

# **Okinawa 1945: Operation ICEBERG**

## **VSR Preliminary Study Packet**



**Army University Press  
Combat Studies Institute  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

## Revision History

V0.3 (2020) First Draft  
V0.13 (2020) Final Draft

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## Preliminary Study Instructions

### I. Overview.

- a. This Army University Press-Combat Studies Institute virtual staff ride (VSR) examines the Tenth US Army's conduct of the Ryukyus Campaign on Okinawa from 1 APR to 2 JUL 1945. The staff ride provides an overview of the decision making and planning for what became Operation ICEBERG and then examines the operational decisions of the US Tenth Army, XXIV Corps, and the Japanese 32d Army. It also examines tactical decisions and combat in the US 7th, 27th, 77th, and 96th Infantry Divisions and the Japanese 62d and 24th Divisions.
- b. The material in this packet is designed to assist in preparing for the VSR and consists of readings for the entire group, readings for assigned small groups, and annexes for information on weapons and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs). The readings provide context for the strategic situation, operational situation, and tactical situations covered in the staff ride. It is recommended that participants read all the required material and take notes for use during the staff ride.
- c. Staff rides are not lectures; they are facilitated discussions for professional development. The better prepared the participants are, the more they will benefit from the staff ride.

### II. Have all participants read CMH Pub 72-35, Ryukyus. This PDF file is included or may be downloaded from the CMH website at no cost.

[https://history.army.mil/html/bookshelves/resmat/wwii/ResourcesPTO/Books\\_and\\_Documents/sec01.html](https://history.army.mil/html/bookshelves/resmat/wwii/ResourcesPTO/Books_and_Documents/sec01.html)

### III. Divide the staff ride participants into groups. The readings may be completed by the entire group, or groups can assign readings to individual participants for discussion in the field study phase. This is a campaign-level staff ride, therefore some of the readings are more extensive for some groups than for others. Additional readings at the end of the packet address specific topics related to elements of combat power, warfighting functions, and branch/functional area specialties. Annexes provide information specific to tactics, weapons, and key leaders. All participants should read Annex C: Japanese Weapons on Okinawa.

- a. Group 1: US Tenth Army/XXIV Corps.
  - OPLAN ICEBERG
  - Phase I, 24 March-3 April
  - Phase II, 4-14 April
  - Phase II, 15 April-5 May
  - Tenth Army Attacks, 6-31 May
  - Tenth Army Pursues, 1-17 June
  - End of Resistance and Surrender, 18-22 June
  - Annex D. US Key Leaders
- b. Group 2: Japanese 32d Army.
  - OPLAN SHO-Go Two
  - Defending Okinawa, 24 March-14 April
  - Defending Okinawa, 15 April-5 May
  - Defending Okinawa, 6-31 May

- Defending Okinawa, 1-17 June
- End of Resistance and Surrender, 18-22 June
- Annex A. Cave Design and Tactics
- Annex E. Key Japanese Leaders
- c. Group 3: 7th Infantry Division
  - The First Japanese Counterattack
  - Skyline Ridge
  - Kochi Ridge
  - The Second Japanese Counterattack
  - Kochi Ridge Secured
  - Flattop and Dick Hills
  - Conical Hill
  - Breakthrough at Yonabaru
  - Hill 95, Yaeju-Dake, and Yuza-Dake
  - Annex B. Anti-Cave Tactics
  - Annex D. Key US Leaders
- d. Group 4: 27th Infantry Division.
  - Phase II: 15 April-15 May
  - Machinato Inlet and the Pinnacles
  - Item Pocket
  - Annex B. Anti-Cave Tactics
  - Annex D. Key US Leaders
- e. Group 5: 77th Infantry Division.
  - Maeda Escarpment
  - The Second Japanese Counterattack
  - Chocolate Drop Hill
  - Ishimmi Ridge
  - Flattop and Dick Hills
  - Annex B. Anti-Cave Tactics
  - Annex D. Key US Leaders
- f. Group 6: 96th Infantry Division.
  - Kakazu Ridge
  - The First Japanese Counterattack
  - Nishibaru Ridge
  - Maeda Escarpment
  - The Second Japanese Counterattack
  - Flattop and Dick Hills
  - Oboe Hill
  - Hill 95, Yaeju-Dake, and Yuza-Dake
  - Annex B. Anti-Cave Tactics
  - Annex D. Key US Leaders
- g. Group 7: Japanese 24th Division.
  - The First Japanese Counterattack
  - The Second Japanese Counterattack
  - Kochi Ridge Secured
  - Chocolate Drop Hill

- Ishimmi Ridge
  - Flattop and Dick Hills
  - Conical Hill
  - Breakthrough at Yonabaru
  - Hill 95, Yaeju-Dake, and Yuza-Dake
  - Annex A. Cave Design and Tactics
  - Annex E. Key Japanese Leaders
- h. Group 8: Japanese 62d Division.
- Kakazu Ridge
  - The First Japanese Counterattack
  - Skyline Ridge
  - Nishibaru Ridge
  - Machinato Inlet and the Pinnacles
  - Item Pocket
  - Maeda Escarpment
  - Kochi Ridge
  - The Second Japanese Counterattack
  - Hill 95, Yaeju-Dake, and Yuza-Dake
  - Annex A. Cave Design and Tactics
  - Annex E. Key Japanese Leaders

## Small Group Readings

### OPLAN ICEBERG

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 1.

The plan for the conquest of the Ryukyus was in many respects the culmination of the experience of all previous operations in the Pacific war. It embodied the lessons learned in the long course of battle against the Japanese outposts in the Pacific—lessons of cooperation and combined striking power of the services, of the technique of amphibious operations, and of Japanese tactics and methods of meeting them. The plan for ICEBERG brought together an aggregate of military power—men, guns, ships, and planes—that had accumulated during more than three years of total war. The plan called for joint operations against the inner bastion of the Japanese Empire by the greatest concentration of land, sea, and air forces ever used in the Pacific.

#### *Planning ICEBERG*

The general scheme for Operation ICEBERG was issued in the fall of 1944 by Admiral Nimitz as Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas (CINCPOA). The strategic plan outlined was based on three assumptions. First, the projected campaign against Iwo Jima would have progressed to such an extent that naval fire-support and close air-support units would be available for the assault on Okinawa. Second, the necessary ground and naval combat units and assault shipping engaged in the Philippines would be released promptly by General MacArthur for the Okinawa campaign. Third, preliminary air and naval operations against the enemy would ensure control of the air in the area of the target during the operation.<sup>1</sup>

The immediate task imposed upon the American forces by the terms of the general mission was the seizure and development of Okinawa and the establishment of control of the sea and air in the Ryukyus. The campaign was divided into three phases. The seizure of southern Okinawa, including Keise Shima and islands in the Kerama Group, and the initiation of the development of base facilities were to constitute the first phase. In the next phase Ie Shima was to be occupied and control was to be established over northern Okinawa. The third phase consisted of the seizure and development of additional islands in the Nansei Shoto for use in future operations. The target date of the operation was set at 1 March 1945.<sup>2</sup>

The principal mission in seizing the objective was assigned to a huge joint Army-Navy task force, known as the Central Pacific Task Forces, and commanded by Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, Commander of the Fifth Fleet. (See Chart II.) Admiral Spruance's forces consisted of naval covering forces and special groups (Task Force 50), which he personally commanded, and a Joint Expeditionary Force (Task Force 51), commanded by Vice Admiral Richmond K. Turner, Commander, Amphibious Forces Pacific Fleet. Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner, Jr., Commanding General, Tenth Army, was to lead the Expeditionary Troops (Task Force 56) under VADM Turner's direction.<sup>3</sup>

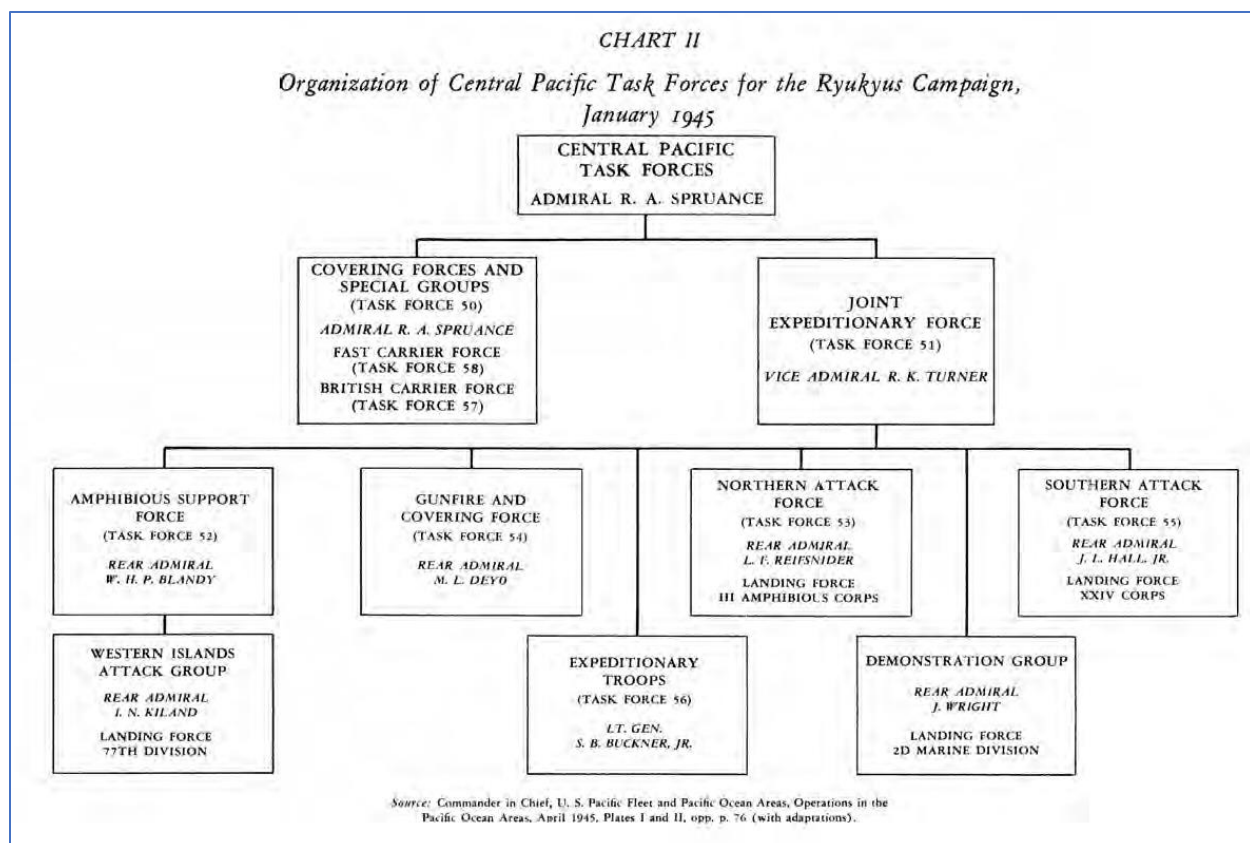
The Joint Expeditionary Force (Task Force 51) was directly charged with the capture and development of Okinawa and other islands in the group. It was a joint task force of Army, Navy, and

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<sup>1</sup> CINCPOA Joint Staff Study ICEBERG, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Rad CINCPOA to CG Tenth Army, 9 Oct 44, cited in Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 3-0-1.

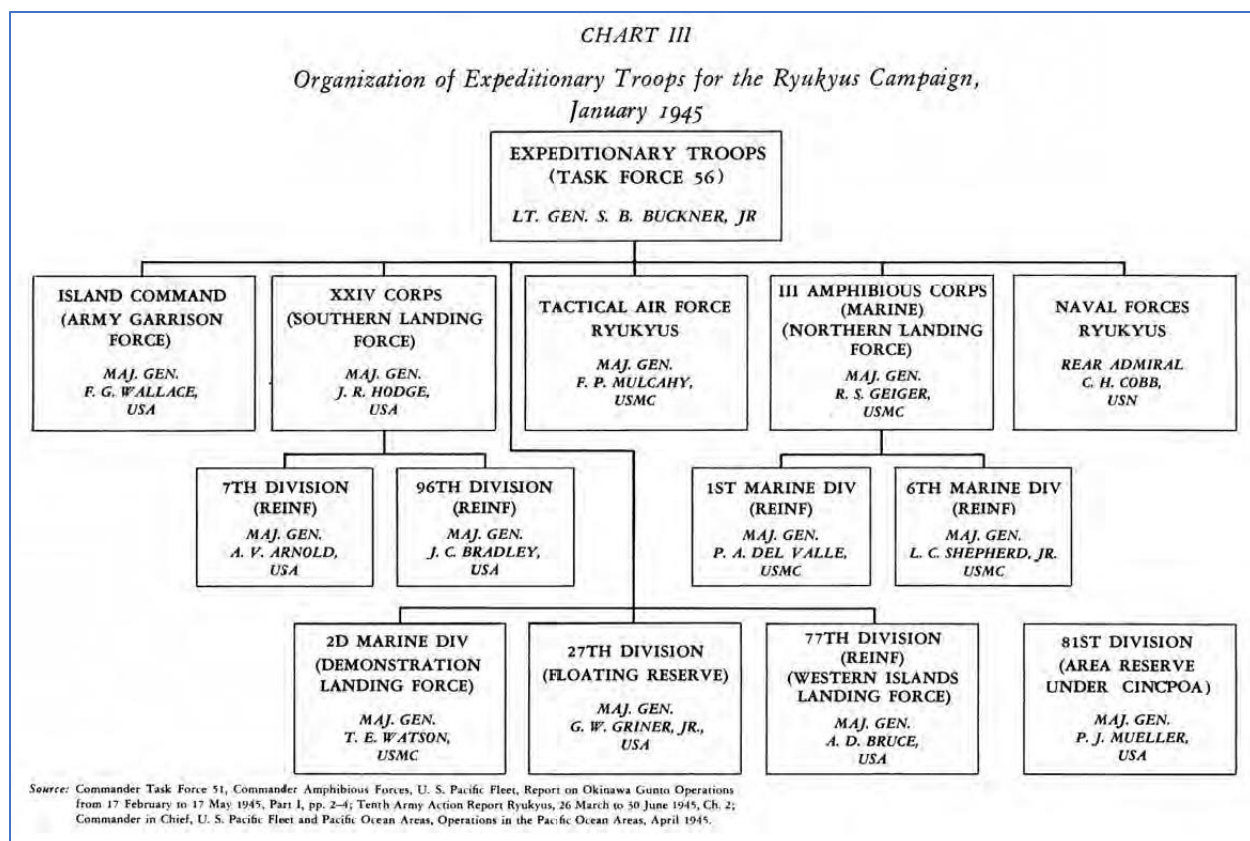


Marine units and consisted of the Expeditionary Troops (Task Force 56—see Chart III), shipping to transport them, and supporting naval and air units. Direct naval and air support for Task Force 51 was to be furnished by its Amphibious Support Force (Task Force 52), made up of escort carriers, gunboat and mortar flotillas, mine sweepers, and underwater demolition teams, and by the Gunfire and Covering Force (Task Force 54) of old battleships, light and heavy cruisers, destroyers, and destroyer escorts. The transports and tractor units of the Northern Attack Force (Task Force 53) and Southern Attack Force (Task Force 55) were to land the ground troops in the main assault on the Okinawa beaches, while a number of task groups were assigned the task of transporting the troops for subsidiary landings and the floating and area reserves. Task Force 51 also included a transport screen, a service and salvage group, and several specialized naval units.<sup>4</sup>

Using the CINCPAC Joint Staff Study as a basis, each of the major commanders prepared his plans and issued his operation orders. Although each plan and operation order was derived from that of the next superior echelon, planning was always concurrent. The joint nature of the operation also required extensive coordination of the three services in all operational and logistical problems. Joint conferences thrashed out problems of troop lists, shipping, supplies, and strategy. Corps and task force commanders worked together on the plans for amphibious operations. Corps and division staffs were consulted and advised by Army for purposes of orientation and planning. To ensure interservice coordination, Navy and Marine officers were assigned to work with Tenth Army general and special staff sections.<sup>5</sup> In some cases planning was facilitated by utilizing the results of work on other operations. Thus the naval staff developing the gunfire support plans was able to use the operations at Iwo Jima to test and strengthen the general command and communications framework, which was generally similar

<sup>4</sup> CTF 51 Opn Plan A1-45, 16 Feb 45, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Tenth Army Actn Rpt, Ch. 3: Preliminary Planning.



for both operations; in the same way Tenth Army logistical planners took advantage of their work on the canceled Formosa operation, adapting it to the needs of the Okinawa campaign.<sup>6</sup>

Out of these planning activities came extremely important decisions that modified and expanded the scope of proposed operations. Tenth Army found it necessary to enlarge the troop list by about 70,000 to include greater numbers of supporting combat elements and service units. Its staff presented and supported a plan for initial assault landings on the west coast of Okinawa, just north and south of Hagushi, as the most feasible logistically and as consonant tactically with the requirements of CINCPAC. The naval staff insisted on the necessity of a sustained week-long naval bombardment of the target and on the consequent need for a protected anchorage in the target area where the fleet units could refuel and resupply. As a result it was decided to capture the Kerama Islands just west of Okinawa, a week before the main landings, and the 77th Division was assigned this task. At the suggestion of VADM Turner a landing was to be feinted on the eastern coast of the island, and the 2d Marine Division was selected for this operation. The commitment of these two reserve divisions impelled Tenth Army to secure the release of the area reserve division to the Expeditionary Troops, and the 27th Division was designated the floating reserve. In its place, as area reserve, the 81st Division was ordered to stand by in the South Pacific. Finally, CINCPAC was twice forced to set back the target date because delays in the Luzon operation created difficulty in maintaining shipping schedules and because unfavorable weather conditions appeared likely in the target area during March. L Day (landing day) was set for 1 April 1945.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> CTF 51 Actn Rpt, V-C-1; Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-IV-3, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Tenth Army Actn Rpt, Ch. 3: Preliminary Planning

### *Expeditionary Troops (Task Force 56)/Tenth Army*

The troops who would assault the objectives constituted a field army, the Tenth Army, which had been activated in the United States in June 1944 and shortly thereafter had opened headquarters on Oahu. LTG Buckner formally assumed command in September 1944, having come to the new assignment from the command of the Alaskan Department, where for four years he had been organizing the American defenses in that area. His new staff included many officers who had served with him in Alaska as well as some from the European Theater of Operations. The major components of Tenth Army were XXIV Army Corps and III Amphibious Corps (Marine). The former consisted of the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions and was commanded by Major General John R. Hodge, a veteran leader of troops who had met and defeated the Japanese on Guadalcanal, New Georgia, Bougainville, and Leyte. III Amphibious Corps included the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions and was headed by Maj. Gen. Roy S. Geiger, who had successfully directed Marine operations on Bougainville and Guam. Three divisions, the 27th and 77th Infantry Divisions and the 2d Marine Division, were under the direct control of Tenth Army for use in special operations and as reserves. The area reserve, the 81st Infantry Division, was under the control of CINCPAC. Also assigned to Tenth Army for the purpose of defense and development of the objectives were a naval task group, the Tactical Air Force, and the Island Command.<sup>8</sup>

A total of 183,000 troops was made available for the assault phases of the operation.<sup>9</sup> About 154,000 of these were in the seven combat divisions, excluding the 81st Division, which remained in New Caledonia; all seven divisions were heavily reinforced with tank battalions, amphibian truck and tractor battalions, joint assault signal companies, and many attached service units. The five divisions committed to the initial landings totaled about 116,000. The 1st and 6th Marine Divisions, with 26,274 and 24,356 troops, respectively, each carried an attached naval construction battalion and about 2,500 replacements in addition to their other supporting combat and service units. The reinforced 7th, 77th, and 96th Divisions averaged nearly 22,000 men per division but each was about 1,000 understrength in organic infantry personnel. The 27th, a reserve division, was reinforced to a strength of 16,143 but remained nevertheless almost 2,000 understrength organically. The 2d Marine Division, also in Army reserve, numbered 22,195.<sup>10</sup>

Tenth Army, as such, had never directed any campaigns, but its corps and divisions had all been combat-tested before the invasion of the Ryukyus. XXIV Corps had carried out the conquest of Leyte, and III Amphibious Corps had captured Guam and Peleliu. The 7th Division had seen action on Attu, Kwajalein, and Leyte, the 77th on Guam and Leyte, and the 96th on Leyte. The 27th had taken part in the battles for the Gilberts and Marshalls and for Saipan. The 1st Marine Division had been one of the first to see action in the Pacific, on Guadalcanal, and had gone through the campaigns of Western New Britain and Peleliu. The 6th Marine Division had been activated late in 1944, but its regiments were largely made up of seasoned units that had fought on Guam, the Marshalls, and Saipan. The 2d Marine Division had participated in the fighting on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, and Tinian.

