in their rear. Reports from Tenth Army units all along the line gave proof that Japanese resistance remained undiminished. Only in a goodly portion of Chinen Peninsula, scouted by 7th Division troops during the day, was there little or no opposition.

Offsetting the relatively unhindered advance down the coasts by Tenth Army flanking divisions, a vividly contrasting picture was presented by the massive struggle down the center of the island. Despite the efforts of General Buckner's forces to execute a mass double envelopment successfully and encircle the bulk of General Ushijima's troops at Shuri, all signs pointed up the fact that the Japanese rear guard had accomplished its mission well; the greatest portion of the units defending Shuri had indeed escaped to the south.

⁸¹ 2/1 SAR, p. 12.

Breakout to the South

JAPANESE WITHDRAWAL¹

Threatened by an American frontal encroachment upon their Shuri defenses and an envelopment of their flanks by the Tenth Army divisions driving down the east and west coasts of Okinawa, the Japanese were forced to reevaluate thoroughly the battle plans adopted in March. On the night of 22 May, General Ushijima convened at his headquarters a conference of his principal commanders and staff officers. The major and only item on the agenda of this momentous meeting was a discussion of how best to prevent—or at least to postpone—the disaster engulfing the *Thirty-second Army*.

Contingency plans calling for a massive defense centering about Shuri had been included in final battle preparations completed before 1 April 1945. All Japanese units located elsewhere on Okinawa and still able to fight would withdraw on order for a last-ditch stand in the vicinity of the *Thirty-second Army* headquarters. Tactical conditions at the time of this conference indicated that, to hold Shuri, approximately 50,000 Japanese soldiers would have to be compressed into a final defense sector less than a mile in diameter. These close quarters would not permit an effec-

tive defense, but would, in fact, make the defenders “easy prey”² for the massive American fires which would undoubtedly seek them out from all directions. Although many Japanese long-range artillery pieces were still in firing condition, the constricted space factors around Shuri prevented their proper emplacement and subsequently efficient employment.

In a discussion of the alternatives to remaining at Shuri, Ushijima’s staff considered two other defensive areas—Chinen Peninsula, and the Kiyamu Peninsula at the southern tip of Okinawa. (See Map 2.) The hills, cliffs, and lack of roads on Chinen presented a group of formidable natural defenses, especially against tank-infantry tactics. Militating against a choice of this area were the lack of sufficient caves and prepared positions to hold the entire *Thirty-second Army* and the inadequacy of ammunition supplies that had been stockpiled there. Another disadvantage ruling out Chinen was the poor road net, which would equally hamper the Japanese and the Americans. Finally, in face of these considerations and the route that would have to be taken to the peninsula, *Thirty-second Army* units would find it difficult to reconcentrate and reorganize speedily at the same time that they would undoubtedly be waging a hard fight during disengagement and withdrawal. The weight

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *Okinawa Operations Record*; *Yahara Interrogation: Shimada Interrogation*.

² *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 111.

of the evidence against Chinen ruled it out quickly.

It appeared to the *Thirty-second Army* staff that Kiyamu Peninsula was the best area in which to develop a solid defense for prolonging the battle. This area, dominated by the Yaeju Dake-Yuza Dake³ Escarpment, contained a sufficient number of natural and man-made caves in which to store supplies and protect troops against American bombardments. The terrain on the peninsula had been defensively organized earlier by the *24th Division*, which also had cached a large store of ammunition and weapons there before it was ordered north into the Shuri defenses. As opposed to the poor road net into Chinen, all roads south led directly to the proposed new positions and would permit the army to make a rapid mass movement. On the other hand, Tenth Army tanks also could move south quickly over these roads, but only to the outpost defenses of the sector. American tanks would be denied passage beyond this point by the sheer cliffs, steep hills, and deep ridges of the region. In this broken terrain, the infantry would be on its own.

Not all of the senior Japanese leaders approved the planned withdrawal. One dissenter was General Fujioka, commander of the *62d Division*. His objection was based on a compassion for the thousands of severely wounded men who could not be taken south. General Fujioka felt most strongly about this point because it was his division that had originally been assigned to defend Shuri, and it was his officers and men

who had taken the brunt of American attacks on the city. He contended, therefore, that their desire to fight to the last in their present positions should be fulfilled.

Supporting the anticipated withdrawal was General Suzuki, commander of the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade*, who tempered his approval with the stipulation that the army move into the Chinen Peninsula positions that his forces had previously developed. Fully supporting the move to Kiyamu were Generals Amamiya and Wada, commanders of the *24th Division* and *5th Artillery Command*, respectively. General Amamiya reinforced his argument with information that his *24th Transportation Regiment* had been able both to salvage and to preserve enough trucks to transfer the army ammunition reserve in five nights' time if weather conditions permitted.

Not long after weighing all of these arguments, General Ushijima ordered the move to Kiyamu. The first transportation to head south left Shuri at midnight, 23 May, carrying wounded and a portion of the ammunition supply. The main body of the *Thirty-second Army* was scheduled to begin the trek southward on 29 May.

According to the army plan, the new defensive dispositions would be as follows (See Map 16.) :

1. The *44th IMB* was to move from positions on the westernmost flank of the Shuri front to take up defense positions on a line running from Hanagusuku on the east coast to Yaeju Dake.
2. The *24th Division* would occupy the commanding heights of the Yaeju Dake-Yuza Dake escarpment, the ridges of

³ *Dake* means peak.

Mezado and Kunishi, and Nagusuku, on the west coast.

3. Elements of the above two units would establish and defend an outpost line—and the zone forward of it—which would run from Itoman through Yunagusuku to Gushichan.

4. The heavily depleted forces of the *62d Division* would occupy defenses along the coast in the rear of the main battle line; at these positions the division could reorganize, and, at the same time, be prepared to reinforce threatened sections of the line.

5. The firing batteries of the *5th Artillery Command* were to be emplaced within the confines of a triangularly shaped area formed by Kunishi, Makabe, and Medeera, in direct support of the defense line.

6. Admiral Ota's *Okinawa Naval Base Force* was assigned as reserve and would move on order to an assembly area in the center of the Kiyamu defense sector.

7. Each unit breaking contact with the Americans on the Shuri line was to leave a sufficiently strong force in position to keep the Americans occupied long enough to permit a successful withdrawal.

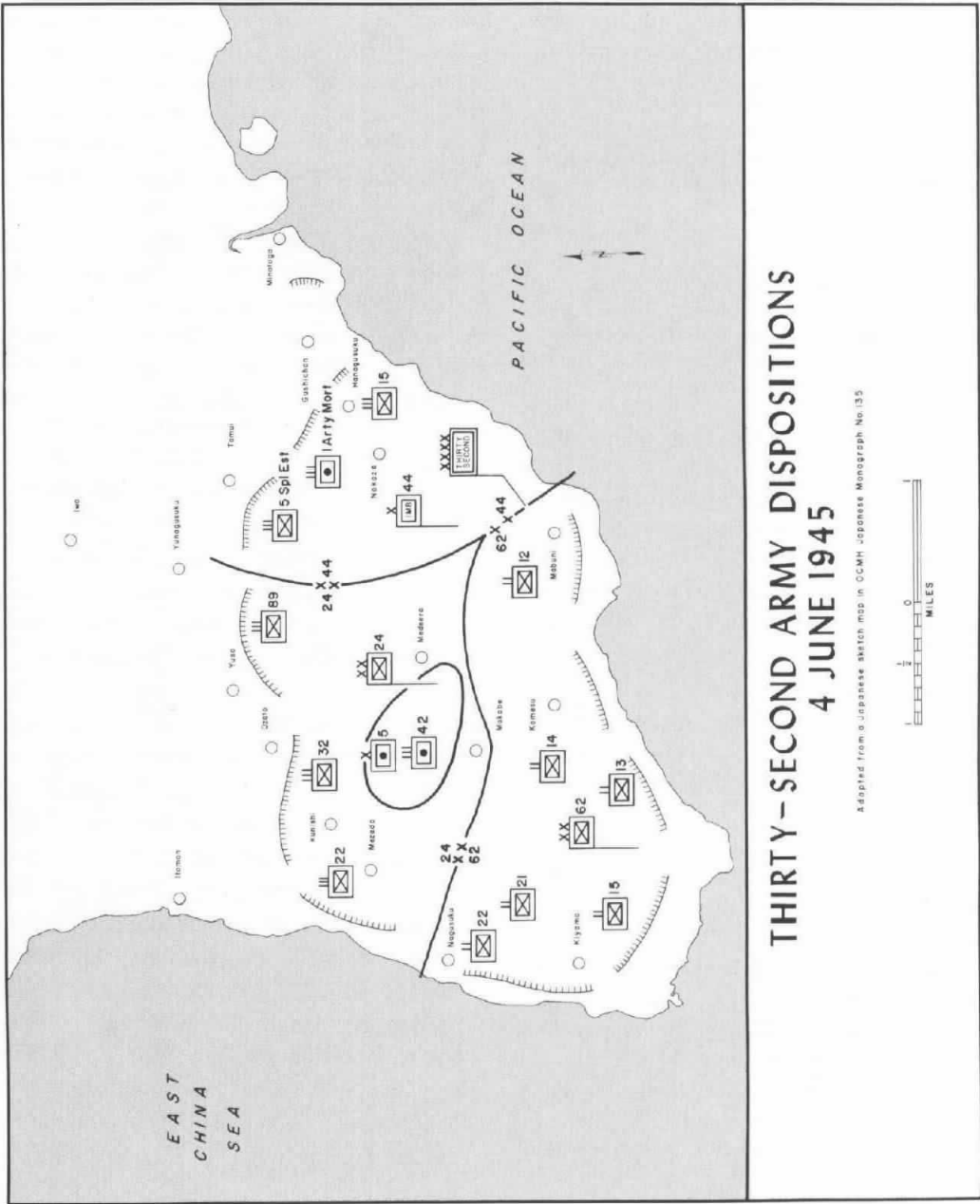
Posing a threat to this plan was the penetration of 7th Infantry Division elements through Yonabaru. To oppose them, remnants of the *62d Division* were to disengage and pull out of the Shuri front on the night of 25 May, and then move through Tsukasan to counter-attack the Tenth Army spearhead. Replacing the *62d* in the line was the comparatively strong and rested *22d Independent Infantry Battalion*, which had been in reserve during the fighting in April and May. The orders to General Fujioka were both explicit and simple: “. . . annihilate the enemy rushing from the Yonabaru area.”⁴ In addition, a secondary mission laid on, should the

primary fail, was to slow or stop the American advance for a period long enough to permit the main body of the *Thirty-second Army* to escape.

To give General Ushijima time to organize his new dispositions on Kiyamu, the force remaining on the Shuri front was to hold until 31 May. Behind it, withdrawing units would leave other rear guard elements to hold a strong defense line running along the Kokumba River to the hills north of Tsukasan and Chan until the night of 2 June. At that time, the line would then cut south through Karadera to the east coast. Approximately 2,000 yards further south, another temporary line—this one centered on Tomusu—would be established and held until the night of 4 June. *Thirty-second Army* staff planners believed that the time gained during holding actions along these lines would permit the organization and manning of the final outpost zone. Before beginning its own retreat south, the composite naval unit on Oroku Peninsula was to guard the western flank of the withdrawal route.

All available replacements were thrown in the disintegrating Shuri front on 23 May, when the onsurging Tenth Army forced the enemy to bolster his defenses. On 24 May, the first Japanese walking wounded began leaving caves that passed as hospitals. Many terminal cases, too seriously wounded to be moved, were either killed with a lethal injection of morphine, or—less mercifully—left behind to suffer a more lingering end without the relief-giving drug. Limited medical care of the wounded because of circumstances rather than willful neglect appears to

⁴ *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 116.



**THIRTY-SECOND ARMY DISPOSITIONS
4 JUNE 1945**

Adapted from a Japanese sketch map in GCMM Japanese Monograph No.135

T. L. RUSSELL

MAP 16

have been commonplace, judging from the following description of conditions:

At one time there were almost 90 men in the cave, lying on the ground in the mud in pitch darkness, except when a doctor or corpsman would come around with a light and ask them how they felt. Medical supplies were very low, so very little could be done to care for the wounded. Men died on all sides. Filth accumulated. In the heavy rains, water poured into the cave and the wounded almost drowned. The smell was so bad that they could hardly breathe.⁵

In accordance with the schedule of the withdrawal plan, on the night of 25 May some 3,000 men remaining in the *62d Division* moved into positions blocking the drive of the 7th Infantry Division. The enemy expected that the continuing bad weather would aid their efforts in this sector considerably.

