



THE SMALL CHANGE OF SOLDIERING:  
THE 188TH GLIDER INFANTRY REGIMENT

by

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In The Face of Battle, John Keegan stated that battles are united by time, place, and action, meaning battles seek a decisive result within a limited time. His definition excluded colonial wars, mopping up, and patrolling since those sporadic actions represent the small change of soldiering, not battle. However, many units spend their combat experience performing those missions he overlooked. While patrolling lacked the immediate danger of stepping from a trench into "no man's land," or facing a cavalry charge, patrols still faced tremendous uncertainty and danger as ambushes could lurk anywhere. While not trying to minimize its efforts, the 188th Glider Infantry Regiment spent a limited time, though it surely seemed endless to those involved, attacking fortified positions or organized armies in events termed "battles." The remainder of its time it engaged in patrolling and mopping up, which has caused most histories to overlook the unit's exploits during World War II.

Along with the 511th Parachute Infantry and 187th Glider Infantry Regiments, the 188th formed the 11th Airborne Division, the only such division to serve in the Pacific Theater. The 188th's experience contradicted common sense and airborne warfare's fundamental ideas. Despite the unit's name, the regiment never made a combat parachute drop or glider landing. Similarly, the 11th frequently violated established doctrine and procedures to accomplish its missions, by remaining in combat for extended periods, failing to practice planned parachute drops, and receiving aerial resupply from division liaison aircraft rather than the Troop Carrier or Air Transport Commands' C-47s. However, these failures demonstrated the need for flexibility rather than rigid adherence to doctrine. Ironically though the army wasted the individual 188th member's parachute or glider abilities, the division's airborne status solved numerous problems such as supplying forward units, providing artillery support, and caring for the wounded, and gave glidermen important skills that allowed the regiment to operate in terrain that nearly crippled normal infantry divisions.

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## Prologue:

### Introduction to Airborne Warfare

On March 8, 1945, Staff Sergeant Gene R. Knight's platoon received intense enemy fire and several casualties while attacking a Japanese position on Luzon, Philippines. Knight's suppressing fire neutralized the emplacement and allowed the evacuation of wounded, which brought him the Bronze Star.<sup>1</sup> On March 19, Private First Class Frank DeGennaro's company suffered casualties while withdrawing from enemy defenses. Like Sergeant Knight, he moved under fierce resistance to attack the installation and cover the unit's escape, and received the Bronze Star.<sup>2</sup> On May 1, 1945, Private First Class William W. O'Brien disregarded his personal safety during an enemy night attack and scrambled forward to aid several wounded men. He moved to various locations to administer first aid, evacuated serious cases to the rear, and received the Silver Star for his efforts.<sup>3</sup>

These three men served in the 188th Glider Infantry Regiment during World War II, which along with the 511th Parachute Infantry and 187th Glider Infantry Regiments, helped form the 11th Airborne Division, the only such division to see service in the Pacific Theater. Only one major secondary source, E.M. Flanagan's The Angels: A History of the 11th Airborne Division, discusses the 188th in any detail, and it

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<sup>1</sup>"General Order 108, 4 June 1945," p. 2, in RG 407, Box 7586, in file "General Orders (69-128) - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 1945 311-1.13."

<sup>2</sup>"General Order 117, 17 June 1945," p. 2, in RG 407, Box 7586, in Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>"General Order 119, 20 June 1945," p. 3, in RG 407, Box 7586, in Ibid.

focuses on the unit's major engagements. While four airborne regiments served in the Pacific, this unit's exploits have been relatively ignored.<sup>4</sup>

The 188th's experience contradicted common sense and airborne warfare's fundamental ideas, since despite the unit's name, the 188th never made a combat parachute drop or glider landing. The Army wasted innumerable hours training these men as the airborne doctrine's spear tip, yet they served exclusively as normal infantry soldiers. Transport aircraft shortages, terrain, and the need to have soldiers advance yard by yard against Japanese troops partly account for this use, but nevertheless, the regiment's primary service involved patrolling and "mopping up" operations.

Similarly, the 11th frequently violated established doctrine and procedures to accomplish its missions, though less of its own accord than from above. First and foremost, the division regularly remained in combat for extended periods as infantry, and the 188th never performed its airborne missions. Doctrine stated that commanders should not use airborne units when other forces could accomplish the same objective, because airborne divisions had half an infantry division's authorized strength, and to prevent wasting an airborne unit's unique abilities. Senior leaders ignored this advice, and the 11th frequently found itself thinly stretched

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<sup>4</sup>The 503rd Parachute Infantry was the fourth regiment, and served in the Pacific from late 1942 or early 1943 until the war's end. The 503rd served as an independent regimental combat team in conjunction with other regiments or divisions, or was formally attached to a division. It participated in the drops on Nadzab, New Guinea, Noemfoor Island, New Guinea, and Corregidor, and fought at Mindoro and Negros islands.

when accomplishing its various tasks. Of lesser importance, the division disregarded doctrine when it failed to practice planned parachute drops, and received aerial resupply from division liaison aircraft rather than from the Troop Carrier or Air Transport Commands.

Yet these failures demonstrated the need for flexibility rather than rigid adherence to principles. The 11th Airborne frequently violated these maxims and missions as the situational reality forced modifications, and in some cases, complete disregard of established procedures. Although the army wasted the individual 188th member's parachute or glider training, the division's airborne status solved numerous problems such as supplying forward units, providing artillery support, and care for wounded, and gave glidermen important skills they used in the Philippines' rough terrain. These two points allowed the 11th to operate in areas that nearly crippled normal infantry divisions.

Before reconstructing the 188th's history, a brief explanation of airborne warfare is necessary.<sup>5</sup> The airborne concept originally involved parachuting troops into enemy territory, but as the idea matured, theorists envisioned landing troops by transport aircraft or gliders which offered several advantages. Both craft allowed troops access to heavy weapons that could not be parachuted, such troops did not need

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<sup>5</sup>For a more detailed explanation, consult Gerard M. Devlin, Paratrooper! The Saga of U.S. Army and Marine Parachute and Glider Combat Troops During World War II (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1979), and James A. Huston, The United States Army in World War II: Airborne Operations (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1954?).

costly and time-consuming parachute training, and the men arrived as a compact unit. Beyond those benefits, gliders surpassed transports since they did not require airfields and lower cost allowed their sacrifice. Regardless of means, the objective remained the same: airborne forces posed a serious threat by permitting vertical envelopment of the enemy's rear or flank.

American interest in parachute troops started in World War I when General Billy Mitchell suggested dropping men behind German lines, supplying them by air, and uniting them with ground troops. Despite Mitchell's enthusiasm, American airborne interest abated after WWI, while several European countries, most notably the Soviet Union, forged ahead during the 1930s. Memories of Japan's Manchuria invasion and the Russo-Japanese War convinced Soviet leaders that parachute units could quickly redeploy between its vast theaters, causing it to create the first airborne battalion in 1935.<sup>6</sup>

Attaché reports from Europe sparked concern over airborne developments and convinced Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, to act in April 1939. He directed a study to test the feasibility of larger airborne units, but despite recommendations for extensive review, transport shortages and other projects' urgency gave the airborne concept a low priority. Once again the army shelved the idea, only to have it regain life from external events and

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<sup>6</sup>Devlin, Paratrooper!, p. 30-31.

sufficient transport numbers. Hoping to protect its Baltic Sea and Arctic Ocean borders, the USSR offered to purchase parts of Finland, but it naturally rejected the overture. The Soviets responded by attacking with thirty divisions and small parachute units on November 30, 1939. These events and the increased availability of transports prompted General Marshall to rekindle the airborne concept in January 1940. If the Soviet effort failed to convince American leaders, German victories in Holland and Belgium using airborne troops provided another impetus. From that point, every nation resorted to catching the German lead. The U.S. Army made great strides and formed an airborne Test Platoon on June 25, 1940, but the effort took precious time. The platoon confirmed the experiment's success, and permitted the first battalion-sized unit authorization in September with three more to follow in early 1941.<sup>7</sup>

Shortly before this decision, three Army branches met with Marshall to squabble over its control. The Engineering Corps' Chief, Major General Eugene Schley, contended his department should control airborne units since they required explosives training. The Air Corps' General Henry H. Arnold argued aerial infantry would function like the Marines and the Navy, and that parachutists' dependence on aircraft necessitated his branch's control, as in Germany's military. Finally, the Infantry Chief, General George A. Lynch, and one

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<sup>7</sup>Devlin, Paratrooper!, p. 34-40, 46, 74-75, 90.

of the concept's pioneers, asserted that paratroopers became infantrymen on the ground. Upon hearing their arguments, Marshall kept the airborne under Lynch's branch.<sup>8</sup>

As airborne training facilities expanded, rumors spread that army leaders thought the entire concept a pipe dream, but events in Europe quelled those negative opinions. When Italy's attack against Greece bogged down, German assistance came on April 6, 1941. By month's end, Greece's British allies had retreated to Crete where the island's airbases endangered Rumanian oilfields. Germany captured the island in May using only airborne forces, but casualties neared fifty percent and ended Germany's airborne program. Lacking casualty figures, the stunning results invigorated American attempts as planners could not overcome the hard fact that a hastily organized airborne force had traveled 200 miles, assaulted numerically superior foe on a rugged island, and accomplished its mission.<sup>9</sup>

Though the airborne idea received at least tacit approval, many organizational and supply problems existed. The War Department controlled each airborne battalion individually, which made daily operations cumbersome. Not until March 1942 did reorganization establish the Airborne Command under the Army Ground Forces (AGF) to train, equip, and organize all parachute, air-landing, and glider infantry units. Days after the Airborne Command's inception, the Air

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<sup>8</sup>Devlin, *Paratrooper!*, p. 80-81.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 99-107.

Corps established the Troop Carrier Command to train the aircraft and glider pilots used by airborne units. While the December 1941 war declaration ended manpower shortages on paper and increased funding for supply requirements, deficiencies plagued both commands long after 1941 until the army obtained recruits and industrial production met demands. The army's January 1942 decision to enlarge airborne battalions to regiments, and the activation of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions by August created new strains. Yet, even as remedies solved some problems, others persisted.<sup>10</sup>

Aircraft shortages extended well into 1943 and at some points threatened the entire training program as too many commitments strained the Air Corps' ability to provide the Troop Carrier Command its transports. After a series of agreements between the AGF, the Army Air Forces (AAF), and the War Department, the AGF's commander, Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair, involved himself in the issue. He pointed to a July 1942 arrangement that set one division's training requirements at 208 transports and 500 gliders, but by early 1943 only 27 planes existed.<sup>11</sup> While limited training occurred at Laurinburg, North Carolina, where the 11th later trained, facilities in Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma remained inactive. He concluded that unless the troop carrier units received sufficient planes, future activation of

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<sup>10</sup>Devlin, Paratrooper!, p. 111-115; Huston, p. I-7 - I-8.

<sup>11</sup>Huston, p. III-3.

airborne divisions would cease.<sup>12</sup> Despite this assertion and even though the 82nd and 101st could only perform small unit training by January 1943, the Airborne Command planned to activate the 11th the following month. Realizing training might come to a standstill, the Air Corps acted to make more aircraft available, but even this action did not suffice. Projections forecast only two troop carrier groups for the 11th's training in November, and three the following month, but one division needed four groups.<sup>13</sup> Until the command received ample consideration in strategic planning, supply shortages would only continue.<sup>14</sup>

Training also suffered from inadequate doctrinal direction. Initially planners thought airborne forces would operate in small groups, but Germany's large unit airborne successes caused a dilemma. Critics argued that airborne divisions violated the coveted economy of force and mass principles by creating specialized units. Rather they contended all infantry divisions should receive airborne training, but that assumed small parachute groups would spearhead a glider assault. Airborne supporters claimed these arguments overlooked an airborne unit's unique training, and operations might include large unit drops. By June 1942 the AGF temporarily settled the issue and approved the formation of airborne divisions, but the imprecision leading to the

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<sup>12</sup>Huston, p. II-8, II-26, III-3.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. III-16, V-1.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p. III-3, III-4,

decision created tremendous uncertainty about airborne missions, internal organization, and size.<sup>15</sup>

The War Department's Field Manual 31-30 appeared in May 1942 and marked the first significant effort to provide guidance. Although based on theories, not American experience, much of the document passed the battle test. The publication asserted the familiar argument that parachute troops should lead a glider attack, and listed the following missions: seizing airfields; establishing bridgeheads; attacking the enemy's flank, rear, or landing within its perimeter; occupying ground taken by armored forces; destroying enemy supply and communication centers; and assisting ground offensives.<sup>16</sup>

The final issue remained the airborne division's organization and size. The Airborne Command's General Bill Lee analyzed the British airborne structure in June 1942 and advocated one glider and two parachute regiments based on its system. McNair, who thought parachutists should lead glider troops, disagreed and decided on one parachute and two glider regiments, but the number could change if needed. With that decision, the airborne division represented a smaller division with 504 officers and 8,321 enlisted men, when compared to an infantry division's 14,000 men.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Huston, p. I-5, I-24, I-25.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, p. I-15 - I-16.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, p. I-27, I-28; Gerard M. Devlin, Silent Wings: A History of the Glider Pilots of World War II (London: W.H. Allen, 1985), p. 51.

Airborne doctrine's glider aspect gained momentum even more slowly than the paratrooper, since American military leaders dismissed the glider's military potential. In 1931 the Secretary of War refused to waste time or money on its development, while the Air Corps banned glider flying by its off-duty personnel starting in the early 1930s. Only in 1941 did the Army's Command and General Staff school consider the glider concept and the War Department activate a test glider battalion. Reality conquered this idleness when intelligence reports from Germany's capture of Crete and Fort Eben Emael, Holland arrived. Gliders interested General Lee as a means of supplying paratroopers, and reinforcing them with jeeps and large-caliber weapons. As glider interest improved, immense difficulties arose since both the Air Corps and the Army implemented separate programs without clear guidance; thus no coherent plan shaped glider design or established the numbers needed. Lacking substantive doctrine, the projected transport availability, the number of gliders they could tow, and the proposed number of airborne divisions drove glider acquisition, but these greatly fluctuated.<sup>18</sup>

From these difficulties, the Waco Aircraft Company's CG-4A possessing a steel endoskeleton, honeycomb plywood flooring, and a thin canvas skin won the competition combining reliability, durability, and manufacturing ease. Glidermen

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<sup>18</sup>James E. Mrazek, The Glider War (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1975), p. 52-53; Devlin, Silent Wings, p. 40; Janet R. Daly Bednarek, "The American Combat Glider Program," Air Power History (Winter 1996): p. 41-42; John A. McQuillen, Jr., "American Military Gliders in World War II in Europe" (Dissertation, St. Louis University, 1975), p. 64, 348; Devlin, Paratrooper!, p. 117.

aptly named it the "flying coffin," and hardly agreed with the word reliable. The CG-4A carried 3,750 pounds of supplies, or two crewmen and 13 fully loaded passengers, while a hinged nose section permitted the easy loading of artillery pieces and jeeps.<sup>19</sup> Despite these qualities, the CG-4A's production faced poor management, non-standardized tooling, inexperience, limited production capacities, and outright fraud. The glider program became one of the most difficult Air Corps undertakings, and nearly faced complete failure, but as the military wavered on goals, defective production continued with the crews and glidermen completely unaware.<sup>20</sup>

Even though production started, initial glider shortages created the same training difficulties as did the lack of transports, since even revised plans put sufficient numbers available only by August or September 1943.<sup>21</sup> The glider and transport unavailability pointed to larger mobilization issues because the Air Corps' aircraft procurement process faced limited resources, endless overseas commitments, and domestic training requirements, but airborne training suffered from low priority.

The glider caused one major organizational change, but from a logistical standpoint rather than a doctrinal modification. A single crated glider weighed 20,000 pounds and nearly held the record as World War II's largest crate.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Devlin, *Paratrooper!*, p. 117.

<sup>20</sup>Bednarek, p. 44-46.

<sup>21</sup>Huston, p. III-20.

<sup>22</sup>Huston, p. I-35; Mrazek, p. 108.

Since the War Department valued shipping space, in early 1943 it replaced one 82nd Division glider regiment with a parachute regiment before shipment to Europe in April 1943. The Airborne Command deployed succeeding divisions, the 101st, 17th, and 13th, to Europe with the original organization as more shipping space became available. The Army finally codified the alteration in December 1944 and even authorized glider regiments a third battalion. Airborne Divisions in Europe made the change in the spring of 1945, but the 11th retained its two glider regiments until July because it was in combat in December, and due to its commander's, Major General Joseph M. Swing, efforts to train all his glidermen as parachutists, which in effect made the 188th and 187th parachute units in all but name.<sup>23</sup>

Aside from gliders, parachute field artillery marked the last important development, but the idea received little attention until 1942. Experimenters eliminated the 105mm howitzer due to its weight, but the "Pack 75," a lightweight 75mm mountain piece, provided the solution since soldiers could reduce it into nine separate parts and parachute it.<sup>24</sup> Despite its shorter range, an airborne unit's intended use would place paratroopers close to the enemy. The "sawed-off 105" signaled another improvement in 1943, and formed the meat

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<sup>23</sup>Huston, p. III-8 - III-9, VIII-37, IX-29.

<sup>24</sup>Devlin, Paratrooper!, p. 122.

of glider field artillery units, but this action reduced the 105's range from 12,330 to 7,500 yards.<sup>25</sup>

With the major pieces established, the 2nd Bn, 503rd Regiment and 82nd conducted the first airborne operations in North Africa in late 1942 and Sicily during July 1943. These operations provided the first doctrinal tests, exposing numerous flaws and signaling a stinging defeat. Poor planning and coordination led to numerous friendly fire accidents, while complicated flying routes and inadequate pilot training made flying the routes difficult, but the army could correct those problems. The Mediterranean airborne disasters brought renewed criticism and efforts to dissolve airborne divisions. The AGF recommended removing an airborne division's parachute units, reorganizing the remainder as light divisions, and downsizing parachute units to battalions. When operations necessitated airborne drops, those light units would unite and receive training for that specific mission, but this initiative failed.<sup>26</sup> Whereas the German disaster at Crete ended its airborne program, the American failure in Sicily brought important alterations that marked the last major modifications before the 11th Division's activation.

The War Department commissioned a board to address airborne training and transport requirements under General Swing and Major General E.G. Chapman, resulting in the September 1943 "Swing Report." The report asserted that

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<sup>25</sup>Devlin, Paratrooper!, p. 122-123.

<sup>26</sup>Huston, p. IV-2 - IV-20, V-30 - V-31.

theater commanders should not divert their Troop Carrier units from airborne training and operations to aerial supply.

Though ideal from the airborne perspective, theater commanders often viewed Troop Carrier units as inefficient when combat units needed supplies.<sup>27</sup>

Training Circular 113 issued in October 1943, marked the other change and asserted several fundamental principles and missions. Commanders should only use paratroopers when necessary for mission success, and not when other forces could accomplish the objective more effectively. Airborne drops required ground or naval support within three days to succeed, and close coordination between all air, land, and sea units to avoid friendly fire. Lastly, it required rehearsals for planned missions and differentiated between Troop Carrier and Air Transport units by implying supply missions wasted the Troop Carrier's specialized training.<sup>28</sup>

Regarding missions, the circular defined basic missions that resembled Field Manual 31-30 in most respects, but had several changes. The three day's requirement appeared to eliminate airborne's strategic use deep in enemy territory, while the assumption that paratroopers would seize airfields and await gliderborne reinforcements disappeared. One new mission emerged using the presence of airborne troops as a continual threat, similar to the navy's fleet in being, but this assumed the enemy knew the existence of those troops.

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<sup>27</sup>Huston, p. V-1, V-2, V-10 - V-14, V-18, V-20 - V-21, V-31 - V-32.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid, p. V-20 - V-21.

The Northwest African Air Forces agreed with these missions and suggested another, that airborne units could achieve some objectives as small groups rather than in mass.<sup>29</sup>

Both external and internal events drove the development of parachute and glider forces. The American experience, German operations, British organization, manpower and transport shortages, competing priorities, operational reality, and interservice rivalries all played a significant role in airborne development. Though at times the entire concept remained in jeopardy, the idea survived, but even as it endured, theater commanders occasionally employed airborne units as regular infantry, as the 188th witnessed. While this grossly wasted the regiment's training, it reflected the situational reality that demanded every combat unit to fight, regardless of specialized abilities.

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<sup>29</sup>Huston, p. V-21 - V-24.

## Chapter One

### Activation and Training

As the Army formed more parachute and glider regiments and built more bases, one such base, Camp Hoffman, later named Camp Mackall, sprung from North Carolina's wilderness, forty miles west of Fort Bragg. Construction began in November 1942, but before work ended six months later, the base became the Airborne Command's and 11th Airborne Division's home in early 1943. The army activated the 11th on February 25, 1943 under Major General Swing, the 82nd Airborne Division's artillery commander, Mediterranean Theater's airborne advisor, Swing Report author, and Airborne Command commander.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after activation, Swing designed the division's shoulder patch to give his unit identity, with its wings the most significant feature. These wings and the Los Banos rescue effort in February 1945 earned the unit its nickname the Angels.<sup>2</sup>

Like the 82nd and 101st Divisions, the 11th had one parachute and two glider regiments corresponding with the original organization table, but unlike the other two divisions, the 11th formed from untrained units rather than preexisting airborne regiments or battalions. 76th Division officers like Captain Robert M. Mitchell, and 88th Division NCOs provided the initial division cadre.<sup>3</sup> Other enlisted men like Corporal Dom Suppa volunteered for the cadre since he had

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<sup>1</sup>I constructed an order of battle for the 188th with the available information in Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup>"History 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1," p. 1, in RG 407, Box 7582; Devlin, Paratrooper!, p. 193, 196, 200.

<sup>3</sup>"History 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1," p. 1, in RG 407, Box 7582; Letter to author from Robert M. Mitchell of Santa Maria, CA, November 2, 1998.

three years experience, and wanted to return home from his Hawaiian assignment to visit his family. When he and other NCOs from his unit arrived, the 188th's commander, Colonel Robert H. Soule, informed the men they already had the cadre, but if openings existed for their ratings they would retain their rank. If no positions existed, they would have to take any available job. Though Corporal Suppa kept his rank, First Sergeants and other senior NCOs became Privates.<sup>4</sup>

The cadre immediately made the barracks, mess hall, orderly rooms, and other facilities as livable and functional as possible, while road and building construction continued and the remainder of the division arrived. The so called "fillers," came from reception centers of the Second, Third, Fifth, Eighth and Ninth Service Commands after a few weeks training. Most men averaged 20 years old, were in excellent physical shape to be chosen for the airborne, had recently completed high school or junior college, and were draftees. These new arrivals quickly found themselves performing the same housekeeping tasks as the cadre.<sup>5</sup>

Differences immediately developed between the parachute and glider regiments. Parachute regiments possessed three battalions with a total authorized strength of 1,958, while glider regiments had two battalions with 1,605 men, at least until December 1944 when the War Department authorized a third

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<sup>4</sup>Interview with Dom Suppa, Myrtle Beach, SC, October 24, 1998.

<sup>5</sup>Edward M. Flanagan Jr., The Angels: A History of the 11th Airborne Division (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1989), p. 32; "History 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1," p. 2, "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943-15 Sept 1946 311-0.1," p. 2, and "Historical Summary-11th Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - 10 Feb 45 - 1946 311-0.1 20643," p. 1, in RG 407, Box 7582.

battalion.<sup>6</sup> Though parachute units accepted only volunteers, men chosen for glider units, "were assigned, without any particular choice in the matter," but they were expected to like their job.<sup>7</sup> Illustrating the selection process, Wilmont Wheeler remarked, "As a draftee there may have been a sign in the induction center that said, 'Join the Airborne.' I may have said, 'What's that?,' and was heard," while Merritt Hinkel claimed he had no idea he was joining the airborne until he reached Camp Mackall.<sup>8</sup> Though not every glidermen volunteered and many protested, men fought to stay in because the 188th held strict standards that if not met, men received transfers. The 188th became an elite organization that had higher standards than a normal regiment, and thus better quality troops.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the glider's peaceful connotations of noiseless craft gently gliding to the ground, gliders held no promise of safe landings. While most men did not complain, the lack of flight or hazardous duty pay, which paratroopers received, angered the most complacent. Even glider pilots and the tow-plane's crewmen, who faced the same dangers as glidermen, received extra pay. Glider troops might have refused to fly had they combined this pay discrepancy with knowledge of the

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<sup>6</sup>Devlin, *Paratrooper!*, p. 118.

<sup>7</sup>"History 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1," p. 2, in RG 407, Box 7582.

<sup>8</sup>Letter to author from Wilmont Wheeler of Salt Lake City, UT, September 23, 1998; Interview with Merritt Hinkel, Myrtle Beach, SC, October 24 1998.