### *Shaping Operations and Joint Fires*

As finally conceived, the plan for the capture of Okinawa gave fullest opportunity for the use of the mobility, long range, and striking power of combined arms. After the strategic isolation of Okinawa had been effected by land- and carrier-based aircraft, the amphibious forces were to move forward to the objective. Task Force 52 (the Amphibious Support Force) and Task Force 54 (the Gunfire and

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<sup>8</sup> Tenth Army Tent Opn Plan 1-45, 6 Jan 45, pp. 1-10.

<sup>9</sup> CTF 51 Actn Rpt, Pt. V, Table 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., Tables 2a-2g: III Amph Corps Actn Rpt Ryukyus, 1 Jul 45, p. 28; XXIV Corps Actn Rpt Ryukyus, p. 6; 7th Div Actn Rpt Ryukyus, 30 Jul 45, Annex I, App. B, pp. 1, 2; 27th Div Actn Rpt Ryukyus, 19 Jul 45, p. 10; 96th Div Actn Rpt Ryukyus, Ch. IX, p. 21.







Covering Force), assisted by the fast carriers of Task Force 58, were to begin operations at Okinawa and the Kerama Group on L minus 8 (24 March). They were to destroy the enemy defenses and air installations by naval gunfire and air strikes, clear the waters around the objective and the beaches of mines and other obstacles, and provide cover and protection against hostile surface and air units to ensure the safe and uninterrupted approach of the transports and the landings of the assault troops. After the landings they were to furnish naval support and air cover for the land operations.<sup>11</sup>

Mine sweepers were to be the first units of the Amphibious Support Force to arrive in the target area. Beginning on L minus 8, they were to clear the way for the approach of the bombardment units and then to sweep the waters in the landing and demonstration areas to the shore line.<sup>12</sup> Underwater demolition teams were to follow the mine sweepers, reconnoiter the beaches, and demolish beach obstacles.<sup>13</sup>

Naval gunfire was to support the capture of Okinawa by scheduled destructive bombardment in the week before the landings, by intensive close support of the main and subsidiary landings and the diversionary feint, and thereafter by delivering call and other support fires. In view of the size of the objective and the impossibility of destroying all targets, fire during the prelanding bombardment was to be laid on carefully selected targets; the principal efforts were to be directed to the destruction of weapons threatening ships and aircraft and of the defenses opposing the landings. Covering fires were to be furnished in conjunction with fire from gunboats and mortar boats in support of mine-sweeping operations and beach demolitions.<sup>14</sup>

Air support was . . . to cover mine-sweeping operations, hit targets on Okinawa which could not be reached by naval gunfire, destroy enemy defenses and air installations, and strafe the landing beaches. The escort carriers would provide aircraft for direct support missions, antisubmarine patrols, naval and artillery gunfire spotting, air supply, photographic missions, and the dropping of propaganda leaflets. After L Day additional support was to be furnished by seaplane squadrons based on the Kerama Islands and by the shore-based Tactical Air Force of the Tenth Army.<sup>15</sup> The latter was eventually to be responsible for the air defense of the area, being charged with gaining the necessary air superiority and giving tactical support to the ground troops.<sup>16</sup>

Provision was made for the careful coordination of all naval gunfire, air support, and artillery both in the assault and in the campaign in general. Target information centers, to be established at army, corps, and division levels, would collect and disseminate data on all targets suitable for attack by the respective arms and keep a record of attacks actually carried out. In addition, at every echelon, from battalion to army, representatives of each support arm—artillery, naval gunfire, and air—were to coordinate the use of their respective arms for targets in their zones of action and advise their commanders on the proper employment of the various types of supporting fires. Requests for support would thus be coordinated and screened as they passed up through the various echelons for approval.<sup>17</sup>

Under cover of the sustained day and night attacks by the naval and air forces, the first phase of the campaign—the capture of the Kerama and Keise Islands and of the southern part of Okinawa—was to begin. On L minus 6, the Western Islands Attack Group was to land the reinforced 77th Division on the Kerama Islands. The seizure of these islands was designed to give the Joint Expeditionary Force, prior to the main assault on Okinawa proper, a base for logistic support of fleet units, a protected anchorage,

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<sup>11</sup> CTF 51 Opn Plan A1-45, p. 35.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Annex A; CTF 52 Actn Rpt Okinawa, 1 May 45, V-H-1.

<sup>13</sup> CTF 52 Actn Rpt, V-G-1.

<sup>14</sup> CTF 51 Opn Plan A1-45, Annex G: Ship's Gunfire Support Plan

<sup>15</sup> CTF 51 Opn Plan A1-45, Annex H: Air Support Plan.

<sup>16</sup> Tenth Army Tent Opn Plan 1-45, Annex 7: Air Support Plan.

<sup>17</sup> Tenth Army Tent Opn Plan 1-45, Annex 5: Planning and Coordination of Artillery, Naval Gunfire and Air Support.

and a seaplane base. Two regimental combat teams were to land on several of the islands simultaneously and to proceed from the southeast end of the group to the northeast by island-hopping maneuvers, capturing Keise Island by L minus 1. All hostile coastal defense guns that could interfere with the construction of the proposed naval bases were to be destroyed. Organized enemy forces would be broken up without attempting to clear the islands of snipers. Two battalions of 155-mm. guns were to be emplaced on Keise in order to give artillery support to the landings on the coast of Okinawa. Then, after stationing a small garrison force in the islands, the division would reembark and be prepared to execute the Tenth Army's reserve plans, giving priority to the capture of Ie Shima.<sup>18</sup>

### *Scheme of Maneuver*

While the 77th Division was taking the lightly held Kerama Islands, the preliminary operations for softening up Okinawa would begin; they would mount in intensity as L Day approached. Beginning on 28 March fire support units would close in on the island behind the mine sweepers and demolition teams. The Northern and Southern Attack Forces would arrive off the west coast early on L Day and land their respective ground forces at H Hour, tentatively set for 0830. III Amphibious Corps would land, two divisions abreast, on the left flank, north of the town of Hagushi at the mouth of the Bishi River; XXIV Corps would land, two divisions abreast, on the right flank, south of Hagushi. The four divisions in landing would be in the following order from north to south: 6th Marine Division, 1st Marine Division, 7th Division, and 96th Division. The two corps were then to drive across the island in a coordinated advance. The 6th Marine Division was first to capture the Yontan airfield and then to advance to the Ishikawa Isthmus, the narrow neck of the island, securing the beachhead on the north by L plus 15. The 1st Marine Division was to head across the island and drive down the Katchin Peninsula on the east coast. South of the Corps' boundary, which ran eastward from the mouth of the Bishi, the 7th Division would quickly seize the Kadena airfield and advance to the east coast, cutting the island in two. The 96th was required initially to capture the high ground commanding its beaches on the south and southeast; then it was to move rapidly down the coastal road, capture the bridges near Chatan, and protect the right of the Corps. Continuing its attack, it was to pivot on its right flank to secure the beachhead on the south by L plus 10 on a line running across the isthmus below Kuba and Futema.<sup>19</sup>

While the troops were landing on the west coast, the 2d Marine Division would feint landings on the southeast coast. This demonstration, scheduled for L Day and to be repeated on L plus 1, would be as realistic as possible in order to deceive the enemy into believing that landings would be made there as well as on the Hagushi beaches. After the demonstration, the division would be prepared to land on the Hagushi beaches in support of the assault forces.<sup>20</sup>

The 27th Division, as floating reserve, was to arrive at Ulithi not later than L plus 1 and be on call of the Commander, Joint Expeditionary Force. It was to be prepared to seize the islands off the east coast of Okinawa and then to land on that coast in support of XXIV Corps.<sup>21</sup>

The scheme of maneuver was designed to isolate the initial objective, the southern part of the island, by seizing the Ishikawa Isthmus, north of the landing beaches, to prevent enemy reinforcement from that direction. At the same time, the establishment of a general east-west line from Kuba on the south would prevent reinforcement from the south. Thereafter, the attack was to be continued until the entire southern part of the island was occupied.<sup>22</sup> Ground commanders hoped that, for the first time in the Pacific, maneuver could be used to the utmost. The troops would cut across the island quickly, move

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<sup>18</sup> CTF 51 Opn Plan A1-45, Annex A, pp. 35, 38; 77th Div Opn Plan ICEBERG, 18 Feb 45, Opn Plan I (Preferred Plan).

<sup>19</sup> Tenth Army Tent Opn Plan 1-45, pp. 12-13; XXIV Corps FO 45, 8 Feb 45: Preferred Plan, pp. 2-6.

<sup>20</sup> Tenth Army Tent Opn Plan 1-45, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 13-14.

<sup>22</sup> Tenth Army Tent Opn Plan 1-45, p. 12.

rapidly to the south, break up the Japanese forces into small segments, bypass strong points, and mop up at leisure.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Interv 1st I & H Off with Gen Buckner, CG Tenth Army, 21 Mar 45, and with Gen Hodge, CG XXIV Corps, 12 Mar 45.

## OPLAN SHO-Go Two

Excerpts from:

- 1) Leavenworth Papers No. 18, Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945, Chapter 1.
- 2) CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 4.

The Japanese Empire's strategic need to hold Okinawa was absolute. After U.S. air strikes on Truk in February 1944, *Imperial General Headquarters (IGHQ)* assumed that the United States sooner or later would try to seize Okinawa as an advanced base for invading Japan itself and garrisoned the island with the newly organized *32d Army*. As time went by, it became apparent that any U.S. assault on Okinawa would enjoy air superiority, artillery superiority, naval artillery cover, superior firepower on the line, and predominance in armor. Japan's *32d Army* knew well in advance both where it would fight on Okinawa and that it would face overwhelming lethality.

### *Early Preparations: The Air Strategy*

The Okinawa campaign began for Americans on 1 April 1945, the day U.S. forces landed (L day). For the Japanese high command, however, the defense of Okinawa began over a year before. American air strikes against Truk in February 1944 made it clear to Japanese strategists that the Marianas line could fall, leaving the Ryukyu line as the main zone of defense. There then began a year of operational analysis, political maneuvering, re-organization, facilities development, and supply stockage that would determine as much as anything else the performance of Japanese forces on Okinawa.

In February 1944, just after the Truk air raids, *IGHQ's* "Outline of Preparations for the 'TEI-Go' Operation" provided for an increased defense presence in the area of the Ryukyu Islands and Taiwan. To this end *IGHQ* created the *32d Army* headquarters late in March, to be located in Naha, Okinawa. Its first commander, Lieutenant General Masao Watanabe, assumed his post on 1 April 1944, a year to the day before the Okinawa landings.<sup>1</sup>

The Ryukyus and Taiwan were to form a long zone of inter-protective air bases under the TEI-Go and later plans. These bases were expected to defeat any American sea or air forces sent into the region. To avoid destruction from the air, each base was to consist of a cluster of airfields, such that if one were damaged others could be used immediately. Military and civilian crews were promptly set to work building the numerous fields. Thirteen base clusters had to be created, stretching in a line from Tachiarai in the northern Ryukyus to Pingting on Taiwan in the south.<sup>2</sup> *IGHQ's* extravagant scheme for the invulnerable air wall derived from its recent experiences on New Guinea. Japan's *4th Air Army* there had no success destroying the Allied air base at Port Moresby because it consisted of six adjoining runways, protected by a dense radar and anti-air net. *IGHQ* concluded that this same style of aviation fortress could effectively guard the Ryukyu line against naval approaches.<sup>3</sup>

The only remaining tasks for ground forces were the defense of these facilities and their support anchorages and the unenviable work of building the fields.<sup>4</sup> Much of the energy of *32d Army* would be absorbed almost up to L day building these air facilities. This was the more difficult since *32d Army* had

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<sup>1</sup> Boei kenkyujo senshishitsu, ed., *Okinawa homen rikugun sakusen*, *Senshi sosho*, vol. 11, [Okinawa area infantry strategy, War History Series] (Tokyo: Asakuma shimbunsha, 1968), 2-3, hereafter cited as OHRS; and U.S. Army Forces Far East, Military History Section, ed., *Japanese Monograph no. 135, Okinawa Operations Record* (Washington, DC, 1949), Book 1, "Okinawa Operations Record of 32d Army," 1, hereafter cited as JM 135.

<sup>2</sup> JM 135, 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Inagaki Takeshi, *Okinawa: higu no sakusen* [Okinawa: A strategy of tragedy] (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1984), 85.

<sup>4</sup> JM 135, 4.

only two bulldozers and one earth roller.<sup>5</sup> Since soldiers were thus obliged to use shovels, hoes, straw baskets, and horse-drawn wagons, construction was slow. Moreover, because of U.S. submarine raiders, it was impossible for the Japanese to deliver the large quantities of fuel, ammunition, and anti-aircraft guns needed to operate the bases. Even more seriously, the planes themselves were not available.<sup>6</sup>

IGHQ's TEI-Go plans were superseded in July 1944 by the SHO-Go plans in response to the loss of Saipan in that month. The several SHO-Go plans covered each area from northern Japan to the Philippines. The Philippines was covered by SHO-Go One and the Ryukyu area by SHO-Go Two. The plans called for 1,500 planes to swarm from China, Taiwan, and the Philippines in case U.S. forces entered the Ryukyu area.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, noting the loss of Saipan, IGHQ began rushing major ground forces to Okinawa. In May 1944, 32d Army had only enough forces to protect facilities on the island from small raids. The 15th Independent Mixed Regiment was sent immediately by air in July 1944. (The 15th would later be absorbed by the 44th Independent Mixed Brigade [IMB].) The other major units that were sent to Okinawa in July and August were the 24th Division, the 62d Division, the 9th Division, and the 44th IMB, all infantry.<sup>8</sup> The premise at this time was that most U.S. forces would be destroyed on the water and that Japanese resources would be abundant. Therefore, 32d Army's strategy was to occupy all of Okinawa in force and to destroy the invasion party on whichever beach it appeared (see map 1).

The rapid buildup of ground forces from July to August 1944 occurred because IGHQ felt Okinawa might be a target immediately after Saipan. But with American landings on Palau and Leyte in September and October, IGHQ realized that the Philippines, not Okinawa, was the Americans' next objective.

The fierce fighting on Leyte, under the rubric of SHO-Go One, affected 32d Army in several ways. . . . IGHQ chose to withdraw the elite 9th Division from Okinawa to participate in the Leyte battle. On 13 November 1944, 32d Army Staff members received a telegram from IGHQ instructing them to designate their best division for redeployment to the Philippines, which staff members agreed was the 9th. The staff vigorously protested this removal of the 9th Division at the staff meeting in Taipei where it was discussed in early November, and continued to protest it right up to L day. The 32d Army Staff's resentment over this was the greater since the 9th Division was actually sent to Taiwan, not to the Philippines, Taiwan being another possible target of American landings and a competitor with Okinawa for scarce resources. The fact that Taiwan's 10th Area Army headquarters was just above 32d Army in the chain of command, and may have engineered the move selfishly, made these feelings of resentment all the greater.<sup>9</sup>

Withdrawal of the 9th Division was a pivot of crisis for the 32d Army Staff that forced them into a comprehensive review not only of their operational plans but of their operational doctrine. The upshot of this crisis was a set of options, presented on 23 November 1944 by the senior operations officer, Colonel Hiromichi Yahara, to 32d Army chief of staff, Lieutenant General Isamu Cho. Yahara's options of 23 November represented just four possible dispositions of 32d Army's finite resources on Okinawa, but each of the four positions required a completely different operational doctrine!

Yahara's four approaches were, in brief:

(1) After the 9th Division's removal, available forces should be spread thinly to defend all of Okinawa.

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Army, 77th Infantry Division, G-2 Section, "G-2 Summary-Okinawa from 27 April 1945 to 10 June 1945" (Okinawa, June 1945), 17, hereafter cited as 77th ID, "G-2 Summary."

<sup>6</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 86.

<sup>7</sup> JM 135, 18-19.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>9</sup> OHRS, 132-35; and Inagaki, Okinawa, 109-11, 116.





In sum, *32d Army* could attempt to defend all of Okinawa or only the center, only the south, or only the north.<sup>10</sup>

Yahara's memorandum of 23 November 1944 rejected the first option, defense of all Okinawa, as no longer feasible for lack of forces, even though *IGHQ* favored it. He rejected the second option, defense of the open Hagushi plain, even though it might briefly protect the *IGHQ*'s treasured airfields, because *32d Army* would be immediately annihilated. He rejected the fourth option, cowering in the northern hills, even though it would keep the army unharmed, because in strategic terms, it would totally waste the resources over which the *32d Army Staff* was the steward.<sup>11</sup>

Instead, Yahara endorsed the third option, concentrating all forces in the defensible but strategically critical south. Chief of Staff Cho agreed and passed the proposal to the *32d Army* commander, Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima, who without comment adopted it as *32d Army* policy. Although this change in deployment seemed workaday, it actually entailed a massive and controversial change in *32d Army*'s operational doctrine. It meant abandoning the *IJA*'s heretofore cherished policy of "decisive battle," namely, seeking out the enemy aggressively in close combat, in favor of a "war of attrition." It meant deliberately discarding the priority of antinaval air defense that for ten months had been, and still would be, the cornerstone of *IGHQ*'s Pacific strategy. The *32d Army Staff*'s new commitment to attrition warfare in the south of the island was probably more important than any other event in making the *IJA*'s performance on Okinawa, along with that on Iwo Jima, the most militarily effective of the Pacific war. The *32d Army Staff* members were pleased with the new arrangement as a solid plan that would allow them to give a good account of themselves, and it was sent to the units on 26 November.<sup>12</sup>

The new force dispositions were carried out in December, and the new lines were inspected by Operations Officer Yahara in January. Yahara's prevalent impression, however, was that the defenses were too thin to hold against concentrated attack. *IJA* doctrine required no more than six miles of front per division. The *32d Army*'s two and one-half divisions were covering thirty-six miles of front, of which twenty-four miles had to be actively defended. Yahara concluded that the division fronts would have to be shortened, and that the way to do this was to draw *44th IMB* from the Hagushi plain south to share some of the area covered by the *62d Division* (see map 3). The new arrangement was endorsed by Cho and Ushijima and sent to the divisional units on 15 January 1945.<sup>13</sup>

The dispositions of 15 January would endure until the American landings on 1 April. They represented a culmination of the tendency of the *32d Army Staff*, facing the prospect of American firepower, to shorten its lines and give up its offensive plans. In the end *32d Army* only defended the southernmost one-eighth of the island and abandoned the sought-after Yontan and Kadena airfields uncontested. In the eyes of *IGHQ*, Okinawa was part of a multi-theater, technology-intensive strategy in which *32d Army*'s specialized role was to defend the Yontan and Kadena airfields. The *32d Army Staff* members' perceptions were simpler: *32d Army* was about to be attacked and needed defensible positions to survive. The staff members had no confidence that air forces could interdict the Americans and instead thought simply in terms of denying the Americans free use of Okinawa facilities as long as possible. Their larger strategic assumptions were well informed and in fact were more sound than the air power schemes of *IGHQ*. Even so, the staffs final operational plans amounted to nothing more nor less than denying the enemy the ground, foot by foot.