This expectation was valid, but only to the degree that the rain put greater obstacles in the way of the successful American drive than did the Japanese infantry. Reinforcing the *62d* and coming under its command were the *7th Heavy Artillery* and *23d Shipping Engineer Regiments*, which left their defenses on Chinen Peninsula to occupy holding positions on the right of the division. Owing to the failure of the *62d Division* to accomplish its mission, General Ushijima was convinced that it was necessary to evacuate Shuri while he still had the time. On 28 May, he ordered that the withdrawal was to begin on the following evening. The *Naval*

Base Force, misinterpreting the order, jumped the gun by withdrawing to Kiyamu ahead of time. Admiral Ota's force was intercepted and sent back to Oroku Peninsula to take up its assigned positions west of the Japanese escape route.

On the night of 29 May, the *24th Division* moved out of the lines in orderly fashion, leaving one-third of the *32d Regiment* and the *22d IIB* as a covering force. While the division evaded the Tenth Army and headed south, the *44th IMB* remained in blocking positions outside of Naha and the *62d Division* was likewise defensively disposed near Chan and Karadera.

With the arrival of dawn on Wednesday, 30 May 1945, the greater portion of the *Thirty-second Army* had successfully postponed its final reckoning at the hands of the Tenth Army by withdrawing from Shuri and out of the grasp of General Buckner's flanking divisions. Having taken advantage of the heavy rains and the accompanying poor visibility, General Ushijima had executed a "properly deft withdrawal"⁶ to establish new army headquarters outside of Mabuni, 11 miles south of Shuri, in a cave deep within Hill 89. By then, his covering forces were in position to slow down a Tenth Army pursuit and thereby give the *Thirty-second Army* a bit more time to organize the defense of Kiyamu Peninsula.

⁵ "Interrogation of Superior Pvt, 5th Co, 22d IIB, POW Interrogation Rpt No. 54," in 1st MarDiv G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 63, dtd 3Jun45.

⁶ "Matters for the Attention of Unit Commanders During the Change in the Direction of Advance, n. d.," Translation No. 85, in 1st MarDiv G-2 PeriodicRpt No. 64, dtd 6Jun45.

*THE PURSUIT*⁷

American attempts to exploit the successful breakthrough at Shuri and maintain incessant pressure on the reeling *Thirty-second Army* were frustrated on 30 May by an electrical storm accompanied by torrential rains on an already-saturated landscape. Movement of all Tenth Army units was effectively halted by the mud. Amphibious craft and vehicles were employed on both coasts to give logistic support to the two corps and enabled the ground commanders to maintain at least minimum supply levels.

Out of a total of 916 missions of all sorts flown by VMTB-232 in May, 74 were supply air drops in support of frontline troops and advance patrols. In spite of the submarginal flying conditions and limited visibility on 30 May, the squadron flew 12 air drop missions to the 1st Marine Division. General del Valle expressed his appreciation to Major Feldmeier's pilots in a message which read in part: "Those pilots have guts!"⁸ This congratulatory message could have been repeated just as well the next day, when the squadron's Avengers flew 37 missions over southern Okinawa to drop water, medical supplies, rations, and ammunition to the ground forces.⁹

⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, the material in this section is derived from: *Tenth Army AR*; *IIIAC AR*; *XXIV Corps AR*; *TAF AR*; *1st MarDiv SAR*; *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*; *7th InfDiv AR*; *77th InfDiv OpRpt*, Okinawa; *96th InfDiv AR*; *1st Mar SAR*; *4th Mar SAR, Ph III*; *5th Mar SAR*; *7th Mar SAR*; *22d Mar SAR, Ph III*; *29th Mar SAR, Ph III*.

⁸ VMTB-232 WarD, May 45.

⁹ *Ibid.*

The weather situation changed so abruptly at the end of the month that "For the first time no enemy planes were detected in the area for the 24-hour period" ending at midnight, 30 May.¹⁰ The heavy rain, however, did not completely stop ground activity on the 30th, for attacks were made all along the Tenth Army front. In the XXIV Corps zone, the 96th Division and the right flank regiment of the 7th Division—the 17th Infantry—attacked west and captured the high ground in the rear of the Shuri positions, one and a half miles west of Yonabaru. Other elements of the 7th Division passed through Shinzato and Sashiki against little opposition, and moved deeper into the Chinen Peninsula. The 77th Division ran into determined holding action by the *32d Regiment*, but managed nevertheless to capture all of the high ground and key defensive positions occupied by the enemy immediately to the northeast and east of Shuri.¹¹

In the 1st Marine Division zone, a grave situation confronting 3/1 on 30 May was rooted in events that had occurred the day before, when the battalion broke off contact with the enemy in Wana Draw and headed for Shuri Castle. At the time of the disengage-

¹⁰ *CTF 31 AR*, pt III, p. 41.

¹¹ Effective at 1200 on 31 May, the 77th Division was pinched out of the line when the direction of its attack and that of the 96th Division was oriented towards the corps boundary below Shuri. The 77th moved to an assembly area in the rear on the next day, and its 305th Infantry was taken out of division reserve to cover the right rear of the corps advance. The 7th Division was assigned the zone below the Naha-Yonabaru valley and including the Chinen Peninsula, also on the 30th.



AIR DELIVERY SECTION Marines and ship's crew of USS Sargent Bay load a TBM with supplies to be dropped to Tenth Army troops. (USN 80-G-338840)



VMTB-232 TBM drops supplies to troops near Shuri. (USMC 126402)

ment, all battalion assault companies badly needed food, water, and ammunition. An air drop scheduled at 1800 on the 29th at the castle was not made, with the result that the frontline troops were without food and water for 36 hours.¹² Commenting on this later, the battalion commander noted:

During this period the battalion was operating under the worst imaginable conditions, no food, water, little ammunition, the battalion CP 2500 yards to the rear of the lines, battalion dump 1000 yards to the rear of the CP and all transportation hopelessly mired with the results that no food of any type was available and the men had resorted to drinking water from shell-holes due to their extreme thirst.¹³

Early in the morning of the 30th, Lieutenant Colonel Ross was informed that an air drop was scheduled for 0600, and shortly thereafter he learned that a very low ceiling had grounded the planes. The battalion's Marines had now been without food and water for two days and a night. This situation and an inadequate ammunition supply forced the battalion commander to tell Colonel Mason that unless this logistics problem was solved, it would be most difficult for the battalion to undertake any extensive operations. Finally, at 1335 an air drop was made, but another one had to be scheduled since most of the first had fallen outside of the drop zone and in enemy territory. Enough of the supplies were recovered, however, to issue each man one-third of a K-Ration¹⁴ and one canteen of water.

¹² *3/1 SAR*, pp. 35-36.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁴ This emergency ration, officially described as "Ration, Field K," was packed in a light-

While attempting to locate the headquarters of the *Thirty-second Army* at Shuri Castle, representatives from the 1st Division G-2 Section had discovered numerous caves containing many enemy documents of intelligence value. Together with these intelligence people, General del Valle had sent the division colors to Lieutenant Colonel Ross with a request that they be raised over the castle. After locating the remnants of a Japanese flagpole, the battalion commander had it erected near the southern wall, raised the American flag, and then ordered all observers to evacuate the area rapidly because he expected the Japanese to use the flag as an aiming point and to fire an artillery concentration on the position almost immediately.

Continuing supply problems prevented the 1st Marines from making any concerted attack on 30 May until the 1st and 2d Battalions had received supply air drops. On the left of the 1st Marines, the 306th Infantry extended to the right, allowing Colonel Mason's left battalion, 2/1, to move its left company to the right, relieving Company C, 1/1. Patrols from 1/1 ventured into the ruins of northern Shuri, but were

weight, compact, wax-wrapped cardboard container measuring 7 inches by 3½ inches by approximately 2 inches. This unit could be easily carried in either a haversack or field pack. For variety, there were three different types of units or components—breakfast, dinner, and supper—furnishing about 3,750 calories for the three meals. The ration contained such items as biscuits, enriched chocolate bars, chewing gum, cigarettes, a packet of one of several types of beverage powder, and the main course—a canned protein food consisting of one of the following: chopped ham and egg, pork and veal loaf, cheese, pork luncheon meat, or corned beef hash.

forced back by machine gun and 47mm AT fire from well-entrenched positions in a ravine southwest of Wana Draw. On the right of the division zone, the 5th Marines was also limited to local patrol action by its need to bring supplies forward over muddy routes.

On 30 May, in torrential rains, the 22d and 29th Marines pressed the 6th Division attack east to clear the north bank of the Kokuba. Heavy enemy resistance, built around a framework of mutually supporting machine guns emplaced in the mouths of Okinawan tombs, was made even more effective by the fact that the Marines had no armor support for the greater part of the day. Jump-off time was advanced one hour to 1000 to permit division interpreters and cooperative prisoners to broadcast surrender inducements over loudspeakers to enemy holdouts in front of the 22d Marines. A barrage of small arms and mortar fire signified a negative response to this effort. After a 15-minute artillery, rocket, and naval gunfire preparation, the division attack began at 1010.

On the right of the division line, Lieutenant Colonel Woodhouse was killed by sniper fire while in the van of 2/22 controlling its attack. The battalion executive officer, Major John G. Johnson, assumed command and maintained unit pressure against the caves and the improvised tomb-pillboxes thwarting the Marine advance. By nightfall, after a series of costly local attacks and mopping-up activities, the battalion possessed hill positions overlooking the Kokuba estuary and the trans-island rail line between Naha and Yonabaru.

The 3d Battalion passed through 1/22 and then jumped off abreast of 2/22, meeting the same heavy resistance along the way. Blocking the 3/22 path to the Kokuba was commanding terrain in which Knob Hill, Hill 27, and a number of radio towers were located. At approximately 1530, 3/22 secured this area, but only after the ground troops had fought a number of small arms and grenade-throwing duels while clearing the enemy out of an intricate system of tunnel-connected caves. Following the seizure of this high ground, Lieutenant Colonel Clair W. Shisler reorganized his 3d Battalion and continued the advance to the high ground north of and overlooking the Kokuba. As his troops dug in for the night, they were subjected to intense mortar and artillery fire.

Advancing alongside of 3/22, 1/29 made the main regimental effort. During the attack, a Marine threw a satchel charge or a grenade into one of the tombs along the advance route, setting off an estimated ton of explosives and causing approximately 25 casualties in Company C; B immediately passed through to maintain the attack.¹⁵ Although machine gun and small arms fire from the numerous caves and fortified tombs in the battalion zone slowed the progress of the attack, 1/29 was able to advance under the cover of fire support from 3/29. The latter also advanced slowly, meanwhile maintaining contact with the 5th Marines on its left. At the end of the day, both 6th Division assault regiments had gained 800 yards and were in firm possession of the key

¹⁵ *6th MarDiv G-3 Jnl, Ph III, 30May45.*

high ground overlooking the Kokuba from the south.

During the night of 30–31 May, the volume of enemy artillery and mortar fire on Tenth Army positions was noticeably lighter in comparison to that which had fallen previously in the battle for Shuri. When assault troops surged towards troublesome Japanese pockets remaining about Shuri on the morning of the 31st, they were pleasantly surprised by the almost complete lack of opposition. Only sporadic sniper and machine gun fire broke the weird silence in an area that had just recently been filled with the din and crackle of battle. Adhering to the *Thirty-second Army* withdrawal plan, rearguard forces from the *44th IMB*, *32d Regiment*, and *22d IIB* had pulled out of their positions during the night to occupy the second holding line north of Tsukasan.¹⁶ Another aspect of the completely reversed situation was the break in weather, which changed the seemingly unending period of rain and solid overcast into a day of sunshine and high scattered clouds.

American ground units moved into Shuri, later described as “a perfect final defensive position,”¹⁷ and found it to be nearly abandoned. Soldiers from XXIV Corps quickly advanced and occupied assigned objectives, and spent most of the time thereafter mopping up isolated pockets of resistance. Only on the extreme left of the 96th Division line, where attack elements encountered the Tsukasan line defenses, was the corps objective not taken. The encirclement and occupation of Shuri became a

reality at 1255 on the 31st, when patrols from 3/383 and 1/5 made contact south of the city.¹⁸

In a coordinated sweep with the 77th Infantry Division, the 1st Marine Division cleared out the enemy-infested areas immediately surrounding Shuri. Mopping up of bothersome pockets in the northern outskirts of the city and in the stubborn Wana Draw was completed by noon. Later in the day, the 1st Marines was ordered into division reserve and given a primary mission of patrolling Shuri.

Despite supply and evacuation problems, the 5th Marines continued its southeasterly advance towards the hills just north of Shichima, overlooking the Naha-Yonabaru highway. The 3d Battalion made the main effort for the regiment, jumping off at 1445—15 minutes after it had received an air drop of water and ammunition. Upon reaching the hills, rifle and machine gun fire from Japanese blocking units forced the battalion—on the corps boundary—to dig in for the night. A gap existing between the 1st and 3d Battalions was plugged by Company F of 2/5.