<sup>9</sup>Letter to author from Wallace Stiliz of Indiana, PA, October 6, 1998; Interview with Wallace Stiliz, Myrtle Beach, SC, October 24, 1998.

poor glider construction. To add insult, they had no badges or insignia to distinguish themselves.<sup>10</sup>

These factors made the two groups more adversaries than partners, yet most paratroopers quietly acknowledged the "guts" required to ride those flying death traps, since once cut loose, there were no second chances.<sup>11</sup> One poster showing five wrecked gliders said everything, "JOIN THE GLIDER TROOPS! No Flight Pay; No Jump Pay; BUT -- Never a Dull Moment!"<sup>12</sup> Eventually Congress remedied the situation and gave glidermen hazardous duty pay, but not until July 1944, and shortly after, the Army authorized a separate glider badge.<sup>13</sup> One would think both measures did much to alleviate the two groups' differences, but by then most glidermen had parachute wings as well, so the difference was minuscule. Moreover, the rivalry naturally inspired the glidermen to excel and demonstrate their abilities.

Surviving records from the division's training era are vague at best, and in some places non-existent; therefore, reconstructing this period becomes exceedingly difficult. Where possible, personal interviews help flesh out details, but in other cases the record has holes or is very general. The army projected a new airborne division's training requirements at forty-two weeks, while those formed from existing airborne units required twelve.<sup>14</sup> Training started in

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<sup>10</sup>Huston, p. I-46 - I-47.

<sup>11</sup>Devlin, Paratrooper!, p. 121.

<sup>12</sup>Huston, p. I-46.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. I-47.

<sup>14</sup>Huston, p. V-9.

March 1943, continued through June, and stressed physical fitness above everything with long runs and forced marches of twenty-five miles. Corporal Edward Gentile remarked they ran every day, even the service units, and started with short distances and no equipment, then progressed to full packs and M-1s for nine miles after two months. Men continued to learn basic infantrymen skills such as marching, target practice, bayonet training, and judo, while others like supply and radio operators learned their own specialties. After testing by the Airborne Command, the division received an "excellent" rating and the 11th entered Unit Training from late June until September.<sup>15</sup>

During July and August, selected glider officers and men rotated through one week's training at Maxton Field, North Carolina. These individuals learned how to load and lash equipment in gliders, since any load shift in flight would likely cause a crash. The remainder of glidermen received intensive training from these instructors, and had their first orientation flights. Though glider training included little else for the 188th, since the men were essentially passengers, Corporal Gentile took about twenty training flights. The flights did not occur without incident as he commented on several crashes where gliders nosed up upon landing, causing the contents to spill forward and resulting in severe injuries

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<sup>15</sup>"History- 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1," p. 3, in RG 407, Box 7582; Interview with Edward Gentile, Myrtle Beach, SC, October 25, 1998; Interview with Wallace Stiliz.

and deaths when the loads were jeeps or artillery, which should have justified hazardous duty pay.<sup>16</sup>

Following the introductory rides, unit exercises at various levels became the norm beginning in August to familiarize the unit staffs and gain practice in large-scale maneuvers. After landing in local corn fields, combat ready glidermen charged out in simulated company, battalion, and regimental size attacks. The exercises continued with division size training from September through November, including a series of night field problems where trucks transported paratroopers and glidermen to drop zones. Men made "landings" from trucks, when aircraft were unavailable, in scattered patterns to simulate actual drops, and emphasized assembling, organizing, and attacking from disorganized groups. Training stressed small unit tactics and fighting since troops would often land in scattered groups, which directly carried over to the Philippines where the 188th fought in platoon and squad size units.<sup>17</sup>

Unit training culminated in December 1943 when the division participated in one of the largest exercises thus far, specifically ordered by General Marshall in the Sicilian operation's wake to reevaluate the airborne concept; transport shortages had delayed its autumn execution. Since Swing and the division realized the maneuver's success or failure could

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<sup>16</sup>"History- 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1," p. 3, in RG 407, Box 7582; Interview with Edward Gentile.

<sup>17</sup>"History- 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1," p. 4, "History 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1," p. 4, and "Historical Summary-11th Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - 10 Feb 45 - 1946 311-0.1 20643," p. 2, in RG 407, Box 7582; Interview with Wallace Stiliz.

jeopardize the entire airborne concept, preparations involved thorough practice drops and planning. At night on December 7, four troop carrier groups carrying paratroopers and towing 100 gliders in double tow, landed 4,800 troops 300 miles from their departure point.<sup>18</sup> These men "captured" Knollwood Airport, North Carolina, and covered the remainder of the division's landing. Using 200 C-47s and 234 CG-4A gliders, the troop carriers parachuted 4,679 men, landed 1,869 by glider and another 3,734 by transports within 39 hours, where the Angels and the attached 501st Parachute Regiment attacked 17th Airborne Division and 541st Parachute Regiment units.<sup>19</sup> The attacking force received all its supplies and even evacuated its "wounded" by air for six days.<sup>20</sup>

Among the many observers, General McNair congratulated General Swing and wrote that the exercise's success persuaded him to reconsider his earlier decision to disband airborne units. The entire exercise marked a significant improvement over previous drills and proved the feasibility of double-tow gliders and night drops. Although the operation contradicted established doctrine by taking an airfield, it provided large-scale maneuver experience. Individual soldiers learned little, but the various staffs received essential large unit

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<sup>18</sup>"Historical Summary-11th Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - 10 Feb 45 - 1946 311-0.1 20643," p. 1, in RG 407, Box 7582; Huston, p. V-37.

<sup>19</sup>Huston, p. V-38.

<sup>20</sup>Devlin, Silent Wings, p. 131; "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1," p. 4, in RG 407, Box 7582.

training since problems dramatically increased when handling two or three regiments over one battalion or regiment.<sup>21</sup>

After December's training, the 11th prepared for, then moved to Camp Polk, Louisiana in January 1944, where it conducted more advanced training and ground maneuvers. Edward Hammrich, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion 188th, recalled an early February exercise where men encountered snow, sleet, rain, hail, cold, and enough mud to bury a jeep, and B Company's Les Hallock recalled much the same.<sup>22</sup> By mid-month, the 11th returned to camp and prepared for overseas deployment by taking examinations and receiving inspections. The Angels' artillery took tests covering battery and battalion firing conditions, while the G-4 inspected equipment serviceability. Meanwhile, squad to regimental level exercises included attacks on fortified positions, forced marches, and defensive position construction. Everyone knew the Inspector General could prevent the 11th's deployment with his pencil.<sup>23</sup>

While at Camp Polk, the division established a principle that followed through its service, and greatly increased the unit's capability. The previous fall the 11th opened parachute training to clerks, cooks, mechanics and other so-called "non-combatant" positions. General Swing obtained AGF permission to establish a jump school at Camp Polk and later in New Guinea, and allowed glider troops the same opportunity to receive jump wings. Many glidermen volunteered for the

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<sup>21</sup>Devlin, Silent Wings, p. 132; Huston, p. V-38 - V-40, V-43.

<sup>22</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 64-65; Letter to author from Les Hallock of Duncan, OK, September 18, 1998

<sup>23</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 64-65.

training because they viewed parachuting as safer than glider landings. Though not fully parachute qualified until much later, the 188th became the army's first para-glider unit with this action.<sup>24</sup>

General Swing selected Colonel Orin Haugen to conduct the Camp Polk school, but the two disagreed on training details. Haugen insisted on running the program like Fort Benning's, which lasted four weeks and emphasized physical fitness, but Swing objected due to time constraints and the students were already in great shape. Swing passed the project to Major Henry Burgess and reduced it to one week ground training, and one week jump qualification. Lacking Benning's thirty and 250 foot towers and other facilities, the 11th improvised, and removed the night jump Benning paratroopers made. A mock fuselage allowed students to learn hook up, shuffling, and exiting procedures, while Burgess built wooden platforms to train the men in parachute landing falls, the landing method used when troopers met the ground. One 188th officer, Captain R.E. Kennington, recalled of his class, "I think the jump class consisted entirely of 188th company grade officers and NCO's, about 3 plane loads of 69 scared people."<sup>25</sup>

After passing the inspections in mid-April, the division received its overseas orders and entrained for Camp Stoneman, California. Once there, the 11th received its last supplies, inoculations, and made final preparations, while the men

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<sup>24</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 65; Letter to author from Joseph Honkoski of Lake Station, IN, October 13, 1998; Letter to author from with Wallace Stiliz.

<sup>25</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 65-67.

learned about shipboard life, the location of life rafts, net rope climbing, watched concerts and shows, and ate their last decent meals. Then from May 5 to May 18, 1944, the division embarked on different ships for the month's journey to Oro Bay, New Guinea.<sup>26</sup>

Since the Angels traveled in parts, each regiment's and even company's experience differed. Lieutenant Wallace Stilz claimed a dock strike delayed the 188th's departure by several weeks resulting in the regiment sailing virtually alone through the South Pacific. Corporal Gentile went further and remarked his ship zigzagged across the Pacific with no vessels, not even an escort. Just after passing the Golden Gate Bridge, the men on Gentile's ship learned their destination when the Captain announced he had just opened their sealed orders and they were going to New Guinea. His statement shocked everyone, because the army commonly sent troops to the west coast, then shipped them to Europe through the Panama canal, as everyone anticipated. Men on navy manned troop ships enjoyed their food, but those on merchant marine cargo ships hated the food, and, like Corporal Gentile, spent nearly the entire day in the kitchen line because of its limited capacity. Lacking official duties aside from kitchen clean up, the men busied themselves with physical fitness, and endless card and craps games, coped with seasickness, and participated in the navy's equator crossing ceremonies.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid, p. 69-71; Box 7582, "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1," p. 6.

<sup>27</sup>Letter to author from Wallace Stilz; Interview with Edward Gentile; Interview with Merritt Hinkel.

Once at New Guinea, troopers rode to shore aboard DUKWs, then embarked trucks for a dusty ride to their new home, Dobodura, where the first arrivals helped establish the division's facilities. Fortunately, the Air Corps had previously used the base, which eliminated the back-breaking task of clearing jungle, but the men still had to drain nearby swamps, erect tents of plywood floors and rain-tight thatched roofs, and build a 12,000 seat amphitheater.<sup>28</sup> The primitive conditions reminded Milton Feingold of the stone age, since the lack of lights forced them to use cans of oil and thick cloth as a wick.<sup>29</sup>

While in California, the division removed all its unit insignias to keep its identity secret, and that practice continued when the 11th landed in New Guinea. When Corporal Gentile's Headquarters and Headquarters Company units moved to Buna, as a radio operator he received Tokyo Rose announcements. The radio voice welcomed the 11th Airborne to New Guinea, and warned them they would be pushed into the sea. That scared Gentile and others because she knew so much about them despite their efforts to maintain secrecy.<sup>30</sup>

Training resumed in July emphasizing amphibious warfare, jungle warfare, acclimatization, glider and parachute training, and even live-fire exercises. The division frequently limited training to selected officers and men, rather than the entire division. Presumably these men served

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<sup>28</sup>Box 7582, "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 1945 311-0.1," p. 8.

<sup>29</sup>Letter to author from Milton Feingold, Jamaica, NY, September 21, 1998.

<sup>30</sup>Interview with Edward Gentile.

as instructors for their respective units, allowing training in multiple skills simultaneously. Those selected for amphibious training practiced loading and unloading, and made actual landings with the 4th Engineer Brigade.<sup>31</sup>

Official documentation states selected officers and men attended the Australian New Guinea Administration Unit's (ANGAU) jungle warfare school where they learned valuable lessons. They mastered swift, but quiet movement through dense jungle, and knowledge of edible plants.<sup>32</sup> However, surviving members remarked that their training involved less formality and did not prepare them for the real jungle, others stated the training was worse than the Philippines jungle since they had to use machetes that were not used on Luzon or Leyte, and still others commented that their training often entailed nothing more than long hikes through the jungle and swamps to maintain physical conditioning and acclimatization. Units frequently cut jungle trails, made fictitious attacks on positions, and learned water's value by having to dig for it or purify it using halizon tablets. Though jungle training attempted to prepare men for Leyte, combat provided men their true training. Regardless, the main goal remained the same: familiarize the men with the jungle's heat, humidity, thick vegetation, steep terrain, and diseases.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 83.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, p. 86-87

<sup>33</sup>Interview with Daniel Texera, Santa Clara, CA, September 20, 1998; Interview with Dom Suppa; Interview with Milton Feingold, Myrtle Beach, SC, October 23, 1998; Interview with Wallace Stilz.

Glider and parachute training resumed from July through November 1944 when the 11th's Headquarters established a school with the 54th Troop Carrier Wing, the unit designated to carry the 11th on any combat operation. Both units trained at Nadzab Field, New Guinea, the same place where the 503rd Parachute Infantry made the first American Pacific combat drop in September 1943. Members who had joined since the Angels' last glider training received their glider initiation in a week long program, but no paratroopers received glider training. Practice drops from squad to battalion size gave the troop carrier units invaluable experience in formation flying and dropping paratroopers, especially since the wing had previously flown cargo.<sup>34</sup>

During the joint training, both units established a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that defined the troop carrier commander's and airborne commander's individual and joint responsibilities. The SOP attempted to coordinate all actions and changes between both commands, set regulations for jump speed, altitude, and other relevant procedures, and detailed the 54th for aerial resupply missions.<sup>35</sup> Though implemented, the division demonstrated one of several breaks with established procedures since it infrequently benefited from the 54th's service once in combat. The Angels relied heavily on aerial resupply, but depended on its organic

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<sup>34</sup>"History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1", p. 8, and "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1 20643", p. 7, in RG 407, Box 7582; Letter to author from Wallace Stilz, Interview with Wallace Stilz; Flanagan, p. 83.

<sup>35</sup>"SOP - Joint Troop Carrier Abn Opn, 11<sup>th</sup> Abn Div 25 Sep 44 311-1.15 44301," p. 1-13, in RG 407, Box 7587.

liaison aircraft rather than the 54th's C-47s due to transport shortages, weather, and small drop zones.

Swing once again tasked Major Burgess with training new parachutists, but time constraints forced him to reduce the number of required jumps at Fort Benning or Camp Polk from five to three, and eliminate the night jump.<sup>36</sup> The efforts produced impressive results as 75% of the division's enlisted men, including glidermen like Sergeant Daniel Texera, and 82% of its officers became parachute qualified by October 1944, regardless of actual job description.<sup>37</sup> Swing's division became almost entirely "airborne," and permitted combat entrance by parachute, glider, or both, depending on the situation and aircraft availability. Swing's decision to open parachute training to all members helped quell any residual rivalry between the parachute and glider regiments, since paratroopers ordinarily strutted around with pants bloused in jump boots. From then, each viewed the other as equal.<sup>38</sup>

Major Burgess later participated in several patrols with the 503rd on Noemfoor Island, the second Pacific theater combat drop, where he made several observations. Many men did not accurately aim or judge their target's range; rather they fired rapid, indiscriminate shots, wasting great amounts of ammunition. When Burgess returned, he related the events to Colonel Haugen, who convinced Division Headquarters to conduct

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<sup>36</sup>"History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1", p. 8, in RG 407, Box 7582.

<sup>37</sup>Box 7582, "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1", p. 4.

<sup>38</sup>Interview with Daniel Texera.

live-fire exercises and teach fire discipline.<sup>39</sup> Though official documents state every division unit participated in maneuvers that included individual infantry battalions, an artillery battery, and an engineer platoon, surviving members recalled never participating in such activities.<sup>40</sup> It is difficult to imagine men would forget a live-fire exercise since the documents only acknowledge this one, but with so much training, the days blurred together. Moreover, men forgot traumatic combat actions that were much more likely to leave an impression, which could partly account for their inability to recall the events.

The men found numerous ways to entertain themselves during their acclimatization and training periods, but the Angels still emphasized physical fitness. The division organized boxing tournaments; inter-regimental football, volleyball, and softball teams; talent shows; and film showings to help them adjust to their new surroundings. Roughly 80% of the men made two or more appearances in the ring before the unit left for Leyte, and nearly everyone watched the USO show visits, including one by Jack Benny. Since the 110 degree heat prevented training during the afternoon, and any rain quickly evaporated and turned the area into a sauna, men frequently ventured to rivers and the ocean

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<sup>39</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 87.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, p. 88.

to escape the heat, but they had to watch for crocodiles, sharks, sand fleas, and rip tides.<sup>41</sup>

As training dragged on, the men grew increasingly restless as many division members had well over eighteen months training and waiting, and some even more. "Training" often sent men like Milton Feingold and Wilmont Wheeler on loading party detachments to Oro Bay, or ammunition details in the countless supply dumps. Some men began referring to their units as "labor battalions" or "non-combatants," which negatively effected morale. These feelings changed and excitement abounded in October when scuttlebutt foretold of the division's departure. After endless months of parachute and glider training, the division sailed to Bito Beach, Leyte to perform an unopposed amphibious landing. Though the means of travel disappointed some, others remained indifferent since American forces controlled the coast and had pushed inland into steep, jungle terrain that obviated any drop there.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 92-93; "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1", p. 8, in RG 407, Box 7582; Interview with Dom Suppa; Interview with Milton Feingold.

<sup>42</sup>"History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1", p. 10, in RG 407, Box 7582; Interview with Milton Feingold and Merritt Hinkel; Letter to author from Wilmont Wheeler.

## Chapter Two

### Leyte: Taste of Combat

Strategic planners did not consider the Philippines invasion a foregone conclusion, and it almost did not occur. When summoned to Hawaii in July 1944, General Douglas MacArthur, the Southwest Pacific Forces Commander, had no idea of the meeting's nature, but he quickly realized the future of any Philippine return was at stake. Lacking supporting materials, the general argued his position extemporaneously and concluded the United States had a moral obligation to retake the islands. Regardless of strategic soundness, President Franklin Roosevelt approved the assault, which eventually committed the 11th to action.<sup>1</sup>

The army and navy initially planned to invade Mindanao, the southernmost island, with Leyte set for a later date, but circumstances modified the plan. When Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's carrier aircraft struck Mindanao, and Admiral William Halsey's planes attacked Leyte, neither raid met substantial opposition. Halsey recommended scrubbing the Mindanao operation to Admiral Chester Nimitz, the Pacific Naval forces commander, and proceeding directly to Leyte. After consulting the Joint Chiefs and General MacArthur, whose forces would execute the attack, the Joint Chiefs approved and set October 20, 1944 as the invasion date.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert L. Eichelberger, Our Jungle Road to Tokyo (New York: The Viking Press, 1950), p. 165-166.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 167-168.

Keeping with war's changing nature, MacArthur expected a quick battle and had no intention of using the 11th in combat on Leyte, but reality directed otherwise. As the fighting moved inland, it progressively became more difficult in terrain and casualties. In several places, days passed before units made appreciable gains. Meanwhile, General George Kenney's air units, could not prevent Japanese reinforcements from arriving, which only worsened an already bad situation. General MacArthur and his Sixth Army commander, General Walter Krueger, met on November 8, where Krueger argued combat losses had reduced his army by 12,000 men, and projected estimates put losses at 22,000 by December 22.<sup>3</sup>

Based on MacArthur's decision not to use the 11th, the Angels boarded five APAs (personnel carriers) and two AKAs (cargo ships) administratively, rather than combat loaded, and departed for Leyte on November 11, 1944, escorted by nine destroyers.<sup>4</sup> Fortunately, for the men's sake, they traveled aboard navy manned ships where many had the best food since leaving Camp Stoneman six months prior. The convoy sailed unhindered, except for one encounter with a Japanese submarine that a destroyer immediately chased away. The ships reached Leyte's eastern shore at Bito Beach on November 20, and unloaded everything within 48 hours.<sup>5</sup>

Just prior to the 11th's arrival, the Assistant Division Commander, General Albert Pierson, met with General Krueger to

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<sup>3</sup>Eichelberger, p. 171; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 95, 110.

<sup>4</sup>"History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1 20643," p. 8, in RG 407, Box 7582.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 95-96; Interview with Wallace Stiliz.

discuss the division's capabilities. When compared to a regular division, the 11th had seven, not nine battalions, and no organic armor or heavy artillery, though it did possess twenty-four Pack 75s and twelve sawed-off 105s.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, each platoon had only forty-four men and only one platoon in each company had anything approaching heavy weapons with 60mm mortars and light machine guns, while the other two were straight rifle platoons.<sup>7</sup> Airborne divisions possessed only sixty percent of a traditional division's manpower and a fraction of the available firepower, yet many senior commanders viewed the Angels as any other division and continually relegated it to front line combat. Despite the numerical shortfall, the desperate situation on Leyte required every combat unit's assistance, and MacArthur had placed the 11th under Krueger's Army. However, the Angels disagreed with straight numbers; from their perspective discipline, esprit de corps, and enthusiasm made up for smaller numbers.

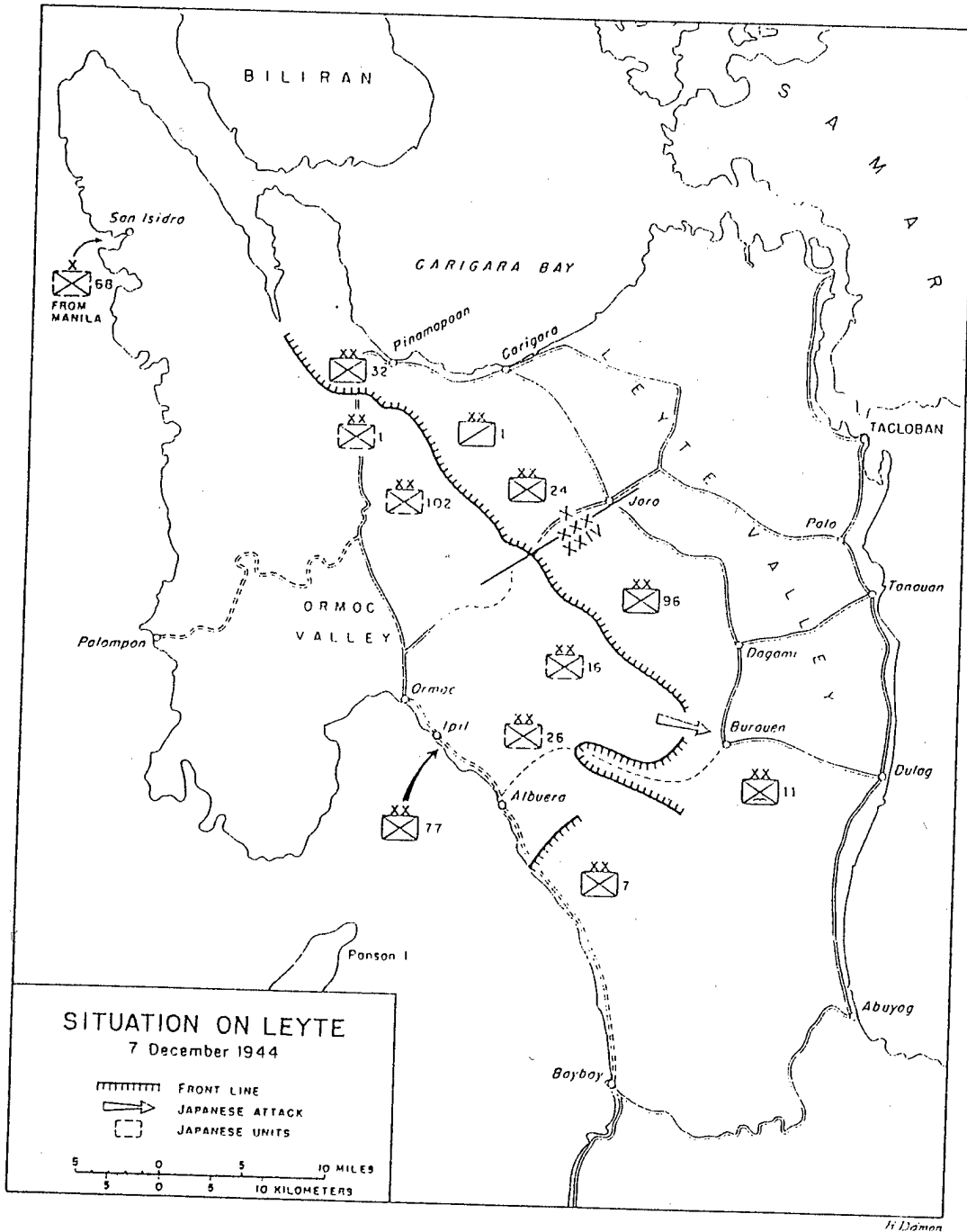
To comprehend the difficulties terrain placed not only on combat, but supply efforts, artillery support, medical assistance, and just basic living, an explanation of the environment is necessary. Leyte lies on the Philippines' eastern edge, at Luzon's southern end, and just north of

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<sup>6</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 95; Edward M. Flanagan Jr., The Rakkasans: The Combat History of the 187th Airborne Infantry (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1997), p. 24.

<sup>7</sup>Interview with Wallace Stiliz.