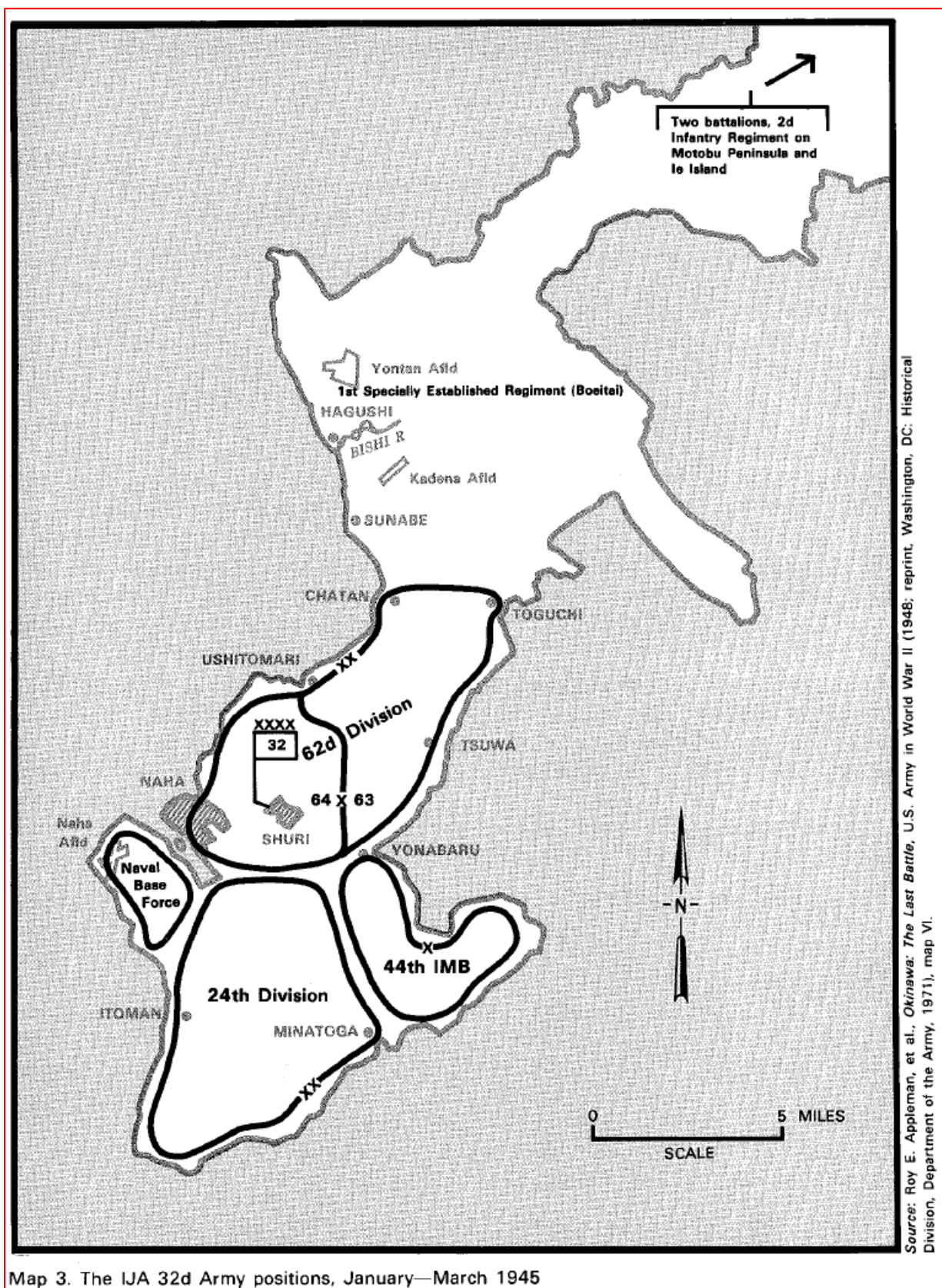
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<sup>10</sup> JM 135, 30; OHRS, 135-36; and Inagaki, Okinawa, 118.

<sup>11</sup> OHRS, 136; and Inagaki, Okinawa, 118-19.

<sup>12</sup> OHRS, 136-37; and Inagaki, Okinawa, 119-20.

<sup>13</sup> OHRS, 168-70; Inagaki, Okinawa, 133-34; and JM 135, 32.



Map 3. The IJA 32d Army positions, January–March 1945



### *Defensive Preparations, July 1944 – March 1945*

They expected the Americans to land six to ten divisions against the Japanese garrison of two and a half divisions. The staff calculated that superior quality and numbers of weapons gave each U.S. division five or six times the firepower of a Japanese division. This meant that U.S. firepower on the ground would be twelve times Japanese firepower or more. To this would be added the Americans' abundant naval and air firepower.<sup>14</sup>

... Operations Officer Yahara prepared a pamphlet titled "The Road to Certain Victory" in which he argued that, through the use of fortifications, *32d Army* could defeat the Americans' superior numbers and technology. Building and using tunnels, what he called "sleeping tactics," was the method he recommended as suitable and capable of success. The pamphlet's purpose was to get the troops and officers stirred up enough to work on their fortifications, which they now did in an environment of renewed optimism.<sup>15</sup>

Work on the caves now began with great vigor. "Confidence in victory will be born from strong fortifications" was the soldiers' slogan. The caves meant personal shelter from the fierce bombardments that were sure to come, and they also offered a shimmering hope of victory. The combination was irresistible, and units began to work passionately on their own caves. Moreover, after frequent relocation, the units were finally in the positions where they would remain until the Americans landed. The *62d Division* and the *24th Division* would be in their final positions 100 days and the *44th IMB* 50 days before L day.<sup>16</sup>

Enthusiasm was essential because of the great toil it took to create the caves. Just as *32d Army* had only two bulldozers to make airfields, it had no mechanized tunneling equipment at all. Chief of Staff Cho repeatedly requested such equipment, so often, in fact, that "Cho's rock-cutters" became famous in the corridors of *IGHQ*. Still, none were sent. In lieu of cutting machines, the soldiers used trenching tools and shovels.<sup>17</sup>

The *32d Army* intended to, and did, move its entire force underground. The caves were made large enough to hold all personnel, weapons, ammunition, provisions, and "all other material." Prior to November 1944 each unit had been expected to fashion its caves for three times its own numbers so that troops from other areas could be concentrated in any area and remain underground. This more ambitious goal had to be abandoned in November 1944, however, when the major troop shifts reduced the number of working days in each unit's new sector. Still, *32d Army* built sixty miles of the underground fortifications.<sup>18</sup>

The *32d Army* strove to strengthen personnel structure as well as its physical fortifications. It evacuated a portion of Okinawa's population of 435,000 to the main Japanese islands, partly for their safety and partly to prevent their consuming precious foodstuffs once communications with the outside were cut off. Eighty thousand Okinawans were moved to Kyushu on munitions vessels that were otherwise returning to Japan empty. Because transportation was scarce and the inhabitants reluctant, however, the army also began moving Okinawans from the populous southern half of the island, which was going to be contested, to the safer north. Thirty thousand old people and children were moved to the north by mid-March 1945, and 30,000 more when U.S. landings became imminent.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 138-39.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 139-40.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 140.

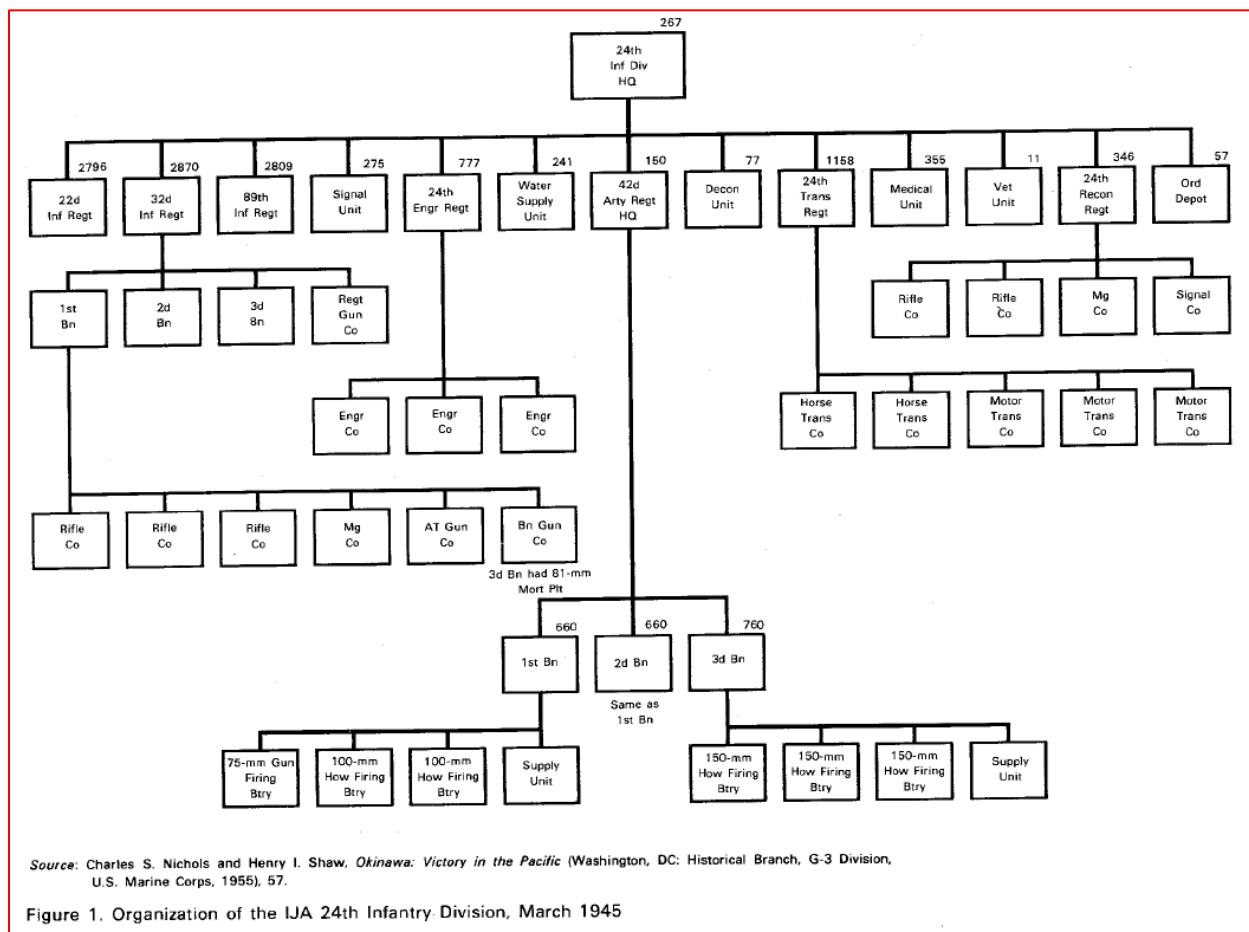
<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> JM 135, 49-50.

<sup>19</sup> Roy E. Appleman, et al., *Okinawa: The Last Battle, U.S. Army in World War II* (1948; reprint, Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1971), 9; and JM 135, 56-57.

### The 32d Army

The principal army units on hand as of March 1945 were *32d Army* headquarters, *24th Infantry Division*, *62d Infantry Division*, and *44th Independent Mixed Brigade*, plus *5th Artillery Command* and *27th Tank Regiment*. In addition to these were some sixty antiair, machine-gun, and engineering units ranging from battalion to company size. The largest of these was the. . . *11th Shipping Group*, whose 19 units boasted some 9,000 men, most of them in *Sea Raiding Base Battalions*, meaning that their job was to send one-man motorboats filled with explosives against the invasion fleet.<sup>20</sup>



The first of the main combat units to reach Okinawa was the *24th Division*, a heavy division [according to IJA terminology]. It was organized in December 1939, assigned to *32d Army* on 18 July 1944, and disembarked on Okinawa from Manchuria on 5 August 1944. Its commander was Lieutenant General Tatsumi Amamiya. The *24th*, a triangular division with three regiments, three battalions per regiment, and three companies per battalion, was organized and equipped for strategic warfare against mechanized and well-armed Russian forces. It had abundant combat support units, with artillery, engineer, transport, and reconnaissance elements organic at regimental level. Each regiment, battalion, and company had its own artillery unit, and each battalion also boasted an antitank gun company. The transport regiment included three motor transport companies. In a word, the *24th*, with its firepower, mobility, specialization, and consistent triangular structure was fashioned for large-scale operations with

<sup>20</sup> Nichols and Shaw, *Okinawa*, 302-4.

another modern army (see figure 1).<sup>21</sup> The total strength of the division, including Okinawans, was more than 15,000.

The *62d Division*. . . had been organized by the *Central China Expeditionary Army* for use as a counterinsurgency force and antilight infantry force. Formed in June 1943 in Shansi, China; was assigned to *32d Army* on 24 July 1944; was concentrated at Shanghai from North China on 13 August 1944; left Shanghai on 16 August; and disembarked at Naha on 19 August. It was the only major unit to have seen action before Okinawa, and during most of its service, its two brigades had been autonomous and not part of a division at all. [But,] . . . the *62d Division* was considered by the commanding general and his staff to be the best in the *32d Army*. Commanded by Lieutenant General Takeo Fujioka, the division was formed from the *63d* and *64th Brigades*, each consisting of four independent infantry battalions which had fought in China since 1938. It lacked divisional artillery but by April 1945 had been brought up to a strength of about 14,000 by the addition of two independent infantry battalions and a number of *Boeitai* (*Okinawa Home Guards*). As finally organized, each [all but one] of the independent infantry battalions was composed of five rifle companies, a machine gun company, and an infantry gun company, with a total battalion strength of approximately 1,200 men (see figure 2).<sup>22</sup>

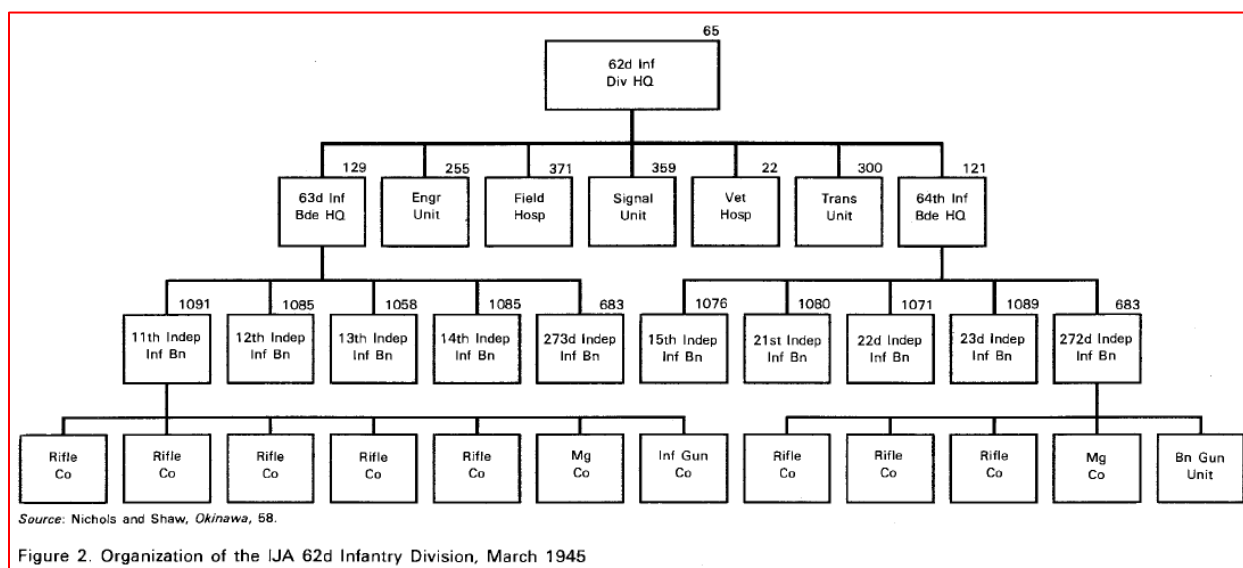


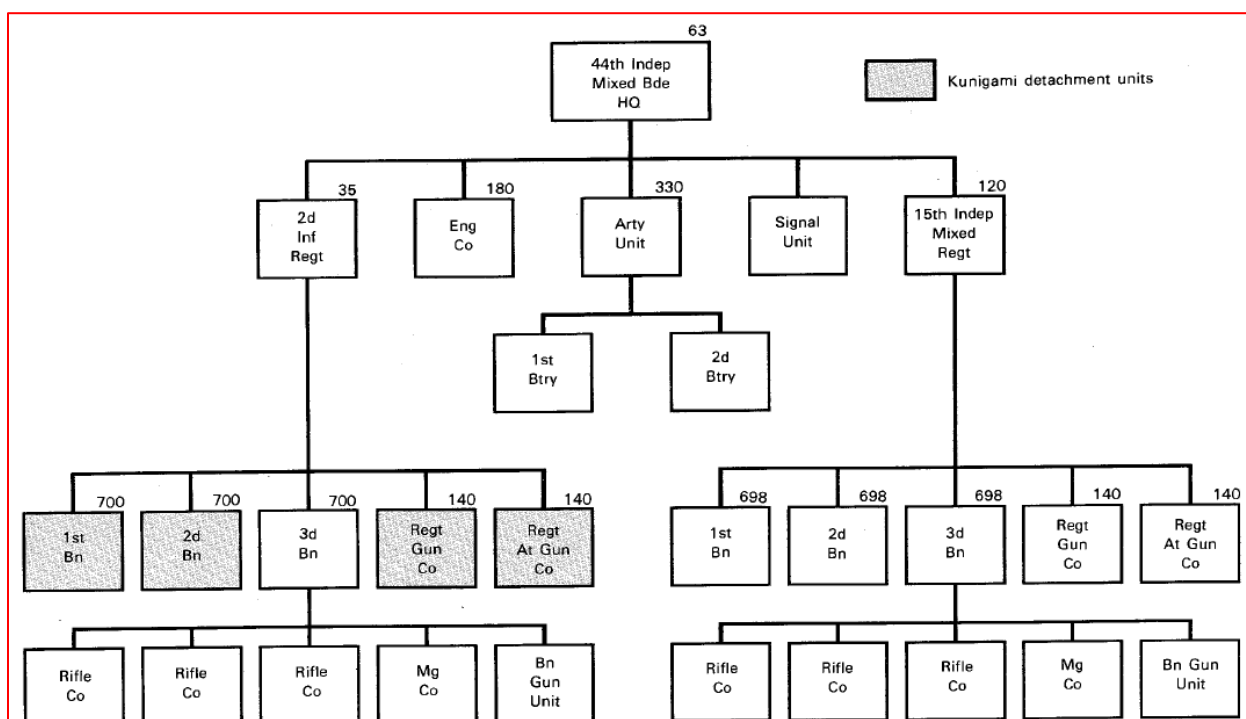
Figure 2. Organization of the IJA 62d Infantry Division, March 1945

The third major combat unit that would fight on Okinawa was the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade*, commanded by Major General Suzuki Shigeki. The *44th IMB* was organized on Kyushu, but its headquarters, *2d Infantry Regiment*, brigade artillery, and engineering units were sunk by a U.S. submarine while en route to Okinawa on 29 June 1944. These elements were thus reconstituted between July and September and dispatched again, this time more successfully. The *15th Independent Mixed Regiment* was formed on Okinawa on 6-12 July 1944 by airlift from Japan. It was assigned to the *44th IMB* on 22 September 1944. Both the *2d Infantry Regiment* and the *15th Independent Mixed Regiment* portions of the *44th IMB* were triangular in organization, with artillery units attached at every level from company up (see figure 3).<sup>23</sup> By the addition of native conscripts and *Boeitai* it had been brought by April 1945 to a strength of almost 2,800 men.

<sup>21</sup> Morimatsu Toshio (former captain IJA), interview with author [Huber], Tokyo, Japan, November 1985; Nichols and Shaw, *Okinawa*, 50, 57; and OHRS, Enclosed chart 2.

<sup>22</sup> Nichols and Shaw, *Okinawa*, 50, 58; and OHRS, Enclosed chart 2.

<sup>23</sup> OHRS, Enclosed charts 1 and 2; and Nichols and Shaw, *Okinawa*, 56.