The heretofore steady progress of Tenth Army flanking units was slowed on 31 May when enemy resistance to the 6th and 7th Divisions became stronger. General Shepherd's assault regiments jumped off at 0730 and rapidly moved forward for several hundred yards before encountering unyielding Japanese positions in the hill mass west of Shichima and Kokuba. These were occupied by Admiral Ota's ragtag naval troops and units of the *32d Regiment*. The Marine advance was held up until

¹⁶ *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 120.

¹⁷ *3/1 SAR*, p. 38.

¹⁸ *1/5 SAR*, p. 9.

about 1300, when a coordinated assault was launched under the cover of long-range support fire furnished by a company of tanks situated as close to the line of departure as a minefield and a sea of mud would permit.

Although the division had some evidence that the enemy defense was crumbling here, the Marines had gained only 400 yards by nightfall and were still short of their objective. In night defense lines that were consolidated along a series of low hills immediately west of the objective, the assault battalions made preparations for a coordinated attack on 1 June. All through the night, artillery batteries fired concentrations on suspected Japanese gun positions in an attempt to destroy them.

On the left flank of the Tenth Army, the 7th Division continued its two-pronged attack. One assault force drove up the Naha-Yonabaru valley against a chain of well-defended hills to reach the corps boundary at Chan; the second sent strong combat and reconnaissance patrols into the hills and valleys guarding the neck of Chinen Peninsula. Little opposition was met there.

By the end of May, the Tenth Army had overcome the seemingly impregnable Shuri redoubt, only to run into newly organized defenses positioned along the Kokuba River and north of Tsukasan. Since the initial landings on L-Day, General Buckner's forces had killed an estimated 62,548 Japanese soldiers and captured 465 others in 61 days of bloody endeavor. The Tenth Army had seized all but eight square miles of the island, and that parcel was becoming a pocket of doom into which the remnants of General Ushijima's

army were being driven. The battle so far had cost the Americans 5,309 men dead, 23,909 wounded, and 346 missing in action.¹⁹

On 1 June, as though in anticipation of an imminent end to the fighting but in fact on the date stipulated in the ICEBERG logistics plan, unloading operations off Hagushi changed from the assault to the garrison phase.²⁰ This same day, the second consecutive clear one, the direction of the attack was re-oriented in the XXIV Corps zone. In the 96th Division zone, the 381st and 383d Infantry Regiments relieved the 32d Infantry north of Chan on the line paralleling the corps boundary, where it turned east to end at a point 1,100 yards north of Karadera. A day later, General Griner's two regiments were to attack to the south; their objective, the hill complex approach to the Tomui-Aragusuku-Meka area. Guarding the right rear of the corps advance was 2/305, which had moved out to the boundary when the 77th and 96th Divisions had exchanged zones of responsibility.

With its 32d Infantry in reserve, the 7th Division attacked to the south in a much narrower zone than it had been assigned before. During the previous two days, combat patrols had thoroughly scouted and prepared the way, enabling the division to gain an average of 1,100 yards against steadily rising opposition. Facing the Americans were elements of the *7th Heavy Artillery* and *23d Shipping Engineer Regiments*, which slowly pulled back towards Itokazu during the day.

¹⁹ Tenth Army G-3 Rpt No. 67, dtd 1Jun45.

²⁰ *CTF 31 AR*, pt III, pp. 44-45.

Maintaining constant pressure, both IIIAC assault divisions made substantial gains on 1 June in a coordinated attack, which resulted in the capture of all the high ground commanding the cross-island highway running through the Kokuba River valley. The 1st Division attack was made by 1/5 and 3/5, which overran enemy positions in the hills east of Shichina to advance 1,500–1,800 yards before halting for the night. (See Map IX, Map Section.)

In the 6th Division Zone, the 22d and 29th Marines broke through the defenses that had held them up the day before and advanced swiftly in a smoothly functioning tank-infantry attack. By late afternoon, the assault regiments possessed the high ground on the northern bank of the Kokuba, and sent patrols across the northern fork of the river to select suitable crossing sites. Having accomplished their mission of slowing the American advance, Japanese holding forces in the second defense line had withdrawn the previous night. Their action paved the way for the Tenth Army to continue the pursuit and to make an unopposed tactical river crossing.

According to oral instructions General Geiger gave him in the early morning of 1 June, General Shepherd was given 36 hours to prepare his division for an amphibious operation. For as complex an operation as this, considerably more preparation time was usually allotted. Nevertheless, division planners were "to study the practicality of a shore-to-shore landing on Oroku."²¹

Major Walker's 6th Reconnaissance Company was to reconnoiter the peninsula after dark on the 1st. The company was to move out at 2100 and cross Naha harbor in rubber boats to the northern part of Oroku. At 1110 that morning, General Shepherd received a IIIAC warning order alerting him that the 6th Division axis of attack would probably be reoriented in the direction of Oroku Peninsula, where the division would land to secure the harbor and seize the airfield.²² To prevent disclosure of the presence of the reconnaissance company Marines on Oroku, all IIIAC units were directed to restrict the use of illuminating and parachute flares between 2030 and 0300, 1–2 June.²³

Four scouting teams of four men each spent six hours on enemy-held Oroku, where they heard considerable Japanese activity and were fired upon. On their return, the reconnaissance teams reported that the peninsula was Japanese-occupied, but that the enemy was not there in great strength.

Besides ordering the Oroku attack, General Geiger directed the 1st Division to assume responsibility for and occupy the zone of the 6th, excluding Naha, on 2 June. Colonel Snedeker's 7th Marines relieved the 22d and 29th Marines shortly after noon of this date, and General del Valle assumed control of the overall zone at 1215. On the left, 2/7 took over the 22d Marines line along the north bank of the Kokuba, and 3/7 replaced the 29th Marines in hill positions west of Kokuba village.

²² *6th MarDiv G-3 Jnl, Ph III, 1Jun45.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²¹ *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III, p. 15.*

Immediately after arriving at the Kokuba, 2/7 was ordered across the river and into the hills bordering its south bank. Company E was the first to cross. Utilizing a damaged but still-standing bridge in the battalion zone,²⁴ the company gained the heights north of Tomigusuku and fought off an estimated 50 to 100 Japanese who tried to turn the Marine right flank while Company G was firing over the bridge. By nightfall, Company F had joined the other two companies in establishing a firm bridgehead south of the river, and thus safeguarded the crossing site.

Early in the morning of 2 June, the 5th Marines crossed the north branch of the Kokuba over a railroad bridge that the retreating Japanese had neglected to blow up. While attempting to advance beyond a seized ridge guarding the approaches to the village of Tomigusuku, the 5th Marines assault units were pinned down by intense frontal and flanking rifle and machine gun fire, which prevented their making even limited gains for the rest of the day. Despite this bitter enemy reaction here, the 5th Marines advance put the final segment of the Naha-Yonabaru highway into Tenth Army hands. Just before midnight, the enemy launched a determined counterattack—the first since his withdrawal from Shuri—against Marine lines. The Japanese were driven back, but left behind 20 dead.

To the left of the IIIAC zone, XXIV Corps units made large gains all along the line. In the process of cleaning out Chan, seizing the high ground north of Tera and Kamizato, and penetrating

through Japanese defenses to the west of Kamizato and Karadera, 96th Division assault regiments advanced 800–1,200 yards. Farther west the 7th Division succeeded in pushing forward 2,400 yards against slight opposition from retreating Japanese garrison troops. At the end of 1 June, Army infantry troops were positioned for a final drive to close off Chinen Peninsula entirely. Rain during the night of 1-2 June again resulted in the mud and supply problems experienced by all Tenth Army units earlier, and forced them to accommodate their operations more to the obstacles posed by the rain and mud than the enemy.

By noon of 2 June, the 6th Marine Division had received final instructions regarding the Oroku operation, and General Shepherd's staff had already begun detailed planning. After examining possible courses of action and schemes of maneuver for the landing—and eliminating those that seemed least likely to be successful—the division commander decided to land on the Nishikoku beaches on the northeast coast of the peninsula and drive south, generally following an axis of attack astride the high ground in the center of the peninsula. (See Map 17.)

Governing the acceptance of this landing plan was the fact that Nishikoku had low rolling ground leading from the most suitable beaches on Oroku to the airfield and Naha harbor. In addition, an attack inland from this beachhead would be angled in the best direction for comprehensive, massed artillery support from the mainland.²⁵ Other landing sites

²⁴ *7th Mar Hist*, p. 21.

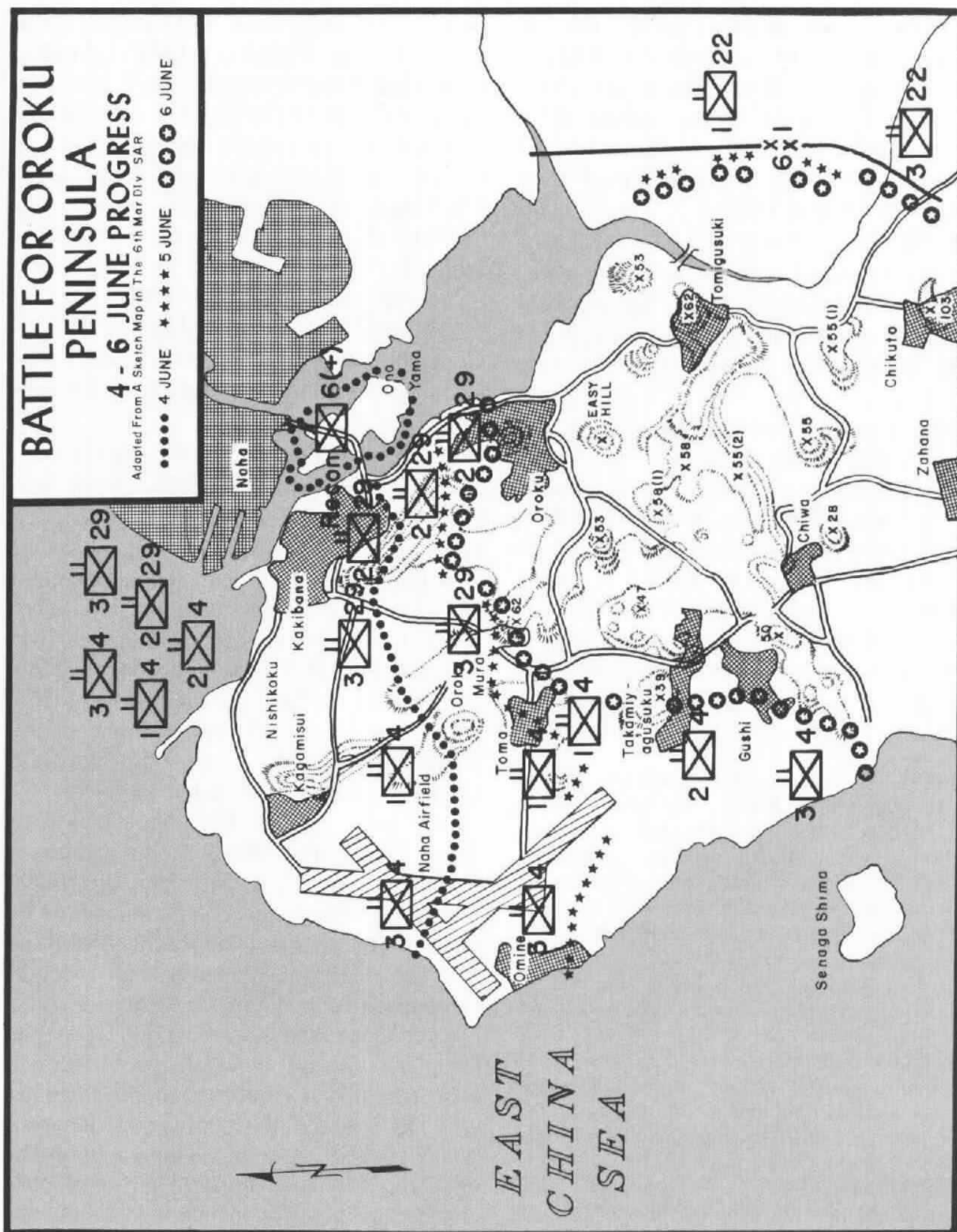
²⁵ *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*, p. 16.

BATTLE FOR OROKU PENINSULA

4 - 6 JUNE PROGRESS

Adapted From A Sketch Map in The 6th Mar Div SAR

●●●● 4 JUNE ★★★★★ 5 JUNE ○○○○ 6 JUNE



MAP 17

T. L. RUSSELL

on Oroku under consideration were rejected because the high seawall ringing the peninsula would have to be breached, which time limitations prohibited. Also the enemy had direct observation of these other prospective beachhead sites from high ground inland.