Map I



H. Loman

Mindanao. A rugged and heavily forested mountain chain, the Cordillera, runs from Carigara on the northern coast, to Sogod Bay south of Baybay. Those mountains contain many precipitous gorges and 4,000 foot peaks that make even foot travel impossible, divide the island into two distinct regions, and affect the weather. The eastern zone and the mountains, where the 11th mostly operated, has virtually no dry season and receives rain on average twenty days per month from October through January, and ten days per month otherwise.<sup>8</sup>

The Ormoc and Leyte valleys, and coastal areas held the best road networks, but for the most part they remained outside the Angels' operating area. Two major east-west connections crossed the Cordillera, the southern Abuyog-Baybay and the northern Burauen-Lubi-Mahonag-Anas roads, but only foot soldiers could walk the latter. Though numerous foot trails led into the mountains, even small parties had great difficulty traversing the Cordillera's paths. Trails frequently crossed gorges on single logs, where slipping meant a thirty to forty foot drop, or they led up terrain so steep soldiers had to scramble using foot and hand holds. Even natives recommended crossing the mountains only on the two major trails.<sup>9</sup> The Southwest Pacific Area's Geographic Section stated Leyte's level terrain, "would permit... passage of troops and of tracked and wheeled vehicles," but apparently

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<sup>8</sup>Walter Krueger, From Down Under to Nippon: The Story of the Sixth Army in World War II (Washington: Zenger Publishing Co., 1953), p. 145

<sup>9</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 1, in RG 407, Box 7596; Krueger, p. 145-146.

those people had no clue about Leyte's weather.<sup>10</sup> Barring any water, these trails may have, though doubtfully, served the Angels, but excessive rains quickly turned these trails into quagmires and hindered vehicle travel for weeks. The 11th developed many unique solutions to overcome these hardships that only its airborne capabilities made possible.

Although some historians have touted the railroad's and motorization's ability to supply armies in unprecedented fashion, the Angels saw little benefit on Leyte. Corporal Gentile described resupply on Leyte as a nightmare, because everywhere, knee-deep muck covered a man's boots, and made vehicle travel extremely difficult. Efforts to drive supply trucks up stream beds and steep mountain roads and trails failed, and often forced the division to hand carry its equipment and supplies into the mountains, except for rations and ammunition which it received by aerial drops. Despite such back breaking work, surviving members regarded that as part of the job. The Service Company's Corporal Suppa stated forward units normally depended on food and ammunition the most, but the lack of stiff resistance lessened the ammunition requirements and allowed the company to shuttle supplies forward to Burauen and Bugho by jeeps and trailers; beyond those towns, carabao (water buffalo) and aerial methods became the norm. The regiment's unit journal showed Colonel Soule even requested his S-1 to determine whether it could contract

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<sup>10</sup>Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Crate, eds., The Army Air Forces in World War II, 7 vols. (University of Chicago Press, 1948-1958), vol. 5: The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, 385.

ox carts from locals. While nothing further is mentioned, it points to the situation's desperation. Even with the weather, the shore's close proximity eased supply problems, since it was easily within walking distance. In one case Lieutenant Stilz and several men walked to the coast, obtained ice cream for the platoon, and returned before it melted.<sup>11</sup>

A brief side note must explain the aerial resupply. The division first used this method on November 26, and its success continued its use throughout the campaign. Without this technique, patrols would have shortened and other operations reduced in scale, and many wounded men might have died. Since fighter-bombers congested Leyte's airfields and left little room for transport aircraft, the entire Sixth Army had between two and six C-47s for aerial resupply of five divisions at any one time.<sup>12</sup> Aside from straight numbers limiting their use, bad weather and the aircraft's high speed prevented it from hitting the "pocket handkerchief" size drop zones. The 11th did utilize a single air-sea rescue C-47's services, whose crew had never conducted airborne operations, but not regularly. At one point, that plane flew thirteen flawless sorties to deliver Battery A, 457th Parachute Field Artillery (FA) Bn to Manarawat, a small plateau northwest of Patog. But lacking Air Corps' support, the division relied

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<sup>11</sup>Interview with Edward Gentile; "Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 3, in RG 407, Box 7596; Interview with Wallace Stilz; Interview with Milton Feingold.

<sup>12</sup>Flanagan, The Angels. p. 136; Craven and Crate, vol. 5, 385.

almost exclusively on its L-4 and L-5 artillery spotting liaison planes.<sup>13</sup>

Eventually the Angels assembled sixteen liaison aircraft, nicknamed the "biscuit bombers," at the Bayug airstrip.<sup>14</sup> The L-4 carried nearly 200 pounds while the L-5 hauled 400 pounds, and each needed only ten minutes to fly from their Burauen airfields to the various drop zones.<sup>15</sup> Once there, the L-5's passenger pushed the supplies out, while the single-seat L-4 required the pilot to do the duty. Fragile bundles such as medical supplies, radio equipment, and artillery shells demanded parachutes, but ammunition, rations, and other cargo were simply pushed overboard. Non-parachuted items caused a number of deaths and injuries when they landed on people as Corporal Gentile's unit alone lost several men killed and others hospitalized. These craft made accurate drops in the worst weather imaginable, and at peak operation flew 176 sorties and carried 18 tons a supplies per day, without which the division would not have passed west of Burauen.<sup>16</sup> It took an estimated ten hours for a man with a light pack to travel from Lubi to Burauen, and Japanese raids still posed a

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<sup>13</sup>"History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1 20643," p. 11, in RG 407, Box 7582; Joseph B. Seay, "The 11th Airborne Division in the Leyte Mountain Operation," Military Review 24 (October 1949): p. 18-22; "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, After Action Report, King II Operation, Leyte, P.I. 18 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-0.3 20437," p. 2, in RG 407, Box 7583.

<sup>14</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 136; "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1 20643," p. 11, in RG 407, Box 7582.

<sup>15</sup>"History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1 20643," p. 12, in RG 407, Box 7582; "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, After Action Report, King II Operation, Leyte, P.I. 18 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-0.3 20437," p. 10, in RG 407, Box 7583.

<sup>16</sup>"History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1 20643," p. 11; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 137.

threat.<sup>17</sup> Mountain patrols could not have survived without the L-4s and L-5s, since they sometimes hiked three days from base camps into terrain where only foot travel was possible, and no other supply lines existed.<sup>18</sup>

The Angels received the following orders in support of Operation KING II, the Leyte invasion: relieve the 7th division on the Burauen-La Paz-Bugho line paralleling the mountains, proceed west along the Burauen-Lubi-Mahonag-Albuera trail, block the Japanese escape east from the west coast, destroy any enemy en route, and defend all army and air force units in its area. Swing assigned Colonel Soule's 188th Regiment to secure the area from Bugho to La Paz, thus protecting the division's southern flank as the 11th drove west. The division immediately began relieving the 7th Division, who then repositioned to drive north from Baybay and east from Ormoc to meet the Angels. Impassable roads and streams lacking bridges delayed the relief, but it finally ended on November 28. Meanwhile, the 1st and 24th Divisions advanced south from Carigara and the 96th slogged west on the Angel's northern flank. These simultaneous actions squeezed the Japanese forces in an enormous vise, with no escape.<sup>19</sup>

Arriving on four ships, the 188th deployed to relieve the 184th Regiment, 7th Division. Regimental and battalion

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<sup>17</sup>"History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1 20643," p. 11, in RG 407, Box 7582

<sup>18</sup>Seay, p. 24; Interview with Edward Gentile; "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1 20643," p. 11; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 137, in RG 407, Box 7582; Interview with Wallace Stiliz.

<sup>19</sup>"History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1 20643," p. 8, in RG 407, Box 7582; Devlin, Paratrooper!, p. 558-559.



commanders accompanied General Swing to Seventh Division Headquarters for a situational briefing; where the 188th received its specific orders. Swing tasked the regiment with seizing and securing all eastern mountain exits opening into the Leyte valley; defending occupied areas; destroying all hostile forces; maintaining contact with the 511th on its right (North) flank, and the 7th Division on its left (South) flank; and the most difficult, advancing to the Cordillera's western slopes to secure the mountains' western exits, thus protecting the 7th. The area the regiment occupied stretched roughly fifteen miles with the Marabang River to the north, and Abuyog-Baybay road in the south, and between six and fifteen miles east to west. Many rivers traversed the area, and greatly impeded travel since the Japanese destroyed numerous bridges, or they simply never existed. Of note, the regiment occupied a zone previously manned by three battalions, not two, which often stretched the regiment while attempting to cover so much territory.<sup>20</sup>

To satisfy these objectives, Lieutenant Colonel Mortimer J. O'Kane's 1st Battalion (Bn), with its three companies A, B, and C, marched to Bugho on November 20, but heavy rains impeded their progress and delayed arrival until midnight that day. The battalion set up its Command Post (CP) on a small, isolated plateau, which forced all resupply by air, demonstrating one of many unique solutions the division

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<sup>20</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 2-3, in RG 407, Box 7596.

implemented to overcome terrain difficulties. The companies quickly established a defensive perimeter, but intelligence reports indicated most Japanese forces had moved north, or had been captured or killed. Those left behind lacked equipment and organization, and had gone several weeks without sufficient food, or had resorted to cannibalizing Japanese and American dead.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, the rest of the regiment, essentially 2nd Battalion's E, F, and G Companies under Lieutenant Colonel Thomas L. Mann, contended with rough surf while it boarded LSMs at Bito Beach. Muddy roads and seven unbridged streams forced the battalion to move north by water rather than the coastal road to Dulag on November 23.<sup>22</sup> Unbelievably the companies traveled through the mud by trucks the next day to Santa Ilena, one mile northwest of La Paz. The battalion dispatched Company E to Lake Danao, and a separate patrol under First Lieutenant William J. Mullaney Jr. to determine the Lake Danao-Mount Tinagen-Bucan River-Naga trail's ability to sustain the battalion.<sup>23</sup>

Both battalions initiated aggressive patrols of the surrounding roads and trails, detailed soldiers to guard bridges (when found) from demolition, and protected those

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<sup>21</sup>"Annex No. 1 to F.O. No. 1, 19 Nov 1944," in RG 407, Box 7596, in file "Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299;" and "Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 3, in RG 407, Box 7596; Interview with Dom Suppa.

<sup>22</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, After Action Report, King II Operation, Leyte, P.I. 18 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-0.3 20437," p. 8, in RG 407, Box 7583.

<sup>23</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 3, in RG 407, Box 7596.

crossings Seabee naval construction units built. Within days of arriving, Company B's Merritt Hinkel found himself on a night patrol, an anomaly in the Pacific fighting, detailed to protect Seabees constructing a bridge. Official army policy directed its Pacific Theater units to build defensive positions and perimeters for men to occupy at night and not leave from until morning, because of the darkness' natural confusion and the Japanese regularly operated after sunset. Since the area was essentially "secure," a limited degree of night patrolling occurred. Hinkel's group encountered a strange glow in the distance, almost like that from a city, but nothing but trails and jungle covered the area. Upon investigation they realized that by cutting trees, the Seabees had agitated something in the trunks, possibly phosphorus, that produced the glow. Hinkel remarked that the eerie lighting put a lump in everyone's throat, and instilled a slight fear of the unknown, but it turned out to be nothing.<sup>24</sup>

The regiment made efforts to find an east-west trail in the Bugho and Lake Danao areas, but all attempts failed. A patrol under A Company's 1st Lieutenant Alan F. Siegle, sought a trail via Carye, west of Bugho, but the terrain forced the group all the way to the regiment's southern boundary, the Abuyog-Baybay road, before it found a suitable crossing. Following several days of patrolling, the 2nd Bn moved by foot on November 27, to Santa Ilena, Magaso, and finally to Lake Danao, where E Company had relieved a 184th unit two days

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<sup>24</sup>Interview with Merritt Hinkel.

prior. The 2nd Bn's move allowed it to block trails leading north and south, and east and west through the Cordillera, and maintain contact with the 511th.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout this period, Lieutenant General Sosaku Suzuki's 35th Army opposed the invaders, of which, only the 16th and 26th Divisions directly countered the Angels, but the 188th initially met little resistance as it moved inland.<sup>26</sup> The regiment's first encounter occurred on November 26th when units near Bugho captured one prisoner, hardly strong opposition. Patrols searched every known trail, road, or path, and the two battalions kept in close contact, but both units found virtually nothing. Colonel Soule quickly realized that no organized enemy force existed in the immediate area, but that slowly changed.<sup>27</sup>

Unfortunately, many of the interviews regarding patrols came from B Company men, which slightly skewed the information, but it is safe to assume all 188th units faced much the same. The physical conditions presented Lieutenant Stilz's platoon with more trouble than did enemy resistance. He lead one platoon patrol into the mountains looking for a trail to the west coast, but the group had no such luck. The patrol's members started the journey with new boots, but after enduring three days of mud and water, the jump boots' stitching rotted and the soles began falling off. Stilz

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<sup>25</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 3-4, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>26</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 112-113.

<sup>27</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 4, in RG 407, Box 7596.

subsequently had new boots air dropped by those crucial liaison planes. Milton Feingold remarked that it rained nearly every day, and forced men to use palm leaves as bedding, since most men slept in the open when patrolling, to separate themselves from the mud. One cannot overemphasize the rain and its affect on the men and combat operations, since it turned trails to muck and made easy tasks not only extremely difficult, but sometimes nearly impossible. Wetness and mud attacked all items causing clothing, boots, equipment, and weapons to disintegrate, covering the men in mud from head to toe, and clothing rarely dried out.<sup>28</sup>

Consequently, health problems became a major issue in any unit trying to maintain its fighting strength. Many men continually battled jungle rot as the never ending wetness caused skin to peel off, and sometimes even incapacitated those whose feet turned raw, but Murphy's Law stated a man could not remove his boots to dry his feet, since as soon as he did the unit would have to move. Merritt Hinkel still suffers from jungle rot's effects today. Despite efforts to tie clothing at the legs, waist, arms, and neck when traveling through water, leeches always managed to find an opening. If a man simply removed the leech, the spot would bleed and become infected, but by burning it, the leech would willingly detach. This gave many men an excuse to smoke. Men also faced malaria carrying mosquitoes, and mites sporting dengue

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<sup>28</sup>Interview with Wallace Stiliz; Interview with Milton Feingold; "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1 20643," p. 11, in RG 407, Box 7582.

fever, which had a 90% chance of burying a man. Lieutenant Stilz credited disease as more of a factor in combat readiness than enemy bullets. Thirty-three year old Lieutenant Charlie Rigano, a grandfather by most standards, started at 185 pounds and lost fifty by the campaign's end due to the tough living conditions, terrain, and heat.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the terrain's inherent difficulties, the men remained in high spirits; of course they complained and no one enjoyed it, but since they had little control over the weather and terrain, most grudgingly accepted it as part of the job. Corporal Suppa agreed and commented that he did not consider the physical environment all that much, since he had a job to do. He merely took everything in stride. Corporal Gentile concluded much the same, though he did remark they wasted a good deal of time and energy due to the elements, getting vehicles out of the mud, and trying to move themselves. Moreover, as some astutely realized, the Japanese encountered the same difficulties.<sup>30</sup>

Squad and platoon sizes characterized nearly every patrol, and very few patrols ever occurred at night. Although a company might travel somewhere as a group, once there, company maneuvers were almost unheard of because of the terrain and jungle, and smaller patrols allowed units to cover larger areas. From that point, platoons and squads became the

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<sup>29</sup>Interview with Merritt Hinkel; Interview with Wallace Stilz; Interview with Charlie Rigano, Myrtle Beach, SC, October 24, 1998.

<sup>30</sup>Interview with Merritt Hinkel, Interview with Wallace Stilz; Interview with Dom Suppa; Interview with Edward Gentile.

norm, and they normally patrolled from fixed base camps for between one to six days. If a squad needed reinforcement, then the rest of the platoon would provide support. On one six day patrol Lieutenant Stilz led, the group unsurprisingly started with enough food for three meals per day, which was a large quantity when combined with other equipment, a rifle, and ammunition. After about three hours, he halted the patrol, had his men keep the necessities, and buried the rest of the rations. From that point, his patrols traveled on reduced rations to decrease weight and maintain the patrol's strength. Night patrols rarely occurred because the army did not operate at night in the Pacific, but some exceptions were made in "secured" areas. The flipside of that is why does a secure area need patrolled? Regardless, official army doctrine held that anything moving at night was shot.<sup>31</sup>

"Mopping up" necessitated interaction with Filipino guerrillas and civilians to speed the operation's conclusion, but while sometimes the meetings were pleasant, other times they inspired distrust and dislike. While guerrillas provided regular assistance, their support on Leyte never reached the level of aid received on Luzon. Guerrillas gave crucial assistance in leading patrols into the mountains, and serving as interpreters, which saved time and casualties since they often had information on Japanese locations. Though the 188th might have accomplished its task without their assistance, it would have taken much longer. In early December, each

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<sup>31</sup>Interview with Wallace Stilz; Interview with Merritt Hinkel.

battalion received at least one guerrilla platoon from Company L, 95th Philippine Infantry. Although in most cases they functioned well, many Americans questioned their reliability because they feared the Filipinos might give them wrong information or lead them into traps. Other guerrillas inspired disbelief among 188th men when they brought in Japanese heads speared on rifles, but as interaction increased, so too did the trust. Though not detailed, the 188th's unit journal indicates the regiment utilized natives as laborers to construct shelters, carry supplies, and drive carabao in supply trains.<sup>32</sup>

On November 27, the Japanese employed airborne troops against the Angels, and brought the 11th face-to-face with its own kind. After several Japanese transports crashed on the beach near Rizal, just south of Dulag, the division alerted its regiments that while most had died, a considerable number escaped inland. The regiment ordered all units to patrol their areas, and a regimental headquarters patrol identified four such soldiers near Gibuga the same day and killed two. On the 29th, a 1st Bn patrol located seven Japanese from the same force, but they escaped leaving demolition kits and other equipment. Lastly, a 2nd Bn patrol killed two more soldiers near Magaso, that reports indicated as paratroopers.<sup>33</sup> The

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<sup>32</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 3, in RG 407, Box 7596; Interview with Merritt Hinkel; Interview with Edward Gentile; Interview with Wallace Stiliz; "Unit Journal," in RG 407, Box 7596, in file "Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299."

<sup>33</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 4, in RG 407, Box 7596.

11th's encounter marked one of the few, if not the only, instances of American airborne forces engaging Japanese parachute units. During the airborne's developmental phase, some argued airborne troops could be dropped on enemy paratroopers just after they had landed. Submariners embraced this symmetrical argument, that the best weapon against a submarine is another submarine. Although the 11th landed by ship rather than air, and the Japanese effort ultimately failed, it did demonstrate the potential use of airborne troops against each other.

On November 30, the regiment temporarily changed directions and priorities when General Swing ordered Colonel Soule to conduct strong patrols northward. The regiment responded by sending a regimental headquarters group under Lieutenant Mullaney and a 2nd Bn patrol under Second Lieutenant James K. Felty northwest from Lake Danao to Patog and Mount Catman. Two days later, F Company followed to Patog and relieved the 511th's H Company. The remainder of 2nd Bn and the regiment's support units moved to Patog by way of Santa Ilena, and reached there on December 6. Finally, one G Company platoon remained to defend and patrol Lake Danao, but 1st Bn's Company C replaced it on December 7. These movements once again forced the 188th to hand carry its supplies, or strap them to carabao, but despite all the traveling, the regiment made few enemy contacts.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 4, in RG 407, Box 7596.

Meanwhile, the 1st Bn continued its patrolling on December 5, and even sent one group as far north as Lake Danao. The patrol reached a landslide that blocked the trail, causing the Filipino guide to lead them west then north around a nearby mountain, where the patrol leader subsequently lost his bearing. As the men crossed a stream, they noticed several unknown soldiers, but the native guide identified them as Japanese and killed one with his rifle. A firefight erupted and the patrol took several casualties from grenade fragments, but with darkness setting in and ammunition running low, the patrol broke contact.<sup>35</sup>

Realizing their growing hopelessness, Japanese leaders took a bold step to strike American air bases on the island. General Suzuki and his commander, General Tomoyuki Yamashita, understood that continued airfield construction threatened communications to the home island, and that occupying the Burauen, Tacloban, and Dulag airstrips would eliminate some American airpower and help sever the Angels' supply line with the liaison planes. The operation started with the drops near Rizal on November 27 with the intent of destroying aircraft on the ground. The next phase included a coordinated attack on Burauen's airfields, San Pablo, Bayug, and Buri, using more parachute drops, and the 16th and 26th Divisions.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> A/B Div, G-3 Journal, Leyte 19 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-3.2 20812," 05 Dec 1944 - 06 Dec 1944, in RG 407, Box 7589.

<sup>36</sup>M Hamlin Cannon, The United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific, Leyte: The Return to the Philippines (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1954), p. 294-298.

Optimism, poor coordination, and faulty intelligence doomed the mission to failure. The 16th Division had only 500 effective soldiers of its original 8,800, hardly enough to attack through a division.<sup>37</sup> More importantly, not realizing that Yamashita had delayed the operation, including the parachute jumps, by twenty-four hours, the "Division" attacked the 11th prematurely on December 5. The December 5th XXIV Corps' G-2 Report at 2000 stated, "An examination of reports of action in this area since 1 Nov may well warrant the assumption that organized resistance had about ceased."<sup>38</sup> The 16th proved them wrong late that night and early the next morning, but by the time it reached Buri's airfield, only a few hundred remained. Fortunately for them, they met U.S. 5th Bomber Command units and men of the 287th Field Artillery Observation Bn. These units lacked infantry training and only gave sporadic resistance until 1st Bn 187th arrived.<sup>39</sup>

On December 6, earlier Japanese airborne efforts arose like the mythical phoenix when 1st Bn units in the Angels' southern sector reported Japanese bombers and transports flying north at 600 feet. Shortly after, roughly 300 paratroopers landed near Burauen's three airfields.<sup>40</sup> Corporal Suppa remarked the planes flew so low over his position, he could have hit them with a rock. Antiaircraft guns shot down

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<sup>37</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 142.

<sup>38</sup>Cannon, p. 298.

<sup>39</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 143.

<sup>40</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 4, in RG 407, Box 7596; "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1," p. 9, in RG 407, Box 7582.

all the transports flying toward Tacloban, while those assigned to Dulag crashed and killed everyone aboard. Those allotted to Burauen expected fighters and bombers to fill the strips, but work had stopped on all but Bayug due to mud; therefore, it only held the liaison aircraft. The division's artillery units, quartermaster company, ordnance company, engineers, 187th Regiment, and others bore the brunt of eliminating the paratroopers. The division ordered 2nd Bn to return to Burauen on December 7, which it did, but the unit's dispersed nature and water-logged trails hindered travel, and delayed arrival until afternoon on the 9th. Once there, it established a perimeter around the Bayug airfield, but by then Japanese resistance in the area had been crushed. Much the same occurred when the 26th Division finally broke through the mountains and attacked the airfields on December 10.<sup>41</sup>

The Japanese effort destroyed a few supply dumps and aircraft, and the offensive failed miserably, but some discrepancies exist regarding the attack's impact. Official documents give the impression nothing significant occurred, although they acknowledge the Japanese destroyed all but one of eleven aircraft, which the Fifth Air Force subsequently replaced with fifteen similar planes from the 25th Liaison Squadron.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, Captain Joseph Seay, from the division's 127th Engineers, wrote a postwar article stating

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<sup>41</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 152-153, 162-163; Interview with Dom Suppa; "Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 5, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>42</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, After Action Report, King II Operation, Leyte, P.I. 18 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-0.3 20437," p. 8, 11, in RG 407, Box 7583.

the assault drastically affected supply efforts, at least temporarily. He claimed efforts to repair and replace the planes required four days, during which, forward troops quickly exhausted their limited reserves. The Manarawat dump nearly depleted its entire stock before resupply resumed, and when deteriorating weather prevented immediate replenishment, the men suffered. His argument appears correct since the division relied heavily on aerial resupply into the mountains, so any interruption would have tremendous effects.<sup>43</sup>

Fearing more raids, the division ordered the 188th less 1st Bn to search areas south of the Burauen-Dulag road and San Pablo airfield, and to protect the area's engineering units. The following day, E Company moved back to Burauen to defend the 44th General Hospital, where it remained until the 13th, and helped eliminate a Japanese raid. The 1st Bn stayed there until December 17, and continued patrols and raid defense. Of note, the regiment ordered its intelligence section to reconnoiter the area between Burauen and Mount Majunag. The group, under Lieutenant Mullaney, killed 32 Japanese near the mountain, presumably 16th Division members.<sup>44</sup>

Following the airborne attack, 1st Bn patrolled its area to find any stragglers from the Japanese parachute forces, but they had little or no luck. Merritt Hinkel's platoon searched the countryside, but Filipino civilians always reported the Japanese five to ten kilometers ahead. Upon reaching the

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<sup>43</sup>Seay, p. 22.

<sup>44</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 5, in RG 407, Box 7596.

area, civilians repeated the same, so his platoon never found anything. Though the reports may have held truth, with such small numbers and untamed wilderness, any Japanese would have had an easy time hiding. 1st Bn patrolled the Bugho-Burauen area to the mountains, through at least December 20-21, but Intelligence Reports indicated it encountered nothing significant.<sup>45</sup>

Since patrols rarely encountered any resistance, especially in the southernmost sectors, some men like Milton Feingold and Merritt Hinkel recalled never having fired their rifles on Leyte. Though neither man could remember for certain, and both agreed they might have fired their M-1s, their response is still significant because both men were from separate B Company platoons and both distinctly recalled using their weapons later on Luzon. Either way, it illustrates how non-existent resistance was by that point, since no major firefights occurred. Though some, like the Eighth Army's commander, General Robert Eichelberger, have concluded infrequent contacts and casualties suffered only for mopping up demoralized those involved, interviewees offered a different perspective. Most men stated they did not give much thought to their feelings regarding patrolling and mopping up, and only did as they were told. In fact, it was better not to have contacts since it meant no one was shooting at you, which demonstrated a survival mentality characterized most men.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Interview with Merritt Hinkel.