Source: Nichols and Shaw, *Okinawa*, 56.

Figure 3. Organization of the 44th Independent Mixed Brigade and Kunigami Detachment

To add to the three major combat infantry units, LTG Ushijima in February 1945 converted seven sea-raiding battalions, formed to man suicide boats, into independent battalions for duty as infantry troops to fill the serious shortage resulting from the withdrawal of the *9th Division*. These battalions had a strength of approximately 900 men each and were divided among the major infantry commands. Counting these additions there was a total of thirty-one battalions of infantry on Okinawa, of which thirty were in the southern part.

Independent artillery units constituted an important part of the reinforcements sent to Okinawa. Two regiments of 150-mm. howitzers, one regiment of 75-mm. and 120-mm. guns, and one heavy artillery battalion of 150-mm. guns were on the island by the end of 1944 to supplement the organic divisional artillery and infantry cannon. For the first time in the Pacific war, Japanese artillery was under a unified command; all artillery units, with the exception of divisional artillery, were under the control of the *5th Artillery Command*. Most of the personnel of the command, which numbered 3,200, had served in other campaigns and had been with their units for three or four years. They were well trained by Japanese standards and were considered among the best artillerymen in the Japanese Army.

About 10,000 naval personnel were organized into the *Okinawa Naval Base Force*, commanded by Rear Admiral Minoru Ota, which had control of all naval establishments and activities in the Ryukyus. The unit was largely concentrated on Oroku Peninsula and just before the American landings was reorganized as a ground combat force for the defense of the peninsula. Only about 200 of the *Force*, however, had had more than superficial training in ground combat.

Other important units on Okinawa included the *27th Tank Regiment* of about 750 men, 4 independent machine gun battalions totaling over 1,600 men, an independent mortar regiment of 600 men, 2 light mortar battalions comprising 1,200 men, 4 anti-aircraft artillery battalions totaling 2,000 men, 3 machine cannon battalions with 1,000 men, and 3 independent anti-tank battalions and 4

independent antitank companies totaling about 1,600 men. There were also from 22,000 to 23,000 service troops of various kinds.

At the time of the American landings on Okinawa, about 20,000 *Boeitai* had been mobilized by the Japanese for duty as labor and service troops. Though these men were for the most part not armed, they performed valuable services as ammunition and supply carriers at the front lines and also engaged in numerous front-line and rear-area construction and other duties. Some eventually saw combat. The *Boeitai* are not to be confused with the Okinawan conscripts and reservists who were called up and assimilated into the regular army just as were the Japanese in the home islands. The first group of *Boeitai* was assembled in June 1944 to work on the construction of airfields, but the general mobilization of natives into "National Home Defense Units" was not ordered until January 1945, after the departure of the *9th Division*. About 17,000 Okinawans between the ages of seventeen and forty-five were drafted to serve as *Boeitai*. In addition, about 750 male students of the middle schools, fourteen years of age and over, were organized into *Blood and Iron for the Emperor Duty Units* and trained for guerilla warfare. Further drafts of *Boeitai* were made at various times during the battle. In addition to the *Boeitai* a large number of Okinawan civilians were conscripted into the Japanese forces either to increase the strength of existing units or to organize new units. While the actual number of Okinawans serving with the *32d Army* has not been determined, available evidence indicates that they represented a large proportion of the total, increasing the Japanese strength by perhaps as much as one-third or more.<sup>24</sup>

When the Americans invaded Okinawa, the total strength of the *32d Army* amounted to more than 100,000 men, including the 20,000 *Boeitai* draftees and an unknown number of conscripted Okinawans. The army proper totaled 77,000, consisting of 39,000 Japanese troops in infantry combat units and 38,000 in special troops, artillery, and service units.

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<sup>24</sup> Tenth Army G-2 CICA Transl No. 83, 19 May 45: Standard for Establishment of Nansei Shoto Garrison Plan, 1 Jan 45; Transl No. 228, 6 Jul 45: *32d Army* Op Ord A #110, 3 Mar 45; Transl No. 76, 15 May 45: *62d Div* Op Ord A25, 8 Mar 45; Tenth Army G-2 Wkly Summary, 15 Aug 45; XXIV Corps G-2 Summary No. 16, 24 Jun-1 Jul 45, Incl 3: OB Summary. See also Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 18, 31 Jul 45: Civilian Defense Organizations.

## Phase I, 24 March-3 April

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapters 2 and 3.

### *Seizure of the Kerama Islands*

The first landings in the Ryukyus were on the Kerama Islands, fifteen miles west of Okinawa. The boldly conceived plan to invade these islands six days prior to the landing on Okinawa was designed to secure a seaplane base and a fleet anchorage supporting the main invasion. An additional purpose was to provide artillery support for the Okinawa landing by the seizure of Keise Shima, eleven miles southwest of the Hagushi beaches, on the day preceding the Okinawa assault. The force selected for the landings in the Keramas was the 77th Division, commanded by Major General Andrew D. Bruce; the 420th Field Artillery Group was chosen for the landing on Keise Shima.<sup>1</sup>

Naval and air operations against the Keramas had begun two days earlier. Under the protection of the carriers and battleships of Task Force 58, which was standing off east of Okinawa, mine sweepers began clearing large areas south of the objective area on 24 March. Underwater demolition teams came in on the 25th and found the approaches to the Kerama beaches clear of man-made obstacles, though the reefs were studded with sharp coral heads, many of which lay only a few feet beneath the surface at high tide and were flush with the surface at low tide.<sup>2</sup>

The military value of the Keramas lies in two anchorages, Kerama Kaikyo and Aka Kaikyo, separated from each other by Amuro Islet, in the center of the group, and bounded on the east by Tokashiki and on the west by Aka, Geruma, and Hokaji. These anchorages inclosed 44 berths, from 500 to 1,000 yards long, ranging in depth from 13 to 37 fathoms.<sup>3</sup> (See [CMH] Map No. IV.)

Four battalion landing teams (BLT's) of the 77th Division made the first landings in the Kerama Islands on the morning of 26 March. The first unit ashore was the 3d BLT of the 305th Regimental Combat Team (RCT). At 0804<sup>4</sup> the 3d BLT hit the southern beaches of Aka. . . The 200 boat operators and Korean laborers on Aka put sporadic mortar and machine-gun fire on the Americans, without inflicting damage, and then retreated into the steep central area as the invaders rapidly overran the beaches and the town of Aka.

The next island invaded—and the first to be secured—was Geruma. . . lying south of Aka. The 1st Battalion Landing Team of the 306th Regimental Combat Team landed on the narrow beach at 0825, meeting no opposition except for long-range sniper fire. Within three hours it wiped out a score of defenders and secured the island.

The easiest conquest of the day was that of Hokaji. . . lying a few hundred yards south of Geruma. . . The 2d BLT of the 306th landed on Hokaji at 0921 and secured it without resistance.

At 0900 on 26 March the 1st BLT of the 305th invaded Zamami, initially meeting little resistance. The assault elements received sporadic mortar and sniper fire until they reached the town of Zamami, just to the rear of the beach. Then a group of Japanese estimated to be of company strength, together with about 300 Korean laborers, fled north from the town to the hills.

It became apparent to MG Bruce by late morning of 26 March that the rapid progress of the landing teams would permit the seizure on the first day of an additional island. Accordingly the 2d BLT of

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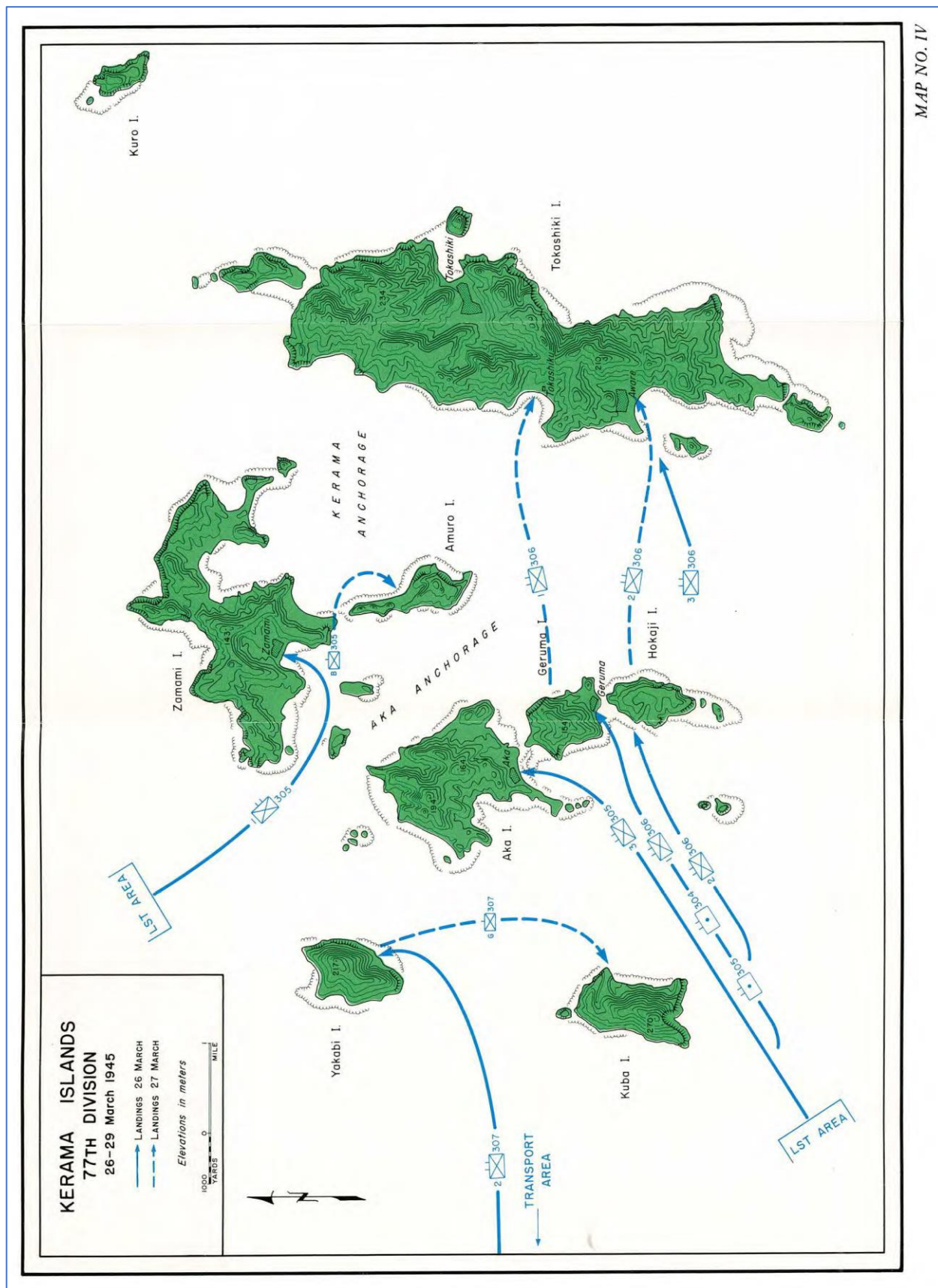
<sup>1</sup> CTF 51.1 Rpt, I-1-19, III-5-17.

<sup>2</sup> CTF 52 Actn Rpt Okinawa, II-C-1, 4; V-H-1; V-G-1.

<sup>3</sup> CINCPAC-CINCPA Info Bull No. 161-44, 15 Nov 44; Okinawa Gunto, pp. 56-58; Supplement, 17 Dec 44: Okinawa Gunto, pp. 35-46.

<sup>4</sup> 77th Div G-3 Jnl and Msg File, 26 Mar 45. This time is erroneously reported as 0904 in the Opn Rpt.





the 307th, a reserve unit, was directed to seize Yakabi, northwesternmost islet of the Keramas. . . At 1341 the battalion landed on Yakabi and, meeting only slight opposition, quickly overran it.<sup>5</sup>

On 27 March, the Americans took without opposition Amuro, an islet between the two anchorages and Kuba, the southwestern-most of the Keramas. Fitful action was still in process on Aka and Zamami on the morning of 27 March.

After a preparation by artillery firing from Geruma, the 1st BLT of the 306th landed on the west coast of Tokashiki at 0911 of 27 March, and a few minutes later the 2d BLT landed to the south of the 1st. Tokashiki was the largest island in the group, six miles long from north to south and averaging about one mile in width. Closest of the islands to Okinawa, it formed the eastern barrier of the Kerama anchorages. Operations on Tokashiki followed the pattern of those on the other major islands of the Keramas. Resistance at first was negligible, the Americans being hindered more by the rugged terrain than by the scattered sniper fire. The two battalions abreast drove north over narrow trails. The 3d BLT of the 306th, initially in reserve, was landed with the mission of clearing the southern portion of the island. By nightfall, the 1st and 2d Battalions were set for the next day's attack on the town of Tokashiki on the east coast; 3d Battalion patrols had reached the southern tip of the island.

On the following day, 28 March, the two battalions of the 306th renewed their drive to the north. After a 500-round artillery preparation the troops occupied Tokashiki, which had previously been leveled by air and surface bombardment. The area near the bay was overrun without opposition. The advance continued to the north, meeting only scattered resistance. On 29 March, after the three battalions had sent patrols throughout the island, Tokashiki was declared secured. By the evening of 29 March all islands in the Kerama Retto were in American hands.

The capture of the Kerama Islands was followed by the landings on Keise Shima. Lying about eleven miles southwest of the Hagushi beaches and about eight miles west of Nana, the group of four tiny coral islets that make up Keise had an importance in the attack on Okinawa far out of proportion to its size and topography. From Keise 155-mm. guns could command most of southern Okinawa.

On 26 March the Fleet Marine Force Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion, attached to the 77th Division, scouted Keise without encountering enemy troops or civilians. On the morning of 31 March a convoy of LST's and LSM's bearing the 420th Field Artillery Group and attachments arrived off the islets. Twenty-four 155-mm. guns were emplaced on the low, sandy islets, and a cub strip and a bivouac area were established. By dawn of L Day the batteries were ready to execute their mission of firing counterbattery, interdiction, and harassing fires deep into enemy territory.

More than 350 suicide boats were captured and destroyed by the 77th in the Kerama Islands. They were well dispersed throughout the islands, many of them in camouflaged hideouts. These plywood boats were 18 feet long and 5 feet wide. Two depth charges weighing 264 pounds each were carried on a rack behind the pilot and were rolled off the stern of the boat when released. According to captured instructions, three boats would attack a ship simultaneously, each seeking a vital spot to release its charge.

From hideouts in the small islands, the "Q-boats" with their charges were to speed to the American anchorages. The Japanese had carefully mapped out possible assembly areas of American transports and had prepared appropriate routes of approach to each area, especially those around Keise.<sup>6</sup> The initial thrust into the Keramas completely frustrated the enemy's plan. In the opinion of MG Bruce, the destruction of the suicide boat base alone was well worth the cost of reducing the Kerama Islands.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 77th Div Opn Rpt, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Tenth Army Transl No. 210, 11 Jul 45: 20th Sea Raiding Bn Opn Ord No. 26, 16 Feb 45.

<sup>7</sup> 77th Div Opn Rpt, p. 40.



### *Softening Up the Target*

While operations were proceeding in the Kerama Islands, Task Force 52, under the command of Rear Admiral William H. P. Blandy, supervised the specialized tasks that were an essential prelude to the invasion of Okinawa itself—the mine sweeping, underwater demolition work, and heavy, sustained bombardment of the target by ships and aircraft.<sup>8</sup>

Bombardment of Okinawa began on 25 March when ships of the Amphibious Support Force shelled the southeast coast. The fire was executed only at long range, however, for mine-sweeping operations which had commenced the previous day were still proceeding well offshore. During the following days, as the mine sweepers cleared areas progressively nearer the coast of Okinawa, the bombardment ships were able to close in for heavier and more accurate fire. The Japanese had planted a mine field of considerable strength along the approaches to the Hagushi beaches, and until mine-sweeping operations were completed the American ships could not bring the beaches within range. Not until the evening of 29 March were the approaches to Hagushi and other extensive areas cleared in what RADM Blandy called "probably the largest assault sweep operation ever executed." Operating under intermittent air attack, American mine sweepers cleared about 3,000 square miles in 75 sweeps.

From 26 to 28 March the naval bombardment of Okinawa was at long range; targets were located with difficulty because of the range and occasional poor visibility, and few were reported destroyed. Effective bombardment of the island did not begin until 29 March when battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and gunboats closed the range and hit their objectives with increasing effectiveness. Then for the first time the large concentration of targets in the Naha-Oroku Peninsula area was taken under effective fire. On the 30th heavy shells breached the sea walls along the coast line in many places. Ten battleships and eleven cruisers were now participating in the attack. On 31 March four heavy ships, accompanied by destroyers and gunboats, supported the final underwater demolition operation off the Hagushi beaches. This was completed before noon. Then the ships concentrated on sea walls and on defensive installations behind the beaches. Even at the shortest range, however, it was difficult to locate important targets, and ships had to explore with gunfire for emplacements and similar structures.

During the seven days before L Day, naval guns fired more than 13,000 large-caliber shells (6-inch to 16-inch) in shore bombardment. Including several thousand 5-inch shells, a total of 5,162 tons of ammunition was expended on ground targets. All known coast defense guns in the area were destroyed or severely damaged. The enemy had established a few heavy pillbox-type installations and numerous emplacements along the beaches and farther inland, but most of them were empty. Naval guns fired extensively into cliffs and rocky points overlooking and flanking the beaches to disclose defensive positions such as the enemy had frequently used in the past; few, however, were found.<sup>9</sup> By the afternoon of 31 March, RADM Blandy could report that "the preparation was sufficient" with the exception of certain potentially dangerous installations still in the Naha area. Enemy shore batteries did not open up on ships during the preliminary bombardment.<sup>10</sup>

Aircraft from Task Force 58 and from the escort carriers flew 3,095 sorties in the Okinawa area prior to L Day. Their primary objective was enemy aircraft based on the islands. Second priority was given to small boats and "amphibian tanks," which later were discovered to be suicide attack boats fitted with depth charges. After these, they gave preference to installations such as coastal defense guns, field artillery, antiaircraft guns, floating mines, communications facilities, and barracks areas.

From 28 to 31 March air missions were closely coordinated with projected ground operations as the escort carriers executed missions requested by Tenth Army. Aircraft concentrated on gun positions at scattered points throughout southern Okinawa. Operations against enemy air and naval bases

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<sup>8</sup> CTF 52 Actn Rpt Okinawa, 1-C-1, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., V-C-1, 7.

<sup>10</sup> CINCPAC-CINCPMA Opns in POA, Apr 45, pp. 35-36.

continued. On 29 March carrier planes destroyed 27 enemy planes on Okinawa airfields and probably destroyed or damaged 24 more; planes hit on the ground during the period totaled 80. Barges, wooden boats, and other small enemy craft were systematically gutted. At least eight submarine pens were demolished at Unten Ko on the north coast of Motobu Peninsula.<sup>11</sup>

Under cover of carrier planes and naval gunfire, underwater demolition teams performed reconnaissance and necessary demolitions on Keise, on the demonstration beaches of southeastern Okinawa, and on the Hagushi landing beaches. The swimmers found approximately 2,900 wooden posts, from 6 to 8 inches in diameter and from 4 to 8 feet high, most of them off beaches north of the Bishi River. In some places there were four rows of these posts. On 30 and 31 March underwater demolition teams destroyed all but 200 of the posts. . . A demolition operation was carried out on the demonstration beaches under gunfire coverage. . . even though no obstacles had been found.<sup>12</sup>

### *Winning the Okinawa Beachhead*

Dawn of Easter Sunday, 1 April 1945, disclosed an American fleet of 1,300 ships in the waters adjacent to Okinawa, poised for invasion. Most of them stood to the west in the East China Sea. The day was bright and cool—a little under 75°; a moderate east-northeast breeze rippled the calm sea; there was no surf on the Hagushi beaches. Visibility was 10 miles until 0600, when it lowered to from 5 to 7 miles in the smoke and haze. More favorable conditions for the assault could hardly be imagined.