Owing to a shortage of amphibious tractors then existing at Okinawa, General Shepherd could count on having only 72 LVTs available for the landing.²⁶ Most of the other amtracs were in poor condition as a result of continued extensive employment during the heavy rains in ship-to-shore supply operations and in coastal runs supplying the flanking divisions of the Tenth Army, and an almost-complete reliance on the LVTs for overland supply of frontline units. Nevertheless with the LVTs he was given, General Shepherd planned to land his division in a column of regiments, the 4th Marines in assault. Colonel Shapley in turn, chose his 1st and 2d Bat-

talions to spearhead the attack. The regiment was to drive rapidly inland to seize dominating terrain near Kagamisui, just north of the airfield, from which it was to cover the movement ashore of the rest of the division. As soon as the 4th Marines had moved beyond the beachhead area onto its objective, and when LVTs had made the return trip and were available, the 29th Marines would land. After this phase of the assault had been completed, tanks and supplies would be unloaded from landing craft.

The 6th Division assault forces were to mount out from assembly areas near the mouths of the Asato and Asa Rivers, and supplies and tanks would be loaded at a point that had been developed near Machinato and named Loomis Harbor after Colonel Francis B. Loomis, Jr., the G-4 for III Amphibious Corps.²⁷ Because it would be difficult to maintain a waterborne resupply operation continuously during the peninsular fighting, General Shepherd decided to seize Ono Yama concurrently with the Oroku assault. This small island in the middle of Kokuba Channel, across from the southern end of the Naha Canal, served as an anchor for bridges from the mainland and the peninsula. Once a task force of reconnaissance company Marines reinforced by a company of LVT(A)s had taken the island, it would provide security for an engineer detachment that was to repair the damaged bridges. After its capture, Ono Yama served the 6th Division as a logistic support base that was located fairly close to the fighting.

²⁶ At the beginning of the campaign, the 4th and 9th Amphibian Tractor Battalions with a total of 205 LVTs were attached to the 6th Marine Division. Added to those in the 1st and 8th Battalions attached to the 1st Marine Division, the total number of LVTs available to IIIAC was 421. *IIIAC AR*, chap VII, p. 101. The resupply of spare parts for LVTs was totally inadequate, especially in the case of such vitally needed basic items as tracks, track suspension system parts, front drive assemblies, and transmission parts. The lack of all of these deadlined a good many LVTs and severely limited the amount of support they could have provided during the drive to the south and in the Oroku landing. At the end of the campaign, 75 LVTs had been completely destroyed as a result of enemy action, or, having been badly damaged, they were cannibalized for spare parts. Of the 346 vehicles remaining, 200 were deadlined for lack of spare parts. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁷ Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 126.

Both logistical and personnel preparations for the assault were increasingly complicated by the almost-complete breakdown of the road net as a result of the resumption of heavy rain. Therefore, all division tactical and support movement had to be made over water. "Even the division CP, deploying to a forward location near Amike was required to move entirely by DUKWs."²⁸ Despite these handicaps, all 6th Division assault and support units made ready for the amphibious landing on K-Day, 4 June; the reinforced reconnaissance Marines were to land at 0500 on Ono Yama, and the main assault force 45 minutes later on Oroku.

While the 6th Division was temporarily out of the fighting and preparing for the Oroku invasion, the attack south increased in impetus and force. By late afternoon of 3 June, the 7th Infantry Division had reached the east coast of Okinawa below Kakibana and cut off the Chinen Peninsula completely. The 32d Infantry then moved into the hill complex of the peninsula to destroy any members of the Japanese garrison still remaining. General Arnold consolidated the lines of the 17th and 184th Infantry in the hills overlooking Itokazu and Toyama, where the soldiers poised for an attack to the southwest against Kiyamu Peninsula positions. (See Map IX, Map Section.)

To the right of the 7th, the 96th Division also scored gains on 3 June. Kamizato, Tera, and then Inasomi fell after only a perfunctory enemy defense. Before halting the attack to set up night defenses, General Bradley's assault regi-

ments had taken 1,400 yards of enemy territory, even though the combination of continuing bad weather and almost insurmountable supply problems seemed to conspire against further American successes. At sunset, 96th Division troops overwhelmed determined enemy defenders to seize commanding terrain in the hill mass north of the road and rail junction at Iwa. Because an already-existing gap between Marine and Army units had been widened by the accelerated pace of the XXIV Corps, the 305th Infantry continued its role of guarding the exposed flank of the corps at the boundary between it and IIIAC.

To the right of the 305th, from midnight, 2 June, to dawn the next day, the 5th Marines frustrated persistent enemy attempts to infiltrate its lines. After sunrise, the Marines spent the morning probing the front with patrols, which soon were pinned down by scattered but well-placed enemy fire from positions south of Tsukasan and west of Gisushi. When the 1st and 3d Battalions could move forward no further, 2/5 was alerted to its possible commitment to ease the situation.

At 1230, Lieutenant Colonel Benedict was ordered to circle around the left battalion—1/5—by moving in a wide arc through the XXIV Corps zone, and to outflank and come up behind enemy strongpoints on the high ground near Tomusu and Gishusi. Taking only equipment that it could carry, the battalion moved out at 1330. At 1800, after having trekked over a difficult, muddy, and circuitous route, it arrived at a jump-off position 400 yards east of its objective. Twenty minutes after arriving here, 2/5 attacked with Companies E and G in

²⁸ *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*, p. 16.

the assault and quickly secured the target against only slight enemy resistance.

As 2/5 Marines began to dig in, they found that the entire ridge contained a well-organized cave defense system, and began blowing up cave entrances to seal them. A white phosphorous grenade thrown into one cave set off what apparently was a Japanese ammunition dump; the resulting explosion blew up the entire side of the hill in the Company E sector, killing 3 Marines and wounding 17. The exposed 2/5 position ahead of the 1st Division line presented the battalion with a most difficult task of evacuating casualties, which was accomplished only "by invaluable assistance" provided by 2/383 on its right.²⁹

While 2/5 was outflanking the Gisuhi position, at 1530 the 1st and 3d Battalions resumed the regimental attack under enemy fire which had lessened considerably since the morning. When these two battalions halted at 1900, they had advanced 1,500 yards and through Tsukasan, placing the 5th Marines south of the former rear command post of the *Thirty-second Army*. The relative ease with which the 1st Division had advanced on 3 June indicated that the Japanese rear guard had once again withdrawn towards fixed positions on Kiyamu.

Spearheaded by 1st Reconnaissance Company patrols, assault units of the 7th Marines rolled up 200 yards in the division right. This advance established Marine control of virtually the entire hill mass south of Kokuba. Scattered enemy holding groups constantly harassed advancing Marines on the right

flank during the day, however, with mortar, machine gun, and machine cannon fire from emplacements in the hills guarding the entrance to Oroku Peninsula. This steady enemy fire constantly menaced supply and evacuation parties traveling a well-worn route into the regimental zone from the only bridge over the Kokuba River. A combination of this harassment and the difficulty of negotiating over rain-damaged road nets again forced the Marines to depend upon air drops as a source of supply for rations and ammunition.

To fulfill the logistic requirements of the ground forces, the Avengers of VMTB-232 were kept as busy in June as they had been in May air dropping pre-packaged loads to IIIAC and XXIV Corps units that could not be replenished through normal supply channels. The squadron made 24 drops on 1 June; 32 on 2 June; 24 on 3 June.³⁰ Having received a supply replenishment from planes during the day, both assault battalions of the 7th Marines were across the Kokuba by nightfall of the 3d and solidly set in the hill mass south of the river; 3/7 was in contact with 1/5, and the regiment was tied in across its front.

Well within the period it had been allotted, the 6th Division completed arrangements for its shore-to-shore operation by the end of 3 June. Beacon lights to mark the line of departure were set in place 1,200 yards north of the Nishikoku beaches at 1215 that day, and division assault forces were en route to board the LVTs at embarkation points on the west coast. The 22d Marines were

²⁹ 2/5 SAR, p. 16.

³⁰ VMTB-232 WarD, Jun45.

placed in IIIAC reserve in and around Naha; its regimental weapons company moved to the shore of the Kokuba estuary, where it set up its 37mm and self-propelled assault guns in position to support the 4 June landing. Supplementing the massive fire support provided by artillery, naval gunfire, air, and its own organic weapons, the 4th Marines would have the additional fire support of a company of LVT(A)s, a company of tanks, and a mobile rocket launcher detachment. All preparations were completed at 2300, and the 6th Marine Division stood poised for the Oroku Assault.

THE CAPTURE OF OROKU PENINSULA³¹

As directed in the landing plan, the 4th Marines were to land on beaches designated Red 1 and Red 2 with 1/4 on the right, 2/4 on the left. The total length of the beaches was approximately 600 yards. Offshore, a rough coral shelf about 200 yards long was a not-insurmountable barrier to the landing site. The assault wave was to be followed by the other waves in LVTs. As envisioned, the shore-to-shore movement would be a comparatively simple operation. In addition to the beacon lights marking the line of departure, the only other control measure was to be the normal radio communication between the assault units.

In the early morning darkness of 4

³¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*; *6th MarDiv Jnl, Ph III*; *4th Mar SAR, Ph III*; *22d Mar SAR, Ph III*; *29th Mar SAR, Ph III*.

June, troops and equipment loaded aboard the tracked amphibians according to plan. An intense prelanding bombardment was laid down on the target for an hour's duration before H-Hour; over 4,300 rounds of high explosive shells ranging in caliber from 75mm to 14-inch blasted suspected enemy positions on the high ground immediately behind the Nishikoku beaches.³² (See Map 17.)

Once loaded, the invasion flotilla headed south towards the target in two columns, 400 yards apart; 1/4 in the seaward column since it was to land on Red 2, the westernmost beach. Almost simultaneously with the beginning of the bombardment of Oroku, 3/5 began blasting Ono Yama, and 15 minutes later the 6th Reconnaissance Company landed on schedule, supported by LVT(A)s of the Army 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion.³³

During their approach to the line of departure, assault Marines were treated to the spectacle of the furious lashing given the beach area by the guns of 1 battleship, 2 heavy cruisers, 1 destroyer, and 15 battalions of artillery which joined in the cannonading. At the line of departure, the lead LVT(A) of each column signalled a column left, whereupon the following LVTs executed the movement, formed up into seven waves, and headed towards the beach. Four LCTs carrying 20 tanks and 10 LCMs carrying elements of the 4th Marines Weapons Company followed in the wake of the assault waves.

Before they had reached the line of departure, mechanical failures forced all

³² *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*, p. 16.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

of the tractors carrying 1/4 to slow down and some to fall out of the formation. Radio communication as well as overall contact was lost. By the time that the battalion had reached the line of departure, nine tractors had dropped out and only six were able to make the final run into the beach. Some of the cripples got underway again, but troops in the other amtracs had to be picked up by spare LVTs in the wave carrying the regimental headquarters. The battalion commander's request for a delay of H-Hour was refused by Colonel Shapley, who ordered the attack to proceed according to schedule. As a result, only two platoons of the right assault company of 1/4 and one from the left landed on time. The 2d Battalion experienced no difficulty during its approach and landing.

Intelligence estimates had indicated that the peninsula was defended by 1,200–1,500 enemy troops. At 0600, when the first Marines went ashore they saw no Japanese defenders on the beach, however, and were able to rush inland 300 yards to high ground against only scattered machine gun fire. All 2d Battalion units were ashore and reorganized in little more than a half hour after the first elements had landed.

By 0650, all tanks of Company A, 6th Tank Battalion, in support of 2/4, and attached engineer mine removal teams were ashore. Four self-propelled 105mm howitzers of the regimental weapons company also landed at this time. Except for one tank lost in a pothole, Company C tanks landed at 0800 and began supporting those troops of 1/4 already on the peninsula. The rest of the infantry

battalion came ashore during the remainder of the morning.

Once ashore, the assault forces found the terrain very open and generally flat, with several 50 to 100-foot tall hillocks breaking up the landscape. As the attack moved inland to the central, southern, and western portions of the peninsula, the Marines encountered many ridges and steep hills—the highest of which was some 183 feet in height. The small hills initially captured were unoccupied by the enemy, but close inspection showed that the terrain was honeycombed with tunnels and numerous firing ports, which, when manned, had given the defenders commanding all-around views of the area.

Following its surge beyond the beachhead, 2/4 met mounting resistance on the left. Extensive minefields on the plateau immediately adjoining the landing site and the rain-soaked ground held up the tank-infantry advance as well. Both obstacles restricted tank operations and forced the Shermans to remain roadbound. Many sections of the roads had been blown up by the enemy and the mediums were unable to bypass these spots over the bemired fields; the ground troops were thus threatened with having their armor support severely curtailed.³⁴ The job of filling in the cratered roads soon surpassed the capabilities of the tank dozers.

Although the 1/4 reserve, Company B was the only element of the battalion to land in near-full strength. It was then committed at once on the right of 1/4 and ordered to take the high ground overlooking Kagamisui. The company

³⁴ *6th TkBn SAR, Ph III*, p. 15.

promptly overran the objective maintaining the momentum of the battalion attack and permitting 1/4 to gain its objective, 1,000 yards inland, at 1100.