<sup>46</sup>Interview with Milton Feingold; Interview with Merritt Hinkel; Eichelberger, p. 195.

Recognizing the southern sector's inactivity, Swing ordered the regiment transferred northwest. On December 16 the 188th, less 1st Bn, received orders to move to Manarawat, the site of intense fighting earlier by the 511th, where it arrived on the 18th. To move supplies and heavy equipment over the steep, narrow trails, the 188th depended on native carriers and nearly 100 carabao, but rather than release those men and animals once the move was complete, the regiment built them a small living area and retained them for future operations. Even the carabao had difficulty traversing the steep trails and beyond Manarawat they could not make the journey, which put a premium on aerial resupply near Lubi, just west of Manarawat.<sup>47</sup>

The area's steep terrain caused an other important development in early December, but again the division's airborne capability furnished the solution. Since carrying litters from Lubi to Burauen required ten to twelve stretcher bearers and more for a security detail and at least ten hours travel, the 11th parachuted field hospitals at Lubi and Mahonag.<sup>48</sup> The two hospitals treated most casualties, but in extreme cases pilots and medics rigged a plywood shelf in the L-4 to support a litter and evacuate the wounded. More importantly, the hospitals treated minor wounds, and presumably the sick, and returned men to their original units,

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<sup>47</sup>"History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1," p. 11, in RG 407, Box 7582; "Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 5, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>48</sup>"History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1," p. 11, in RG 407, Box 7582.

thus keeping the unit's strength and preventing unnecessary travel for minor wounds. These hospitals initially supported the 511th, then later assisted the 188th.<sup>49</sup>

The hospitals offered a number of services to ease the suffering of wounded men, but also demonstrated the ability to supply difficult forward areas with nonessential items. A motion picture projector made its way to Manarawat, and even the division band marched there on December 18. Every day the division dropped its newspaper, "The Static Line," to the hospital, while several chaplains also made the jump. General Swing's earlier decision to purchase an ice cream machine paid dividends as the wounded received daily rations, and men ate fresh turkey dinners on Christmas Day like the other Angels.<sup>50</sup>

2nd Bn continued patrols in the Lubi and Lubi River areas, but met much greater resistance than earlier, especially northwest of Anonang. The 511th and 187th had earlier bypassed this stronghold since Swing considered his main mission reaching the west coast; consequently, the Anonang defense's elimination fell to the 188th and 187th Regiments. Initially the regiment focused on patrols and probes to determine the extent of the defenses. On the night of December 21, units set up an ambush 1500 yards northwest of Lubi, where 188th men had previously seen 21 enemy soldiers.<sup>51</sup> Nothing occurred that night, but the next day they encountered

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<sup>49</sup>"History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1," p. 11-12, in RG 407, Box 7582.

<sup>50</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, After Action Report, King II Operation, Leyte, P.I. 18 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-0.3 20437," p. 13-14, in RG 407, Box 7583.

<sup>51</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 6, in RG 407, Box 7596.

a strong defensive position just north of the ambush site. A Regimental Headquarters patrol met the same emplacement, and joined forces with the 2nd Bn group. While determining the position's location, the patrols suffered six casualties.<sup>52</sup>

When Colonel Soule received word of the resistance, he sent another group to evacuate the casualties and evaluate the situation. The patrol radioed Soule that the Japanese had extensive, well-manned positions. With this knowledge, he transferred the 2nd Battalion to destroy the emplacements. Although probes continued looking for some weakness, none existed, but keeping pressure on the enemy forced their withdrawal from isolated outposts. By December 24, the 188th began planning a coordinated infantry and artillery assault between the 1st Bn 187th and 2nd Bn 188th, with the 1st Bn 188th ready if needed. The two battalions, supported by the division's three artillery battalions, launched their assault

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

on December 26.<sup>53</sup>

The resulting struggle produced some of the fiercest fighting thus faced by the division, and the only "by the book" assault the 188th engaged in while on Leyte. The Japanese concentrated their defenses on two parallel ridges. The first contained at least sixty-four spider holes, eight to ten feet deep, for individual riflemen.<sup>54</sup> Light and heavy machine gun nests gave both hillsides interlocking fire, and all positions had thick overhead cover. Later inspection revealed a bivouac area, and enough supplies and equipment to support a regiment.<sup>55</sup>

Company F established itself on the supply trail west of Ananong to block any Japanese retreat, while the two battalions flushed the defenses. The 187th's 1st Bn positioned itself on the north side, while Mann's battalion formed on a hill across the gorge from Purple Heart Hill, named for the casualties suffered during its capture. When the attack began, Mann's battalion moved away in plain view to deceive the Japanese, but once out of sight, the battalion doubled back and scaled a rocky gully to Purple Heart Hill's southern slope. After reaching the slope, the men used vines and branches to pull themselves toward the ridge's enemy

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<sup>53</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 6, 8, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>54</sup>"History Notes by Mr Edward W. Jacobs, Secretary to Major General J.M. Swing, 11th A/B Div, December 29, 1944," in RG 407, Box 7582, in file "Historical Summary-11th Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - 10 Feb 45 - 1946 311-0.1 20643."

<sup>55</sup>"History Notes by Mr Edward W. Jacobs, Secretary to Major General J.M. Swing, 11th A/B Div, December 29, 1944," in RG 407, Box 7582, in file "Historical Summary-11th Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - 10 Feb 45 - 1946 311-0.1 20643."

positions, where the battalion encountered stiff resistance. When the attack stalled, Colonel Soule asked a private at one point what he would do to take the hill. Spoken like a true soldier, E Company's Private First Class John Chiesa replied, "Just bomb the hell out of them, blow the hill up."<sup>56</sup>

That day and night, batteries at Manarawat and Burauen, including 105mm and 155mm artillery, shelled the positions. On the 27th, the battalion stormed the ridge and captured it in a rage of hand-to-hand fighting, then occupied the Japanese foxholes as night came. Japanese soldiers not killed by artillery or close-in fighting retreated north and west. Those fleeing north met the 187th attacking south against the other ridge, while those escaping west met F Company. All told, the units involved counted 238 dead Japanese and countless body fragments, and by December 30, the battalion secured the hill and returned to Manarawat.<sup>57</sup>

While 2nd Bn units moved north and confronted stiffer resistance, the 1st Bn moved from Bugho to Burauen by trucks and DUKWs, then marched to Patog. On December 18, division alerted the 1st Bn to prepare to drop and seize the Valencia airstrip north of Ormoc. Company C returned from Santa Ilena to Bugho and began preparations, but although the 11th canceled the mission, the company remained on alert for other possible missions. On the 22nd, the battalion traveled to Lake Danao and continued patrolling west and southwest. As

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<sup>56</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 195.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid, p. 196.

the 511th moved to the rear, the 1st Bn eventually transferred forward to Manarawat to support the Ananong attack.<sup>58</sup>

With all organized resistance crushed in the division's sector, the 1st Bn once again resorted to patrolling the Manarawat, Mount Lubi, and Purple Heart Hill areas in all directions searching for any remnants. Meanwhile, 2nd Bn departed for the coast on January 3, only to be redirected by the division to eliminate an estimated 200 Japanese soldiers southwest of Patog, which Company F killed or dispersed.<sup>59</sup> 1st Bn received a new commander, Lieutenant Colonel Ernest H. LaFlamme, that week, but little else aside from patrolling, and the horrible task of grave registration and burying the dead occurred. The unit had few enemy contacts, and on the 9th the 96th relieved all but A Company, which remained there until the 13th. By then the regiment had come full circle by returning to Bito Beach, the Leyte campaign's staging area.<sup>60</sup>

From January 13-26, the division rested and refitted for the upcoming Luzon operation by replenishing stores and equipment losses. Meanwhile, doctors tried to patch the men together, especially those suffering from dysentery and foot troubles. In late January, the 188th learned it would spearhead the division's assault at Nasugbu, Luzon. The regiment boarded amphibious assault ships on the 26th, and

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<sup>58</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 6, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>59</sup>"188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Leyte 1-31 Jan 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 1, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

made a practice landing the following morning, then boarded WWI type, four stack destroyers and departed for Luzon.<sup>61</sup>

The Leyte campaign gave the 188th its proverbial baptism of fire, and men progressed from green and inexperienced to veterans. Despite physical fitness, lectures, exercises, and training, they learned only through experience, which came at a cost. The transition to the veteran status cost the regiment forty-four dead and wounded, though probably more from disease and accident related casualties, and all but twelve of which occurred near the Purple Heart Hill area.<sup>62</sup> Corporal Suppa recalled one instance when a truck crossing a bridge knocked a trooper in the water. Without hesitation, Sergeant Monroe dove in the water and held the man up until a dugout rescued the soldier, but Monroe tried to swim to shore and rebuffed efforts to drag him into the boat. He never made it, and Corporal Suppa lost a dear friend who had been with him since the division's formation, and for whom he still prays for today. Suppa remembered with misty eyes what must have been every soldier's greatest fear, possibly even greater than their own death, "That's when you really start to fear the war. When you first lose a buddy, or somebody, somebody that you know, somebody close."<sup>63</sup> Though an isolated incident, countless 188th men faced similar situations from combat and

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<sup>61</sup>"188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Leyte 1-31 Jan 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 1, in RG 407, Box 7596; Letter to author from Wallace Stiliz.

<sup>62</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>63</sup>Interview with Dom Suppa, I could not decipher Sgt Monroe's first name from the taped interview.

non-combat deaths that they had to overcome amidst the fury around them.

The 188th learned many important "lessons" regarding communicating with and supplying units, small unit tactics, and hygiene. Communications became extremely important, especially in rugged terrain where direct line of sight or movement straight from point A to B became impossible, and in some instances, runners provided the only available means. Documentary evidence indicated communication wires should be laid, regardless of difficulties, but experience showed that a better method used radio relay stations due to wire's maintenance and security requirements. The regiment encountered many difficulties when supplying its units, with the most successful solutions including aerial resupply, native carriers, and carabao. Concerning tactics and the individual soldier, several lessons emerged. Successful patrols relied heavily on quietness, alertness, and teamwork to avoid detection and ambushes, and men should carry the minimum necessary equipment when traveling at length over mountain and jungle trails, as Lieutenant Stilz discovered. One could not overemphasize perimeter discipline and fire sectors in defensive situations.<sup>64</sup>

The lessons learned touted night operations, which marked a significant change to the traditional policy of digging in

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<sup>64</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 7, in RG 407, Box 7596; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 126-127; "Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 7-8, in RG 407, Box 7596; "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 43 - May 45 311-0.1 20643," p. 11, in RG 407, Box 7582.

at night, as crucial to success, and the division conducted them whenever possible. However, a disclaimer must be mentioned. Units traditionally holed up an hour or two before sundown, but this allowed the Japanese to know the perimeter's exact location. Swing instituted a dramatic change: units would proceed until dark, dig their night positions, and break camp before sunrise to gain a jump on the Japanese. Whether the lessons learned refer to this, or true night operations, is not clear. Regardless, Swing's changes did not constitute true night patrols, and the Japanese still owned the night. Interviewees stated training taught them to shoot anything that moved at night, which could and did result in friendly.<sup>65</sup>

A great deal of friendly fire accidents occurred both on Leyte and Luzon, that normally came from distant artillery and mortar fire, but even came from someone just next to you. Though some were accidental, others were from plain stupidity as nearly occurred with Corporal Suppa. After the Japanese airborne drop at Burauen, Suppa recalled sitting perimeter defense one night with Peter Herons. Shortly before nightfall, he confronted a group of four to five radio operators from Headquarters and Headquarters Company and told them they would have to man foxholes that night, but they replied they were pulling out. When both men noticed heads moving outside the perimeter later that evening, they awakened the men in neighboring foxholes and Suppa volunteered to check

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<sup>65</sup>Dale F. Yee, ed., Dear General: World War II Letters, 1944-1945 from Major General Joseph M. Swing to General Peyton C. March (11th Airborne Division Association, 1987), p. 13; Interview with Merritt Hinkel; Interview with Dom Suppa; Interview with Edward Gentile; Interview with Wallace Stiliz.

out the movement. He told those behind him to open up with everything they had if the "Japanese" fired. When Suppa reached the area, he found those same radiomen sleeping outside the perimeter. The movement Suppa and Herons saw were the men rolling in their sleep, but had he decided to obey official policy, and not his instinct, those men would have probably not survived.<sup>66</sup> Presumably the lack of real fighting and the mop up nature relaxed the radiomen and caused them to feel their lives were not threatened, or maybe a rear area atmosphere developed that put the them at ease.

From a weaponry standpoint, the lessons learned praised the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) as the best automatic weapon for jungle fighting. Lieutenant Stilz valued the BAR as a heavy weapon because of its relatively light weight, seventeen pounds, and magazine fed rounds. As a side note, near the Luzon campaign's conclusion, the army decided to replace the BAR with twenty-one pound, belt-fed light machine guns that were more difficult to handle, but Stilz asserted he would not have turned in the BARs until absolutely necessary. The lessons recommended that 60mm mortars accompany all patrols, whether by hand or animal in difficult terrain, but some patrols found a better solution. Stilz confiscated four Japanese knee mortars, so named for a bend in the barrel, and distributed them throughout his platoon because of their light weight, reliability, and ease of firing.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Interview with Dom Suppa.

<sup>67</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 7-8, in RG 407, Box 7596; Interview with Wallace Stilz.

Finally, of great concern to soldiers, the unsanitary conditions created immense hygiene problems. The lessons stressed camp sanitation to prevent intestinal and insect born diseases, and foot care became the single most important factor, since fungus and wetness could disable entire units if not handled properly. Men found their solution in dry socks, airing, powder, and Luzon's drier climate.<sup>68</sup>

Although sacrificing firepower, the 188th's airborne association ideally suited it for movement in rugged terrain, but that movement came at a price. As General Pierson informed General Krueger, the 11th lacked the necessary firepower to destroy Japanese defensive positions; however, most of the regiment's actions favored light, mobile units, and the 188th rarely encountered fortified defensive works on Leyte. Instead, it met disorganized groups of platoon and squad size or smaller, which they were better structured to meet. As the lessons learned indicated, small patrols effectively defeated the Japanese with BARs and 60mm mortars, which supported the patrols better than the distant, and sometimes non-existent, artillery fire. For the Leyte campaign the limited firepower served them well, but this changed when the 188th faced Manila's layered defenses.

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<sup>68</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-INF(188)-0.3 22299," p. 7-8, in RG 407, Box 7596.

### Chapter Three

#### Luzon: By the Book and Mopping Up

The fighting on Luzon differed in many ways with that on Leyte both in terrain and in actual combat. While it rained nearly every day on Leyte, the division's arrival on Luzon coincided with the dry season, which eased many problems the Angels had previously faced. Moreover, being the Philippines largest island and having the national capital, Luzon had much better roads, including a major concrete highway. Luzon's combat offered the 188th the only true opportunity to fight "by the book" as battalion and regimental size units using tremendous firepower, but even that ended after Manila. Poor weather and the fighting's patrol nature limited the 11th's reliance on artillery and close air support on Leyte, but the division had continual fire support up to Tagaytay Ridge, at Nichols Field, and at Mount Malepunyo. Lastly, the quick advance to Manila placed a premium on guerrilla support as the supply line stretched dangerously thin.<sup>1</sup>

Like the Leyte campaign, the Joint Chiefs questioned the Luzon invasion's necessity, and considered assaulting Formosa instead. At the last minute, Admiral Ernest King, the Chief of Naval Operations, accepted Admiral Nimitz's proposal to take Luzon, not Formosa. Since, MacArthur could not meet the original December 20 invasion date because he lacked

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Wallace Stiliz; Interview with Edward Gentile.

sufficient naval and air support, planners pushed the invasion date back to January 9, 1945.<sup>2</sup>

MacArthur considered the 11th his secret weapon, and planned to use the Angels to reconnoiter southern Luzon, pin down Japanese forces in the area, provide the decisive stroke against Manila if possible, and rescue prisoners at Los Banos, but the method of getting the 11th there involved great deliberation. The General Headquarters (GHQ) staff and General Swing developed numerous plans, but nothing fruitful emerged. Following the main amphibious invasion, Swing intended to drop the Angels in the Japanese rear to prevent reinforcements from reaching the beachhead, while a second amphibious invasion would attack Manila. The debate still raged when the Sixth Army landed at Lingayen Bay, north of Manila, on January 9 and drove south.<sup>3</sup>

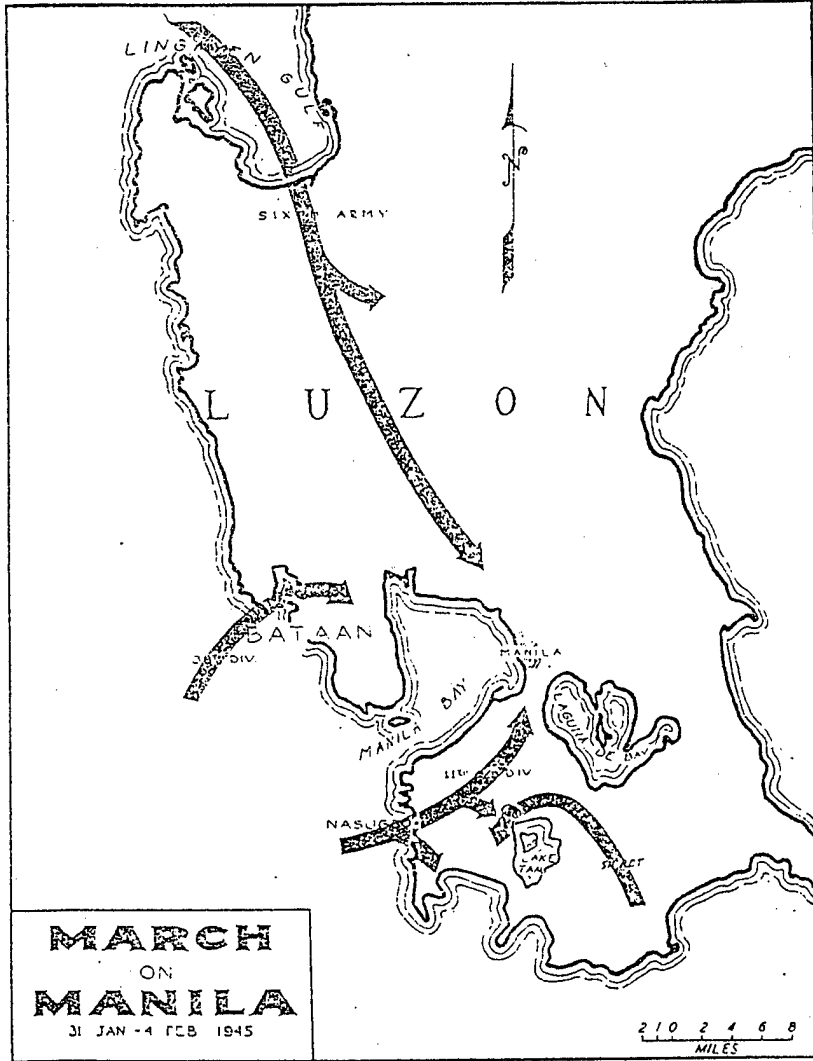
From the 9th until the 22nd, the GHQ and Swing had heated discussions about the 11th's employment before the Angels landed on Luzon. The GHQ suggested the 511th drop in company size units throughout southern Luzon, but Swing objected since his paratroopers would have to fight piecemeal and supplying them would have been impossible. Other scenarios included parachute and glider attacks on Manila's Clark Field, uniting the 503rd Parachute Regiment and the 11th, scattering the entire division in company units over southern Luzon, and landing the two glider regiments at

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<sup>2</sup>Flanagan, *The Angels*, p. 205.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 203; Yee, ed., p. 15; Eichelberger, p. 188.

Map III



different beaches on southern Luzon's west coast. Ultimately both sides blended the last proposal and Swing's original concept: the two glider regiments would land amphibiously at Nasugbu, the most suitable beaches south of Manila, while the 511th parachuted on Tagaytay further inland, then the two would unite and wheel north toward Manila. With the plan finalized, the division received its orders on January 22, and the 188th and 187th sailed for Nasugbu within a week and landed on January 31.<sup>4</sup>

To understand the 188th's combat on Luzon, an explanation of the geography is necessary. Although the 188th confined its efforts to the island's southern half, the most obvious point is Luzon dwarfed Leyte in overall size. While the increased distance caused overextension and lengthened supply lines, one bright spot existed; after suffering Leyte's ceaseless rains, the men were delighted to learn February was Luzon's dry season, which helped quicken the advances.<sup>5</sup>

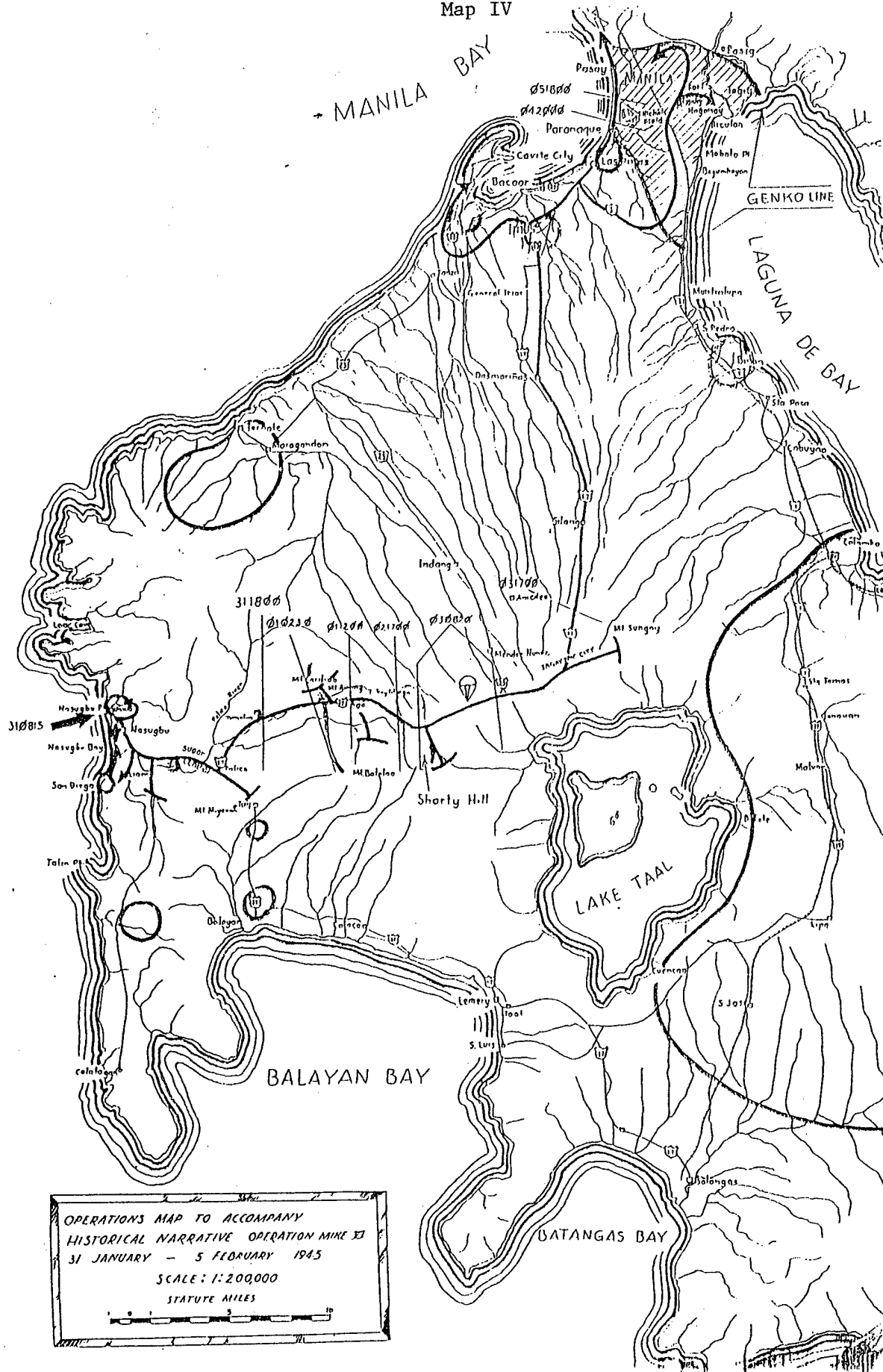
Being the main Philippine island, the road networks were better, but still primitive by today's standards. Terrain restricted travel to roads after the landing since rice and sugar cane fields lay behind Nasugbu and the easiest route of advance lay along highway 17; thus 188th and 187th's movement toward Tagaytay canalized along that road. In some areas the

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<sup>4</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 208, 216-217; Robert Ross Smith, Triumph in the Philippines (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), p. 180-181; While enroute, the XI Corps landed at Subic Bay on January 29, 1945 and drove east to prevent any Japanese escape into the Bataan Peninsula, and join with the Sixth Army moving south. The 158th RCT made the last landing at Legaspi in southeast Luzon on April 1, 1945. From there they drove north to link with the 11th.

<sup>5</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 218-220.