#### *The Landing*

H Hour had been set for 0830. At 0406 VADM Turner, Commander of Task Force 51, signaled, "Land the Landing Force."<sup>13</sup> At 0530, twenty minutes before dawn, the fire support force of 10 battleships, 9 cruisers, 23 destroyers, and 177 gunboats began the pre-H-Hour bombardment of the beaches. They fired 44,825 rounds of 5-inch or larger shells, 33,000 rockets, and 22,500 mortar shells. This was the heaviest concentration of naval gunfire ever to support a landing of troops. About seventy miles east of Okinawa, Task Force 58 was deployed to furnish air support and to intercept attacks from Kyushu. In addition, support carriers had arrived with troop convoys. At 0745 carrier planes struck the beaches and near-by trenches with napalm.<sup>14</sup>

Amphibian tanks formed the first wave at the line of departure, 4,000 yards from the beach. Flagged on their way at 0800, they proceeded toward land at four knots. From five to seven waves of assault troops in amphibian tractors followed the tanks at short intervals.<sup>15</sup>

Opposite each landing beach, control craft. . . formed the assault waves of amphibious vehicles in rotating circles. At 0815 the leading waves of amtracks uncoiled and formed a line near their mother control craft. Five minutes later the pennants were hauled down and an almost unbroken 8-mile line of landing craft moved toward the beaches.

Gunboats led the way in, firing rockets, mortars, and 40-mm. guns into prearranged target squares, on such a scale that all the landing area for 1,000 yards inland was blanketed with enough 5-inch shells, 4.5-inch rockets, and 4.2-inch mortars to average 25 rounds in each 100-yard square.

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<sup>11</sup> CTF 52 Actn Rpt, pp. V-E-1-7; CINCPAC-CINCPOA Opns in POA, Apr 45, pp. 37-38.

<sup>12</sup> CTF 52 Actn Rpt, V-G-1, 2, 3; CINCPAC-CINCPOA Opns in POA, Apr 45, pp. 32-33.

<sup>13</sup> Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 7-III-1; 1st Marine Div Actn Rpt, Nansei Shoto Opn, 1 Apr-30 Jun 45, Ch. VII, p. 2; CTF 51 Actn Rpt, V-B-II-2, 3; Comdr Amph Gp 4 Pac Flt (CTF 53), Actn Rpt Okinawa Gunto, 20 Jul 45, III-12; III Amph Corps Actn Rpt, p. 69.

<sup>14</sup> CTF 51 Actn Rpt, II-15; Tenth Army Actn Rpt. 11-V-6; CTF 58 Actn Rpt Okinawa, Incl A, p. 3, and II-5; CTF 53 Actn Rpt, III-13.

<sup>15</sup> Gugeler, 7th Div Hist, p. 17; III Amph Corps Actn Rpt, p. 69; CTF 53 Actn Rpt, III-13; XXIV Corps Actn Rpt, Fig. 3, following p. 19.

Artillery fire from Keise added its weight. After approaching the reef, the gunboats turned aside and the amphibian tanks and tractors passed through them and proceeded unescorted, the tanks firing their 75-mm. howitzers at targets of opportunity directly ahead of them until landing. Simultaneously, two 64-plane groups of carrier planes saturated the landing beaches and the areas immediately behind with machine-gun fire while the fire from supporting ships shifted inland. When the assault wave moved in, the landing area had been under constant bombardment for three hours.<sup>16</sup>

Beginning at 0830, the first waves began to touch down on their assigned beaches. The volume of supporting fire had increased until a minute or two before the first wave landed; then suddenly the heavy fire on the beach area ended and nothing was to be heard except the rumble of the shells that were shifted inland. Quickly the smoke and dust that had shrouded the landing area lifted, and it became possible for the troops to see the nature of the country directly before them. They were on a beach which was generally about twenty yards in depth and which was separated by a 10-foot sea wall from the country beyond. There were few shell holes on the beach itself, but naval gunfire had blown large holes in the sea wall at frequent intervals to provide adequate passageways.<sup>17</sup>

New waves of troops kept moving in. Before an hour had passed III Amphibious Corps had landed the assault elements of the 6th and 1st Marine Divisions abreast north of the Bishi River, and XXIV Corps had put ashore those of the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions abreast south of that river. The 6th Marine Division and the 96th Division were on the flanks. Two battalion landing teams from each of two assault regimental combat teams in the four divisions, or more than 16,000 troops, came ashore in the first hour.<sup>18</sup> (See [CMH] Map No. V.)

The assault troops were followed by a wave of tanks. Some were equipped with flotation devices, others were carried by LCM(6)'s which had themselves been transported by LSD's, and still others were landed by LSM's. After debarking the assault waves, the amphibian tractors returned to the transfer line to ferry support troops, equipment, and supplies across the reef onto the beach. LVT, DUKW, and small-boat control points were established at the transfer line. Amphibian vehicles preloaded with ammunition and supplies proceeded inland as needed.<sup>19</sup>

The entire landing on Okinawa had taken place with almost incredible ease. There had been little molestation from enemy artillery, and on the beaches no enemy and few land mines had been encountered. The operation had taken place generally according to plan; there was little disorganization and all but a few of the units landed at the beaches assigned to them. The absence of any but the most trivial opposition, so contrary to expectation, struck the men as ominous and led them to reconnoiter suspiciously. After making certain that they were not walking into a trap, the troops began moving inland, according to plan, a very short time after they had landed.

### *Moving Inland*

Having ascended the slight hills at the landing beaches, the troops moved inland cautiously. Their immediate objectives were the two airfields, Kadena and Yontan, each about a mile inland. At 1000 the 17th RCT of the 7th Division had patrols on Kadena airfield, which was found to be deserted, and at 1030 the front line was moving across the airstrip. A few minutes later it was 200 yards beyond.

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<sup>16</sup> CTF 51 Actn Rpt, V-C-7 and III-9, 10; III Amph Corps Actn Rpt, pp. 70, 76; XXIV Corps Actn Rpt, p. 34; 1st Mar Div Actn Rpt, Ch. VII, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 7-III-1 and 11-IX-7; III Amph Corps Actn Rpt, pp. 69, 101; XXIV Corps Actn Rpt, p. 24; 1st Mar Div Actn Rpt, Ch. VII, p. 3; 32d Inf Actn Rpt, p. 3; 780th Tank Bn Actn Rpt, p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Maj Roy E. Appleman (XXIV Corps Historian), *The XXIV Corps in the Conquest of Okinawa* (hereafter cited as Appleman, XXIV Corps Hist), p. 89; III Amph Corps Actn Rpt, p. 69; 1st Mar Div Actn Rpt, Ch. VII, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Gugeler, 7th Div Hist, p. 18; Appleman, XXIV Corps Hist, p. 91; Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-IX-6; III Amph Corps Actn Rpt, pp. 69, 70, 99, 101.



With similar ease the 4th Marines of the 6th Marine Division captured the more elaborate Yontan airfield by 1130. Wrecked Japanese planes and quantities of supplies were strewn about on both fields.<sup>20</sup>

By nightfall, the beachhead was 15,000 yards long and in places as much as 5,000 yards deep. More than 60,000 men were ashore, including the reserve regiments of the assault divisions. All divisional artillery landed early, and, by dark, direct-support battalions were in position. Numerous tanks were ashore and operating, as well as miscellaneous antiaircraft artillery units and 15,000 service troops. Kadena airfield was serviceable for emergency landings by the evening of the first day. The 6th Marine Division halted for the night on a line running from Irammiya to the division boundary below Makibaru. The 7th Division had pressed inland nearly three miles, knocking out a few pillboxes and losing three tanks to mines. On the southern flank, the 96th Division had established itself at the river south of Chatan, on the high ground northwest of Futema, in the outskirts of Momobaru, and in the hills northwest and southwest of Shido. There were gaps in the lines in many places, but before nightfall they had been covered by reserve units or by weapons.<sup>21</sup>

Favored by perfect weather and light resistance, American forces moved swiftly during the next two days, 2 and 3 April. By 1400 on 2 April the 17th Infantry, 7th Division, had established itself on the highlands commanding Nakagusuku Bay, on the east coast, and had extended its patrols to the shore of the bay. The speed of its advance had left the units on its flanks some distance behind. To the south the 32d Infantry came abreast late in the afternoon of 2 April, after reducing a strong point south of Koza with tanks. To the north, where the 1st Marine Division had encountered rugged terrain and difficult supply problems, a 6,000-yard gap was taken over by the 184th Infantry. Okinawa was now cut in two, and units of the Japanese Army in the northern and southern parts of the island were separated.<sup>22</sup>

The 96th Division made slow progress during the morning of 2 April in the country around Shido. Here it found heavily forested ridges, empty caves and dugouts, and mines and tank traps along the rough trails. Before evening the 381st Infantry had pushed through Shimabuku but had been stopped by enemy opposition in and around Momobaru. After a sharp fight, the 383d Infantry took a hill just south of Momobaru, and with the help of an air strike, artillery, and tanks it reduced a ridge northeast of Futema. That night its lines stretched from the west coast just north of Isa to a point southwest of Futema on the Isa-Futema road and along the northern edge of Futema.<sup>23</sup>

On 3 April XXIV Corps turned its drive southward. Leaving the 17th Infantry to guard and consolidate its rear, the 32d Infantry pushed all three of its battalions southward along Nakagusuku Bay. After gaining 5,000 yards it occupied Kuba and set up its lines in front of Hill 165, the coastal extremity of a line of hills that swept southwest of the village. Fire was received from the hill, and a few Japanese were killed in a brief fire fight. Ten rounds of enemy artillery were received in the regiment's sector, a sign of awakening resistance.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Gugeler, 7<sup>th</sup> Div Hist, p. 25; Capt Phillips D. Carleton, (6th Mar Div Historian) the 6th Marine Division in Northern Okinawa (hereafter cited as Carleton, 6th Mar Div Hist), p. 11; Steven-Burns, Okinawa Diary, entry 15 Apr 45; III Amph Corps Actn Rpt, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> CTF 51 Actn Rpt, III-9, and Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 7-III-2, give the number of troops landed as 50,000. A survey of unit reports indicates a figure of 60,000 as more accurate. See 382d Inf (96th Div) Actn Rpt, Ch. VII, p. 1; 7th Div Opn Rpt, p. 38; III Amph Corps Actn Rpt, p. 33; 1st Mar Div Actn Rpt, Ch. VII, p. 3; Gugeler, 7th Div Hist, p. 26. On the Kadena airfield, see CTF 55 Actn Rpt, III-7. For the front lines at the end of L Day, see III Amph Corps G-3 Periodic Rpt, 1 Apr 45; 1st Mar Div Actn Rpt, Ch. VII, pp. 2, 3; 17th Inf (7th Div), Actn Rpt, map opp. p. 14, Ch. VII; 32d Inf (7th Div) G-3 Periodic Rpt, 1 Apr 45; Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div Hist, Pt. I, pp. 5, 7, and Pt. II, pp. 5, 9, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Gugeler, 7th Div Hist, p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div Hist, Pt. I, pp. 10ff, and Pt. II, pp. 11ff.

<sup>24</sup> Gugeler, 7th Div Hist, pp. 32ff.

Coordinating their advance with that of the 32d Infantry on their left, elements of the 96th Division moved toward Hill 165 and Unjo. An unsuccessful attempt was made to take the hill. Other 96th Division units advanced to positions in the vicinity of Kishaba and Atanniya and northeast of Nodake. Futema and the high ground 600 yards south of it were taken. On the west flank the division's line went through Isa to the southeastern edge of Chiyunna.<sup>25</sup>

Having completed its wheeling movement to the right, the 96th Division was ready to drive south in conjunction with the 7th Division. Civilians and prisoners of war stated that Japanese troops had withdrawn to the south. XXIV Corps now changed the boundary line between its two assault divisions. On the next day, 4 April, four regiments were to move into line across the narrow waist of the island - the 32d and the 184th of the 7th Division on the east, and the 382d and the 383d of the 96th Division on the west. The real battle for Okinawa would then begin.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div Hist, Pt. I, pp. 12ff.

<sup>26</sup> Gugeler, 7th Div Hist, p. 35; Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div Hist, Pt. I, pp. 17, 18.



## Phase II: 4-14 April

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 5.

General Hodge ordered both his divisions to continue the attack southward on 4 April—the 7th on the east and the 96th on the west. The Corps' objective was the hill mass extending from Urasoe-Mura to Hill 178 and Ouki. This was a larger assignment than anyone realized at the time, and much blood was to be shed before it could be carried out. The objective was not to be gained for three weeks, and then only partially.

### *XXIV Corps Drives South, 4-5 April*

The 96th Division made sweeping gains on 4 April. Its advance carried it through much of the outpost area immediately north of the Uchitomari-Tsuwa line. In the center of the island, troops of the 382d Infantry advanced more than two miles south from Nodake along the division's east boundary. On the west coast, the 96th's right-flank units swept along the flatlands from Isa to Uchitomari. Progress was only a little slower in the division's center along Route 5. Enemy resistance, which included artillery fire from the area to the south, varied from sniper fire to intense machine-gun and mortar fire directed out of scattered Japanese strong points. Rapid maneuver by infantry units supported by tanks reduced the enemy positions. Risks were taken for the sake of rapid advance, with the result that adjacent units often lost contact with one another, and advance elements occasionally were cut off by fire from supporting units.<sup>1</sup>

The deepest penetration of the Japanese area was on the west, where the 3d Battalion, 383d Infantry, preceded by elements of the 96th Reconnaissance Troop, drove rapidly from Isa to Uchitomari during the morning of 4 April. Between Mashiki and Uchitomari the troops ran into heavy fire from the south and from the ridges on their left (east). As a result of continuing Japanese fire in the rough ground east of Mashiki and Oyama, the 3d Battalion, 383d Infantry, pulled back under smoke to Mashiki, where the troops dug in under artillery fire. (See [CMH] Map No. VII.)

For the 96th Division, 5 April marked the beginning of iron resistance on Okinawa. The 383d estimated at one time during the day that its forward elements were receiving fire from 20 machine guns and from 15 to 20 mortars, besides artillery pieces. Driving through the green, rolling country east of the Ginowan road, the 382d unmasked a series of fortified positions, many of them protected by mine fields. Each position caused American casualties and required enveloping movements. Well-camouflaged Japanese troops, supported by tanks, attacked the 1st Battalion during the afternoon, but the attack was broken up by artillery, mortar, and machine-gun fire. During the day, the 382d gained about 400 yards on the left (east) and 900 yards on the right.

The 383d on the west made little progress on 5 April. Its efforts centered on Cactus Ridge, 600 yards southeast of Mashiki, which commanded much of the ground between Uchitomari and Oyama. An infantry company supported by tanks made a direct assault on Cactus Ridge under heavy fire. The ridge was protected by a tank ditch, barbed wire, and a long mine field. When American tanks tried to pass through a gap in the mine field, they came under 47-mm. fire. Two were hit and had to be abandoned. The infantry soon came to a halt under almost continuous machine-gun, rifle, and mortar fire, and were forced to withdraw.

By the evening of 5 April the 7th Division had pulled up almost abreast of the 96th. The 7th had fallen about two miles behind on the preceding day, when its center elements encountered a high, wooded ridge paralleling the coast line just west of Kuba and defended by a group of Japanese

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<sup>1</sup> The account of operations of the 96th Division is based on Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pts. I and II, and 96th Div G-2 and G-3 Periodic Rpts for the period 4-14 Apr 45.



estimated as of company strength. On this ridge a great castle had been built in the sixteenth century by a feudal lord who chose the commanding height as a vantage point from which he could observe movement through this narrow part of the island. Now there remained only attractive green terraces encased on several levels within massive stone walls intricately pieced together by Okinawans of a former day, 10,000 of whom labored for ten years to build this castle for their lord.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever its strength in feudal times, the castle was good now only for one day's defense by the Japanese. On the morning of 5 April, the 7th Division found that the heights had been deserted before daylight. The division registered long advances during the day. The 32d Infantry moved more than two miles along the coast to a point east of Ukuma. The 184th advanced through Arakachi, and then was brought to a standstill by heavy and accurate fire from a rocky pinnacle located about 1,000 yards southwest of Arakachi. The reduction of this position—called the Pinnacle after a thin coral spike that rose 30 feet above the 450-foot ridge and served as a watchtower for the Japanese—was to be the main task of the 7th Division on the following day.

After a 10-minute artillery preparation on the morning of 6 April, Company B, 184th Infantry, made a frontal assault on the Pinnacle, supported on the right (west) by Company C. Two platoons climbed almost to the top of the ridge, but when they started dropping grenades into caves and underground positions they stirred up a hornet's nest. The Japanese fought back with grenades, satchel charges, and mortars. The troops held on for fifteen minutes, until mounting casualties forced a withdrawal. An hour later another infantry assault was attempted, supported by 105-mm. artillery, light tank fire, antitank guns, heavy machine guns, 60-mm. and 81-mm. mortars, 4.2-inch chemical mortars, and bazookas; but the attack was again stopped by Japanese who hid underground during the heavy fire and then rushed back to their firing positions to meet the oncoming Americans.

For the third attack of the morning, Lieutenant Colonel Daniel G. Maybury, commanding the 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry, decided to push Company C up a draw just beyond the ridge used by Company B, but the latter was still expected to seize the peak. Company B moved up the ridge quickly to catch the enemy out of his holes, but again the troops were driven back. Company C was now working its way up the western approaches along a difficult but partially covered route. Colonel Maybury directed supporting fire in front of Company C, which quickly moved to the top without losing a man. It then proceeded leisurely and methodically to destroy the remaining Japanese with white phosphorus grenades and flame throwers. With the Pinnacle reduced, the entire 7th Division line could move forward.

#### *XXIV Corps Halted on the West, 6-8 April*

On 6 April, the strong enemy positions on Cactus Ridge continued to hold up the Corps' west flank. An air strike early in the morning put bombs squarely on the ridge, but the assaulting troops of the 96th Division found enemy fire as intense as ever. The 2d Battalion, 383d Infantry, made frontal assaults through intense mortar fire to gain the ridge. By such tactics the 2d Battalion gained the western half of Cactus. On the next day, 7 April, more American "banzai charges" won the rest of the ridge.

The capture of Cactus Ridge brought the 383d Infantry up against the formidable Japanese positions in the Kakazu area. On 7 and 8 April the regiment pushed down toward Kakazu Ridge, supported by planes, light and medium artillery, and naval gunfire. . . Small-scale attacks along the approaches to Kakazu by the 1st Battalion on 7 and 8 April failed with heavy losses. Spigot mortar fire was met on the 8th for the first time. The 320-mm. shells had little fragmentation effect but a terrific concussion and dug craters fifteen feet across and eight feet deep. The spigot mortar shells were

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<sup>2</sup> The account of operations of the 7th Division is based on Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 36-57; Tenth Army Int Monograph, Pt. I, Sec. C, Ch II: Japanese Defense of the Pinnacle (prepared in part by Lt Gugeler); 7th Div G-2 and G-3 Periodic Rpts for the period 4-14 Apr 45.

dubbed "flying box cars" by the American troops, who claimed that they were able to see the huge missiles in time to run to safety.

From 6 to 8 April the 382d Infantry advanced slowly east of the Ginowan road. The enemy fought stubbornly from hilly ground north and west of Kaniku and delivered heavy fire from his strong positions on Tombstone Ridge, just south of Kaniku, and from Nishibaru Ridge, southwest of Tombstone. Quantities of rifle, machine-gun, mortar, and artillery fire were poured on the troops as they moved south. Savage hand-to-hand encounters marked the slow progress of the regiment, which suffered numerous casualties. By night of 8 April the regiment was strung out on a wide front just north of Kaniku and Tombstone Ridge. Heavy fire from the front, from the Kakazu area on the right (west), and from its exposed left (east) flank, where the 184th was slowed by strong opposition, had brought the 382d virtually to a dead stop.