In regimental reserve, 3/4 was nevertheless committed to the right of 1/4 at approximately 0905, within 20 minutes after it had landed. The 3d Battalion immediately pushed forward to the edge of Oroku airfield. Observers noted that the field was overgrown with rough grass, was swampy, and appeared in very poor condition overall. Large revetments were ranged along the edges of the three runways. Even though they provided excellent concealment and some cover, it would have been dangerous to use them since the enemy seemed to have had them well ranged in with mortars. The wreckage of several planes, apparently strafed and bombed earlier by American aircraft, was strewn over the field. Running along the right (west) edge of the field was a seawall, heavily overgrown with palmetto and brush. On the eastern edge of the airdrome was a series of foothill ridges that were crisscrossed with caves and aircraft revetments.³⁵

An hour after 3/4 had landed, General Shepherd believed that the beachhead had been sufficiently enlarged to the point where it could accept the landing of a second regiment. Accordingly, he ordered the 29th Marines to begin moving to Oroku immediately. Two of Colonel Whaling's battalions were quickly transported to the peninsula and moved into the lines on the left of the 4th Marines. The 2d Battalion was ashore and relieving left flank units of

2/4 by 1300; 3/29 took over the rest of the zone at 1430, whereupon 2/4 went into regimental reserve.

At 0900, 6th Division wiremen ferried a four-trunk cable across the mouth of Naha Harbor in rubber boats, strung it over the mast of a sunken ship, and had it tied at the terminals of assault unit switchboards on Oroku at 1100. At the same time that this task was underway, division engineers worked rapidly to repair the bridges between Naha, Ono Yama, and the peninsula. Bridging operations began immediately after the harbor island had been secured at 0600. After 30 minutes of sharp fighting during which it killed an estimated 25 enemy soldiers, the 6th Reconnaissance Company deployed to positions where the scouts could protect engineers who were assembling the Bailey bridge.

Elsewhere on Ono Yama, other engineers inflated rubber pontoons that were to be placed into the water to support a bridge spanning the wide estuary between the island and Oroku. It was not possible to establish this link until Marines on the peninsula had neutralized heavy enemy machine gun fire aimed at puncturing and sinking the pontoons.

By nightfall, 1/29 was landed and in regimental reserve, 2/4 was set up in an assembly area as its regiment's reserve, and the attack had halted for the day. At this time, the invasion force had pushed inland 1,500 yards against steadily increasing resistance. In addition to this Japanese opposition, the attack had been slowed in the afternoon by very heavy rain storms as well as numerous minefields, whose neutralization and destruction taxed overworked mine-disposal teams.

³⁵ 3/4 SAR, Ph III, p. 5.

During the first day on Oroku, the assault forces had received a considerable amount of fire from a variety of automatic weapons ranging up to 40mm in caliber. It was later learned that these weapons had been stripped from the damaged aircraft on and around Oroku airfield and distributed to the ground defense force, which then was able to offer a more formidable response to the Marine invasion. From early evening and on through the night of 4-5 June, Marine lines were subjected to sporadic enemy artillery and mortar fire.

A startling new Japanese weapon met by Marines on Iwo Jima³⁶ was brought into the Okinawa campaign when the 6th Division was introduced to the enemy's 8-inch rocket. Dubbed a "Screaming Mimi" or "Whistling Willie" by the troops,³⁷ because of the noise it made while tumbling through the air end over end, the projectile was more a source of annoyance than danger and caused few casualties. Its explosion was loud and concussion great, but this rudimentary missile's fragmentation was ineffectual and its accuracy was poor. "It was launched from a pair of horizontal rails about 15 feet long, aiming was strictly hit or miss, a process of sandbags, guesswork, and luck."³⁸ The rockets continued to fall in rear areas during the night, while enemy snipers and would-be infiltrators were active.

Troops on Ono Yama received machine gun and spigot mortar fire in the darkness. These 320mm mortar shells, nicknamed "flying ashcans" by Ameri-

cans, had been employed only briefly earlier in the Okinawa campaign and had not appeared again until this time.

At 0700 on 5 June, 1/22 reverted to the 6th Division from corps reserve, and, as division reserve then, was deployed on the division boundary in the right (west) flank of the 7th Marines attacking south. At 0730, the Oroku assault resumed and moved slowly against determined stubborn opposition until noon, when the 4th Marines was halted by an enemy strongpoint near Toma.

Muddy ground on the right of the 4th Marines zone made it impossible to employ tanks, so a platoon of the tracked vehicles skirted the seawall to come up on the airfield behind 3/4—in whose zone Toma lay—to assist the infantry attack. As the armor drew near open terrain on the field, it began receiving enemy artillery fire. The 15th Marines was called upon to provide counterbattery fire against suspected enemy positions revealed by gun flashes; a tank officer adjusted this artillery fire from his forward position.³⁹ An inspection later disclosed that the 15th Marines had silenced four 120mm dual purpose, one 6-inch, and several field guns of smaller caliber. Blown roads and bridges in the 3/4 zone, not yet repaired by the engineers, forced the battalion to attack Toma without accompanying tanks, which provided direct fire support, however, from positions in the rear of the lines.

The enemy was well dug in in this sector and located in deep, strongly fortified caves that were impervious to all but pointblank fire. Since tanks were bogged down and not available, 37mm

³⁶ See Bartley, *Iwo Jima*, pp. 13, 13n.

³⁷ 3/29 SAR, Ph III, p. 4; 3/4 SAR, Ph III, p. 6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ 6th TkbN SAR, Ph III, p. 16.

guns were brought to the front and employed to good advantage against the enemy positions. After having been stymied through most of the day, 3/4 finally overran the Japanese defenses late in the afternoon with the aid of the fire from M-7s in the 1/4 zone and the support of tanks that had rumbled into position behind the 3d Battalion earlier. By nightfall, the battalion held 75 percent of the airfield and favorable jump-off positions for the resumed attack on the next day.

In the right center of the 4th Marines zone, 1/4 became pinned down by frontal and flanking fire almost immediately after it attacked the morning of the 5th. When 3/4 cracked open the Toma defenses, the 1st Battalion was able to take up the attack again. As it did so, 1/4 moved forward over terrain that was broken by a number of steep hills containing many extensive tunnels in the mouths of which machine guns were emplaced and sited for all-around defense.⁴⁰ The 4th Marines' commander noted that the heavy resistance met all along his line was reminiscent of that encountered in the battle for Naha.⁴¹ When the attack for the day ended at 1700, 1/4 held positions on high ground overlooking Ashimine and Toma on the right, and an unnamed village, designated "Oroku Mura,"⁴² on the left.

⁴⁰ *4th Mar SAR, Ph III*, p. 9.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *1/4 SAR, Ph III*, p. 5, Literally translated, "mura" means township, or in this case prefecture; Oroku Mura referred to the political subdivision in which the peninsula resided. The naming of this village was a matter of happenstance since the map designation OROKU MURA was printed directly above the village's location on the map.

Overcoming both bitter enemy resistance and problems of supply and evacuation, the 4th Marines advanced the division line 1,000 yards on the 5th. Frontline units experienced considerable small arms and automatic weapons fire as well as many grenade launcher barrages, "but very little heavy mortar and no artillery fire, which was a relief to all hands."⁴³ The enemy placed the artillery and mortar concentrations on rear areas instead, however, preventing LVTs from using the tank route leading to 3/4 positions to give that battalion supply and evacuation support. A 50-man working party, organized at regimental headquarters to replace the amphibious tractors, hand-carried urgently needed supplies up to 3/4, and took out evacuees on its return to Colonel Shapley's CP.⁴⁴

The 29th Marines made slow but steady progress on 5 June against enemy opposition that was moderate to heavy. By 1400, the regimental advance was slowed when assault units encountered a strong center of resistance near Hill 57, at the southeast outskirts of Oroku Mura. This strongpoint gave trouble to left flank elements of the 4th Marines also. A Japanese counterattack launched against 3/29 before the battalion had moved forward 1,000 yards was easily blunted, but fire from enemy positions located in the areas of adjacent battalions finally forced the 3rd Battalion to hold up.

The 2nd Battalion continued to push its left flank southeast along the banks of the Kokuba, and finally secured a

⁴³ *4th Mar SAR, Ph III*, p. 9.

⁴⁴ *3/4 SAR, Ph III*, p. 6.

bridgesite area opposite Ono Yama. This permitted the engineers to float a 300-foot pontoon bridge into position. Pausing only to leave security detachments at the bridge as a guard against enemy attempts to destroy it, the battalion continued the attack. At 1810, the first LVT crossed over the bridge to Oroku from Ono Yama, opening a direct ground supply line to the assault troops.⁴⁵

In the course of their operations on 6 June, the two assault regiments of the 6th Division uncovered major enemy defenses that were centered along the axial ridge running northwest-southeast along the length of Oroku Peninsula. The terrain of this hilly region favored the defenders, not only by its complexity but also by a heavy overgrowth of tangled vegetation. Immediately after they had resumed their attacks on the 6th, both the 4th and 29th Marines were held up by determined enemy opposition from concealed and well-camouflaged defenses.

A platoon of tanks supported the attack of the 2/29 with overhead fire at ranges of up to 1,200 yards from a high ridge overlooking the battalion objective—the village of Oroku. Left flank elements of the 2d Battalion pushed forward and captured the high ground in the village itself, but were unable to advance much farther in the face of heavy enemy fire. A second platoon of tanks moved along the river bank and attempted to get into position to subdue this fire, but it was unable to bypass a destroyed bridge in its path.

On the right of the 29th Marines zone, 3/29 moved over terrain that “consisted

of a series of small temple-like hills, each of which had been converted into a fortress by construction of innumerable caves, from which mutually supporting automatic weapons could cover adjacent positions and deny the open ground between the hills [to the Americans].”⁴⁶ Naval personnel from Admiral Ota’s force manned the machine guns and 20mm cannon guarding the sector. After a day of bitter fighting without armored support—the narrow roads in the battalion zone were heavily mined and cratered, and impassable to tanks—the gains of 3/29 were limited to a scant 150 yards.

Immediately fronting the 1/4 line of attack was a hill the Marines called “Little Sugar Loaf,” that 3/29 had been unable to take earlier. Lieutenant Colonel George B. Bell planned for his infantry to capture it by means of a double envelopment coordinated with a tank drive up the center of the valley leading to the objective. Assault companies forming the wings of the envelopment were pinned down as soon as they jumped off. The attack did not begin until 1530, when support tanks arrived and were in position. Although the advance began to gain momentum, the battalion commander thought that night would fall before the objective was taken and ordered his assault elements back to the lines occupied that morning, with little to show for the day’s efforts. Although 1/4 had demonstrated how the enemy defenses could be breached in this sector, it was not to have the satisfaction of doing it itself; early the next day it was relieved by 2/4.

⁴⁵ *6th MarDiv Jnl, Ph III, 5Jun45.*

⁴⁶ *29th Mar SAR, Ph III, p. 8.*

To the right of 1/4 on 6 June, Lieutenant Colonel Hochmuth's 3d Battalion attacked following an air strike on the many ridges in front of the battalion. As Company I on the right prepared to move out, its right flank was subjected to some 20mm and heavier caliber fire from Senaga Shima, a small rocky island flanking the Marine lines and lying approximately 1,000 yards off the southern coast of the peninsula. Tenth Army artillery and naval gunfire support ships blasted the island, silencing all but the 20mm weapons. An air strike was urgently called for and arrived a half hour later. "As rack after rack of bombs fell," scoring direct hits on the Japanese emplacements, "the troops stood up and cheered."⁴⁷ (See Map 17.)

Disregarding the 20mm fire from Senaga as best they could, Marines from 3/4 moved rapidly forward as soon as the last plane in each of a series of air strikes made its final run over a target in front of the battalion. Scattered small arms fire paced the troops attacking over comparatively flat terrain, but 3/4 succeeded in securing the rest of the airfield by the end of the day.

Engineer road-construction crews and mine-disposal teams worked on 6 June in warm and clearing weather. Discovered and disarmed on the main north-south road bisecting the peninsula were 83 mines of all types. At noon, Company B of the tank battalion landed from LCTs with the rest of the battalion's tanks and immediately went into reserve.⁴⁸ Also on 6 June, the 22d Marines as a whole reverted from corps reserve;

3/22 joined the 1st Battalion on the division east boundary, adjoining the west flank of the 7th Marines driving south; and 2/22 was alerted to move to a new defense position elsewhere on the division boundary.