Map IV



road rose gradually, while in others it steepened and snaked through mountains as it traveled thirty miles east through flat and rolling land, over and along ridges, and between high mountains before ending on Tagaytay. That ridge formed Lake Taal's northern edge, and provided a target for all the division's efforts. From there the highway was concrete, and descended from the ridge thirty-seven miles to Paranaque, Nichols Field, and Manila. Once on Manila's south side, the division could hold the narrow Hagonoy Isthmus separating Laguna de Bay from Manila Bay, and thus prevent enemy reinforcements from either reaching or escaping the city.<sup>6</sup>

Early on January 31, P-38s and A-20s strafed the beach, followed by naval bombardment and rocket attacks. Landing craft followed close behind, and in one case almost too close when rockets missed Milton Feingold's and Luther Matthews' craft by several feet. The 188th and 187th went ashore as a reconnaissance in force under the Eighth Army's Operation MIKE VI, meaning they could withdraw if they encountered serious difficulties. However, the Japanese anticipated a southern or eastern attack, not a western one, thus they lightly defended the Nasugbu area. By 1115, Eichelberger committed the entire division and dismissed the reconnaissance in force idea.<sup>7</sup>

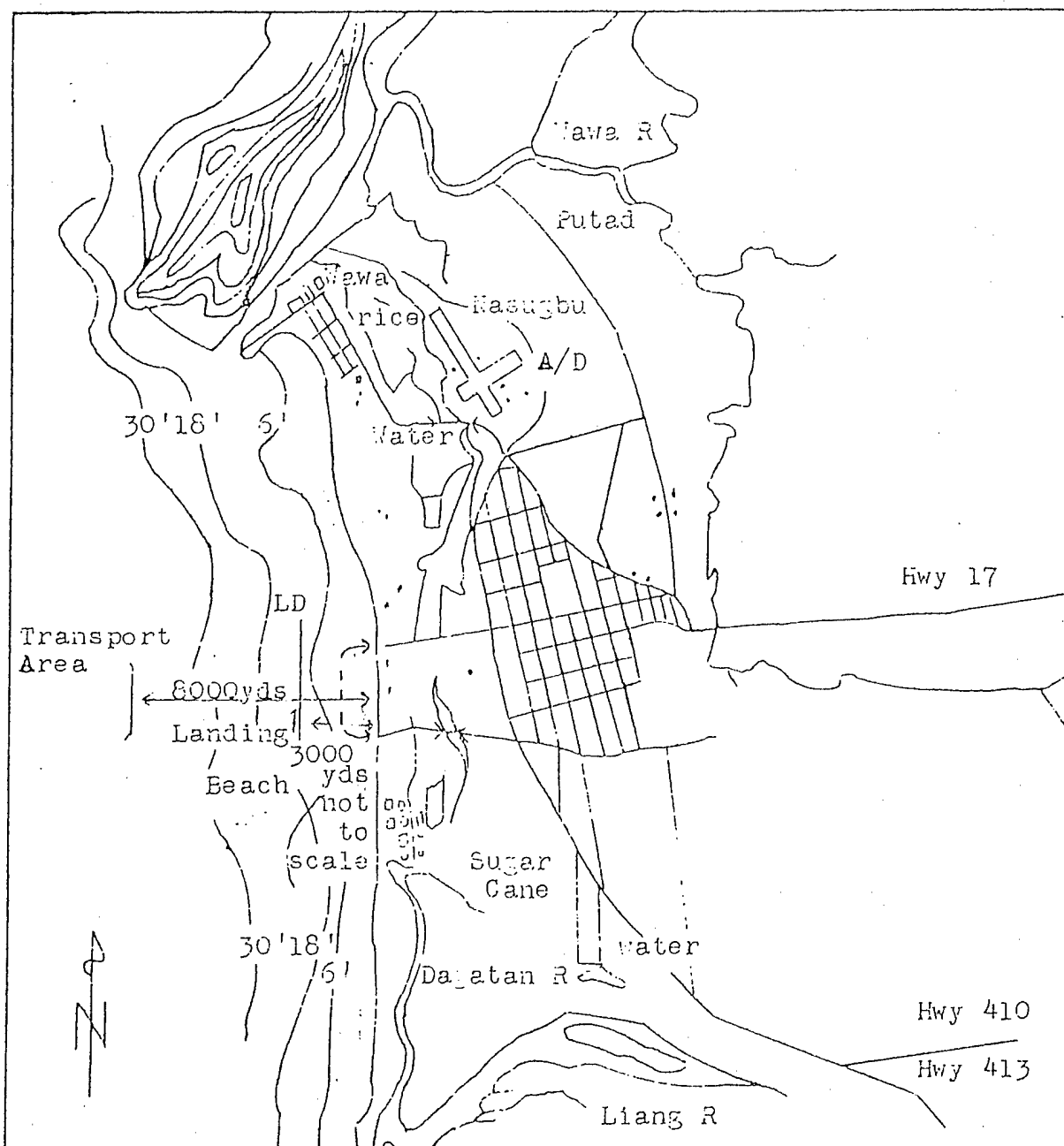
The 188th's 1st Bn made the first landing under light machine gun and 75mm artillery fire from either flank.

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<sup>6</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 217-218; Smith, p. 223.

<sup>7</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 223; Eichelberger, p. 189; Interview with Milton Feingold and Luther Matthews, Myrtle Beach, SC, October 23, 1998; Smith, p. 225.

Map V



Hq 11th A/B Division APO 468  
 Operation Like 6  
 NASUGBU  
 Source PI Report No 6  
 Operations Map No 1  
 Scale 1/24,000 (approx)

LaFlamme's battalion spearheaded the attack because he had served at Fort McKinley, Manila before the war and had frequented the Nasugbu area many times. Company C silenced emplacements on Nasugbu Point and Wawa to the north, while Company E traveled to San Diego Point and F Company captured Lian to protect the southern flank. The 188th's other three companies took the airfield and Nasugbu, where Filipinos greeted the men as liberators. To speed and strengthen the 188th's advance to the Palico River objective and Tagaytay, the 2nd Bn 187th secured the rear areas, and Division HQ assigned the 1st Bn 187th to the 188th, which made it a full strength regiment.<sup>8</sup>

The Palico River bridge lay five miles inland, crossed a gorge 250 feet deep and 85 feet wide, and offered the shortest and best route to Tagaytay since it could support the Angels' heaviest loads.<sup>9</sup> If not seized, the division would have to move south to cross another river then travel north again to highway 17, thus wasting time and energy, and delaying any link with the 511th, whose drop was contingent upon the 188th reaching it within twenty-four hours after jumping. Fortunately, 1st Bn units crossed the bridge and surprised the Japanese preparing demolition charges.<sup>10</sup>

While combat units struggled with Japanese resistance, the division's artillery and heavy articles had a difficult

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<sup>8</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division Oper Rpt. 31 Jan - 5 Feb 1945 Luzon 311-0.3," p. 1, in RG 407, Box 7583; "History - Luzon Campaign (Draft) - 188<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 31 January - 31 March 1945 311-INF(188)-0," p. 3, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>9</sup>Smith, p. 225.

<sup>10</sup>Smith, p. 225.

time getting ashore. Ships often unloaded vehicles thirty yards or more from shore as sand bars frustrated efforts to reach the beach, thus vehicles frequently stalled in the deep water or bogged down in sand. Shore parties resorted to pulling the howitzers ashore by hand, and used bulldozers (when available) to winch trucks and other heavy items like the disassembled liaison aircraft ashore.<sup>11</sup>

To quicken the advance as Eichelberger desired, the reinforced 188th progressed along highway 17 at night. Heavily wooded gorges and steep terrain slowed any off-road movement and confined travel to the road, but that left troopers susceptible to ambushes from the bordering high ground and the road's switchbacks. By 1800 units reached Tumalin, about nine miles inland, but had only met sporadic Japanese resistance; that would soon change. In one of the few Pacific actions where American forces operated at night in the face of resistance, Eichelberger ordered the 188th to continue advancing on the night of January 31, but Swing needed little encouragement. Both men realized that continuing through the night would keep the Japanese off guard and prevent further defensive preparation, but though units moved at night, most of the fighting occurred during the day. The advance paused sometime after midnight for two hours to regroup and rest, then continued at daybreak on February 1 to

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<sup>11</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 228.

the next major obstacle, the defile separating Mounts Cariliao and Aiming, and Mount Batulao.<sup>12</sup>

The Japanese 8th Infantry Division prepared positions in the line running through those three mountains including 155mm, 105mm, and 75mm howitzers; 37mm antitank guns; deep tank traps; mortars; machine guns; and tunnels and caves so close to the road soldiers could throw grenades onto the highway.<sup>13</sup> When the 1st Bn 187th neared Caylungon on the morning of the 1st, the Japanese opened a devastating fire from their high, protected positions. The 457th moved its Pack 75s forward by hand, and silenced machine guns on both sides of the road.<sup>14</sup>

The regiment quickly organized and counterattacked the positions with troopers, artillery, and aerial support. The 1st Bn 188th charged north toward Mount Aiming, where A Company captured the hilltop by noon. The Japanese tried several times to retake the mountain, and even isolated the company from the battalion, but the troopers held their ground. The 1st Bn joined its stranded company after intense fighting, which split the defensive line in half and gave the regiment a commanding position, even if on a slightly smaller

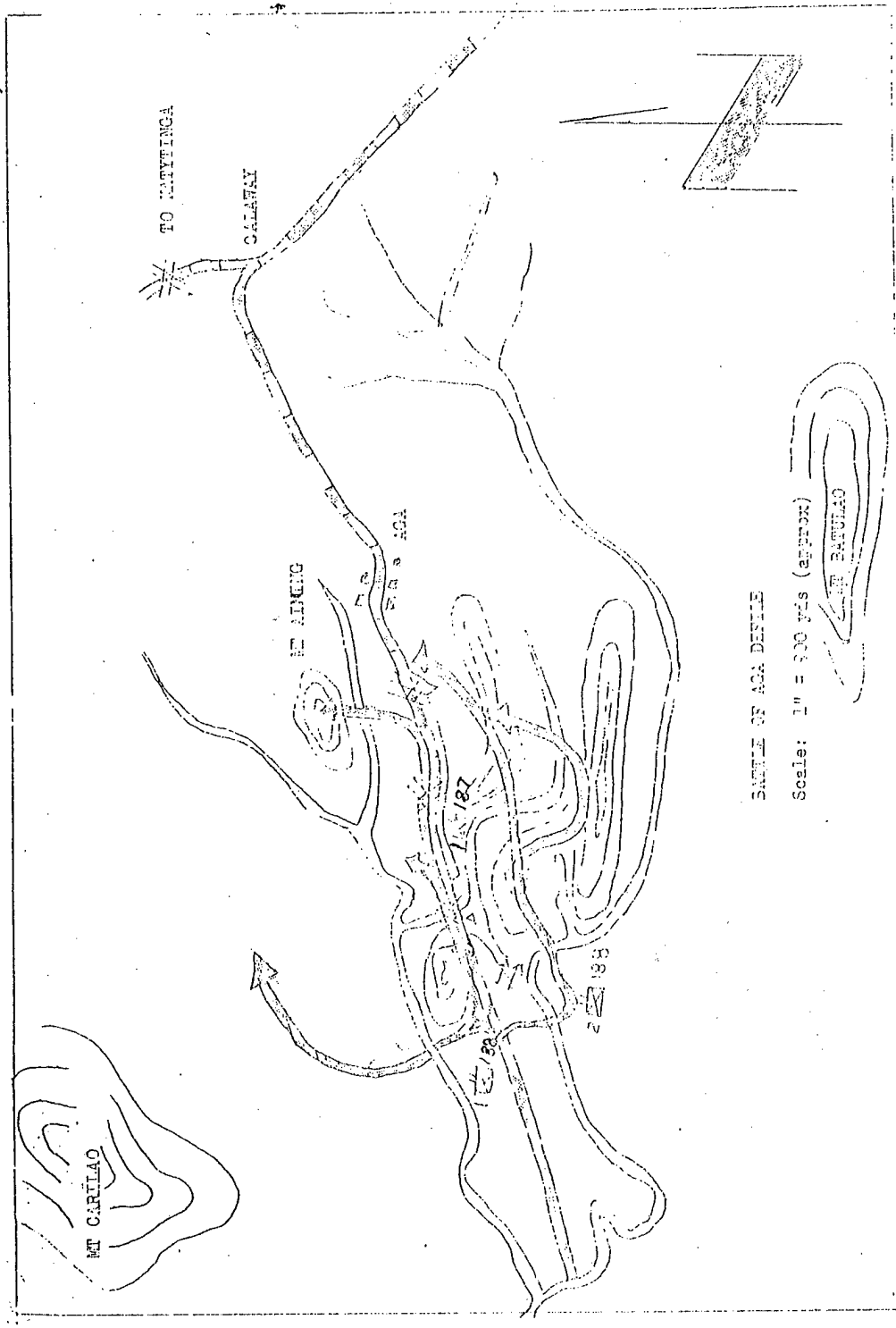
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<sup>12</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 229-230; "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division Oper Rpt. 31 Jan - 5 Feb 1945 Luzon 311-0.3," p. 1-2, and "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division After Action Report, MIKE VI Operation, Luzon, P.I. 31 Jan - 30 June 45 311-0.3 22438," p. 3, in RG 407, Box 7583.

<sup>13</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 234.

<sup>14</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division Oper Rpt. 31 Jan - 5 Feb 1945 Luzon 311-0.3," p. 2, and "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division After Action Report, MIKE VI Operation, Luzon, P.I. 31 Jan - 30 June 45 311-0.3 22438," p. 3, in RG 407, Box 7583.

Map VI



hill. By that point the division had unloaded, established a port and airstrip, fought its way nineteen miles inland by foot, and penetrated the main resistance line within twenty-eight hours.<sup>15</sup> Artillery assisted all units in their progress, and for the first time, the 188th received considerable Air Corps' support from P-38s and A-20s that destroyed numerous artillery positions. Facing such determined attacks, the Japanese fought limited defensive actions, but abandoned successive emplacements. As units neared Aga by dark on the 2nd, the town's proximity to Tagaytay prompted the 11th to send its pathfinders through Japanese lines to mark the drop zone early on February 3.<sup>16</sup>

Lieutenant Stilz went as far as to say the regiment essentially "walked" through the defile's defenses, and he approved of the quick advance. Textbook fighting says one knows the units to the right and left, but Stilz had no idea what units, possibly aside from the company's other platoons, were on his flanks. After a limited firefight in the defile area, his platoon ran along a trail and found itself behind Japanese lines, where it realized the platoon had broken the main line of resistance. While the U.S. Army did not officially fight at night, he said it was a good philosophy.<sup>17</sup>

Following intensive artillery and aerial bombardment near Aga, the division continued its advance on February 2 and 3 as

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<sup>15</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division Oper Rpt. 31 Jan - 5 Feb 1945 Luzon 311-0.3," p. 2, in RG 407, Box 7583.

<sup>16</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division After Action Report, Mike VI Operation, Luzon, P.I. 31 Jan - 30 June 45 311-0.3 22438," p. 3-3a, in RG 407, Box 7583.

<sup>17</sup>Interview with Wallace Stilz.

Japanese forces withdrew. By 1300 on the 2nd, the division had captured the command post at Aga, huge amounts of ammunition, food, clothing, and engineering equipment, and the towns of Kaytitinga and Caylaway. The next morning, February 3, the three battalions proceeded forward to link with the 511th, while one A Company platoon remained to defend the division's only connection with Nasugbu, highway 17. The attack progressed smoothly until the lead squads rounded a bend in the road and the Japanese attacked from their commanding position on Shorty Ridge, named after Colonel Soule's five foot six stature and the highest point on the Tagaytay chain. Soule moved under fire to an exposed position and directed artillery fire himself, as units scrambled forward under a combined artillery and fighter-bomber barrage. Using grenades, flamethrowers, and supporting fire, the troopers suppressed most of the fire, but complete capture waited until the following morning.<sup>18</sup>

11th Airborne members and historians still disagree whether the 188th arrived before or after the 511th's drop, but the jump occurred on the morning of February 3. Robert Smith's Triumph in the Philippines and, not surprisingly, 188th men contend they reached the ridge first, while The Angels states the 511th held the ridge for several hours when the 188th joined it at 1300.<sup>19</sup> Regardless, the difference is

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<sup>18</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division Oper Rpt. 31 Jan - 5 Feb 1945 Luzon 311-0.3," p. 2-3, and "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division After Action Report, Mike VI Operation, Luzon, P.I. 31 Jan - 30 June 45 311-0.3 22438," p. 3a, in RG 407, Box 7583; "188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 3, in RG 407, Box 7596; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 242-243, 247.

<sup>19</sup>Smith, p. 228-229; Flanagan, The Angels. p. 247.

immaterial since the lack of opposition meant the 511th dropped not in the enemy's rear, but on undefended land; thus it did not squeeze the enemy between two forces. The quickness with which they united also illustrates the drop should have occurred earlier, as General Eichelberger had hoped, or deeper in enemy territory. Though unwilling to admit it, the 511th's drop proved anticlimactic since both units linked up within several hours at most and no real opposition existed. Yet that belies two points: it would have taken longer to land the 511th at Nasugbu and march it to Tagaytay than to drop it unnecessarily, and shipping shortages would have delayed that even further.<sup>20</sup>

Events occurred so quickly that the Angels' lacked full comprehension of their accomplishments until the division reached Manila. By seizing Mount Aiming, the main resistance line's center, the 11th weakened the entire Japanese position and forced its evacuation. If the unit had taken longer to reach the Aga area or had not captured Mount Aiming in such a short time, the entire effort would have taken much longer. The subsequent snowball effect would have delayed the 511th's drop, and given the Manila defenses more preparation time, but drawbacks did exist. The penetration's suddenness forced the 11th to bypass enemy pockets and scattered the defenders, which seriously threatened the thread-like line of

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<sup>20</sup>Smith, p. 229.



communications that eventually stretched seventy miles from Nasugbu to Manila.<sup>21</sup>

With the 511th's arrival, the division prepared for the drive toward Manila and consolidated its position. The 11th had walked thirty miles to a twenty-four hundred foot elevation, but now trucks became available. The division had seventeen two and half ton trucks, which along with the concrete road speeded the advance of some units, but most men still walked.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, an earlier error regarding gasoline transport forced C-47s to deliver the supply to Nasugbu, and delayed the 2nd Bn 511th's start until the 4th. While the 11th regrouped, the 2nd Bn 188th found extensive defensive works including tunnels, concrete caves, and firing positions that the 127th Engineers' closed or destroyed with demolition charges. Even after eliminating organized resistance by late morning on the 4th, the 2nd Bn continued patrols with Filipino guerrillas to clear stragglers on Tagaytay's southern slopes.<sup>23</sup>

The next morning the 511th crossed the Paranaque River, and penetrated the right flank of the Japanese Genko Line. Anticipating a southern advance by American forces, the Japanese built a defensive network 6000 yards deep that

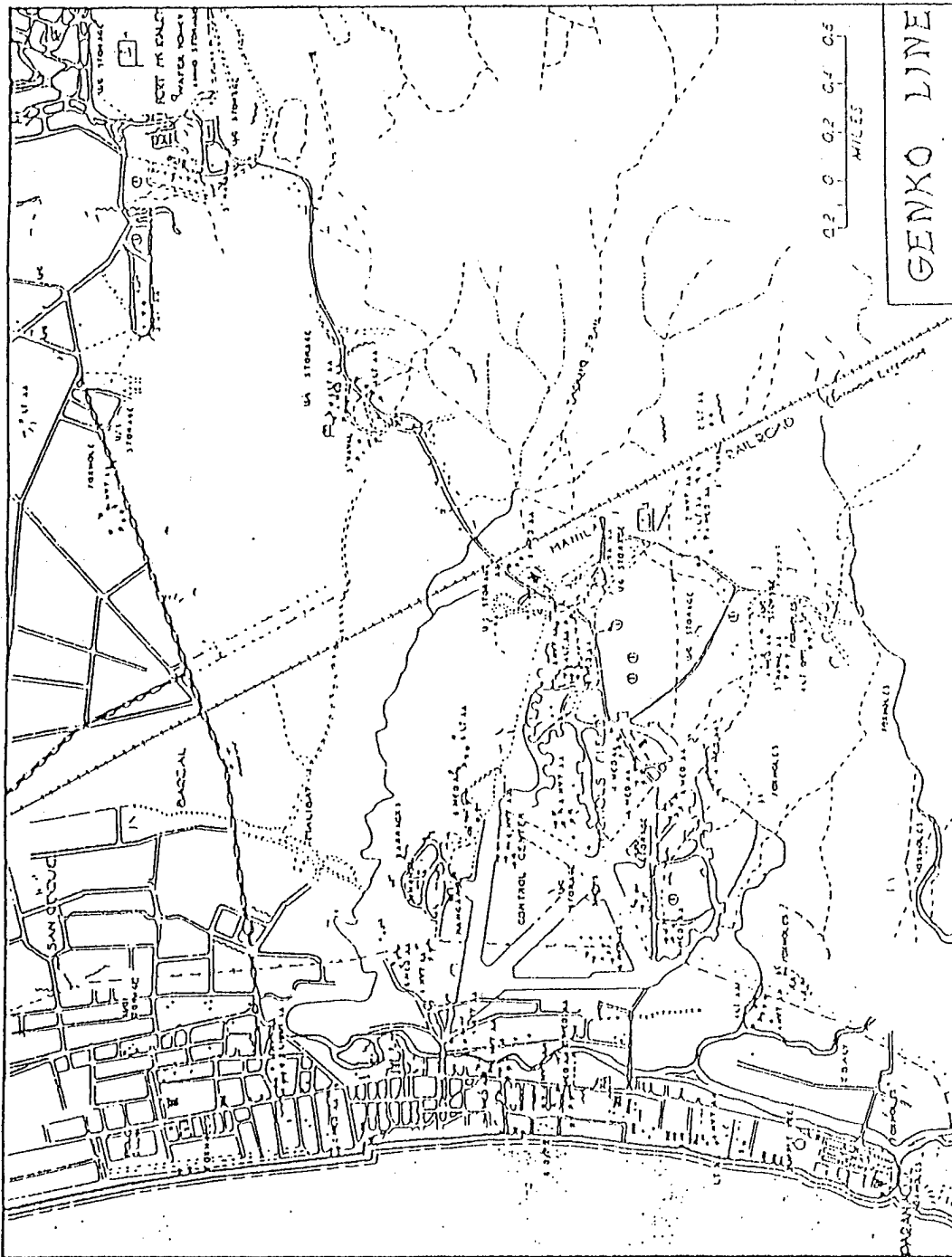
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<sup>21</sup>"Combat History-Luzon Campaign-11th Airborne Division 31 Jan-30 June 1945 311-0," p. 2, in RG 407, Box 7582; "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division After Action Report, Mike VI Operation, Luzon, P.I. 31 Jan - 30 June 45 311-0.3 22438," p. 3a, in RG 407, Box 7583; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 257.

<sup>22</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 249.

<sup>23</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division Oper Rpt. 31 Jan - 5 Feb 1945 Luzon 311-0.3," p. 3-4, in RG 407, Box 7583; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 220, 249; "188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 4, in RG 407, Box 7583.

Map VIII



stretched east to west from Manila Bay to Laguna de Bay. The forward line extended from Nichols Field to just below Mabato Point, while the rear fortifications rested on Fort McKinley's high ground. Like American encounters with prepared defenses on Okinawa and Iwo Jima, the Japanese employed concrete pillboxes, inter-locking fields of fire, machine guns, mines, and large caliber artillery including five and six inch naval guns and 150mm mortars (indicated as black dots).<sup>24</sup> With so many naval guns, one 11th Division company commander quipped, "Tell Halsey to stop looking for the Jap Fleet. It's dug in on Nichols Field."<sup>25</sup>

After securing Shorty Ridge, the 188th, less 2nd Bn to maintain security, marched nearly forty miles to Manila on February 4 and reached Las Pinas on the 6th, where the 2nd Bn later joined. That night the 188th received a tremendous pounding from Japanese artillery at Nichols Field, and an artillery duel ensued lasting all night and several days. Also on that day, Field Order 8 directed the 188th and the attached 1st Bn 187th to attack on the division's right flank with the 511th on the left, which put the 188th on a collision course with Nichols Field, the toughest defensive area the regiment ever faced.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division After Action Report, Mike VI Operation, Luzon, P.I. 31 Jan - 30 June 45 311-0.3 22438," p. 5, in RG 407, Box 7583.

<sup>25</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 271.