#### *XXIV Corps Halted on the East, 7-9 April*

After the fall of the Pinnacle, the 184th Infantry continued to move southward over broken eroded ground on its right (west) and rocky finger ridges on the left. On the flatlands along the coast the 32d Infantry advanced with little difficulty, keeping contact with the 184th. Only when forward elements of the 32d tried to push out ahead of the 184th in force did its assault units encounter aggressive Japanese opposition, in the form of heavy fire from the heights on the right. Thus the rate of advance of the 184th governed that of the XXIV Corps' left. By 7 April it was clear to the 7th Division commander, studying the ground ahead from his observation post on the Pinnacle, that the 184th was now meeting the main Japanese defenses.

The fighting in the 7th Division's sector on 7 April centered on a low, bare hill 1,000 yards west of the town of Minami-Uebaru, called Red Hill because of its color. The enemy had made a fortress of the hill by constructing his usual system of caves and connecting trenches. A frontal assault on Red Hill by troops of the 3d Battalion, 184th Infantry, failed in the face of machine-gun and mortar fire. In a second attempt, three platoons of tanks supported the attack. Intense enemy artillery and machine-gun fire drove the infantry back and disabled more tanks.<sup>3</sup>

After these two reversals the 3d Battalion, 184th, made a wide enveloping maneuver to the right. Behind fire from artillery and supporting weapons, the troops drove toward Red Hill from the west and occupied it, suffering only two casualties in the move. The capture of Red Hill left another sector of enemy territory open for the taking.

The 184th continued to make the main effort on the Corps' east flank during the next two days, 8 and 9 April. Two formidable enemy positions built around strong points lay between Red Hill and Hill 178—Tomb Hill, 1,000 yards northwest of Ouki, and Triangulation Hill, 1,000 yards northwest of Tomb Hill. Enemy artillery fire was the heaviest yet encountered by the 7th Division.

Triangulation Hill fell on 8 April after two bloody assaults. Tomb Hill, so named after the numerous burial vaults along its sides, held out until the 9th, when infantry and tanks, closely supported by artillery and planes, managed to seize and hang onto the crest of the hill. Its capture enabled the 32d to seize finger ridges east of Tomb Hill that dominated the approaches to Ouki.

An ambitious flanking maneuver around the Japanese right (east) was tried on the 10th, but it was a dismal failure. The 7th Division had come up against the hard rim of the Shuri fortified zone, and maneuver was impossible. The 7th now paused, while the XXIV Corps made its main effort in the Kakazu area.

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<sup>3</sup> See 711th Tank Bn (7th Div) Actn Rpt, pp. 7-9.





#### *American Attack on the East Flank Halted, 10-12 April*

While elements of the 96th Division were attempting fruitlessly to take Kakazu Ridge, other elements of that division, together with units of the 7th Division, were trying to continue the advance on the east flank that had begun with the success of the 184th Infantry on 8-9 April. The capture of Tomb Hill by the 184th on 9 April, after an infantry attack supported by the massed fire of mortars and guns, made it possible for the 7th Division to advance several hundred yards on 9 and 10 April. The 32d Infantry continued to push ahead on the east along the flat coastal plain, while the 184th moved along the rough high ground farther inland. Despite bad weather conditions the troops were supported by naval gunfire and artillery. Enemy resistance was stiffening. Japanese artillery fire increased in intensity, and the 7th experienced several small but well-organized counterattacks. (See [CMH] Map No. XI.)

On 10 and 11 April the 32d Infantry tried to advance into the town of Ouki, while the 184th on the heights warded off small counterattacks, sealed up caves, and consolidated its positions. The Japanese had made Ouki into a strong point, covered by their artillery and protected on the north by a well-laid mine field, pillboxes, and trenches. A chill, penetrating rain made advance difficult and the troops miserable. The 2d Battalion of the 32d, coordinating with the 184th Infantry on the west, moved slowly over a series of small spurs overlooking the plain, while the 1st Battalion of the 32d advanced against Ouki below.

The 382d Infantry of the 96th Division, in the center of the XXIV Corps line, also came to a standstill during 9-12 April. The terrain fronting the 382d was notable for its irregularity but had a few prominent features lending themselves to defense. The enemy had fortified Tombstone Ridge, a long low hill running northeast-southwest just south of Kaniku, as well as high ground south of Nishibaru. Kakazu Ridge extended across much of the regiment's right (west) front; and the upper part of the gorge, east of Highway 5, was an effective obstacle even if less precipitous here than on the other side of the highway north of Kakazu.

The main effort of the 382d during this period was made on 10 April, while the 381st and 383d on the west were attempting their "powerhouse" attack on Kakazu. The 382d attacked southwest with three battalions in line. The 382d suffered its worst setbacks of 10 April in the center of its line. From the reverse slope of Tombstone machine guns opened up on the Americans at almost point-blank range. The Americans used portable flame throwers, but the Japanese brought forward flame throwers of their own. Spigot mortar shells burst on the hill. On the northeast flank. . . the Japanese overran a machine-gun position; only one man was able to escape. The American troops on the right made a few more yards in a desperate effort to gain a firm foothold on the ridge. By 1415 it was obvious. . . that further attack would be fruitless, and he secured permission from regiment to pull out of the fire-swept area. The men made an orderly retreat to high ground north of Kaniku.<sup>4</sup>

The abortive attacks of the 382d Infantry on 10 April were its last attempts to move forward until the Corps' offensive opened on 19 April. On 11 and 12 April this regiment, like the 7th Division to the east, mopped up small bypassed groups of the enemy and sent out patrols to probe enemy positions on the front and flanks. Intelligence sections of the combat units redoubled their efforts to discover the strength and the weaknesses of the Shuri defensive system.

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<sup>4</sup> Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. I, pp. 41-42, 49-55; 96th Div Actn Rpt, pp. 11-13; 382d Inf Actn Rpt, pp. 2-4.



## Defending Okinawa: 24 March-14 April

Excerpts from:

1) Leavenworth Papers No. 18, Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945, Chapter 2.

2) CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 5.

By the end of March, *32d Army* was fairly well prepared to resist invasion, although a last minute personnel shuffle interfered with unit cohesion. The U.S. preparatory bombardment soon began. On 23 March 1945, American carrier planes bombed Okinawa, and on 24 March, a preparatory naval bombardment rained down 13,000 6- and 16-inch shells. These fires had no specific targets, however, and amounted to little more than area fire. The *32d Army's* concealment had been so effective that, despite daily aerial reconnaissance, the American gunners did not know where on the island it was.<sup>1</sup>

On 26 March, American forces secured the Kerama Islands, sixty miles west of Naha, and placed eight 105-mm guns [twenty-four 155mm howitzers]<sup>2</sup> there. The few available kamikaze aircraft on Okinawa sortied from Kadena airfield on 27, 28, and 29 March and damaged some American ships.<sup>3</sup> . . . the arduously constructed cave fortresses had protected their occupants fully against the 16-inch naval shells. Until the shelling began, the Japanese staff and soldiers had not been sure whether their caves would really protect them.<sup>4</sup>

### *The American Landings*

At 0830 on 1 April 1945, U.S. forces began to land on the Hagushi beaches. The *32d Army* believed there was a fifty-fifty chance that the Americans would land there rather than at Itoman or Minatoga. The Japanese believed the Americans would land in one place, or two at the most, since that had been their practice in the past. According to their established plan, the Japanese refrained both from firing artillery on the American beachhead and from responding to reconnaissance activities. The Americans did not expect such passivity since, even at Iwo Jima, the Japanese had directed artillery fires against the beaches.<sup>5</sup>

The main units of *32d Army* did not stir from their underground positions in the south. Meeting the Americans around the Yontan and Kadena airfields, however, was the *IJA 1st Specially Established Regiment*, a unit that had only recently been formed out of the *56th* and *44th Air Base Battalions* and had little combat training. The Americans captured both airfields on the first day, a disappointment to the *32d Army Staff*. The *1st Specially Established Regiment* suffered heavy losses and retreated to the north. . . <sup>6</sup>

With Americans on the Hagushi beaches and expanding easily to the north and south, the *32d Army Staff* formulated a series of attacks to push them back but then curiously abandoned or limited each as soon as it was made. The *10th Area Army* on Taiwan and *IGHQ* in Tokyo pressured *32d Army* to attack and recapture the Yontan and Kadena airfields. (*IGHQ* communicated with *32d Army* by radio telegraphy.) This advice was almost redundant, however, since attack as a battle tactic was the

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<sup>1</sup> JM 135, 61.

<sup>2</sup> Compiler's note: Dr. Huber's work focuses on the Japanese perspective on Okinawa, and this information is only correct if taken from a Japanese source. The 420th Artillery Group emplaced twenty-four 155mm howitzers on Kiese Shima.

<sup>3</sup> Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War: Its Theory and Practice in the Pacific* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), 556; and JM 135, 63-64.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Inagaki, *Okinawa*, 154-55.

<sup>5</sup> Isely and Crowl, *U.S. Marines*, 55.

<sup>6</sup> JM 135, 68-69; and OHRS, 269.

predominant feature of Japanese infantry doctrine. Aggressive attack was supposed to catch the enemy off guard and force an early solution. Night infiltration and close combat were supposed to offset the enemy's advantage in fire-power. Attack would overcome all problems, so elements of the *32d Army Staff*, echoing *IGHQ*'s wishes, repeatedly advocated attacking American lines in the early days of April.

Having been encouraged by a radio message from the *10th Area Army* to attack and fearing harm to Commander Ushijima's reputation if an attack was not made, Chief of Staff Cho called a staff conference on the night of 3 April. He said the U.S. position was still in flux. Therefore, to annihilate this enemy, *32d Army* should make a general attack immediately, relying on night infiltration and close combat, the form of fighting the *IJA* believed favored itself.<sup>7</sup>

But. . . Operations Officer Yahara exploded against the attack policy. He spoke with the intensity of a man who knew he was right. He said that the young staff officers were agreeing to Cho's suggestions in an offhand manner, as if it were just a five-minute problem on an academy exam. He said they knew nothing of the terrain or other particular factors affecting the attack, even though this data was critical and actually had been gathered by Cho's subordinates.

They were making policy randomly, Yahara said, abandoning the policy of attrition warfare that had been carefully developed since the preceding autumn. Moreover, if they thought the Americans would be caught unprepared, that was "a complete fantasy." The Americans were already established on the beachhead, projecting orderly assault lines north and south, and would be still better organized after the three days it would take the Japanese to prepare a large-scale attack. Moving in the open under American guns would be suicidal and wreck *32d Army* in a few days, which would be especially sad given the long toil preparing the elaborate tunnel positions. Besides that, he suggested, the radioed order from *10th Area Army* for attack was not completely explicit, leaving local commanders some latitude to disregard it if doing so was in the army's interest on account of local circumstances.<sup>8</sup>

Cho heard this urgent speech to the end, saying nothing. When Yahara had finished his plea, Cho rose to his feet nonetheless and deliberately announced that the consensus of the meeting was that the staff favored attack. He recessed the group for thirty minutes, after which all officers reconvened in LTG Ushijima's office in full uniform and battle ribbons, to hear their commander request an attack by the main body of the army on the Yontan and Kadena airfields. A general attack was now the army's intention, and an attack plan in six paragraphs was drafted.<sup>9</sup>

The attack was not scheduled until 6 April, however, and on the night of 4 April an air unit reported to *32d Army* that an American task force of three aircraft carriers and fifty transports and cargo vessels had been spotted ninety miles south of Naha. If the Americans landed at Machinato airfield, just behind the existing forward line, at the same moment as the Japanese attack, the result would be catastrophic. Yahara seized on this message and carried it to Cho, who summarily canceled the 6 April offensive that had caused the *32d Army Staff* so much turmoil for the last several days.<sup>10</sup>

### *Planning the Japanese 12 April Offensive*

From the earliest days of the American presence up until the major Japanese offensive of 4 May, there was a continuing tendency in *32d Army* to go over to the attack, with Yahara in every case trying to stem the tide. The attack impulse came from higher headquarters as well as from doctrinal habit, since the staffs of *10th Area Army* on Taiwan and of *IGHQ* in Tokyo couched their expectations in terms of their strategic goals rather than in terms of the realities of the Okinawa field.

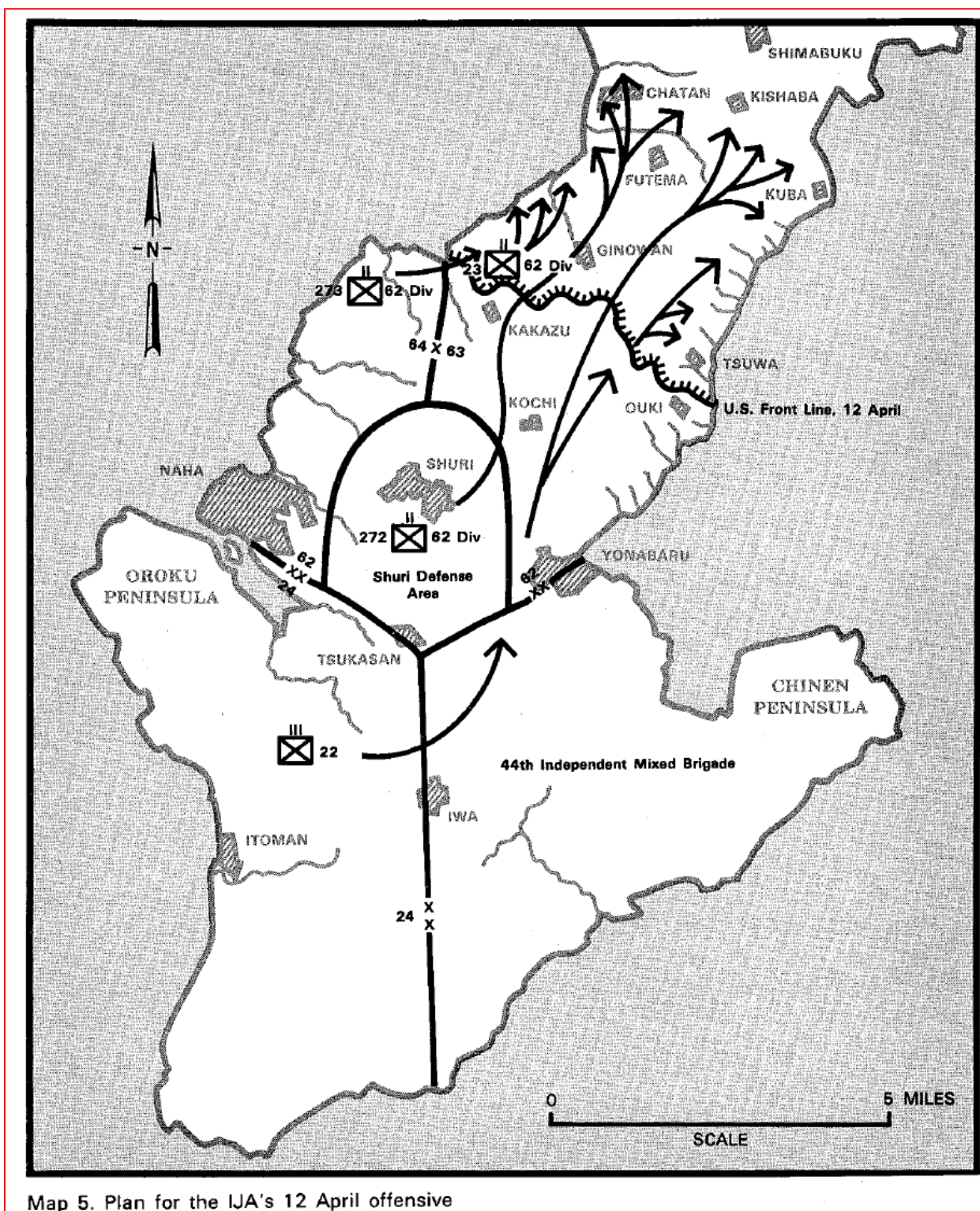
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<sup>7</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 163; and JM 135, 70.

<sup>8</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 164-65; and JM 135, 70.

<sup>9</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 165, 167.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 169; and JM 135, 71.



Map 5. Plan for the IJA's 12 April offensive

On the night of 5 April, when 10th Area Army heard that the 6 April offensive had been canceled, it immediately radioed that 32d Army must attack on the night of 8 April to recapture the airfields. This time the message was a specific command. Consequently, LTG Ushijima's response was to

issue an order for a general attack for the night of 8 April, the order's text being similar to that of the just-canceled 6 April attack.<sup>11</sup>

Once again, however, on the afternoon of 7 April, an American naval group was observed moving west of Naha, causing fears of an American landing near Machinato and an advance toward Urasoe village, behind the left flank of the Japanese main line. Cho therefore modified the attack orders into only a night sortie by two companies in front of their positions, a gesture of little consequence.<sup>12</sup> When no landings materialized, Cho instructed Yahara on 8 April to prepare a night attack for 12 April.

... on 8 April, the U.S. 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions were just pushing up against the main Japanese line for the first time. This arrival happened while the Japanese still debated whether to attack, and it had two important consequences for the Japanese operational situation. One was that the units of the *IJA 62d Division* that manned the main line were engaged and could not easily move for an attack. The other was that now it was not necessary to attack to achieve the close combat *IJA* favored, because the Americans had obligingly provided this circumstance by moving forward.

At the *32d Army Staff* headquarters, the plans for the Japanese 12 April attacks went forward. The main obstacle to a successful attack, the *32d Army* staff believed, would be American field artillery and naval gunfire. In previous campaigns Japanese offensives had failed largely because the area over which the troops advanced was smothered with gunfire within a few moments of the opening of the attack. As a result, the enemy plan for 12-13 April called for a mass infiltration in force through American lines across almost the entire front.

The units of the *IJA 62d Division* already on the isthmus line were to hold. The *IJA 22d Infantry Regiment* was to be brought north from the Oroku area, placed under *62d Division's* command, and assembled northeast of Shuri. The *32d Army* artillery was to provide covering fire beginning at sunset, with fires briefly directed at the American line, then shifted to American rear areas.<sup>13</sup> At sunset, the *22d* was to attack through the U.S. lines on the east of the Ginowan Road, then advance as far as Shimabuku (see map 5).<sup>14</sup> The *62d Division* was to use three reserve battalions from its own rear areas—the *23d*, *272d*, and *273d*—for the sunset assault. The *273d Battalion* was to attack along the west coast, the *272d* was to advance along the west side of the Ginowan Road, and the *23d* was to move forward between them.

... then the troops were to scatter through the American-held area as far north as Kishaba, one and a half miles northeast of Futema, each battalion taking an assigned area. The Japanese were to hide in caves and tombs, awaiting an opportunity to fall upon Tenth Army rear elements on 13 April. They would then be able to engage the Americans in hand-to-hand combat, at which they considered themselves superior. American guns would be silent since their fire would endanger friendly troops as much as Japanese.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Inagaki, *Okinawa*, 169; and JM 135, 72-76.

<sup>12</sup> Inagaki, *Okinawa*, 169; and JM 135, 78.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-83.

<sup>14</sup> JM 135, 81-82.

<sup>15</sup> Tenth Army PW Interrog Rpt No. 28 (cited hereafter as Interrog Yahara), 6 Aug 45.



## Kakazu Ridge

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 5.

On 8 April Colonel Edwin T. May ordered the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 383d Infantry to seize the Kakazu hill mass the next day, and on the morning of 9 April the two battalions were drawn up in position for the attack. (See [CMH] Map No. IX.)

The Japanese-held area in front of the 383d Infantry offered the enemy an ideal combination of defensive features. A deep moat, a hill studded with natural and man-made positions, a cluster of thick-walled buildings behind the hill—these were the basic elements of Kakazu stronghold. The enemy had exploited each one of them. Moreover, Kakazu, unlike such outposts as the Pinnacle, was an integral element of the Shuri fortified zone and a vital rampart that could expect reinforcements and heavy fire support from within the ring of positions that surrounded the 32d Army headquarters, only 4,000 yards to the south.