Considerable resistance continued to plague the 6th Division as it unrelentingly swept across the peninsula on 7 June. (See Map 18.) The 4th Marines again made the most satisfactory progress of the day, but its right flank, which had advanced against only slight opposition on the previous day, was confronted with a much stronger defense in the vicinity of Gushi. As 3/4 tried to take the last section of high ground on the west coast, its leading company came under a deadly machine gun and rifle crossfire at the same time that extremely accurate and heavy mortar barrages fell on the only route of approach to the battalion goal. Both direct and indirect supporting fires bombarded Japanese positions to no avail. At the end of the day the battalion commander, faced with the prospect of sustaining heavy casualties if he pushed on, decided to pull his forwardmost elements back and hold the ground already taken.

Colonel Shapley's 2d Battalion passed through 1/4 at 0730, and began its attack on Little Sugar Loaf with the supporting fires of 37mm guns, tanks, and self-propelled 105mm howitzers. Left flank elements of 3/4 also supported the attack as Company G maneuvered around to the right of the enemy position and took it at 1100.

Following its capture of Little Sugar Loaf, the 4th Marines pushed ahead slowly against machine gun fire coming from all directions and ever-stiffening

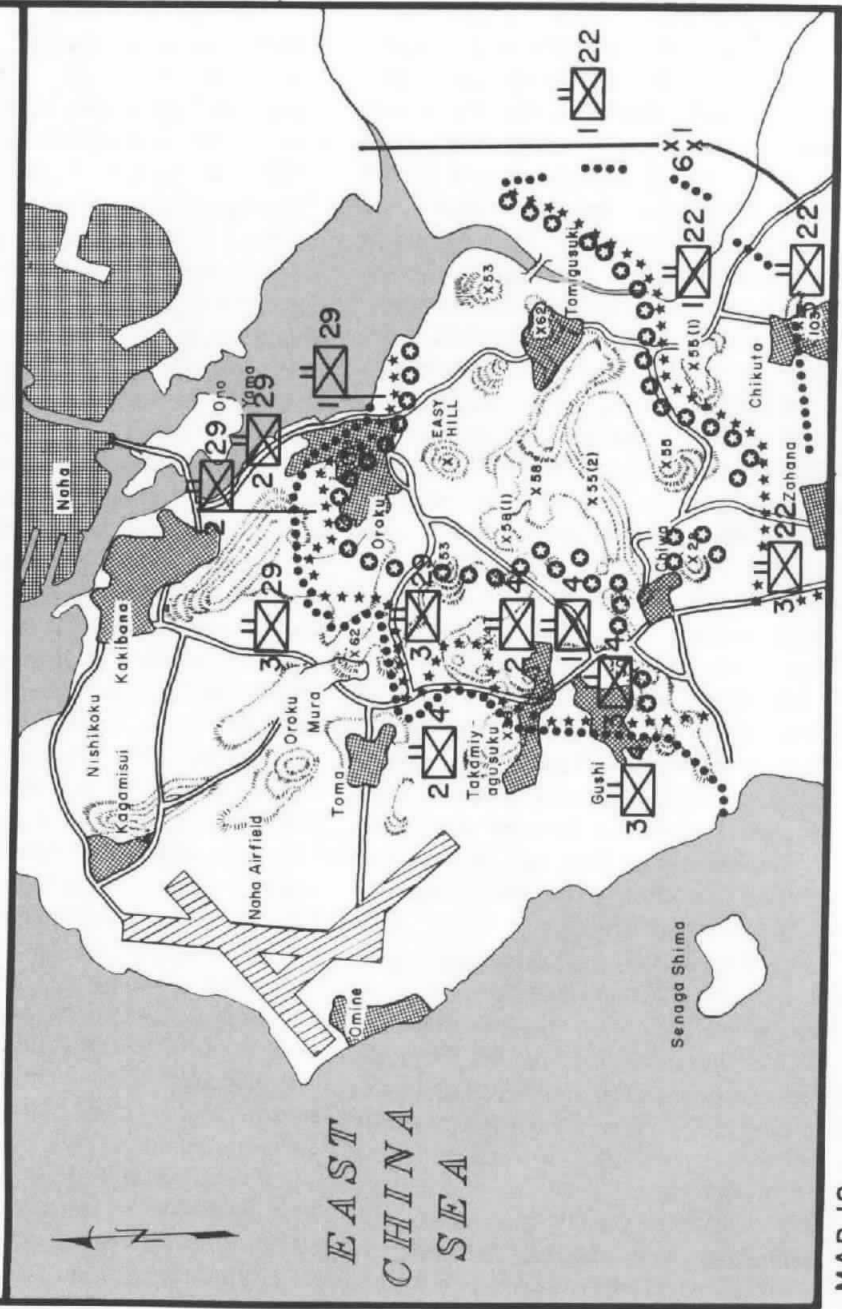
⁴⁷ 3/4 SAR, Ph III, p. 6.

⁴⁸ 6th TkbN SAR, Ph III, p. 16.

BATTLE FOR OROKU PENINSULA 7-9 JUNE PROGRESS

Adapted From A Sketch Map In The 6th MarDiv SAR

●●●● 7 JUNE ★★ ★★ 8 JUNE ○○○ 9 JUNE



EAST
CHINA
SEA

MAP 18

T. L. RUSSELL

enemy opposition. Frontline Marines, already expert in the technique of sealing caves, furthered their expertise while closing the many caves on Oroku with a deadly combination of direct fire, flame, and demolitions. Unit commanders soon surmised that the peninsula was being defended by an enemy force greater than the 1,500–2,000 soldiers and naval troops previously estimated. Captured documents and POWs substantially confirmed the fact that the Oroku defense had been reinforced by a number of naval troops, which had originally moved south to Itoman and then had been ordered back to the peninsula. This information also indicated that the original American strength estimate of naval personnel was faulty and now had to be revised upward because many Okinawan conscripts had been dragooned into the ranks of Admiral Ota's force.

Although many of the Japanese on Oroku had been killed after three days of fighting on the peninsula, the stubborn opposition of those still alive caused casualty figures in the 4th Marines to mount. Frontline units could only be supplied after dark because of the lethal fire covering approach routes. By nightfall, the lines of 3/4 extended in a southeasterly direction and faced north, while on the left, 2/4 still attacked towards the southeast. The boundary between the 4th and 29th Marines ran in a southeasterly direction down the middle of the peninsula.

Just to the left of the 4th Marines, 3/29 began the first of three days of extremely vicious fighting by a grenade and bayonet assault without armored support on the hill to its immediate front. During the period following these

three days, the battalion gained little ground, but killed an estimated 500 troops, destroyed a large variety of weapons, and sealed many caves containing enemy soldiers, supplies, and equipment.⁴⁹

Two factors served to restrict the progress of the 29th Marines on 7 June. Hostile enemy concealed in the rocky outcroppings of the coastal ridge paralleling the Kokuba pinned down the attackers with a drumfire from automatic weapons. Secondly, the positions of the enemy in a confined area and the proximity to the 29th of adjacent friendly troops severely limited the employment by the regiment of its supporting fires. To destroy the Japanese weapons positions and the soldiers manning them, gun crews from 2/29 manhandled their 37mm weapons up steep slopes to the ridge overlooking the enemy emplacements and effectively raked them with murderous direct fire.

In the zone of the 2d Battalion, tank-infantry teams made satisfactory progress towards their village objective. The boggy, steep, and difficult terrain and heavy concentrations of minefields that limited tank employment elsewhere on the peninsula were not in evidence in the east coastal zone, where the Shermans proved their worth. After crossing the newly constructed bridge at the site where a destroyed one had held up the tanks on the previous day, and rolling along the southern shore of Naha harbor, the tank platoon attached to 2/29 assisted the infantry in capturing Oroku village. Without pause, the battalion continued its attack and seized the high

⁴⁹ 3/29 SAR, Ph III, p. 5.

ground in the immediate vicinity of the village. Accurate and heavy enemy artillery fire and an extensive minefield then held the tanks up.

Along the division boundary, on 7 June the 22d Marines continued sending patrols out into the high ground immediately east of Chikuto. Having fixed the approximate center of enemy strength in this area, 3/22 moved two companies into position to attack the high ground designated Hill 103. By 1400, the Japanese stronghold was overrun, which effectively eliminated fire from that area on the 1st Division west flank, and gave it an additional measure of security.

Hill 103 proved to be an important enemy observation post occupied by a large number of Japanese troops. By choosing to remain in their caves, these soldiers sealed their own doom since this ineffectual defensive tactic confined their fields of fire and permitted the Marine attackers to outflank the position over covered routes of approach.⁵⁰

According to the original scheme of maneuver established for the Oroku invasion, the 4th and 29th Marines would drive towards the base of the peninsula in a southeasterly direction. But, the rapid pace of the division attack during its first four days on the peninsula had forced the enemy to withdraw to the south of Oroku village and, with his back to the Kokuba Gawa, into the hills which were honeycombed with strong defensive positions. General Shepherd's order on 8 June reorienting the axis of attack to the northeast was a formal recognition of the course that the battle was

taking. By this time, the 4th Marines on the right had advanced much further than the stalled 29th had in its zone on the left. Colonel Shapley's regiment was in the process of pivoting on the right flank elements of the 29th Marines in a counterclockwise movement that, when ended, would head the 4th in the direction of the hard core of Japanese resistance. In effect, the elements on the right wing of the 4th would sweep in front of the 22d Marines and continue on to the northeast. Neither the 22d nor the 29th Marine lines would remain static, however, for at this point all three infantry regiments were moving and inexorably tightening the circle around Admiral Ota's hapless force.

During the evening of 7 June, 1/4 was alerted and prepared to enter the line the next morning on the right of 3/4. For the 8 June attack, battalion boundaries were changed to reflect the new direction in which these two units were to head. Early on the 8th, Marine mortars laid a smoke screen over the route 1/4 was to take as it skirted along the eastern edge of the airfield while getting into jump-off positions. The 1st Battalion's objective was the high ground located approximately midway between Uibaru and Gushi. At 1030, the assault elements attacked and immediately were pinned down by a hail of fire from rifles, machine guns, and mortars.

Bitter enemy reaction to the Marine assault was unallayed despite the massive fires of American tanks, M-7s and organic infantry crew-served weapons. The attacks of the 1st and 3d Battalions were so coordinated that one could aid the other at any given time. Because the

⁵⁰ 3/22 SAR, Ph III, pp. 8-9.

tanks were unable to deliver direct support fire from their masked positions, they lumbered forward into the open shortly after midday and blasted the 1/4 objective for 20 minutes. After this preparation, Company A again attacked the high ground, this time overrunning enemy machine gun and mortar emplacements. At 1430, Company C jumped off to the south with armor support and proceeded to clean the enemy out of the high ground in its sector and down to the seawall. Meanwhile, Company B entered the battalion line to the left of Company A and swung north, tying in for the night with 3/4. After clearing the ground in the battalion rear, Company C moved into position on the right rear of A to cover the exposed battalion flank overlooking the north-south Itoman road. Thus, the 1st Battalion commander had the unique experience of having his three infantry companies make successful attacks in as many different directions.

While the 1st Battalion headed for the seawall, 3/4 began a cross-peninsular attack over extremely rugged terrain that was marked by a maze of interlacing ridges. "Every slope had its allotment of caves, each covering the other from flank and rear."⁵¹ Many of these caves were filled with enormous stores of explosives, which created a hazardous condition for the demolition teams attempting to seal them. Nonetheless, the indomitable teams set off hundreds of pounds of demolitions to destroy the honeycomb of cave entrances.

At 1300 on 8 June, an hour and a half after it had resumed its attack, 2/4 was

just 200 yards short of that day's objective. Taking time out only to regroup, the battalion continued its advance, but was slowed by ever-increasing Japanese fire from well-constructed positions in the mouths of caves. Nevertheless, by 1530, 2/4 assault elements had captured the objective and began organizing for night defense. Before dark, patrols were sent back to mop up bypassed positions in the battalion rear.

To effect a junction with the 4th Marines, the 22d Marines pivoted on its right flank unit, while the 3d Battalion on the left moved in a clockwise direction to tie in with 3/4. A 3/22 patrol moved to the seawall and made contact with the right flank element of the 4th at 1550. Shortly thereafter, another battalion patrol scouted potential LVT landing beaches on the East China Sea coast north of Itoman. Reinforced by an infantry company from the 2d Battalion, 1/22 sent out strong combat patrols to take two hills. One, Hill 55, was approximately 500 yards east of Chiwa, and the other, designated Hill 55-1, was almost the same distance east of the first. Throughout the day, the patrols received light small arms fire which increased in intensity as the hill objectives were neared. At 1800, the easternmost height, Hill 55-1, was in possession of the Marines, who were forced to withdraw under cover of darkness because of an ammunition shortage coupled with heavy incoming enemy mortar fire.

Originally scheduled to jump off at 0830, on 9 June, the 22d Marines attack was delayed until 0900. The 1st Battalion was to retake Hill 55-1, 2/22 was to seize Hill 55, while 3/22 was ordered to capture Hill 28 on the outskirts of

⁵¹ 3/4 SAR, Ph III, p. 7.