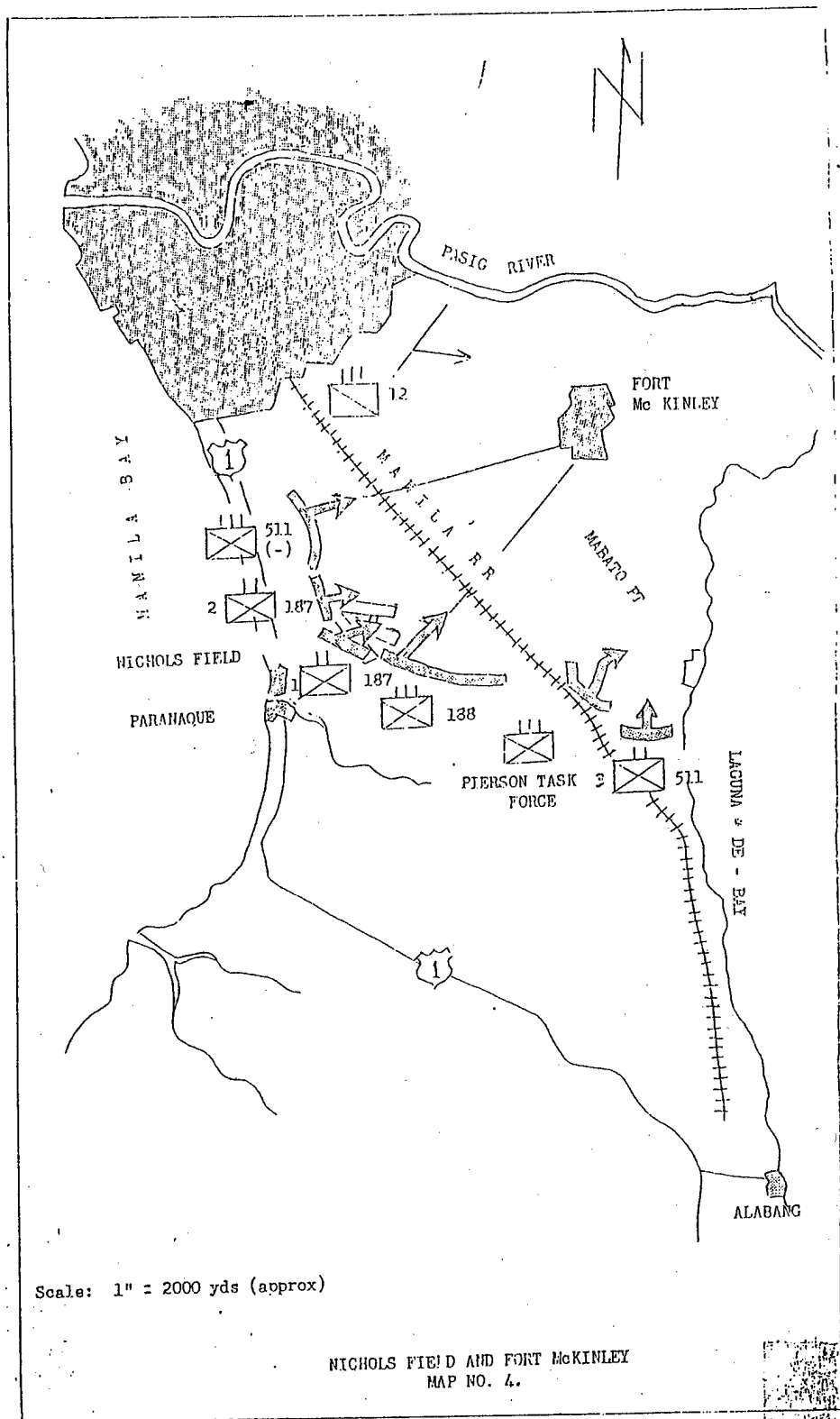
<sup>26</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division After Action Report, Mike VI Operation, Luzon, P.I. 31 Jan - 30 June 45 311-0.3 22438," p. 5, in RG 407, Box 7583; "188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 4, in RG 407, Box 7596.

While not trying to minimize this portion of the campaign and the casualties suffered, the attack on the Genko Line's fortified positions represented the exception to the 188th's service, and more importantly, lacking sufficient documentary material and first-hand accounts, it becomes exceedingly difficult to reconstruct. With that said, a general summary of the attacks is necessary. Pursuing Field Order 8, the 188th proceeded under cover of darkness to Nichols Field's southern and southeastern defenses, and launched its assault on the morning of February 7.

Over the next week and a half, the 188th launched multiple, coordinated attacks against Japanese positions with the 187th, 511th, and numerous attached artillery and tank units. All forces involved relied heavily on artillery and air support to soften up positions, and as a preliminary to any attack, as typical of fighting on other islands and Europe. The troopers faced fierce resistance that often slowed the attacks, and could only be overcome by men painstakingly eliminating each pillbox with grenades, rifle fire, and flamethrowers. The Japanese used mutually supporting fire from anti-aircraft guns and artillery at point blank ranges, and buried depth charges and aerial bombs to inflict heavy casualties. Though having limited exposure to such intense fighting at Purple Heart Hill and the defile leading to Tagaytay, the action near Manila was the first encounter with prolonged barrages. Moreover, for the first



Map X



time the 188th had the opportunity to fight like it had trained, with battalions and regiments maneuvering in direct support of each other. Although the Japanese repeatedly launched counterattacks to dislodge the troopers, the Angels repulsed all attempts.<sup>27</sup>

Gradually the regiment gained the upper hand as troopers eliminated and isolated Japanese positions, and as the defenders increasingly withdrew. On February 12, the regiment established a perimeter and ordered patrols to gather information. Patrols returned having found many abandoned positions, and intact and destroyed guns ranging from 20mm to 75mm. As the regiment gathered more information the next day, its leaders realized the 11th had broken the main resistance line, and that enemy forces now survived in isolated pockets that required piecemeal destruction, not all-out attacks.<sup>28</sup>

The attack on Fort McKinley, northeast of Nichols Field, typified the fighting. On February 13, the division ordered a coordinated attack on Fort McKinley by the 11th and 1st Cavalry. The Angels spent the 14th preparing for the upcoming attack on Fort McKinley, with the 188th receiving reinforcement from the 2nd Bn 187th, Company G, less one platoon, 637th Tank Destroyer Bn, and B Company 127th Engineers.<sup>29</sup> All units made some gains on the 15th, but spent that day and the next consolidating those advances and

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<sup>27</sup>"188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan - Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 5-7, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid, p. 7-8.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, p. 8.

clearing isolated Japanese pockets. On the 16th, the division requested permission to attack the fort, but the XIV Corps refused when the 1st Cavalry reported it had troops in the fort's NCO Club. The account proved inaccurate and the 11th received blistering fire from the fort, which led the XIV Corps to authorize the Angels to seize it. Aerial bombing and artillery fire paved the way, but the actual capture proved relatively easy compared to the efforts thus far since the Japanese had retreated east. By early afternoon the regiment established its command post within the fort, and little remained of the Genko Line.<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, the regiment resorted to its now familiar role of patrolling on the 18th and 19th with patrols sent toward Hauginaw and northeast to Tagig. On February 19, the 2nd Bn began defending the division's southern flank by securing the area from Imus to Muntinlupa north to the 187th near Fort McKinley, and then eventually moved to Paranaque during the upcoming Los Banos operation. As the regiment caught a quick breather, regrouped, and secured its area, the 1st Bn prepared for a special mission.<sup>31</sup>

On February 20, the 188th received orders to rescue prisoners of war interned at Los Banos. The prisoner of war situation had long concerned General MacArthur, but he conceded that Japanese forces required a higher priority.

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<sup>30</sup>Flanagan, *The Angels*, p. 284; "History - Luzon Campaign (Draft) - 188<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 31 January - 31 March 1945 311-INF(188)-0," p. 10, 13, and "188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 8-9, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>31</sup>"History - Luzon Campaign (Draft) - 188<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 31 January - 31 March 1945 311-INF(188)-0," p. 13-14, in RG 407, Box 7596.

MacArthur's request reached Swing who detailed planning to begin on the 5th. Planners gathered intelligence from many sources including guerrillas, the division's reconnaissance platoon, Air Corps photo reconnaissance, and Filipino civilians, from which they constructed a rather detailed picture and greatly reduced the mission's uncertainty.<sup>32</sup>

With the intelligence gathered, the following plan materialized. The Division Reconnaissance platoon would cross Laguna de Bay two days prior to D-Day and coordinate guerrilla efforts to infiltrate the camp and attack the guards at H-hour. At H-Hour, B Company 511th would jump at a drop zone guarded by the Reconnaissance Platoon and guerrillas just outside the camp. The remainder of 511th's 1st Bn and supporting Pack 75s would travel by amphibious tractors to Mayondon Point, and move to the camp. Finally, the 1st Bn 188th, the 472nd and 675th FA Bns, and Company B 637th Tank Destroyers would ride south along highway 1, attack across the San Juan River near Calamba, block any Japanese reinforcements from Santo Tomas, and move toward the other units to help evacuate the prisoners by land.<sup>33</sup>

Since significant Japanese forces existed in the area, including 9,000 veteran troops about one and half hours march from Los Banos, success depended on speed and surprise.<sup>34</sup> 1st

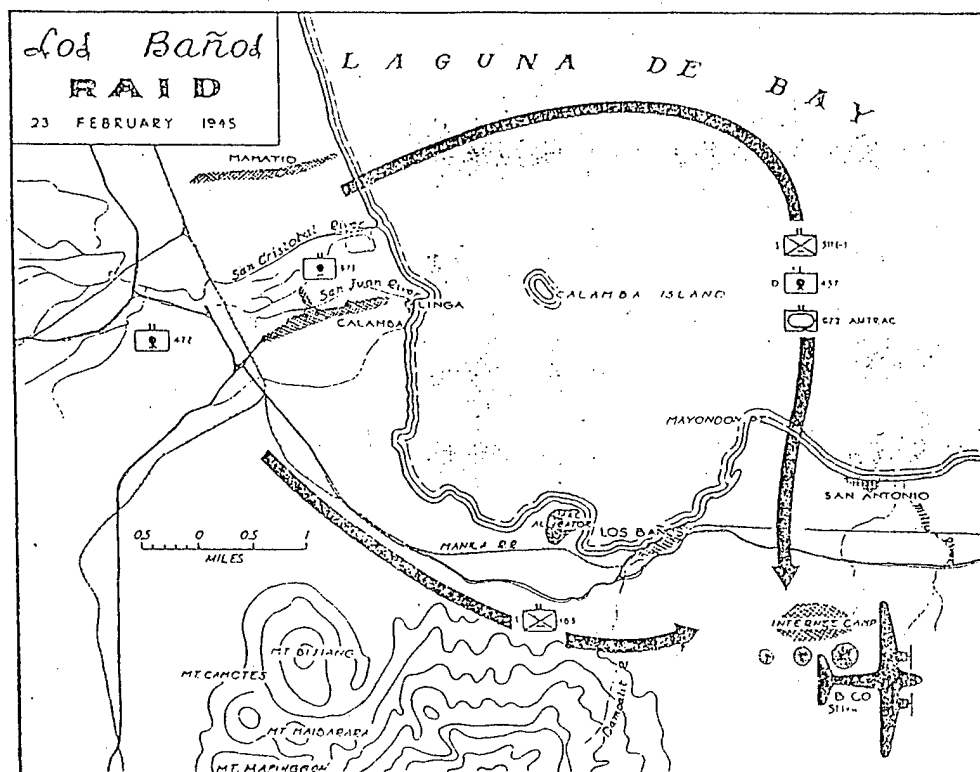
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<sup>32</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 292-293.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid, p. 297; "History - Luzon Campaign (Draft) - 188<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 31 January - 31 March 1945 311-INF(188)-0," p. 15.

<sup>34</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 297.

Map XI



Bn reached the San Juan River's north side just before dark on the 22nd, where it reconnoitered fords since no bridges existed. As planned on the 23rd, the 1st Bn stormed across the river to seize Lecheria Hills and block the road from Santo Tomas, while the 1st Bn 511th arrived in amtracs, and B Company 511th parachuted. No units met any appreciable resistance, though sniper fire delayed the 188th's B and C Companies, but the 188th's advance was halted since amtracs would evacuate the all internees by sea. Amazingly, all units involved performed flawlessly, despite no rehearsals, and by afternoon the 11th evacuated all 2,200 prisoners to Muntinlupa's hospital. While the 511th gained the glory, the 188th performed an essential mission by blocking any potential Japanese reinforcements from hindering the rescue.<sup>35</sup>

Following the Los Banos raid, the 1st Bn remained north of the San Juan, and the 188th assumed protection of the 11th's north flank as the Angels redeployed south. The 2nd Bn, less G Company, remained near Paranaque to clear Japanese elements near that town, Las Pinas, and Nichols Field, as well as guard support units, while G Company traveled to Cavite City. 1st Bn spent several days regrouping for the first time in weeks, then received new orders on February 28 to reduce scattered Japanese units that had reformed at Ternate on

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<sup>35</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 299; "History - Luzon Campaign (Draft) - 188<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 31 January - 31 March 1945 311-INF(188)-0," p. 16, in RG 407, Box 7596; "188th Glider Infantry Regiment: The Soule Task Force...Los Banos Raid," Winds Aloft, July and October, 1989, p. 30.

Manila Bay's south coast.<sup>36</sup>

Field Order 14 defined the 1st Bn's objectives, and detailed the 457th and 472nd FA Bns, three guerrilla companies, and A Company, 44th Tank Bn to support the effort. Upon arriving near Ternate, the battalion attacked into heavy mortar and machine gun fire on March 2. The 457th responded with an intense artillery barrage against those positions and two strongholds in private homes, while attached tanks spearheaded the drive into town. As the tanks reached the village's entrance they quickly realized the Japanese had buried mines, including 350 pound depth charges, but by nightfall, the battalion had captured the town's southern half. Those Japanese not killed retreated southwest into the jungle covered mountains near Mount Pico de Loro that contained knife-like ridges, deep gorges, few trails, and no roads. It closely resembled Leyte, and once again forced the battalion to depend on aerial resupply.<sup>37</sup>

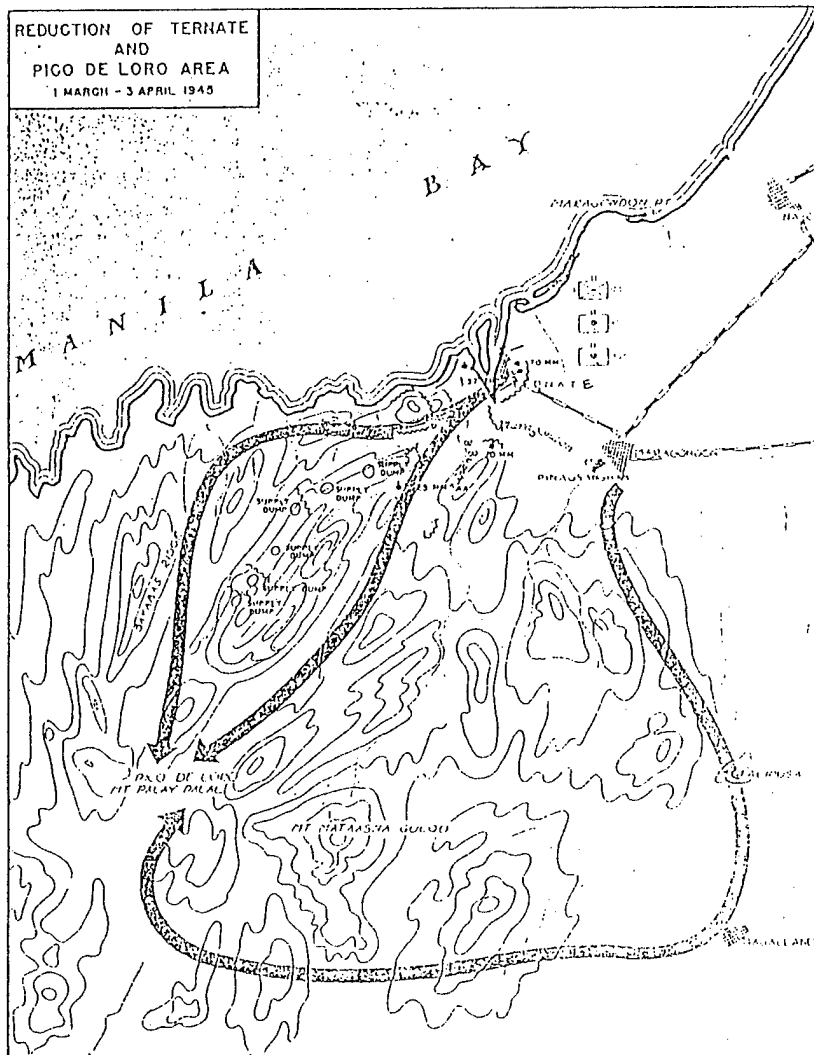
The 1st Bn utilized guerrilla services extensively during this campaign's phase. Tarapan guerrillas progressed ahead of the battalion's main body and proceeded toward San Jose, but they withdrew after meeting stiff resistance, which of course is a natural response given their light armaments. The Ocompo guerrilla force crossed the Maragondon River to

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<sup>36</sup>"History - Luzon Campaign (Draft) - 188<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 31 January - 31 March 1945 311-INF(188)-0," p. 16, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>37</sup>"Combat History-Luzon Campaign-11th Airborne Division 31 Jan-30 June 1945 311-0," p. 3, in RG 407, Box 7582; "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division After Action Report, Mike VI Operation, Luzon, P.I. 31 Jan - 30 June 45 311-0.3 22438," p. 7, in RG 407, Box 7583; "188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 10, in RG 407, Box 7596.

Map XII



take three small villages, then later patrolled the Ternate-Palapag trail on March 2, and also established ambushes and bridge guards. The Ocompo group encountered some strong opposition, but killed numerous Japanese and occupied that area's ridge.<sup>38</sup>

The next morning, the battalion utilized air strikes to destroy several defensive positions and ignite the barracks, then cleared the town and captured numerous artillery and anti-aircraft pieces by early afternoon. The unit dispatched C Company toward Zabang, then disregarding surprise and maneuver (and closely resembling American actions in Vietnam) the company used "recon by fire" to clear the trail near Zabang after meeting a small enemy group. Rather than capturing the town, C Company advanced to the coast and seized 15-25 Q-boats, torpedo type craft that the Japanese used as kamikazes against American ships. The Company overran Zabang on the 4th, and the battalion secured the area around the Maragondon River on March 5.<sup>39</sup>

Toward February's end or early March, the 188th received its first replacements, but actual numbers are difficult to discern. James Fuehrmeyer, who eventually joined F Company, recalled that he and about 200 others were chosen to join the 11th from a replacement depot on Leyte holding roughly 1800 men. Another man, B Company's Thomas Grace, could not believe he was selected for an airborne unit given he had no parachute

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<sup>38</sup>"188th Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 11, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

or glider training. Everyone held the distinction of being young and unmarried, which signaled to them they were chosen for something special. The replacements arrived at Lingayen Gulf, rode trains to Manila, then boarded trucks to meet the 11th. When the open-bed trucks reached Tagaytay, Grace remembered the dust and sand they kicked up acted like talcum powder, blinding vision and choking the lungs. Both men subsequently joined their units as they continued mopping up and patrolling.<sup>40</sup>

Shortly after Fuehrmeyer met his company in the hills, many veterans returned to a rest camp, while he and others remained on patrol. Like other men, he had interesting comments on the environment's affect on operations. Though it rained far less than on Leyte, he stated the rain penetrated everything, and many men, including himself, received trench foot that still causes water blisters. Despite some problems with water, overall the men faced near drought conditions on Luzon that forced liaison planes to drop water in five gallon lister bags. Training had continually repeated the need to use water purification tablets when drinking stream water, but its apparent clarity could be deceptive. On one occasion he recalled finding a dead horse lying in a stream, and from that point he never questioned the tablets. Corporal Gentile stated the heat and humidity were oppressive, and even dried rice paddies into cracks. The heat had one other unintended

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<sup>40</sup>Interview with James Fuehrmeyer, Myrtle Beach, SC, October 22, 1998; Interview with Thomas Grace, Myrtle Beach, SC, October 23, 1998.

effect: it quickly turned the dead bodies men frequently found into blotted, decaying piles that poisoned the air.<sup>41</sup>

Like Leyte, the jungle proved particularly difficult, and produced cob web like conditions that tangled men and hindered patrols. Fuehrmeyer recalled a friendly fire incident when mortars caused several casualties and forced the stretcher carriers to struggle up slippery slopes, grabbing roots and dragging the litter to get the wounded out of the ravine. Limited roads and rugged hills eliminated truck supply in many cases, and forced aerial resupply of mail, rations, and ammunition.<sup>42</sup>

In contrast, Grace arrived when B Company had just returned from the hills. Upon arriving at the command post, he saw his first dead Japanese soldier and it disturbed him. Filipinos had strung up the body on a pole like a deer, and he had been shot through the throat. Many men faced similar situations and had to deal with them, just like Corporal Suppa when he lost his close friend. On a lighter side, as Grace sat down to eat dinner the thunder of four, camouflaged 105mm howitzers just behind caused him to spill his dinner, and gave the veterans quite a laugh.<sup>43</sup>

For the remainder of March, 1st Bn endured a war of attrition as it gradually eliminated Japanese forces in small isolated groups. Operations involved seemingly endless patrolling, the only effective method of clearing the terrain.

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<sup>41</sup>Interview with James Fuehrmeyer; Interview with Edward Gentile.

<sup>42</sup>Interview with James Fuehrmeyer.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid; Interview with Thomas Grace.

When groups encountered Japanese units of any size, they generally directed artillery and air strikes on those positions with telling effects since the Japanese could no longer replace their losses. The battalion temporarily introduced one new tactic; instead of assaulting Japanese fortifications, it prepared defensive emplacements blocking the main trail southwest of Zabang to prevent any escape. Companies continued to patrol, but also invited attacks against those defenses. Keeping with what had sustained it throughout the Luzon campaign, the battalion relied heavily on artillery fire to destroy any suspected resistance. One C Company patrol heard construction sounds near its position and immediately called in artillery shells, while F Company called artillery on a Japanese group hurriedly building defensive positions. The artillery fire, however, further scattered already small enemy groups, which made their elimination even more difficult.<sup>44</sup>

The battalion faced stiff resistance from caves and dugouts in the area that forced troopers to dig out their opponents, since even napalm had little effect in those situations. One particular position required the efforts of two companies and four days to reduce it. As 1st Bn cleared its areas, resistance appeared to weaken under constant artillery and mortar barrages, and inadequate supplies, but the Japanese later proved that wrong. Patrols captured huge

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<sup>44</sup>"History - Luzon Campaign (Draft) - 188<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 31 January - 31 March 1945 311-INF(188)-0," p. 19, in RG 407, Box 7596.

quantities of rice, canned foods, medical supplies, and straw hats and cloth bolts that led the battalion to believe the Japanese were using civilian disguises.<sup>45</sup>

While 1st Bn reduced the Ternate area, 2nd Bn finished clearing Nichols Field and the surrounding areas, but a March 6 field order defined new objectives. 1st Bn remained near Ternate with the added job of defending Nasugbu; fortunately it had an added guerrilla battalion to cover the extended area. The 2nd Bn also had attached guerrillas for its new mission, protecting the division's life-line, highway 17, from Nasugbu to Shorty Ridge from raiding parties, and defending Cavite. To accomplish this, the battalion returned to Tagaytay, while the 511th and 187th advanced east on Lake Taal's north side and the attached 158th Regiment probed east on the lake's southern shores.<sup>46</sup>

By mid-March new orders replaced Colonel Soule with the 2nd Bn 187th's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Norman Tipton, and reassigned the 188th to a new mission. The division's lines thinned as it cleared the Calamba-Santo Tomas-Lipa-Batangas road and progressed east, thus the 188th redeployed to fill the gaps. On the 17th, 2nd Bn traveled to Batangas, followed the next day by 1st Bn, less A Company. A Company, an 81mm mortar section, and the Ocompo guerrillas remained near Ternate to clear Japanese remnants, but just as the 1st

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<sup>45</sup>"188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 13-14, in RG 407, Box 7596.