The 1st and 3d Battalions were drawn up on the high ground several hundred yards northeast of the main hill of Kakazu. Between the Americans and Kakazu lay a deep gorge, half hidden by trees and brush, which could be crossed only with difficulty. The Kakazu hill mass itself, on the other side of this gorge, stretched northwest-southeast for 1,000 yards, sloping on the west toward the coastal flat and ending on the east at Highway 5. Kakazu was made up of two hills connected by a saddle. On the east was the larger of the two hills, about 500 yards long and topped by a fairly level strip of land averaging 25 yards in width; it came to be known to the American troops as Kakazu Ridge. At the western end of this ridge was a north-south saddle, sloping gently up toward the south. This saddle was dotted with tombs, as were the sides of Kakazu Ridge. West of the saddle was another portion of the Kakazu hill mass, forming the head of a T in relation to Kakazu Ridge, and stretching north-south for about 250 yards. This hill was. . . known as "Kakazu West." On the northern slope of Kakazu West the ground fell away sharply in a steep cliff pockmarked with caves; on the east it was steep but not precipitous.

In and around the Kakazu hills the Japanese had created one of their strongest positions on Okinawa. Mortars dug in on the reverse slope were zeroed-in on the gorge and on vulnerable areas between the gorge and the crest of Kakazu. Several spigot mortars also protected the hill. In an intricate system of coordinated pillboxes, tunnels, and caves Japanese machine guns were sited to cover all avenues of approach. The enemy was also supported by many artillery pieces within the Shuri fortified zone. The heavy walls and the hedges of the town of Kakazu—and eventually its rubble—afforded the Japanese countless defensive positions.

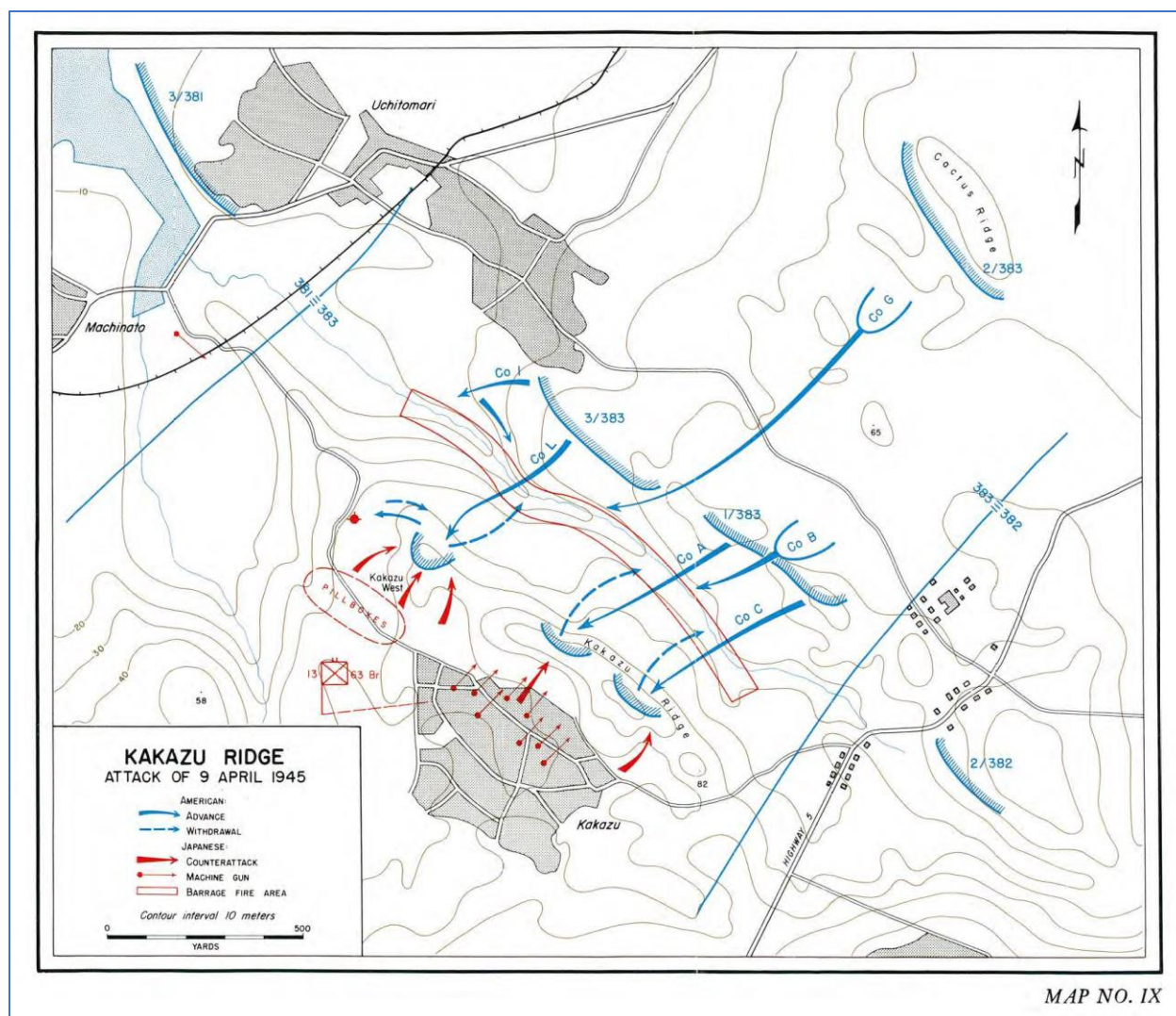
The 1st Battalion of the 383d, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Byron F. King, was to capture Kakazu Ridge; the 3d Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Edward W. Stare, was to take Kakazu West.<sup>1</sup> The companies were to attack before dawn without an artillery preparation in order to surprise the enemy. The men had only a vague conception of the ground over which they were to attack. The air photographs and maps were inaccurate or lacking in detail. From the jump-off position the gorge between the men and Kakazu was not visible.

### *Rifle Companies Storm Kakazu*

The predawn darkness hid the movement of the troops as they moved out. From east to west the companies were C and A of the 1st Battalion and L and I of the 3d Battalion. Companies C and A crossed the gorge, picked their way up the slopes of Kakazu Ridge, and were on the top by dawn without being discovered. Company L's forward elements killed several Japanese on the way up Kakazu West

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<sup>1</sup> 383d Inf (96th Div) FO No. 21, 8 Apr 45.



without arousing the bulk of the defenders. Company I on the far west was delayed in its jump-off and by daylight was in open ground 150 yards south of Uchitomari.

Shortly after 0600 the enemy was alerted. A lone Japanese in a pillbox spotted Company A and opened fire. Almost immediately a terrific hail of mortar fire fell along the entire front, punctuated by staccato bursts from machine guns. The Americans were in poor positions. Most of Companies A and C were on the ridge, but they had separated in the approach and had not yet regained contact. Likewise there was no contact between Company A and Company L, which was part way up Kakazu West. Company L at first escaped most of the fire, which blanketed the gorge after L had crossed it, but the same fire cut off Company I in the open ground to the west and thus left L isolated on Kakazu West.

While the men of Companies A and C huddled in holes on the crest and forward (northeast) slopes of Kakazu Ridge to escape the murderous fire, Company L made a dash to gain the top of Kakazu West. In the face of machinegun fire First Lieutenant Willard F. Mitchell, commander of Company L . . . urged his men to the top. They made it with fixed bayonets and immediately became engaged in a close-quarters fight that was to last all morning.

Just as Company L gained the top of Kakazu West the situation was becoming desperate on Kakazu Ridge. The Japanese charged through their own mortar barrage into the American lines. Hand-to-hand fighting, especially in Company A's section, raged without a lull until 0745. Since the support



platoons were pinned down in the open ground between the gorge and the hill, reinforcement was impossible; yet more and more of the enemy closed in.

Captain Jack A. Royster, commander of Company A, reported that it would be forced to withdraw or would be wiped out unless reinforcements could be brought up or the 3d Battalion could come abreast on the right (west).<sup>2</sup> He evidently did not know that only Company L of the 3d Battalion had made the top of Kakazu West and that it was now fighting for its life. Company B was ordered to move up behind A but was stopped by the fire blanketing the gorge. The enemy was keeping over the gorge a curtain of steel and explosive which prevented more Americans from moving up, while Japanese counterattacking elements were attempting to finish off the small force on the top.

At 0830 Company C was being heavily attacked on its exposed left (east) flank. Colonel King. . . had ordered CPT Royster to hold at all costs, but now knew that the game was up. He radioed COL May: "Have 50 men on ridge. Support elements pinned down. Heavy concentrations of mortars and artillery being laid down on troops beside MG crossfire. If we do not get reinforcements, we will have to withdraw."<sup>3</sup>

Colonel May was acting under a division field order which called for a "vigorous" attack to the south.<sup>4</sup> He was unwilling to relinquish his toe hold on Kakazu; to do so meant giving up vital high ground. Furthermore, he felt that the 1st Battalion would lose as many men in attempting a retreat as in trying to hang on. Colonel May therefore radioed to the 1st Battalion: "Sending G Company to reinforce you ... if the Battalion CO is jumpy, have the executive officer take over. Hold the ridge at all costs."<sup>5</sup> He then ordered the 2d Battalion to fill the gap between the 1st and 3d Battalions by sending Company G forward. Company G, however, was 1,000 yards to the rear and did not arrive in time to help the 1st Battalion out.

Up on Kakazu Ridge, CPT Royster felt his position was untenable. Although almost blind from a mortar burst, he kept rallying his men until a smoke barrage gave them concealment for the move back. The first smoke from a chemical company blew over the lines, but at 1000 it was effective enough for C and A to begin their withdrawal. A rear guard held the crest while the wounded men were carried out. The remaining troops on Kakazu, along with those who had been pinned down in the open ground near the gorge, moved back through mortar fire.

The first members of A and C to reach the gorge were met there at 1030 by Captain John C. Van Vulpen of Company B, who had been trying to move up to reinforce them. Under orders from battalion to attack, CPT Van Vulpen led the forty-six able-bodied men of his company up the south bank of the gorge onto the open ground. They had gone only a few yards when a hail of mortar shells and machine-gun fire wounded seven of the men. Advance was impossible as the enemy had both the gorge and the area north of the gorge under artillery and mortar fire. During the afternoon, the survivors of the three companies straggled back to the battalion lines.

With the withdrawal of Companies C and A during the morning of 9 April, Company L was the sole American unit on Kakazu. Lieutenant Mitchell and his men held the northernmost of two knolls that made up Kakazu West. Although Mitchell and his men had seized enough of the saddle to set up machine guns in its slight defilade, they were unable to seize the southern knoll. The Japanese, who were making their main effort against Companies C and A on Kakazu Ridge, were unable to push the Americans off the northern knoll of Kakazu West, although they drove in close enough to engage in hand-grenade and even satchel-charge duels.

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<sup>2</sup> 1st Bn, 383d Inf, Unit Jnl, Entry No. 5, 9 Apr 45.

<sup>3</sup> 383d Inf Jnl, Msg No. 8, 9 Apr 45.

<sup>4</sup> 96th Div FO No. 14, 3 Apr 45; FO No. 15, 7 Apr 45.

<sup>5</sup> 383d Inf Jnl, Msg No. 9, 9 Apr 45.

About noon the enemy apparently realized that the American force on Kakazu West was not as strong as its fierce resistance had seemed to indicate. He launched four hard counterattacks during the afternoon with forces of from platoon to company strength. The Japanese infantry attacked through their own mortar fire, throwing potato mashers and satchel charges.

Desperate efforts to relieve the pressure on Company L were fruitless. Colonel May had ordered the 2d Battalion to send Company G on Kakazu between L on Kakazu West and A on Kakazu Ridge. Company G did not reach the gorge until midafternoon. By this time Company I, which had been pinned down in the open area just south of Uchitomari, had managed to work its way forward by one's and two's to more covered positions. Together Companies I and G tried at 1400 to reach L's left (east) flank. But because of heavy Japanese fire they were not able to cross the ravine. The enemy's curtain of fire along the gorge was still impassable.

By 1600 1LT Mitchell realized that his position was hopeless. Of eighty-nine men who had reached the top of Kakazu West, fifteen had now been killed and only three were uninjured. Worst of all, the company was almost out of ammunition. Those who still had a few rounds had obtained them by stripping the dead and wounded of ammunition; others had none at all. The machine guns stood idle, their belts empty. The last counterattack at 1530 had been launched by from 100 to 150 Japanese, and 1LT Mitchell knew that his small force could not withstand another such onslaught.

Deciding to withdraw, 1LT Mitchell called for supporting fires, and these were expertly handled. The 4.2-inch chemical smoke on the south side of Kakazu West was interspersed with high explosive artillery shells to keep the enemy pinned down. Under cover of the smoke the survivors of Company L pulled back off the hill to the gorge, carrying their wounded with them. Lieutenant Mitchell then had the concentration moved to the top and north slopes of Kakazu West. Nevertheless Japanese machine gunners, firing blindly into the smoke, killed two of the men on the way back.

It had been a black day for the 383d Infantry. The regiment had suffered 326 casualties—23 killed, 256 wounded, 47 missing.<sup>6</sup> The 1st Battalion was at half strength and was considered ineffective. Colonel May had relieved LTC King of the 1st Battalion and had placed the battalion's executive officer, Major Kenny W. Krickson, in command. Company L had only thirty-eight men left, including the company headquarters. The regiment had gained no ground. However, it had killed about 420 of the enemy.

#### *"Powerhouse Attack" on Kakazu, 10 April*

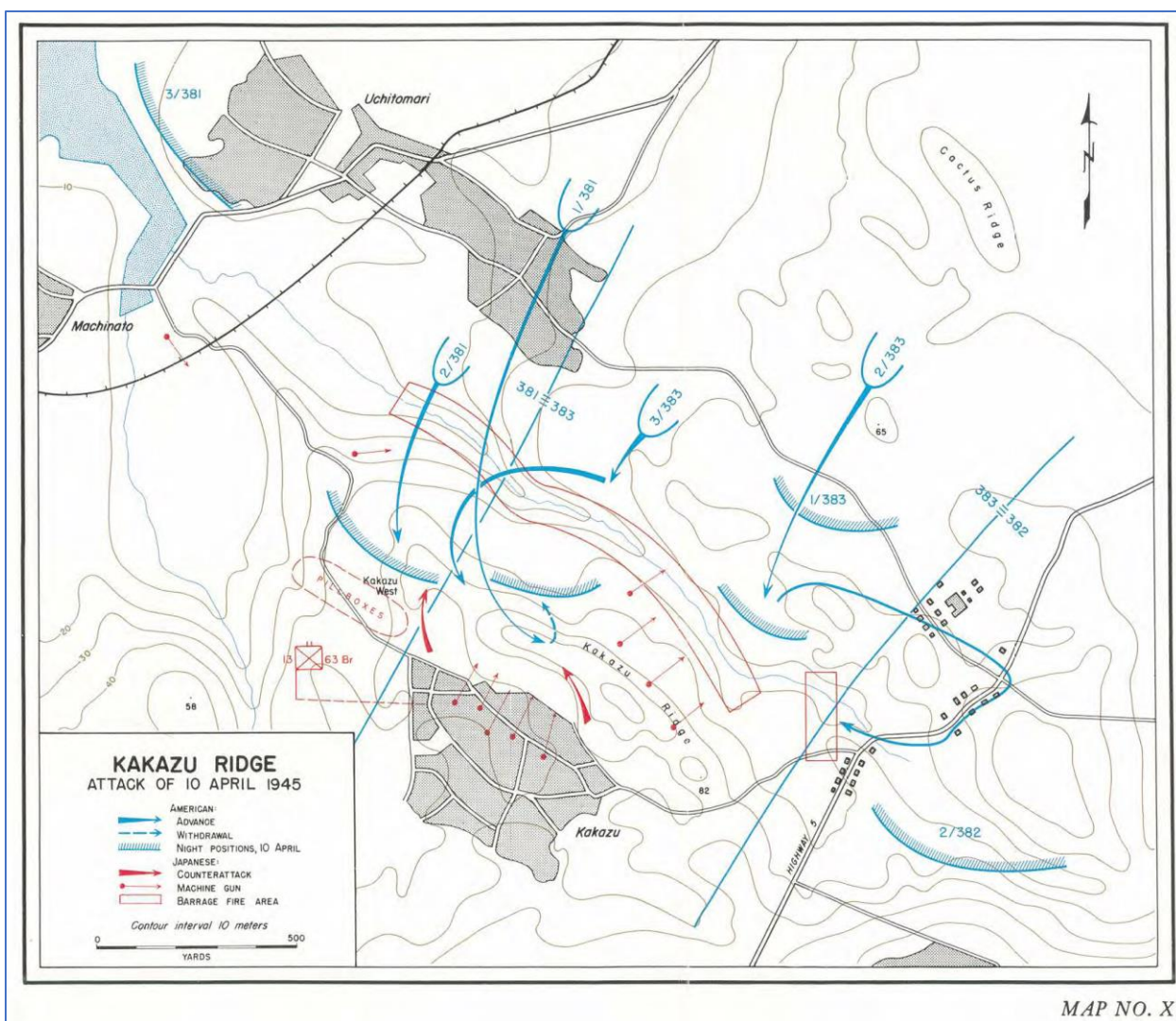
Even before the attack of 9 April disintegrated, Brigadier General Claudius M. Easley, assistant division commander, COL May, commander of the 383d, and Colonel M. E. Halloran, commander of the 381st, had met at the 383d command post to plan a "powerhouse attack" for 10 April.<sup>7</sup> One regiment had assailed Kakazu unsuccessfully on 9 April; now two regiments were to do the job, under the direction of BG Easley. The 381st was to assault Kakazu West from positions south of Uchitomari; the 383d was to attack Kakazu Ridge from positions north of the gorge. (See [CMH] Map No. X.)

No tanks were to move out with the assault battalions. They could not negotiate the gorge at the base of Kakazu; if the tanks tried to make a wide flanking move on the right (west) south of Uchitomari, they would encounter a jumble of rice paddies and terraced fields under direct fire from the enemy; similarly a wide sweep on the left, east of the deepest part of the gorge, would bring the tanks into the open, fire-swept ground where the 382d was inching ahead. As a result, the infantry-tank team, which proved to be so indispensable a weapon in the final reduction of the Shuri defenses, could not be used in the attack on Kakazu. The two regiments, however, were to have exceptionally heavy artillery

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<sup>6</sup> 383d Inf Jnl, Msg No. 24, 9 Apr 45.

<sup>7</sup> 383d Inf Jnl, Msg No. 16, 9 Apr 45.



support from seven battalions of field artillery, including Marine battalions attached to the 96th.<sup>8</sup> Naval gunfire and three squadrons of Navy fighter planes were also on call.

Artillery opened a 15-minute preparation at 0645 on 10 April, but, as BG Easley felt that it had not fallen close enough to the lines to be effective, he ordered another 15-minute bombardment. The 2d Battalion, 381st Infantry, then jumped off from the outskirts of Uchitomari toward Kakazu West; it soon came under intense mortar and machine-gun fire. The 1st Battalion, 381st, moved up behind the 2d. At first the 383d met little resistance; thus during the morning the attack on Kakazu revolved around the efforts of the 381st.

A part of the 2d Battalion, 381st Infantry, soon was pinned down by fire in the open area north of the gorge—about the same place where Company I, 383d, had been stopped on the previous day—but some troops managed to reach it. Already the enemy had his curtain of fire established along the length of the gorge, and the men of the 2d Battalion were forced to cling to overhanging rocks on the south side to escape the fire. A heavy mortar barrage dropped on the gorge as more troops moved up.

At 0805 leading elements of the 2d Battalion moved out of the gorge and started up the north slope of Kakazu West in a skirmish line. Resistance was not strong; machine guns on the crest of Kakazu

<sup>8</sup> 96th Div FO No. 16, 9 Apr 45.

West were knocked out by small flanking movements. By 0930 the troops were on the crest of Kakazu West, where they hastily consolidated their position, knowing that Company L of the 383d had been forced off this very height on the previous day. Soon two companies were on the hill. Here they waited for the 383d to move up on their left (east) flank onto Kakazu Ridge.