Chiwa. The plan of attack called for the 1st Battalion to seize its objective, and for the 2d Battalion to pass through and capture its target. Not until late afternoon was 1/22 able to complete its mission, and the few daylight hours remaining did not give 2/22 enough time to capture its objective. As a result, Colonel Harold C. Roberts concurred in the battalion commander's recommendation to postpone the attack.

Intense fire coming from Hill 55 prevented Lieutenant Colonel Shisler's 3/22 from outpostting Hill 28 until after dark. But Hill 26, just south of the primary battalion objective, was secured and occupied at 1000 by Company I, which soon made firm contact with 4th Marines patrols after the latter had cleaned out Chiwa.

In the course of its fighting on 9 June, the 4th Marines found little that was different from previous days' experiences on the peninsula, for:

The advance was still slow and tedious against bitter resistance. Every Jap seemed to be armed with a machine gun, and there was still some light and heavy mortar fire. Casualties continued to mount and the number of Japs killed soared over the maximum of 1500 which were supposed to have been defending, and there were still plenty left.⁵²

The 1st Battalion was ordered to seize high ground near Hill 55-2—the third hill so designated in the 6th Division zone—in the vicinity of Uibaru. The Marine attack was delayed until supporting armor could get into firing positions on the road paralleling the right flank of 1/4. Once ready to fire, the tanks were driven off by a bombardment

from an enemy rail-mounted 75mm gun, firing from cave ports on the side of a cliff near Chiwa.⁵³

Despite the temporary loss of its supporting armor, 1/4 attacked in the face of intense machine gun and mortar fire. Progress was slow and casualties increased steadily as the battalion advanced over ground that was honeycombed with caves, all of which had to be blown before they could be passed. At dusk, the right flank of 1/4 was anchored on a ridge northwest of Chiwa, while the battalion left flank extended to the outskirts of Uibaru, which had been taken earlier that day by 3/4.

A rocket barrage preceded the morning attack of 3/4 on 9 June. After the 3d Battalion moved out, difficult terrain prevented the battalion commander from maintaining unit control as his men worked closely with 2/4 to take the latter's objective, Uibaru. Upon occupying the village, the 3d Battalion received 20 casualties when a heavy enemy mortar concentration blasted its positions.

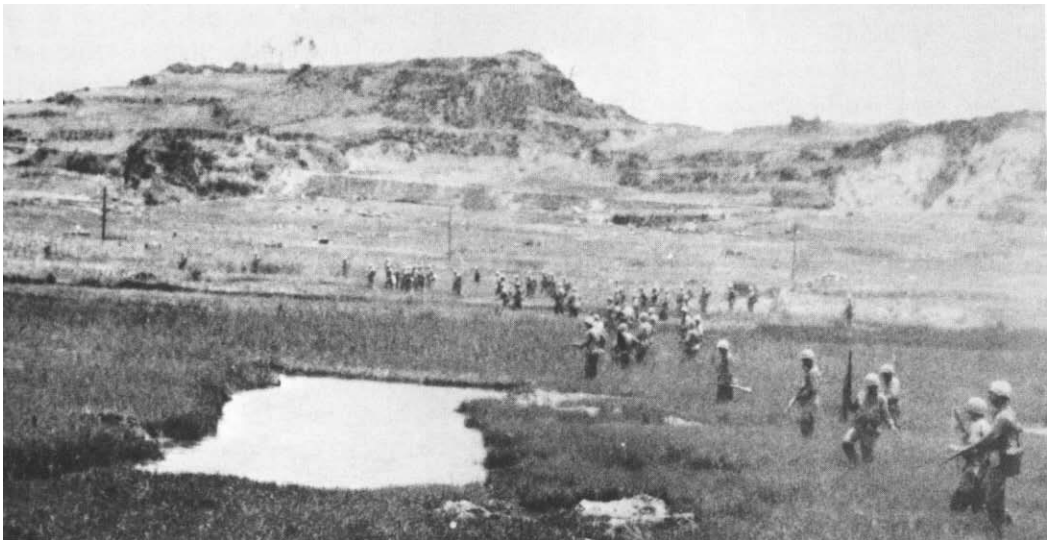
As the three infantry regiments of the 6th Division converged on the Oroku garrison from different directions, and completely isolated it from the main body of the *Thirty-second Army* at Kiyamu, Admiral Ota's mixed defense force was slowly compressed into a small pocket in the southeast region of the peninsula. On all levels, Marine com-

⁵³ 1/4 SAR, Ph III, p. 6; "The gun seemed as surprised by the arrival of the tanks as the tanks by fire from the gun, because it fired only HE [High Explosive projectiles] and no AP [Armor Piercing] and the tanks were able to get to cover without loss." Maj John R. Kerman ltr to CMC, dtd 7Jan48, hereafter *Kerman ltr*.

⁵² 4th Mar SAR, Ph III, p. 12.



6TH DIVISION MARINES land on Oroku Peninsula. Note the medium tank with flotation gear. (USMC 122601)



FINAL SWEEP of Oroku Peninsula in the last stages of the battle. (USMC 126176)

manders found it increasingly difficult to maintain unit control and to coordinate the employment of their supporting fires with those of adjacent friendly units because of the limitations imposed by restricted zones of action. These conditions conspired with the stubborn terrain and the no-less yielding defense to slow to some degree all of the attacking Marine battalions.

One of these units, 2/4, was ordered to capture the last remaining Japanese-held high ground in its zone. To complete this mission, the 2d Battalion was required to mount a frontal attack up a 400-yard wide valley over terrain that offered little cover or concealment. After the battalion jumped off at 1145 on 9 June, supported by tanks, M-7s, and 37mm guns, its initial progress was slow. Further inhibiting the advance was the fact that a lack of tank approaches to the objective lessened the amount of close armor support given to the infantry. Also, 2/4 had to move ahead cautiously, for it was attacking in the direction of its own artillery and across the front of the 29th Marines.

Supplementing the natural tank obstacles in this sector, the Japanese had constructed a tank trap in front of their well-prepared ridge position and further safeguarded the area by a liberal sprinkling of mines. Since the Marines had no armored bulldozers or tank dozers immediately available, they were unable to construct a bypass in time to permit tanks to move ahead to support 2/4. At 1530, therefore, the battalion commander decided to halt the attack for the day.

Late in the afternoon, after 1/4 had pushed through Gushi, a tank managed

to move through the now-demolished village and on to the road leading south to Itoman. Once in position on the flank of the cliff-emplaced enemy 75mm gun, it knocked the Japanese field piece out of commission. Only two shots were fired—one from the enemy gun, which missed and one from the tank, which didn't.⁵⁴

On 10 June, the momentum of the 6th Division attack was accelerated. (See Map 19.) Early that morning, heavy construction equipment began clearing all tank approaches to the 2/4 frontlines, and by 0815 tanks and self-propelled howitzers were moving into position to support the infantry attack. In coordination with the 29th Marines on the left, 2/4 jumped off at 0945 with three companies abreast in assault. Less than an hour later, all attack elements were on the objective and organizing defensive positions from which they were to support the attack of the 29th Marines for the next two days.

From all appearances, the end of the battle for Oroku was near. At the same time that 2/4 had broken through the Japanese lines, the 1st and 3d Battalions advanced against lessening resistance. By 1400 on 10 June, the battalion boundaries of the 4th Marines had converged to squeeze 3/4 out of the line, and it went into regimental reserve.

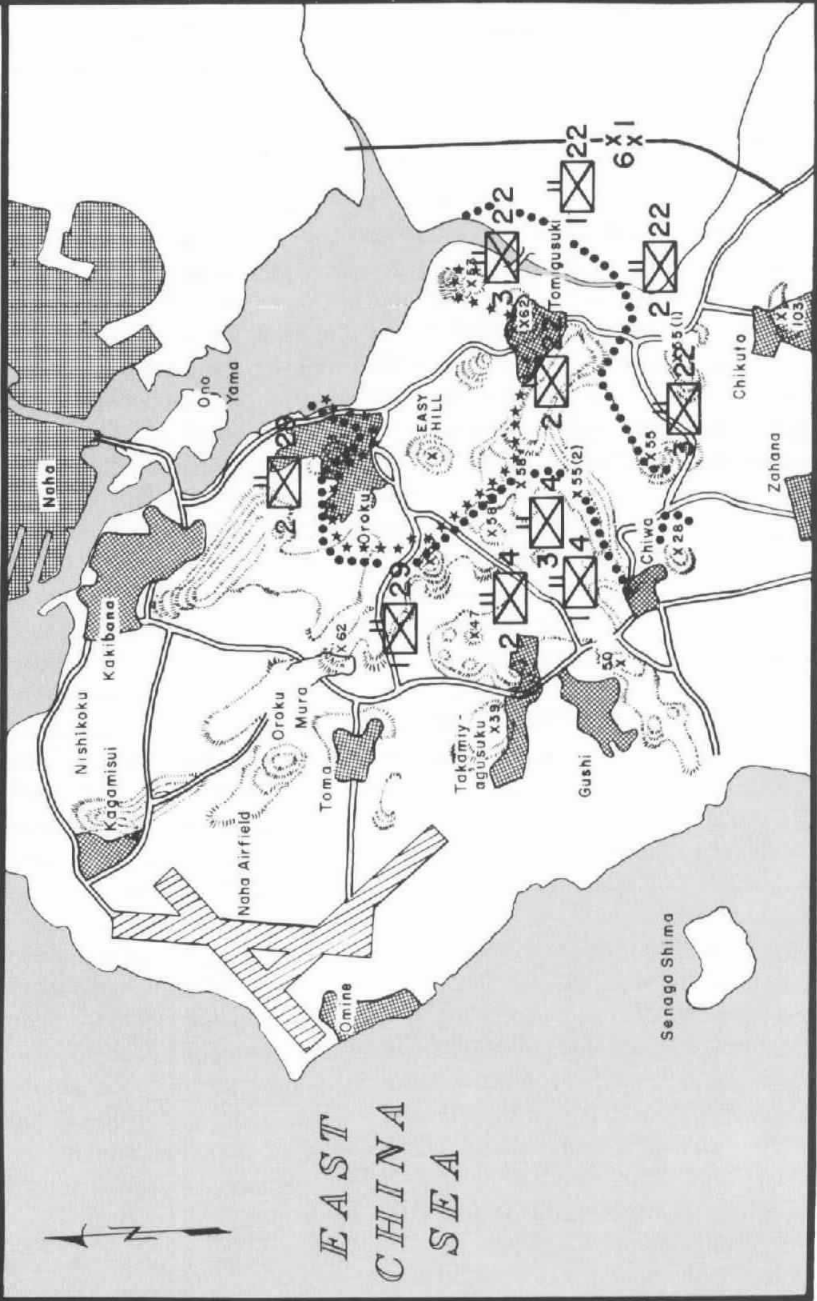
While the 4th Marines pressed eastward, the 22d Marines drove northeast towards Tomigusuki, with 2/22 making the main regimental effort. This 1st and 3d Battalions provided fire support from positions they then held. When 2/22 had seized its objective, 3/22 was ordered forward and coordinated its attack with

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

BATTLE FOR OROKU PENINSULA 10-11 JUNE PROGRESS

Adapted From A Sketch Map In The 6th MarDiv SAR

●●●●● 10 JUNE ★★★★★ 11 JUNE



MAP 19

T. L. RUSSELL

that of 1/4 on the left. The 4th and 22d Marines made slow but steady progress on 10 June, but 29th Marines battalions continued to meet stubborn resistance and could report only limited gains. Moving slowly through Oroku village behind flame tanks, 2/29 was held up and its way blocked when the lead tank was destroyed by a direct hit from a Japanese 8-inch shell. The regiment, therefore, was unable to reach the last major enemy defense pocket in the sector, which was located on the high ground west of Oroku village. The Japanese troops trapped here began a number of frantic attempts to break out.

During the night 10–11 June, a series of local counterattacks hit all along the front. The heaviest of these took place in the sector of 1/4, which counted over 200 enemy dead in front of its lines after dawn. In reaction to the unflinching and determined opposition of the Japanese defenders, General Shepherd launched an all-out armor-supported attack, committing the greater portion of eight infantry battalions to destroy the last vestiges of enemy resistance on Oroku.

In the 4th Marines zone, 3/4 resumed its attack at 0730, passing through the right elements of 1/4; the latter along with 2/4 remained in position to support the attack by fire. As the leading company began moving forward over a route that ran between Hill 58 (east of Uibaru) and Tomigusuki, it was held up by a hail of fire coming from Hill 62, on the right front. Covered by sniper fire from 1/4 on the left and tank supporting fire from the rear, Company I spent the better part of the day attempting to overcome the fortified hill block-

ing its path, and captured it before dark. By this time, Company K on the battalion right still was 300 yards short of establishing contact with 3/22.