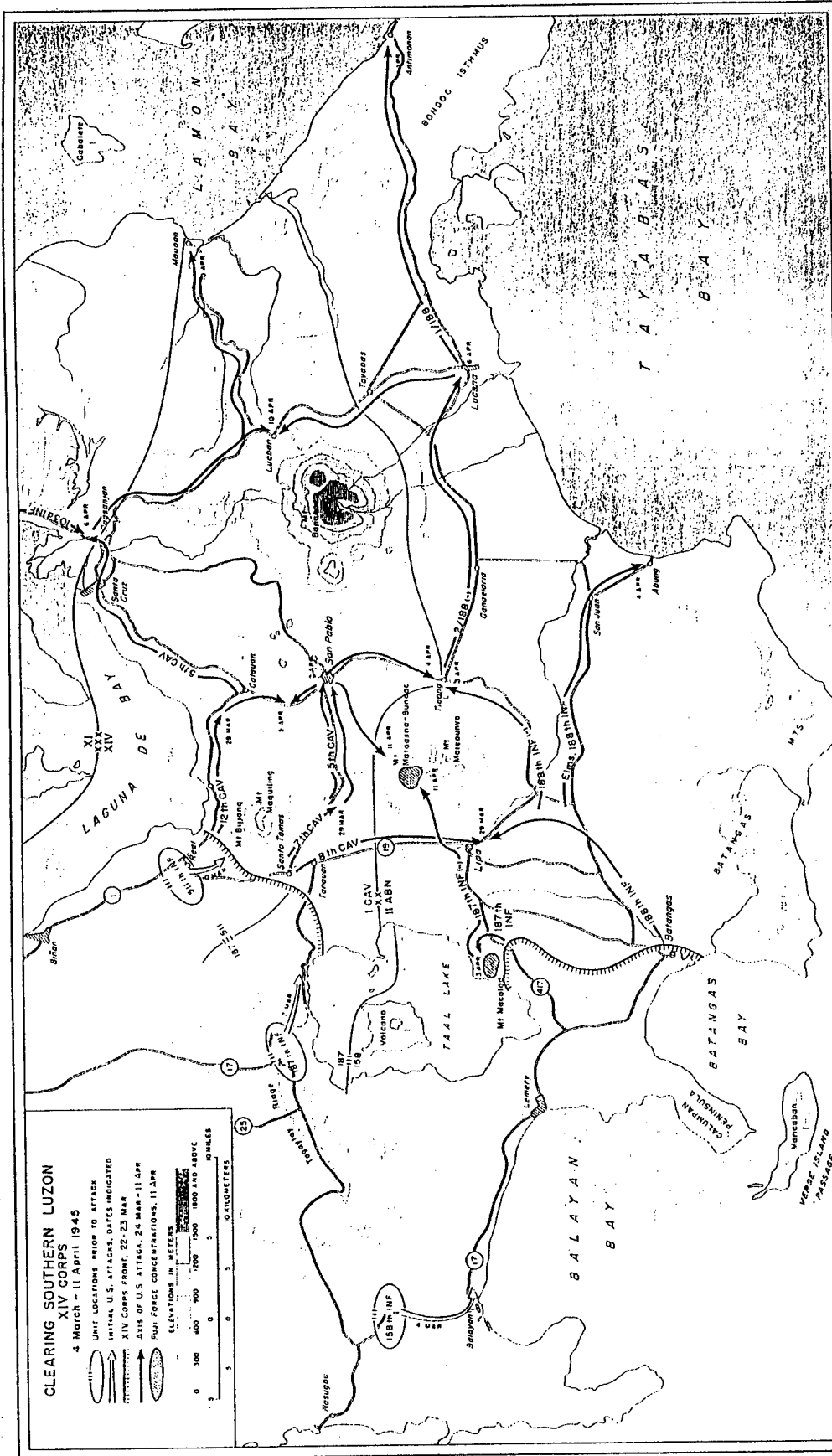
<sup>46</sup>"History - Luzon Campaign (Draft) - 188<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 31 January - 31 March 1945 311-INF(188)-0," p. 18, in RG 407, Box 7596.

Bn neared Batangas, unexpected resistance near Ternate forced its return by truck. 2nd Bn seized Batangas and its airfield for staging a possible 511th drop against Legaspi, but patrols encountered little resistance. Realizing the area was secure, the battalion moved to San Jose, where again, patrols met only small actions.<sup>47</sup>

General Swing increasingly faced a dire situation as overextension stretched his limited manpower. He possessed four battalions, since one remained at Ternate, and the Sixth Army requisitioned two 511th battalions as a reserve for the 158th Regiment's Legaspi invasion. With the remaining units he organized two task forces; the 187th would attack Mount Macolod, while 2nd Bn 188th and 3rd Bn 511th would drive northeast toward Lipa. As the units progressed to Lipa, withdrawing Japanese forces demolished several important bridges, which the 127th Engineers worked round-the-clock to repair. An E Company patrol neared Lipa Hill's summit, southwest of Lipa, and found numerous deserted, but freshly dug positions. Along highway 192, the Japanese destroyed every home and building along the road to Lipa, and even adopted civilian disguises like their comrades in Ternate. Patrols near Rosario revealed the same situation, that the

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<sup>47</sup>"188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 14-15, in RG 407, Box 7596; Colonel Soule was promoted to Brigadier General and became the Assistant Division commander of the 38th Infantry Division.



C. Kemmer

starving, often unarmed, and extremely disorganized enemy had escaped east.<sup>48</sup>

In early April, the regiment established its CP at Lipa, and the 1st Bn returned from Ternate. The 188th sent patrols east past Mount Malepunyo's southern slopes, the last major stronghold, toward Tiaong. After reconnoitering east of Tiaong in a Cub plane, General Swing took a bold step. He sent the Division's Reconnaissance Patrol east to Lucena by plane, and another group under Doug Quandt consisting of B Company 188th, B Battery 457th, and ninety guerrillas by LCM. These forces drove west, while 188th units from Tiaong traveled east with both meeting at Candelaria on April 7. B Company and the Reconnaissance Platoon later moved north and captured Tayabas, then quickly advanced to Atimonan before the 1st Cavalry relieved it. This maneuver sealed the Bicol Peninsula's exit, and caught the Japanese between it and the 158th's Legaspi landing.<sup>49</sup>

Following this maneuver, Swing intensified patrols south of Mounts Macolod and Malepunyo, which encompassed much of the 188th's area, but except for a few small, isolated groups, patrols met no serious opposition. Swing declared the area below those mountains essentially enemy free, just as F Company 188th liberated San Juan. Patrols and ambushes continued throughout April, but the 188th had great difficulty

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<sup>48</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 322; "188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 15, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>49</sup>"Combat History-Luzon Campaign-11th Airborne Division 31 Jan-30 June 1945 311-0," p. 4-5, in RG 407, Box 7582; "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division After Action Report, Mike VI Operation, Luzon, P.I. 31 Jan - 30 June 45 311-0.3 22438," p. 8, in RG 407, Box 7583; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 329.

forcing the Japanese to fight, and their dispersed nature only compounded the problem. The Japanese employed a group of Filipino civilians known as Makapili, though its unclear whether they were coerced or willingly served, which the regiment met and killed on numerous occasions, but little else occurred. After securing Rosario, the regiment rotated its troops through the town to provide them their first rest in weeks, and within a few days, almost everyone had recovered.<sup>50</sup>

In many respects the Luzon campaign can be divided into two phases. The first phase started "by the book" and utilized much of the training practiced in the U.S. Units coordinated their efforts and worked in direct support of each other, and relied heavily on air and artillery support. However, as the fighting dragged on, mopping up became the 188th's norm as it had all along on Leyte. Luzon's second stage opened with a combination of "by the book" and mopping up. The division's assault on Mount Malepunyo might be considered a large-scale mopping up operation as the division reduced numerous positions in a large area using artillery, air support, and troopers. Following that operation, the 188th resorted to its now familiar patrolling.

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<sup>50</sup>"188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 16, in RG 407, Box 7596; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 335.

## Chapter Four

### More of the Same

While the 188th's sector held little resistance, just north, the Mount Malepunyo and Matasna-Bundoc areas remained a Japanese bastion; therefore, this phase opened like the beginning of Luzon, stiff resistance followed by more patrolling, but on a smaller scale. The XIV Corps originally planned to reduce the position using the 1st Cav and the 11th, but on April 22 it directed the 11th to take it alone. The mountains covered a thirty square mile area with no roads and few trails. Like other areas of the archipelago, the area had steep slopes and gorges, thick jungle cover and bamboo thickets, and sharp ridges. As occurred at Leyte, trucks carried supplies to a point, then men carried their supplies or had them dropped by liaison planes.<sup>1</sup>

Complying with General Swing's orders, the 188th traveled to Alaminos on the region's north side on March 24. Reconnaissance revealed a daunting task before the engineers, and forced the regiment to halt to build roads and crossings over the Kaquinkong River. Engineer officers estimated they would need three days working twenty-four hour shifts, which marked a stunning throwback to Revolutionary War times when armies had to hack paths through the wilderness. Once again the 188th benefited little from motorization's supposed

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<sup>1</sup>Flanagan, The Angels, p. 335-336.

logistical changes. Facing delay, the regiment dispatched patrols to locate fords over nearby rivers, but to no avail.<sup>2</sup>

Rugged terrain and numerous rivers hindered road construction, but engineers announced they would finish roads and bridges on April 27. With that knowledge, the division finalized its assault plans and positioned itself for the attack. The 188th would drive south from Alaminos, occupy Center Ridge's Hill 2480, maintain contact with the 8th Cavalry, and prevent any Japanese escape east. The 8th Cavalry provided no direct support other than blocking any westward escape, and protecting the 188th's right flank. The 511th would furnish the main thrust toward Malepunyo's heart from the southwest, while a small collection of forces would attack east to prevent any retreat. Finally, the 11th had seven artillery battalions and attached tank destroyer units on hand as fire support.<sup>3</sup>

April 28 started with a familiar tone, heavy artillery concentrations and air strikes before the attack. The 1st Bn progressed south about 250 yards before the Japanese opened fire. Both battalions encountered caves, which C Company neutralized with flamethrowers, while 2nd Bn called upon its attached tank destroyers to overcome the same obstacle. As the tanks positioned themselves, the Japanese launched a suicide attack with grenades to disable the tanks, but it failed. Near the Center Ridge's foothills, the regiment faced

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<sup>2</sup>"188th Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 17, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 16-17; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 336.

well concealed, coconut log barriers that afforded the Japanese excellent defensive positions. These emplacements, pillboxes, and caves gave the 188th tremendous difficulty. Eventually the defenses cracked, but not before four mortar rounds hit C Company wounding eighteen men and causing a setback as A Company relieved C Company.<sup>4</sup>

Patrols scoured the area the next morning, and one E Company patrol contacted the 511th to the south. Company A established guards near enemy supply dumps and likely water holes in the hope Japanese soldiers might return to those spots. More patrols spotted many caves and defensive works near the Center Ridge, which artillery plastered for three hours. Following air strikes on the 30th, both battalions vigorously reconnoitered the area and found nothing but abandoned positions, supplies, and enemy dead. The 511th actually captured the 188th's objective, Hill 2480, when it progressed further than anticipated. The 188th spent the next several days covering the Center Ridge, Onipa River, and OP Hill areas, and establishing ambushes at river crossings and along draws and trails, but patrols rarely encountered living Japanese. Troopers found dead soldiers everywhere, more caves, and untold supplies, but all organized resistance had vanished. Consequently, General Swing ordered the 188th, less E Company, which moved to San Pablo, back to Lipa on the 2nd, which they reached on that day and the next. All told, the

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<sup>4</sup>"188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 18, in RG 407, Box 7596.

188th suffered fifty-eight casualties of all types on the Malepunyo mission alone.<sup>5</sup>

Toward April's end or early May, Fuehrmeyer's unit was resting on a hillside when he spotted an enemy soldier below his position. As the soldier vanished into bushes, he threw a grenade where the man disappeared, but he never knew if he wounded the soldier and they never found a body. Just afterward, they heard the distinctive sound of mortars firing on their position, but they never found the culprits. 188th men continually met similar circumstances as they faced an illusive foe and terrain that favored hiding.<sup>6</sup>

Shortly after Malepunyo's conclusion, the regiment received its first replacements since March to replace the roughly 375 casualties suffered from January 31 through early May, nearly three quarters of which came from the action near Manila and Malepunyo.<sup>7</sup> Eventually the 188th had 386 casualties from January 31 through June 29, though numbers on disease related casualties are absent.<sup>8</sup> The 11th desperately needed replacements, but riflemen shortages emerged in the summer of 1944 that became so acute the army had to convert men from antiaircraft and AAF support units to bridge the gap. If the shortage for ordinary riflemen was bad, that for paratroopers and glider men was worse due to their specialized training and

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<sup>5</sup>Flanagan, *The Angels*, p. 341; "188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 19-20, in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>6</sup>Interview with James Fuehrmeyer.

<sup>7</sup>"188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan - Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 22 in RG 407, Box 7596.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

another doctrine violation, that of keeping airborne units in action as infantry after their initial commitment. Initially this did not affect the 11th since the Leyte campaign's relatively low casualties, forty officers and 467 enlisted men, caused the division to receive only eight replacements, all of whom were officers, but casualties increasingly presented problems.<sup>9</sup> As the fighting on Luzon intensified, understrength units became more undermanned, the division's geographic responsibility increased, and the 11th's units became more and more thinly stretched.

When Sergeant Daniel Texera's B Company platoon entered Luzon it had forty plus men, roughly its authorized strength.<sup>10</sup> Upon receiving the first replacements, casualties had cut the number in half. Although some men traditionally look down on replacements, not everyone viewed them that way. Texera gladly accepted them, regardless of their background as paratroopers or straight infantrymen, with one requirement, they had to shoot the soldier's standard weapon, the M-1. Likewise, Milton Feingold remarked, "We viewed the replacements with joy[. We were very short of men, they were riflemen and that is what we needed, not airborne men."<sup>11</sup> Although officially commanding a platoon, Lieutenant Stilz had himself and twelve men just before receiving his replacements. To overcome the numerical deficiency and because he still had

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<sup>9</sup>Gerald F. Linderman. The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II (New York: The Free Press, 1997), p. 45; Huston, p. VIII-11; Box 7583, "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, After Action Report, King II Operation, Leyte, P.I. 18 Nov - 25 Dec 44 311-0.3 20437," p. 13.

<sup>10</sup>Interview with Daniel V. Texera.

<sup>11</sup>Letter from Milton Feingold.

the same mission to accomplish, he acquired six BARs for added firepower.<sup>12</sup>

Though the situations differed, this experience sharply contrasts the view expressed in Men of Company K, where veterans held replacements as liabilities. Whether enduring artillery attacks, sitting in a foxhole, or moving, inexperienced replacements received little welcome and were frequently shunned.<sup>13</sup> Whatever the differences, many glidermen, including replacements, echoed Texera's and Feingold's feelings. Though fifty years of reflection might have tempered any animosity, their feelings appear genuine. At nineteen, Grace joined a squad having only a handful of men and stated that the twenty year old veteran Feingold became a mentor, while James Fuehrmeyer recalled no negative feelings directed toward himself or any other replacements. Grace experienced one negative comment when a sergeant told him he would never pass parachute training, but no other incidents occurred. One must remember the 188th was understrength to begin with, and casualties reduced that number even more. Thus veterans viewed everyone, including replacements, as added firepower and security.<sup>14</sup>

An important note, only one enlisted man, though with nearly five years experience, had any negative impressions of replacements, while two of the three officers did. Corporal

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<sup>12</sup>Interview with Daniel V. Texera; Interview with Wallace Stilz.

<sup>13</sup>Harold P. Leinbaugh and John D. Campbell, The Men of Company K: The Autobiography of a World War II Rifle Company (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985).

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Thomas Grace; Interview with James Fuehrmeyer.

Suppa remembered some cocky replacements boldly stating, "You needed us to come down to do the job. We'll do the job for you," but a half an hour later they had broken down and were crying.<sup>15</sup> Company F's commander, Captain Mitchell, remarked that replacements lacked combat experience and thus had little value.<sup>16</sup> Presumably officers concerned themselves with the replacements' lack of fighting experience and fielding an effective fighting unit, while enlisted men were more worried about surviving.

Lieutenant Stilz recalled that replacements came in two forms, unit replacements like a company or platoon, or individual replacements. When B Company received its replacements in May, Stilz had recently become the company commander when an arrogant group of forty men arrived that had just finished making promotional jumps and selling war bonds in America. For unexplained reasons, these men extolled their abilities and chastised the original members as lousy troops. Instead of disciplining or lecturing them, Stilz developed an ingenious solution that quickly settled the dispute; he woke the company at 5:00 am for a twelve mile hike. The original members covered the first six miles in less than an hour, attacked the simulated enemy position, and returned, but not one replacement made the trip. Remember, the 188th had months of physical conditioning in the U.S., six months of acclimatization in New Guinea, and another six months of

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<sup>15</sup>Interview with Dom Suppa.

<sup>16</sup>Letter to author from Robert Mitchell; I actually interviewed four officers, Stilz, Mitchell, Mayberry, and Rigano, but the latter did not answer the replacement question.

combat, while the replacements came directly from America. They realized their error, and no longer posed a problem. Stilz concluded that units could assimilate one or two men more easily than forty, but though they could have caused a problem, he settled it. In general, he commented that veterans did not respect replacements, and they required a great deal of time to acclimatize.<sup>17</sup>

Compounding the initial replacement shortages and causing increased casualties, the division spent 105 consecutive days in combat without more than temporary relief.<sup>18</sup> Though not earth shattering by other divisions' standards and not every day entailed fighting, this extended service forced the 11th to commit all its units continuously. The one time General Swing tried to hold the 3rd Bn 511th in reserve, he committed it within twelve hours.<sup>19</sup> General Swing quipped to General Peyton C. March:

The trouble is that up at 6th Army they have the situation for the other divisions on a 1/25,000 map and for me a 1/250,000. Right now, I've got more territory to cover than the 37th, [and] 1st Cavalry. In a way it's a compliment, but the men can't keep it up endlessly.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Interview with Wallace Stilz.

<sup>18</sup>"Combat History-Luzon Campaign-11th Airborne Division 31 Jan-30 June 1945 311-0," p.6, in RG 407, Box 7582.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid; The 11th transferred from Eighth Army to Sixth Army control on February 10, 1948; "History - 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division 25 Feb 1943 - 15 Sept 1946 311-0.1," in RG 407, in Box 7582.

<sup>20</sup>Yee, ed., p. 27.

Along with this, the division's supply line stretched ninety-five miles from Nasugbu to Lucena, with Japanese pockets all along the way.<sup>21</sup> Again, this demonstrated the necessity of using airborne divisions in limited engagements for short periods. Had the 11th not had guerrilla aid to protect that life line, its efforts might have collapsed.

At one point the division had over 5,000 guerrillas, including about 100 Chinese, attached to its command.<sup>22</sup> Some served with individual platoons and companies, while others served as distinct units like their American counterparts.<sup>23</sup> General Swing praised the guerrillas with the following, "The only thing that keeps my lines open and allows me to spread so thin is the fact that we have organized 5,000 guerrillas and have them attached to all infantry, artillery and engineer units."<sup>24</sup> The 11th allowed the Filipinos to wear the division patch on their left breasts, which really made them proud.<sup>25</sup>

Although some histories have praised the support Filipino guerrillas provided, one cannot generalize a single unit's experience to every unit's encounter. The guerrillas greatly disappointed Sergeant Texera when they served in his company's defensive perimeter one evening. That night the company received heavy mortar and artillery fire, but the unit made a shocking discovery the next morning, all the guerrillas had

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>22</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division After Action Report, Mike VI Operation, Luzon, P.I. 31 Jan - 30 June 45 311-0.3 22438," p. 10, in RG 407, Box 7583; Yee, ed., p. 27.

<sup>23</sup>"11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division After Action Report, Mike VI Operation, Luzon, P.I. 31 Jan - 30 June 45 311-0.3 22438," p. 10, in RG 407, Box 7583.

<sup>24</sup>Yee, ed., p. 21.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

disappeared. In another example, Texera helped lead a small guerrilla party across Lake Taal, but that night the Filipinos made noise and lit bonfires, because, as Texera contended, the Japanese frightened them. He asserted many troopers quickly lost respect for the guerrillas and viewed them with contempt.<sup>26</sup> Joe Morman echoed this distrust after he contacted a fever near Ternate, and returned to an aid station leading about a dozen Filipinos whom he believed were faking illness to escape combat.<sup>27</sup> However, one cannot accept these events without analysis. Guerrillas, by nature, are more adept at hit and run tactics than defending fixed positions. While Texera's statements may be true, they belie the fact that guerrillas were militia type units lacking firm discipline, and they served better as guides, interpreters, and when establishing ambushes.

Lieutenant Stilz had mixed feelings regarding the service guerrillas provided, most of which revolved around trust. Filipinos would report a small party of Japanese, but such information was questionable, especially when the report proved false, as it often did. One could never tell if following such intelligence might lead to an ambush or other set up. Furthermore, he thought many Filipinos feared giving Americans assistance, not because they liked the Japanese, but because they dreaded Japanese reprisals. To be sure, most guerrilla reports and assistance aided the 188th's efforts by

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<sup>26</sup>Interview with Daniel Texera

<sup>27</sup>Letter to author from Joe Morman of Longview, TX, September 23, 1998.

disclosing Japanese positions and maneuvering patrols through the rugged terrain. Moreover, most guerrillas hated the Japanese and had fought them long before the Americans arrived, but others were opportunists who joined the effort after the Americans arrived because of better food and ammunition. Some guerrillas claimed to have been freedom fighters, but they were nothing better than bandits and colored the perceptions of those guerrillas truly providing useful assistance. As the 1st Bn's liaison to Colonel Ocompo's guerrillas, Stiliz developed a high regard for their competence, training, and abilities. Going further, he stated the Los Banos mission could not have succeeded without the intelligence and actions against the camp guards guerrillas provided.<sup>28</sup>

Guerrilla support also brought added complexity, especially due to infighting. Sunday afternoons often provided the forum for such bickering, but splitting the factions and sending them on patrols to fight the Japanese usually solved the problem. Lieutenant Stiliz noted that various guerrilla groups frequently claimed to have expended large ammunition amounts the previous night, yet no one had heard a single shot. After fulfilling some of these requests, it quickly became apparent the guerrillas were stockpiling ammunition for the anticipated power struggle after the war's

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<sup>28</sup>Interview with Wallace Stiliz; Colonel Ocompo's first name is unknown.

end. The division abolished this policy and henceforth rationed ammunition issues to guerrillas.<sup>29</sup>

Once again, patrolling started in early May in what official documentation titled "Mopping Up Operations." The regiment's area included Rosario, Tiaong, Lipa Hill, and Lake Taal's eastern shores. Companies rotated through the duty every couple days to provide the other companies needed rest. Occasionally patrols covered large areas and found nothing, other times they discovered numerous small groups, and still others encountered large groups. Patrols often found themselves chasing civilian reports of Japanese soldiers that sometimes proved true, other times were never found, or were in smaller numbers than reported. Guerrilla aid was crucial to the 188th's efforts as guides, bridge guards, interpreters, and added numbers on patrols.<sup>30</sup>

Supply occurred by truck to fixed points, and, like Leyte, by aerial resupply in rough terrain. While roads in the division's sector were not particularly bad, and unequivocally better than those on Leyte, the long distances and the quick advance to Manila forced the 11th to use every truck, jeep, DUKW, and LVT it obtained almost continuously. Maintenance suffered immediately, and the high tempo quickly took its toll on vehicles. The non-paved roads, especially that between Nasugbu and Tagaytay, consumed tires at an alarming rate, and the Angels lost a third of its vehicles by

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<sup>29</sup>Interview with Wallace Stiliz.

<sup>30</sup>"188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 20-22, in RG 407, Box 7596.

April 5 due to tire shortages. Sandbars hindered LST unloading at Nasugbu, and added to an already difficult supply situation. Aerial resupply from liaison aircraft and C-47s made an important contribution, though not as decisive as that on Leyte, but the real solution came when Manila's ports opened, which transferred the primary supply line from a gravel to a concrete road.<sup>31</sup>

In many respects, patrols on Luzon closely resembled those on Leyte, lasting several days, and usually involving squads, or platoons if they anticipated heavy action. Yet in some ways the term "platoon" is misleading since prior to receiving replacements, casualties and sicknesses sharply reduced a unit from its authorized strength. Though patrols traveled between fixed points, thus limiting the need to carry large quantities of supplies, men still carried tremendous weight in difficult terrain. While near Malepunyo, Thomas Grace had to carry a radio, four grenades, two bandoleers, an M-1, and a belt load of ammunition. As he struggled to exit a ravine, someone assisted him up just as other troopers blew a cave in the ravine's side.<sup>32</sup>

Thomas Grace's platoon did a considerable amount of patrolling and climbing through rough jungle terrain, with more of the latter than the former. Like other platoons, his unit encountered few living Japanese soldiers, and often found nothing more than decaying bodies infested with maggots, or

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<sup>31</sup>Smith, p. 234-235; Yee, ed., p. 30.