The 22d Marines, led by 2/22, attacked Hill 62—north of Tomigusuki—following an intense 30-minute artillery preparation fired by six battalions of 105mm and one battalion of 155mm howitzers.⁵⁵ Once 2/22 had seized Hill 62, 3/22 was to support the 4th Marines until the latter masked its fires, after which it would pass through 2/22 and capture Hill 53, overlooking Kokuba Estuary. The 2d Battalion was unable to carry the hill in its first attempt and did not, in fact, seize the hilltop until 1220, after a heavy fire fight.

At 1300, 3/22 effected a passage of the 2d Battalion lines and was in position to attack 45 minutes later. Despite the lack of an artillery preparation on the objective,⁵⁶ the assault elements attacked, following a heavy mortar concentration. One factor preventing the tanks from gaining more favorable firing positions or even advancing with the infantry was the presence of well-concealed minefields along the route they were to travel. A mine-removal team worked under direct enemy fire and finally cleared a lane through which the tanks could pass to provide limited support. At 1450, Company L occupied Hill 53, giving the 6th Division high ground that overlooked not only the Kokuba Estuary, but also the entire Oroku area

⁵⁵ *22d Mar SAR, Ph III*, p. 12.

⁵⁶ "As the three regiments came closer together, it became dangerous and finally impossible to use even 60mm mortars, and some casualties were incurred from friendly fire on both flanks." *Bergren ltr.*

to the north where the 29th Marines had been unable to make any headway. That regiment attacked to seize the commanding terrain west of Oroku village repeatedly throughout the day, but was unable to find a way to overcome the series of small, mutually supporting hill positions that comprised the defense system here.

Undoubtedly aware that his end and that of the Oroku garrison force was not far distant, Admiral Ota had sent the following communique to his superiors in Tokyo on 6 June:

More than two months have passed since we engaged the invaders. In complete unity and harmony with the Army, we have made every effort to crush the enemy.

Despite our efforts the battle is going against us. My own troops are at a disadvantage since all available heavy guns and four crack battalions of naval landing forces were allocated to Army command. Also, enemy equipment is superior to our own.

I tender herewith my deepest apology to the Emperor for my failure to better defend the Empire, the grave task with which I was entrusted.

The troops under my command have fought gallantly, in the finest tradition of the Japanese Navy. Fierce bombing and bombardments may deform the mountains of Okinawa but cannot alter the loyal spirit of our men. We hope and pray for the perpetuation of the Empire and gladly give our lives for that goal.

To the Navy Minister and all my superior officers I tender sincerest appreciation and gratitude for their kindness of many years. At the same time, I earnestly beg you to give thoughtful consideration to the families of my men who fall at this outpost as soldiers of the Emperor.

With my officers and men I give three cheers for the Emperor and pray for the everlasting peace of the Empire.

Though my body decay in remote
Okinawa,
My spirit will persist in defense of the
homeland.

Minoru Ota
Naval Commander⁵⁷

Four days after the transmission of the above, Admiral Ota released his last dispatch to his immediate commander, General Ushijima:

Enemy tank groups are now attacking our cave headquarters. The Naval Base Force is dying gloriously at this moment. . . . We are grateful for your past kindnesses and pray for the success of the Army.⁵⁸

Marine artillerymen killed or dispersed a group of Japanese soldiers attempting to break out of their entrapment during the night 11-12 June,⁵⁹ and the 22d Marines dispatched 51 of the enemy attempting to infiltrate the regimental line. Obvious signs of a break in the enemy's stubborn and well-coordinated defense appeared on 12 June, when the 4th and 29th Marines compressed an already compact enemy pocket west of Tomigusuki, while the 22d pressed to the north in the direction of Oroku village. (See Map 20.)

The 4th Marines advanced slowly under heavy machine gun fire from positions in the hills and draws surrounding Hill 62 and from well-concealed caves on the hill itself. At 1225, the hill was captured and the attack continued with the Marines systematically cleaning out all pockets of resistance as they advanced. Three hours later, 3/4 tied in

⁵⁷ Inoguchi, Nakajima, and Pineau, *Divine Wind*, p. 147.

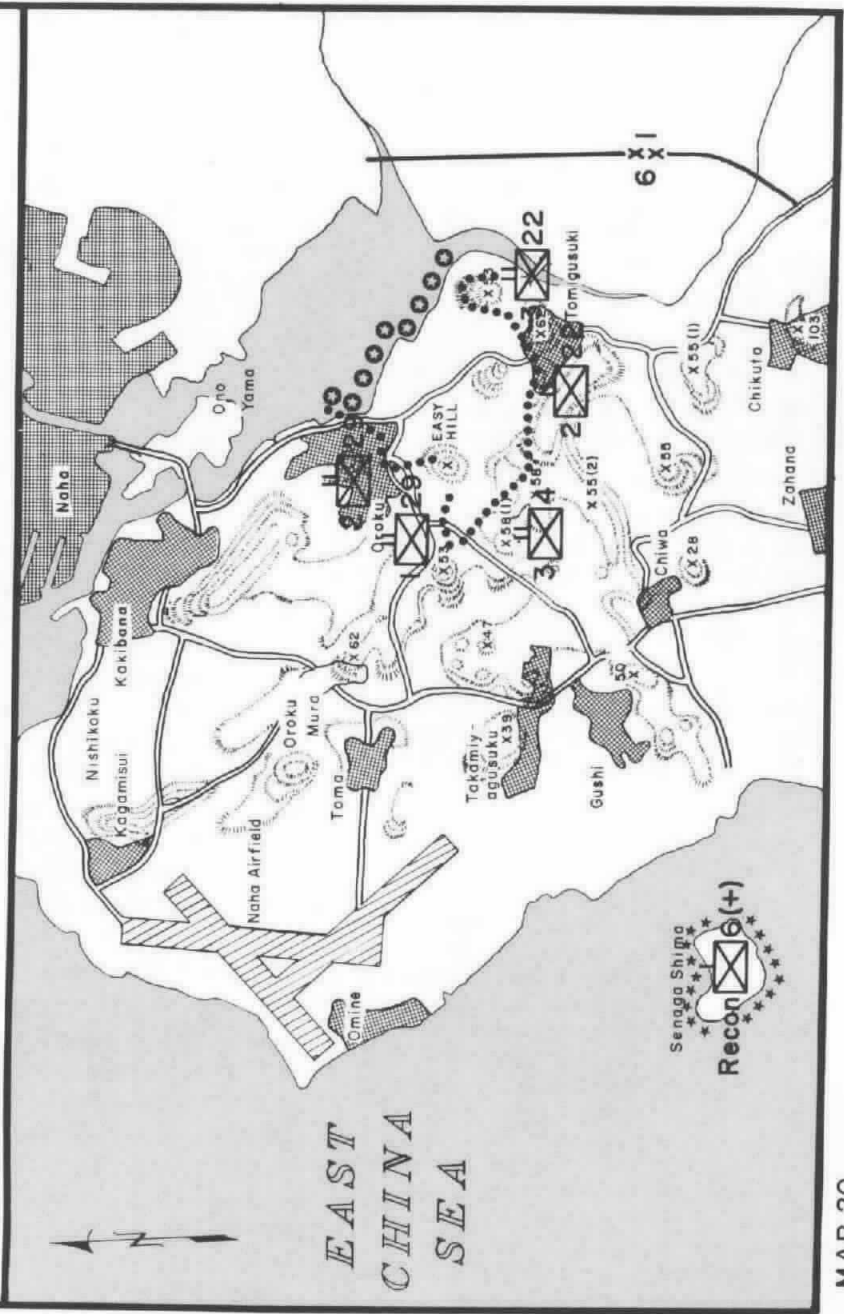
⁵⁸ *Okinawa Operations Record*, p. 126.

⁵⁹ *IIIAC Art'y AR*, p. 30.

BATTLE FOR OROKU PENINSULA 12 - 14 JUNE PROGRESS

Adapted From A Sketch Map In The 6th MarDiv SAR

●●●●● -12 JUNE ○○○○ -13 JUNE ★★★★★ -14 JUNE



EAST
CHINA
SEA

MAP 20

T. L. RUSSELL

with the 22d Marines for the night, 500 yards from Naha Bay and with only one more large hill to be seized.

The same day, the 29th Marines cracked open the firm enemy defenses that had held it up for almost a week. Oroku village was cleaned out by 2/29, as 1/29 began the first in a series of coordinated attacks at dawn to neutralize the enemy's mutually supported positions west of Oroku.⁶⁰ By late afternoon, Easy Hill—the last Japanese strongpoint in the zone of the 29th Marines—was taken. Having lost this key terrain feature, enemy troops were forced to flee to the alluvial flatlands along the river coast between Hill 53 and Oroku. At this time, they “began displaying flags of surrender. Language officers equipped with loudspeaker systems were dispatched to the front line areas to assist in the surrender of those Japanese who desired to [do so]. The attempt was partially successful, 86 enemy soldiers voluntarily laid down their arms.”⁶¹

The 6th Division made a final sweep of the remaining Japanese-held area with 3/29, which relieved the 1st Battalion, and 2/29 jumping off to destroy all enemy still existing in their zone. Advancing rapidly to the southeast, the 29th Marines battalions swept past the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 4th Marines, pinching them out of the line; 3/4 also raced to the beach. As they approached the river flats, the attackers formed into skirmish lines, flushing the routed Jap-

anese from the marshy grasslands along the river bank. A number of enemy soldiers gave themselves up, some committed suicide, others fought to the bitter end, and a few stoically awaited their deaths.

During the liquidation of this pocket, Colonel John C. McQueen, 6th Marine Division Chief of Staff, and Colonel Roy N. Hillyer, Tenth Army Chaplain, viewed the fighting from the north shore of the Naha Estuary at a point approximately 1,000 yards across the water from Oroku. “They saw the Marines come up over the high ground from the south and close in on the Japanese . . . The last survivor was a Japanese officer who calmly walked over to the seawall, sat down, lit a cigarette, and waited for the Marines to kill him.”⁶²

Marine assault troops reached the seawall at noon and spent the rest of the day ferreting out small enemy groups attempting to evade death or capture by hiding in the cane fields and rice paddies near the river. At 1750, General Shepherd reported to General Geiger that all organized resistance on Oroku Peninsula had ended.⁶³ During the day, 6th Division troops had killed 861 enemy soldiers and captured 78 prisoners.⁶⁴

The 6th Reconnaissance Company received orders at noon on 13 June to seize troublesome Senaga Shima—the island that had been scouted the night of 10 June—at 0500 on 14 June. To accomplish the task, a company from 1/29 was attached. For four days preceding the assault, the island had been subjected

⁶⁰ After the 29th Marines first attack on 12 June, the last company of the 3d Battalion still on the line was squeezed out and passed to 1/29 as reserve. *3/29 SAR, Ph III*, p. 5.

⁶¹ *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*, p. 21.

⁶² Smith, *Personal Narrative*, p. 127.

⁶³ *6th MarDiv Jnl, Ph III*, 13Jun45.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*; *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*, p. 21.

to a heavy and continuous bombardment. At the scheduled time, the LVT-(A)-borne attack was launched and proceeded according to plan. There was no resistance to the landing. As the reconnaissance Marines combed the island, they found only dead bodies and silenced guns—all victims of the intense prelanding preparation.

The battle of Oroku ended on 14 June. General Shepherd noted that:

The ten-day battle was a bitter one, from its inception to the destruction of the last organized resistance. The enemy had taken full advantage of the terrain which adapted itself extraordinarily well to a deliberate defense in depth. The rugged coral outcroppings and the many small precipitous hills had obviously been organized for defense over a long period of time. Cave and tunnel systems of a most elaborate nature had been cut into each terrain feature of importance, and heavy weapons were sited for defense against attack from any direction.

Despite the powerful converging attack of three regiments, the advance was slow, laborious, and bitterly opposed. The capture of each defensive locality was a problem in itself, involving carefully thought out planning and painstaking execution.

During ten days' fighting, almost 5,000 Japanese were killed and nearly 200 taken prisoner. Thirty of our tanks were disabled, many by mines. One tank was destroyed by two direct hits from an 8" naval gun fired at point blank range. Finally, 1,608 Marines were killed or wounded.⁶⁵

A most noteworthy aspect of the Oroku operation was the ability of the Tenth Army to exploit the amphibious capability of one of its Marine divisions during a critical phase of the Okinawa campaign despite the extremely limited time available for assault preparations. Overcoming most obstacles and discounting others, the 6th Marine Division planned and launched an amphibious assault within the 36-hour period allotted to it.⁶⁶ In an after-action analysis of the operation, General Shepherd stated that "with trained troops and competent staffs in all echelons, the amphibious landing of a division is not of excessive complexity."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶⁶ *Shepherd memo II.*

⁶⁷ *6th MarDiv SAR, Ph III*, p. 60.