<sup>32</sup>Interview with Wallace Stiliz; Interview with Thomas Grace.

napalm burned corpses. Though he later had pyramidal tents and cots at Lipa, up until that point, men slept on the ground or in defensive positions in the bush. While stating the physical conditions gave him little trouble, Grace acknowledged he later contracted dysentery which made morning training runs later at Lipa problematic. His comment points to a larger issue that the 188th faced on Leyte as well, that of disease related hospital admissions, but unfortunately figures only exist for the division. In February, both battle and disease connected casualties were roughly the same, about 950, but as the fighting lessened from March through June, disease caused a minimum of three and as great as eight times as many casualties as did combat factors.<sup>33</sup>

Fighting of this nature placed a premium on observation above all else, since the slightest detail could reveal an enemy ambush, or betray one's own position. On a patrol Lieutenant Stilz led, a scout halted the group after finding fresh human feces in the trail. That immediately signaled an enemy presence in the area, and the possibility of an ambush. Rather than probing with people, the group placed mortar shells in the high ground overlooking their position that uncovered a cave. The patrol attacked the cave with flamethrowers and BARs, when to their surprise a Japanese soldier emerged on fire charging one of the BARmen. Stilz dropped the man with his Thompson machine gun. In another

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<sup>33</sup>Interview with Thomas Grace; "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division After Action Report, Mike VI Operation, Luzon, P.I. 31 Jan - 30 June 45 311-0.3 22438," p. 44-45, in RG 407, in Box 7583.

instance, Stilz was on patrol near Los Banos when he told the S-2 he knew they were getting close to enemy positions. When the S-2 asked how Stilz knew, he replied he had picked up a fresh cigarette butt. The untrained might credit this with dumb luck that keeps you alive, but Stilz attributed it to the power of observation. While not unique to mopping up, the great number of snipers caused officers and senior NCOs to remove all insignia, since the smallest detail, whether color, movement, or silver bars, attracted attention, and attention drew fire. Similarly, complacency could cause men to overlook those details, causing casualties. Observation also became crucial in detecting and preventing Japanese night perimeter penetrations.<sup>34</sup>

Of greater significance, the one most accurate generalization regarding the patrolling and mopping up is that the fighting could dramatically change from one person to the next with just 100 yards. With such sporadic fighting, especially since the Japanese avoided contact in the latter stages, men might find a dozen Japanese in one area, and none just down the trail. Grace participated in a patrol through supposed hostile area when the group heard a tank-like noise. Given the Japanese could muster little force, everyone concluded it could not be a tank. The patrol inched forward only to discover a lone engineer grading the road with a bulldozer, oblivious to anything around him, while patrols combed the area around him looking for isolated Japanese

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<sup>34</sup>Interview with Wallace Stilz.

pockets. Moreover, as interviewees continually emphasized, the answers they gave represented what happened to their unit, usually their squad, and did not necessarily represent what happened to other battalions, companies, or even their platoon's other squads.<sup>35</sup>

The mopping up, and combat in general, opened many darker sides of warfare from several perspectives. Thomas Grace remembered that an unofficial no prisoners policy existed from the platoon leader who became wounded just before Grace arrived. That Lieutenant was proud his platoon had not taken any prisoners. His motivation stemmed from an incident on Leyte where the Japanese cannibalized a close friend's body. Though after the war men realized the immorality of such actions, at the time few questioned it. Grace and others became accustomed to death, even when graves details ventured into the mountains to retrieve the dead and only returned with heads because of the weight of carrying a body back, or when guerrillas tortured the Japanese by shooting them in the foot or leg to extract information. When troops marched a Makapili prisoner through town, Grace witnessed a Filipino run from the bushes and cut off the captive's head before the GIs could react. Such brutality often became a daily occurrence.<sup>36</sup>

The treatment of Japanese prisoners by paratroopers and Filipinos disgusted Corporal Suppa. Suppa saw few prisoners, because he believed they did not take prisoners, but one had

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<sup>35</sup>Interview with Thomas Grace; Interview with Merritt Hinkel.

<sup>36</sup>Interview with Thomas Grace.

gangrene in the knee. Several paratroopers placed him on a stretcher and tossed him in the air numerous times. On another occasion, a prisoner walked through Bugho with a guard that had to fend off Filipinos who wanted to cut him up. Both incidents made him realize Americans and Filipinos could be just as mean as the Japanese, though he did feel their dirty fighting tactics somewhat justified the abuse.<sup>37</sup>

While one might think the idea of plunder in warfare is an antiquated concept, even modern warfare is not immune. When engineers went souvenir hunting on Mount Macolod, someone fired on them, and Grace's squad left their dry tents for the rain to investigate the area. After riding as far as possible on trucks, they "walked," but with every step forward, men took the proverbial two steps back. They struggled up the sloppy, muddy hillsides and found nothing but dead bodies stacked like cord wood, and that is how Grace spent his nineteenth birthday. Corporal Suppa remembered a Filipino boy he had grown to like told him he could get the trooper eggs, chicken, or anything. Without asking, the boy returned one day with a handful of gold teeth from Makapili bodies. Suppa scolded the boy, took his rifle away, and sent him away, and from that point, he avoided any contact with Filipinos.<sup>38</sup>

Though somewhat less controllable, but no less unnerving, an incredible number of "friendly fire" incidents occurred, including the two previously discussed. Grace considered the

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<sup>37</sup>Interview with Dom Suppa.

<sup>38</sup>Interview with Thomas Grace; Interview with Dom Suppa; Eugene Sledge's With the Old Breed, had many similar cases where Marines removed the gold teeth from Japanese dead and living soldiers.

sound of a mortar's clunk during firing, and the pause while waiting for it to land, eerie, especially when fired by one's own side. During a morning check of the perimeter, Grace's and another man's movement caused several "friendly" mortar rounds to fall about twenty yards away. Fortunately both men had a radio and called off the attack. During the attack on Nichols Field, Stilz conducted a reconnaissance in force to determine if the Japanese had retreated. Higher commanders assigned a mobile 155mm howitzer to accompany the patrol; Stilz rightly objected because he knew it would draw fire, but his protests went unheard. As expected the gun drew fire not only from the Japanese, but from the First Cavalry's 8-inch "Long Toms." After taking a few casualties, he put the wounded on the vehicle and sent it to the rear, which ended the shelling. Friendly fire did not always come from distant mortars or artillery, but also from the man next to you. In one of Grace's few encounters with Filipino guerrillas, several 188th men were exiting a jeep when a gun shot wounded a trooper. Closer inspection revealed a guerrilla had accidentally pulled his trigger while departing the jeep.<sup>39</sup>

Yet even amidst the chaos, bright spots existed. Filipinos amazed Fuehrmeyer with their ability to fashion anything from bamboo, including stands for their helmets. More than anything, the overwhelming poverty struck a cord in the most war hardened veteran. Malnourished children and adults watched the men and eagerly anticipated any food the

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<sup>39</sup>Interview with Thomas Grace; Interview with Wallace Stilz.

soldiers might offer as they ate, or even rummaged through the trash cans for food. With this image in mind, many troopers saved scraps of food to give to the children, which brought a limited degree of humanity and civility to their situation. When Fuehrmeyer's unit liberated Rosario from the handful of Japanese causing the problem, the men felt good because the Filipinos were visibly grateful for their efforts. While not war ending, it gave the troopers a measure of accomplishment.<sup>40</sup>

Gradually the guerrillas assumed control of the patrol mission, as the 11th busied itself with preparations for the Japan invasion. As early as February 1945, the Angels knew they would eventually adopt the standard organization table used by all airborne divisions, one glider and two parachute regiments; thus the 11th made plans to transition the 188th from a para-glider unit to straight parachutes and add a third battalion to the 188th and 187th Regiments. Much to the relief of those planning the Japan invasion, the 188th became a full strength regiment by adding replacements and men from the deactivated 541st Parachute Regiment that arrived in late June. To fulfill these objectives and account for casualties, the division received 6,000 replacements, which brought the 11th up to 12,000 men.<sup>41</sup> On July 20, 1945, the regiment officially became the 188th Parachute Infantry Regiment, and

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<sup>40</sup>Interview with James Fuehrmeyer.

<sup>41</sup>Yee, ed., p. 21, 33.

thus finally met the December 1944 organization table, but the informal change occurred earlier.<sup>42</sup>

Airborne training resumed in May to ready both those veterans lacking parachute qualifications and the replacements for the Japan invasion, and to prepare for the upcoming organizational change. Since many replacements lacked airborne training, General Swing gave them three options: take parachute or glider training, or return to a "leg" division. Though some men opted for the latter, many like Fuehrmeyer and Grace chose parachute over glider training after taking one look at the CG-4A's flimsy construction. The training included one week of ground training and one week of jumping where men made five drops, with everyone finishing their training by early July.<sup>43</sup>

By June 5, the entire regiment had returned to Lipa, and the men spent long hours erecting tents and building facilities. Though limited patrolling continued, and the 511th made the last Pacific airborne drop near Aparri on June 23, no significant actions occurred for the 188th until the Luzon campaign's formal end on June 30. From that point, guerrillas took over patrolling, while 188th focused exclusively on training and recuperation. Morale again became an important concern to General Swing as the division instituted football, baseball, and boxing leagues. Men

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<sup>42</sup>"188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Japan 1 Jul - 31 Dec 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22301," p. 1, in RG 407, Box 7596; "Re-organization Info - 11<sup>th</sup> Abn Div 16 Dec 44 - 22 Dec 45 311-0.19 47832," in RG 407, Box 7585.

<sup>43</sup>"Training Memorandum NO 12, 11 July 1945," in RG 407, Box 7590, in file "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division Training Memos No's 1-28 1945 311-3.13 22803;" Interview with James Fuehrmeyer; Interview with Thomas Grace; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 347.

watched several USO shows, films, and had three days about every two weeks to themselves.<sup>44</sup>

After the atomic bomb drops, the 188th boarded planes for Okinawa on August 12. Tragically, the regiment relied on several B-24s to speed the advance because of transport shortages, but at least one crashed as Bob Ghent recalled:

Early on, the plane just before [Arthur] Fisher's plane, taxied down the runway, couldn't get up enough lift, and plowed into the bunker at the end of the runway. Flame erupted and we could hear the pops of ammunition exploding. Fisher was quite concerned, and our plane followed his! The B-24's were flown away and replaced by the very familiar C-47's, most of which made the long trip to Okinawa successfully.<sup>45</sup>

By the 15th, the 188th had reached the island where they remained on alert until the 29th, when the regiment flew to Atusgi Airfield. With this action, the 11th Airborne became the first unit ever to land on Japanese soil for occupation duty. The 1st and 2nd Bns set up on the air base's south side, while the 3rd Bn embarked for Yokohama as MacArthur's Honor Guard. Within this group, a platoon of handpicked men like Garnett Winfrey and Joseph Honkoski, all with the

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<sup>44</sup>"188<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Narrative History, Luzon Jan-Jun 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22300," p. 22, in RG 407, Box 7596; "11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division Historical Narrative Luzon to Japan 30 Jun - 30 Sep 45 311-0.3 22439," p. 15, RG 407, in Box 7583; Flanagan, The Angels, p. 349.

<sup>45</sup>Letter to author from Bob Ghent of Glen Cove, NY, September 20, 1998.

distinction of being over six feet tall, were detailed as MacArthur's bodyguards to intimidate the Japanese.<sup>46</sup>

After the ceremonial surrender, 188th moved to the Sendai area where it started formal occupation duties to enforce the surrender terms by dismantling local military installations and units, and disarming the populace. Regimental patrols scoured the area since no one anticipated an uneventful occupation; in fact, troopers had landed fully loaded. They quickly realized their preparations were unnecessary, and most units no longer carried weapons when traveling. In another striking turn, most men who had earlier hated Japanese soldiers and culture, gained a liking and respect for Japanese civilians as they interacted with Japanese people on a daily basis, and once they realized they were not the people despised in propaganda. When the 188th's occupation ended in 1948, the local Japanese even held a party and show for some regimental units, and some men even kidded the Japanese that the Russians, who the Japanese deathly feared, were replacing them.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>"188th Glider Infantry Narrative History, Japan 1 Jul - 31 Dec 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22301," p. 1, in RG 407, Box 7596; Letter to author from Joseph Honkoski; Interview with Garnett Winfrey, Myrtle Beach, SC, October 24, 1998.

<sup>47</sup>"188th Glider Infantry Narrative History, Japan 1 Jul - 31 Dec 45 311-INF(188)-0.3 22301," p. 1-2, in RG 407, in Box 7596; "11th Airborne Division-Historical Narrative-Japan 30 Jun-Dec 45 311-0.3 22440," p. 2-3, in RG 407, in Box 7583; Interview with Thomas Grace.

### Conclusion:

#### The Small Change of Soldiering

In The Face of Battle, John Keegan, one of the twentieth century's foremost military historians, stated, "Battle must obey the dramatic unities of time, place and action," meaning, battles are events in which the participants seek a decisive result within a limited time frame, as occurred at Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme.<sup>1</sup> While the 188th's fighting near Manila would fit this definition, it openly excludes colonial wars and implies mopping up and patrolling do not fit the description either, "For there is a fundamental difference between the sort of sporadic, small-scale fighting which is the small change of soldiering and the sort we characterize as battle."<sup>2</sup> Yet by minimizing these actions as sporadic and inconsequential, he weakened his overall purpose: to inspire future study of soldiers' experiences. While not trying to overlook their efforts, the 188th spent a limited time, though it surely seemed endless to those involved, attacking fortified positions termed "battles," and the remainder of its time mopping up.

While patrolling lacked the immediate danger of stepping from a trench into "no man's land," or facing a cavalry charge, patrols still faced tremendous uncertainty and danger as thick foliage could hide an ambush. Though B Company's Roger Maloney did not join the 188th until September 1945, he

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<sup>1</sup>John Keegan, The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 14.

commented on "mopping up" in the Pacific during his earlier service with the Americal Division, "Most of the activity I was involved with was of the 'patrol action' variety. Little noticed, but just as effective as any other in making young men old, especially if you were the 'point' man," and men received no extra pay for that exceptionally precarious position. Many 188th men faced similar situations in the countless patrols that occurred.<sup>3</sup>

Not only has mopping up received little historical attention, but the 11th gained minimal credit for its actions in WWII. The press did not acknowledge the Angels on Leyte for nearly a month after landing, though partly to keep the 11th's identity secret.<sup>4</sup> On Luzon the 1st Cavalry received credit for capturing Manila and Fort McKinley even though the 188th entered the fort first, and the 1st Cav faced a fraction of the 11th's resistance. As General Eichelberger remarked, "The 1st Cavalry owe a hitherto unacknowledged debt to the blood and bravery of the 11th Airborne Division."<sup>5</sup> But that is partly the way of war, credit normally goes to the officers and rarely to the individual riflemen, medics, artillerymen, and supply sergeants who make everything possible.

While the Angels have generally been overlooked, the 511th's actions have produced the most writing on the 11th Airborne. It spearheaded the division's westward advance on Leyte, where it met the fiercest resistance, and it made the

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<sup>3</sup>Letter to author from Roger Maloney of Seattle, WA, September 23, 1998; Interview with Milton Feingold.

<sup>4</sup>Yee, ed., p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>Eichelberger, p. 195.

Angels' drops at Manarawat, Tagaytay, Los Banos, and Aparri, all of which has generated the most interest. But the 188th has largely been ignored even though it faced the same terrain, rain, hunger, pain, if not much of the same intense fighting as its sister regiment. Many histories have glossed over the 188th's actions as "mopping up" or "patrolling" operations; however, as any student should recognize, MacArthur had a terrible habit of declaring an island secure long before Japanese resistance ended. Though admiring MacArthur's strategic insight, Eichelberger never understood the general's reasoning for announcing victories and proclaiming only "mopping up" remained. Perhaps the limited casualties during and invasion's initial stages caused these early pronouncements. He concluded many infantrymen found it disconcerting to discover they had only been "mopping up," while the real fighting occurred elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> When MacArthur finally acknowledged the 11th's actions on Leyte on Christmas Eve, he stated, "The division had annihilated all resistance within the area," but the 188th assaulted Purple Heart Hill the next day where it suffered roughly three-quarters of its casualties on Leyte.<sup>7</sup>

With that said, what can one conclude about the 188th's mopping up efforts? First and foremost, no one interviewed agreed with Eichelberger's statement that patrolling demoralized them. While it is unclear to whom he referred,

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<sup>6</sup>Eichelberger, p. 181-182

<sup>7</sup>Devlin, Paratrooper!, p. 563.

one must surmise it might be Australian infantrymen, or American units who spent long periods performing such action. Though the 188th spent most of its time mopping up, it did so only for about six months, whereas some Australian units cleared New Guinea's jungles for several years. Second, the physical conditions often proved more problematic than Japanese resistance, but whether that is attributable to the Philippines' terrain or mopping up is another question. The lack of fighting tends to highlight the environmental difficulties more, but they would have remained during any kind of action. Next, patrolling differed for every individual involved as patrols in one area could uncover nothing, while those a short distance away could encounter stiff opposition.

Lastly, 188th men viewed their patrolling efforts, terrain, lack of resistance, and thinly stretched units as part of the job. They had a mission to perform regardless of rain, steep terrain, or a "platoon" of twelve men. Yet the phrase "part of the job" hides a tremendous amount of detail that this work cannot touch on other than it covers something men either do not care to remember, or they cannot relate to civilians.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, most men did not consider their efforts too much, and may not have even realized they were mopping up; rather they were more concerned with more immediate tasks like survival, clean clothes, and showers. If they pondered the

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<sup>8</sup>Linderman's The World Within War provides an intriguing discussion of the phrase "part of the job."

regiment's actions at all, they might have concluded the war was nearly over in their area.<sup>9</sup>

The mopping up operations highlight the most important aspect of the 188th's service, and point to the many doctrinal violations that occurred. The most grievous error resulted from keeping the regiment in the line for extended periods that sapped the unit's limited strength, but the necessity to commit every available unit obviated any chance of removing it from combat. Consequently, the 188th was pitted against fixed defenses it was ill-equipped to handle, which forced higher commands to attach artillery, tank-destroyer, and armor units to strengthen the regiment.

While the lack of these attached units and its associated logistical train assisted movement in rough terrain, and the 188th did not need it in much of the fighting anyway, the lack of heavy firepower haunted it at Nichols Field. Though troopers did a superb job against fortified positions, airborne troops were not intended to attack such emplacements, but this was more of a failure from above than from the 188th. Yet even this is misleading since just because a unit had attached units did not mean it wanted them, as witnessed with Lieutenant Stilz, or that they would perform their missions. Thomas Grace participated in a patrol that had tank assistance, but when mortar rounds began falling, the tanks left because crews found the noise of rounds hitting their

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<sup>9</sup>Interview with Thomas Grace; Interview with Wallace Stilz; Interview with Merritt Hinkel; Interview with James Fuehrmeyer.

tank irritating.<sup>10</sup> Although attaching heavier units appeared to solve the problem, it overlooked the basic point that the airborne division alone had a difficult time attacking strongly defended areas. For this reason, airborne doctrine stated commanders should not use airborne troops in combat for extended periods, or when other forces could perform the same mission. However, the latter phrase allowed a loophole that MacArthur fully exploited. Lacking sufficient "other forces," MacArthur, Krueger, and Eichelberger had the 11th deployed as a normal infantry division.

Of less significance, the Angels breached procedures by failing to use the Troop Carriers' C-47s for aerial resupply and not rehearsing planned missions. The C-47's deficiencies were illuminated earlier, but weather, high speed, inadequate numbers, and inability to hit small targets prevented its large scale use by the 11th. Regarding mission rehearsals, General Matthew Ridgeway, the 82nd Airborne Division's commander, wrote after the experiences in Sicily and Italy that airborne divisions needed several weeks training for specific operations.<sup>11</sup> However, the 11th did not practice for the Los Banos and Tagaytay operations because of the previous violation of keeping the Angels in combat, but more importantly, airborne forces performed best when used at opportune moments. Though the 188th did not participate directly in these drops, it did function in support roles. In

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<sup>10</sup>Interview with Thomas Grace.

<sup>11</sup>Huston, p. V-25.

these examples, time constraints superseded any doctrine requirements necessitating training for a specific mission. One must conclude from the Angels' experience that the Pacific airborne effort marked improvisation of existing doctrine over everything.

Although WWII confirmed the airborne experiment's success, a quick glance at these doctrinal shortcomings and the 188th's experience makes such a conclusion difficult for the simple fact it made no combat drops. This then leads to the assumption that the regiment wasted its airborne training. However, closer examination reveals many obvious points. One could confidently argue from the 188th's actions that the situation forced theater commanders to abandon stated doctrine, but more than anything, this points toward the necessity of flexibility. A military force can not rigidly conform to predated principles since they never hold true in every circumstance. Paradoxically, though the Angels' violated stated dogma, and patrolling did not represent the best use of its talents and training, it overlooks the many valuable contributions the airborne training made that uniquely suited the 188th to operate and succeed in a patrolling fashion in the Philippines' terrain.

Given the 188th did not use its airborne capabilities directly, how did the Angels' airborne abilities assist the 188th? Most men never thought about not being used until after the war since everyone anticipated a drop in Japan. Only afterward did they reflect on the "waste" of their

training, and most did not care anyway. Nevertheless 188th men were elite and maintained strict standards since they had the option of removing those who did not measure up, which gave the regiment a better quality individual overall. What they sacrificed in firepower, they more than accounted for in spirit and mobility.<sup>12</sup> Captain Mitchell remarked, "I've never heard anyone infer that his parachute training was wasted. It made us into an elite unit with confidence and helped to blend us into a cohesive unit."<sup>13</sup>

While 188th men were elite, the fact that they entered combat by glider or parachute was only a portion of the overall picture. Once on the ground they became infantrymen, just as General Lynch had argued when the Infantry, Air Corps, and Engineering Corps squabbled over the airborne's control. Thus Lieutenant Stilz stated the concept of airborne is somewhat overrated, "We were infantry first and airborne second. The troops accepted whatever duties were assigned to them, be they airborne or ground, and did them well," but he still credited the airborne training with giving the men valuable skills.<sup>14</sup> Merritt Hinkel noted a battle's airborne aspect made up ten percent, while the other ninety was an infantryman's duty.<sup>15</sup>

Fortunately those who devised airborne training recognized that men would land in disorganized groups, which

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<sup>12</sup>Letter from Wilmont Wheeler.

<sup>13</sup>Letter to author from Robert M. Mitchell.

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Wallace Stilz; Letter to author from Wallace Stilz.

<sup>15</sup>Interview with Merritt Hinkel.

influenced the training 188th men, at least the original members, received. Wilmont Wheeler noted they trained to operate as individuals and small detached groups more readily than regular infantrymen. Thus platoon size and smaller patrols were accepted as commonplace long before their implementation on Leyte. This aspect uniquely suited the 188th and 11th as a whole to operate in Leyte's rugged terrain, where the environment precluded large-scale maneuvers like those practiced in the U.S. Moreover, small unit training emphasized individual leadership and thinking, which meant even privates could be leaders.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the training stressed physical fitness above everything; nearly everyone interviewed partly attributed their success to this single factor as giving them a distinct edge over normal infantrymen. Men were better conditioned to move over difficult terrain or fight their way seventy miles, though surely the turns and hills lengthened that distance, from Nasugbu to Manila by foot in six to seven days. Les Hallock agreed and stated, "I was glad we didn't make any combat jumps. [T]he train[ing] was good... to build strength, endure hardships."<sup>17</sup>

Finally, by fielding undermanned, ill-equipped units, airborne troops were naturally more flexible as they had to develop unique solutions to overcome obstacles. Lieutenant Stilz thought the American soldier was ingenious anyway, and

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<sup>16</sup>Letter from Wilmont Wheeler; Interview with Edward Gentile.

<sup>17</sup>Interview with Wallace Stilz; Letter to author from Les Hallock; Interview with Edward Gentile; Interview with James Fuehrmeyer.

airborne troops even more so because they had to do without so often. Medics in his platoon were armed and did not carry red cross symbols, while his patrols traveled on reduced rations to decrease weight, and adopted six BARs to add firepower to his twelve man "platoon." Aerial resupply allowed the 188th to operate in a dispersed nature in inaccessible terrain by dropping necessities like rations and ammunition. Other unusual solutions resulted from parachuting hospitals and artillery units to assist forward units, or using liaison planes for communications.<sup>18</sup>

While only a small part of the overall fighting in the Pacific, the 188th's devotion to duty is representative of that displayed by all U.S. troops in the theater. Although John Keegan might not have considered most of the 188th's actions as "battles," the men knew that they were indeed combat-hardened veterans, and that experience transformed them fundamentally. They may have spent most of their time "mopping up," but they now had more in common with the veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, the Battle of Okinawa, or even those from the Somme and Agincourt that Keegan discussed, than they had with any civilians.

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<sup>18</sup>Interview with Wallace Stiliz.

Appendix 1<sup>1</sup>**11th Airborne Division Commander**

Major General Joseph M. Swing

**188th Glider Regiment Commander**

Colonel Robert H. Soule (February 1943-13 March 1945)

Lt Col Norman Tipton (14 March 1945-?)

**First Battalion Commanders**

Lt Col Mortimer J. O'Kane (February 1943-January 1945)

Lt Col Ernest LaFlamme (January 1945-?)

**A Company Commander**

Captain Raymond F. Lee

**B Company Commanders**

Captain Edward M. Beck

Captain William Mayberry

1st Lt Wallace P. Stilz

**C Company Commander**

Captain Phillips B. Crew

**Second Battalion Commander**

Lt Col Thomas L. Mann

**E Company Commander**

Captain Frank C. Mogan

**F Company Commander**

Captain Robert M. Mitchell

**G Company Commander**

Captain C. Fransen

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<sup>1</sup>"Historical Report of 188<sup>th</sup> Para - Glider Inf in K-2 Operation, Leyte, P.I. 21 Nov - 25 Dec 44," in RG 407, Box 7596. This is not a complete list because many of the change of command dates are unknown.

## Appendix 2

Rather than citing the sources directly on the maps, the following is a list of the sources used.

Map I Cannon, p. 274.

Map II Flanagan, p. 121.

Map III Flanagan, p. 224.

Map IV "11th Airborne Division Oper Rpt. 31 Jan - 5 Feb 1945 Luzon 311-0.3," in RG 407, Box 7583.

Map V "Combat History - Philippine Campaign - Maps and Sketches - 11th Airborne Division 18 Nov 1944 - 22 June 1945 311-0," p. 60, in RG 407, Box 7582.

Map VI "Combat History - Luzon Campaign - 11th Airborne Division 31 Jan - 30 June 1945 311-0," in RG 407, Box 7582.

Map VII Smith, Appendix Map V.

Map VIII Flanagan, p. 261.

Map IX Smith, Appendix Map VI.

Map X "Combat History - Philippine Campaign - Maps and Sketches - 11th Airborne Division 18 Nov 1944 - 22 June 1945 311-0," p. 60, in RG 407, Box 7582.

Map XI Flanagan, p. 301.

Map XII Flanagan, p. 321.

Map XIII Smith, Appendix Map IX.

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