The 383d, however, was not making much progress. Both battalions, the 3d on the right (west) and the 2d on the left, advanced until they were stopped by enemy fire just short of the gorge, which on 10 April, as on 9 April, was the dominant element of the action. Although COL May believed that enemy fire was negligible and radioed both battalions to move forward toward Kakazu Ridge, the battalions could not advance.<sup>9</sup> As a result, both battalions became involved in flanking movements. Part of the 2d Battalion never left the area north of the gorge, but other elements moved southeast along the Uchitomari-Kaniku road, turned right (south) on Highway 5, and infiltrated through houses along the highway to flank the gorge. They were still no better off, however, for the enemy had the open area here under control by fire. The 2d Battalion stayed in this position, at the eastern end of the gorge in front of Kakazu Ridge, for the rest of the day.

When stopped at the gorge, the 3d Battalion, 383d Infantry, made a flanking move in a direction opposite to that taken by the 2d Battalion, moving west toward the 381st regimental sector. The 3d Battalion managed to cross the gorge at the north base of Kakazu West in the 381st sector. It then attacked up the north slopes of that hill, connecting with the 2d Battalion, 381st, in the latter's sector on the northeast side. By 1100 elements of the 381st and 383d held the top of Kakazu West, its northern slopes, and part of the saddle between Kakazu West and Kakazu Ridge. The hold was none too secure, for the enemy had troops available for counterattack and was placing intermittent machine-gun and mortar fire on Kakazu West.

Kakazu Ridge was still unconquered. About noon the 2d Battalion, 383d, attacked east along the saddle connecting Kakazu Ridge and Kakazu West, in an effort to take the ridge. The attempt was abortive; the troops advanced about 100 yards and then were pinned down by machine-gun and mortar fire from Kakazu Ridge. It was now raining, and movement was more difficult than ever. The 2d Battalion, 381st, tried to push south along the crest of Kakazu West in order to gain ground dominating the town of Kakazu and the reverse slope of Kakazu Ridge. The troops made a small gain; then quickly a vicious counterattack drove them back to their original positions on the north knob of Kakazu West.

The situation was now critical, for the 3d Battalion, 383d, had suffered many casualties during the day, especially among the small-unit commanders, and was now being vigorously attacked. At 1345 BG Easley attempted to break the deadlock. He ordered the 1st Battalion, 381st Infantry, to pass through the right (west) flank of the 383d in the saddle, and instructed the latter to hold on until help arrived.

By 1400 the 1st Battalion, 381st, was on the move in a column of companies, following the same route of approach that had been used by the 2d Battalion in the morning. About half the battalion was across the gorge when the enemy again placed his prearranged mortar concentrations and machine-gun fire on this vulnerable point. Cut off from some of their supporting elements, the forward troops of the 1st Battalion made their way up the steep slopes of Kakazu West in the pouring rain. Some of the near elements later joined them; others never reached Kakazu West that day.

At about 1530 the 1st Battalion of the 381st finally arrived to relieve the 3d Battalion of the 383d in the saddle. But it was too late for an effective relief. A part of the 3d Battalion had given way before the fierce enemy attack, and the relieving troops discovered a horde of Japanese where they had expected to find only Americans. Nevertheless, the 1st Battalion attacked southeast along Kakazu Ridge. The attack was not delivered in strength, however, and it failed. Later, some of the elements of the 1st

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<sup>9</sup> 383d Inf Jnl, Msg Nos. 18 and 19, 10 Apr 45.

Battalion which were cut off at the gorge rejoined the unit, and by darkness the troops had worked their way up the north slopes of Kakazu Ridge to within twenty yards of the crest.

*The Enemy Clings to Kakazu Ridge, 11-12 April*

Under regimental orders to seize Kakazu Ridge, the 1st Battalion, 381st Infantry, attacked across the saddle at 0700 on 11 April. The troops worked up the western slope of the ridge but then came under severe flat trajectory gunfire from the area south of Kakazu and under high-angle mortar fire from the reverse (southern) slope of Kakazu Ridge. The Japanese also threw satchel charges at them from the crest of Kakazu Ridge. Although the attacking troops were supported by fire from the top of Kakazu West, they finally were forced to dig in short of the crest of the ridge. Here the enemy made two sharp counterattacks. . .

The 3d Battalion, 383d Infantry, spent the morning in its position on the north slope of the saddle, receiving rations and ammunition brought through the gorge under heavy fire. At 1300 this battalion, with the 1st Battalion, 381st, on the right (southwest), drove up the northwest slopes of Kakazu Ridge. Since the commander of the 1st had been unable to cross the gorge, LTC Stare, commander of the 3d Battalion, directed the attack.

After advancing about 150 yards the attacking troops came under severe mortar and machine-gun fire from the crest and reverse slope of Kakazu Ridge. Even heavier fire was coming from the reverse (south) slope of Kakazu West, which was still in enemy hands. Colonel Stare decided that his assault could continue only if the 2d Battalion of the 381st, occupying the northern part of the top of Kakazu West, attacked and destroyed the Japanese who still clung to the southern portion of Kakazu West.

Through heavy fire LTC Stare made his way to the 2d Battalion command post to plan this attack with Lieutenant Colonel Russell Graybill, 2d Battalion commander. Just as the attack was about to be launched the Japanese counterattacked on Kakazu West, and LTC Graybill's men had all they could do to hold their positions. Colonel Stare then called off further attacks on Kakazu Ridge and ordered casualties evacuated under a smoke screen. The two battalions on the northwest slopes of Kakazu Ridge drew back to their original positions. Once again the enemy had retained his grip on the main portions of Kakazu.

During the night of 11-12 April the Japanese bombarded the Uchitomari-Kakazu area with huge mortar shells, some of them 320-mm. On 12 April the 96th Division made its final attempt to take Kakazu. After planes bombed and rocketed the crest and reverse slope of Kakazu Ridge, the 1st Battalion, 381st, attacked up the northwest slopes of the ridge. The Japanese waited for the planes to leave and then opened up with one of the heaviest mortar concentrations the 96th had ever met. For over an hour mortar shells burst on the rocky slopes at a rate faster than one a second. Three times the troops of the 381st attacked; each time, in the face not only of this mortar fire, but also of machine-gun and rifle fire, grenades, and satchel charges, the attack disintegrated. The battalion lost forty-five men. Although the mortar fire stopped as soon as the Americans pulled back, the enemy was still very much in control of the situation on Kakazu Ridge.

## The First Japanese Counterattack

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 5.

Brilliant enemy flares exploded over the battle lines shortly after dusk on 12 April. Two of them were red parachute flares; another seemed to be a dragon flare. American intelligence officers consulted a Japanese signal code, captured a few days before. The red bursts meant, "We are attacking with full strength tonight"; the dragon flare stood for, "Make all-out attack."<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after the first flare Japanese artillery opened up an intense bombardment. Hundreds of enemy 105-mm. and 150-mm. shells burst throughout areas just behind the American lines—most of them around command posts, observation posts, and artillery positions. Regiments reported receiving the heaviest barrages in their experience. In the 96th Division area, more than 1,000 rounds fell on the 381st Infantry, approximately 1,200 on the 383d. The troops were well dug in, however, and losses were light. The 3d Battalion of the 184th Infantry, 7th Division, estimated that 200 rounds of 105-mm. fire landed in front of them within the space of five minutes, but no casualties resulted.

The attack on the 32d and 184th Infantry was not in regimental strength, as planned. Two infiltration attempts by about a squad each were repulsed by the 184th before midnight. Two squads also attacked the 3d Battalion of the 382d Infantry, just to the west of the 184th, and a savage fight ensued. . . but the enemy did not follow through with this assault. While groups of two or three tried to infiltrate behind the 7th Division front, the only attack of any weight came shortly after midnight against Company G of the 184th. By the light of flares it discovered to its front from thirty to forty-five Japanese, carrying rifles and demolitions; the company opened fire and sent the enemy running for the cover of caves and trenches.

The assault on the 96th was heavy, sustained, and well organized. The enemy artillery and mortar preparation began promptly at 1900 as planned and continued in heavy volume until about midnight, when it lifted over the center of the division line. Japanese in groups ranging from platoon to company size, with radio communications to their own command posts, began to infiltrate in strength into the American lines in the general area between Kakazu Ridge and Tombstone Ridge. (See [CMH] Map No. XIII.)

The 96th Division front in the area under attack was thinly held by the 382d and 383d Regiments. There was a large bulge in the lines where the 382d had been held up by strong enemy positions in the Nishibaru-Kaniku-Tombstone Ridge area. A series of fire fights broke out as the Japanese closed with elements of the 382d strung along Highway 5 and with troops of the 383d just west of the highway. Troops of the 2d Battalion, 383d Infantry, saw a group of sixty soldiers coming down the highway in a column of two's. Thinking they were troops of the 382d, the 383d let twenty of them through before realizing that they were Japanese; then it opened fire and killed most of the enemy group. At 0100 the 2d Battalion of the 382d, calling for artillery fire, repulsed an attack by a group estimated as of company strength. Although troops of the two regiments in this sector killed at least a hundred Japanese during the night, a number of the enemy managed to make their way into the Ginowan area.<sup>2</sup>

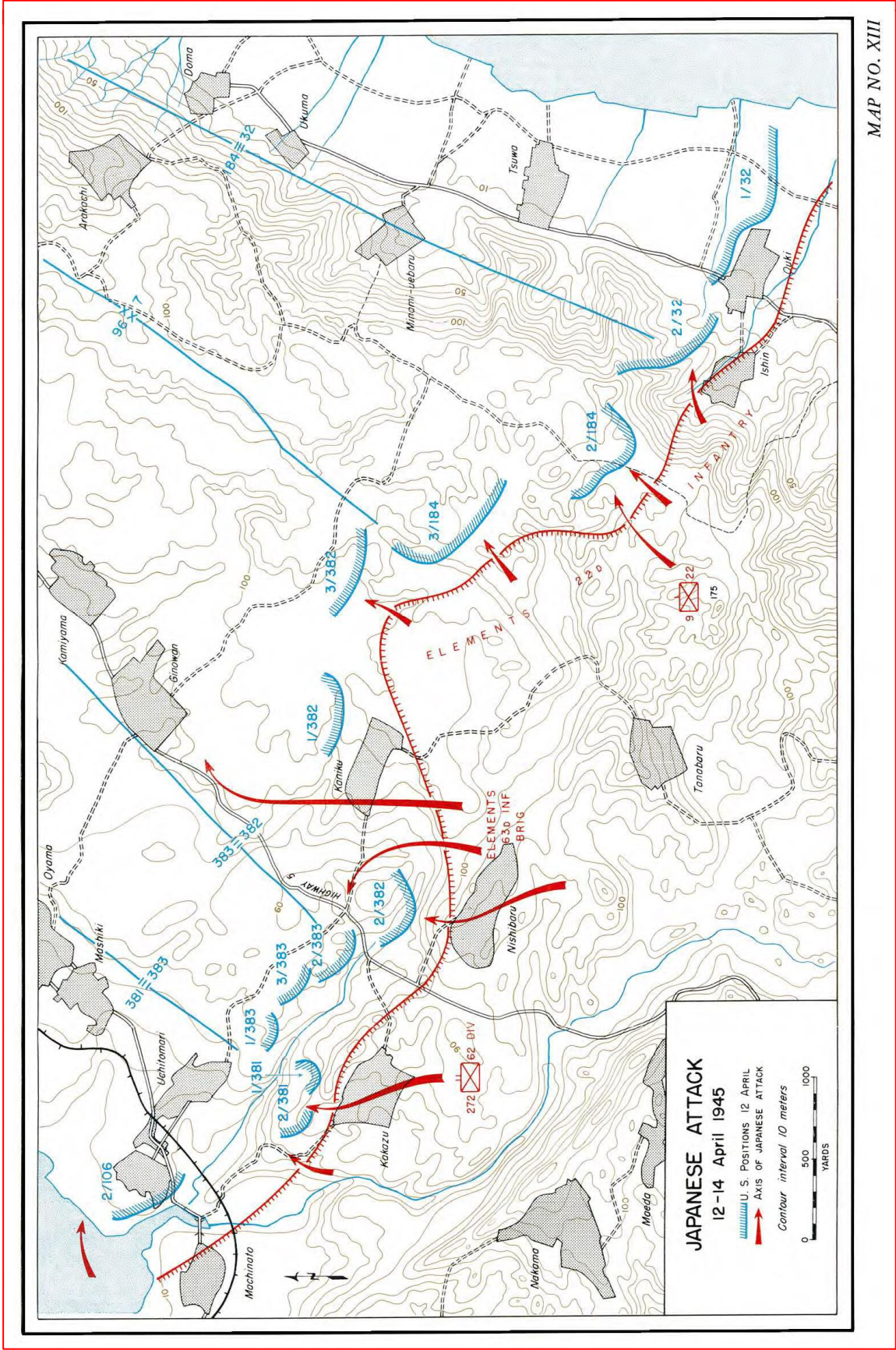
By far the heaviest blow was delivered by the *272d Independent Infantry Battalion*, commanded by Captain Shimada, and operating under control of the *62d Division*. The *272d* had the mission of attacking Kakazu and breaking through at that point. This was no banzai charge; the battalion had a

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<sup>1</sup> 96th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 13, 14 Apr 45; for the captured signal code, see 7th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 7, 7 Apr 45.

<sup>2</sup> Interrog Yahara. Colonel Yahara's statement that a battalion reached the Ginowan area is probably highly exaggerated.





MAP NO. XIII

moved up for the attack from the Shuri area on 10 and 11 April. Composed of three rifle companies and a machine gun unit, the 272d was smaller than the other independent infantry battalions. The men were well supplied with grenades and carried sacks of food.<sup>3</sup>

From dusk of 12 April until past midnight a terrific artillery and mortar barrage blanketed the 1st Battalion, 381st Infantry, on the north slopes of Kakazu Ridge, and the 2d Battalion, 381st, on Kakazu West. The barrage knocked out the dual wire communication of the 1st Battalion but casualties were slight. At 0300 the enemy fire intensified on the north slopes of Kakazu West and Kakazu Ridge. This was the signal for the 272d Battalion to move out of Kakazu town up into the draw separating Kakazu Ridge from Kakazu West, in an effort to break through the American lines, while smaller groups tried to flank Kakazu West on the west.

Naval illumination was asked, but because of an air raid alert an hour passed before it was provided. During that hour, as the Japanese advanced up the south slopes of Kakazu and through the draw, a handful of men guarding the draw on its lower northern end fought off the attackers until heavier fire power could be brought to bear.

Bright naval illumination robbed the enemy of protective darkness and allowed effective use of support fire on the general Kakazu area in front of the Americans. The 1st Battalion brought the fire of its 81-mm. mortars to bear on the positions of its own forward elements, hoping that American troops would remain in their holes. More than 800 rounds of high explosive were successfully used in this fashion. The 2d Battalion ordered fire from its attached Marine artillery to within 150 yards of its front, successfully risking a clearance of 15 feet.

After several hours of fighting, during which a few Japanese tried to come in across the sea wall near Uchitomari, the remnants of the enemy force withdrew. In the morning 317 enemy dead were counted in the 381st and 383d areas. Patrols sent to the crest of Kakazu, which had been a target for American artillery and mortar fire, reported that "dead were stacked up like cordwood." Nine light machine guns, 4 knee mortars, 125 rifles, and 1 radio were captured in the Kakazu area. Casualties in the 381st and 383d during the fight totaled about 50.<sup>4</sup>

During the day of 13 April the 7th Division noted several large concentrations of Japanese in front of its lines but it was not attacked. The 96th continued to hunt down and destroy Japanese who had infiltrated into its rear areas; some enemy soldiers blew themselves up when cornered. Just before midnight the 9th Company, 22d Regiment, which that day had been held in reserve in the Kuhazu area, attacked the 184th after an artillery preparation. The assault was quickly broken up by artillery, mortars, and machine guns. The enemy intensified his artillery fire on Kakazu at dusk and launched an attack in the same direction as on the previous night, but this attempt also was soon frustrated by artillery. At 0315 on 14 April the enemy attacked for the last time. The attackers, estimated at company strength, had heavy supporting fire but were repulsed, 116 Japanese being killed. Infiltration attempts were made across the Corps line, with little success.

By dawn of 14 April the Japanese counterattack on the XXIV Corps was over. It had been almost a total failure and had confirmed the worst fears of the 32d Army staff. Its chief effect had been to bring the enemy out of his stout positions and render his troops vulnerable to the enormous fire power of the Americans. On the 14th there was practically no enemy activity; it was clear that the Japanese had reverted to the defensive.

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<sup>3</sup> Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. I, p. 62; XXIV Corps G-2 Summary No. 7, 30 Apr 45, App. I, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> XXIV Corps G-3 Periodic Rpt No. 13, 13 Apr. 45; 96th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 13, 14 Apr 45; Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. I, pp. 59-64.

## Phase II: 15 April-5 May

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 8, 9, 10, and 11.

There was virtually no change in the lines from 14 to 19 April. Patrols probed the enemy's defenses; artillery, naval guns, and aircraft searched out and destroyed enemy mortars, artillery pieces, and installations. Ground and air observers studied the ground in front of XXIV Corps and pinpointed caves, trenches, supply points, and emplacements which were to be demolished. . .

Fresh troops also were brought in. The 27th Division, previously in floating reserve, had landed at the Hagushi beaches on 9 April to serve as reinforcements in the attack. It was assigned to XXIV Corps and proceeded to relieve the 96th Division in the western part of its zone. By 15 April, the 27th was in position. . . about 1,200 replacements sent in to the 7th and 96th Divisions. Their arrival heightened the morale of the men in the infantry companies, but XXIV Corps still remained understrength for the heavy fighting ahead.<sup>1</sup>

Terrain which became increasingly formidable confronted each of the three divisions. In front of the 27th lay Machinato Inlet on the right; a low flat area covered with rice paddies and dissected by streams, later called "Buzz Bomb Bowl," in the center; and the Kakazu hill mass and town on the left. The 96th faced several inconspicuous but strongly defended hills, such as Tombstone and Nishibaru Ridges, as well as the bold face of Tanabaru Escarpment. The 7th Division was confronted by the stout defenses of Hill 178 and the town of Ouki, which had brought it to a full stop.

These terrain features were merely points of the initial barrier; beyond them lay even stronger obstacles. The most prominent of these was the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment, which stretched across the 27th Division's front and most of the way across that of the 96th. The escarpment rose from the East China Sea in a jagged coral spine that steadily gained height as it extended southeastward. At its highest point, near the center of the island, Urasoe-Mura jutted upward 215 feet from the jumbled ground at its base. From this point, called Hill 196, and from most of the escarpment itself, the enemy had excellent observation in all directions. Although the escarpment came to an abrupt end near the center of the island, Japanese defenses in the rough ground around Kochi, Onaga, and Unaha extended almost to Buckner [Nakagusuku] Bay. Behind this line lay the inner Shuri defenses. The core of the Japanese defensive system on Okinawa, this ground was utterly without pattern; it was a confusion of little mesa-like hilltops, deep draws, rounded clay hills, gentle, green valleys, bare and ragged coral ridges, lumpy mounds of earth, narrow ravines, and sloping finger ridges extending downward from the higher hill masses.<sup>2</sup>

### *American Plan of Attack*

General Hodge's plan was to break through the enemy's intricate defense system around Shuri and to seize the low valley and highway extending across the island between Yonabaru and Naha. He ordered the 7th Division on the east to take Hill 178, then to press south to that section of the Naha-Yonabaru road in its zone. The 96th Division, less the 383d Infantry, in Corps reserve, was to drive straight through the heart of the Shuri defenses, seizing the town of Shuri as far as the highway beyond. For these two divisions H Hour would be 0640, 19 April. The 27th was to attack at H plus 50 minutes from positions taken during the previous night; its mission was to seize Kakazu Ridge, the western portion of the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment, and the hilly country and coastal plain beyond to the Naha-

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<sup>1</sup> XXIV Corps Actn Rpt, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 161-65. The authors reconnoitered this terrain by jeep and on foot at frequent intervals during and after the operation and studied the area from observation planes.

Yonabaru highway. The 27th Division's delayed entrance was to allow for progressive massing of artillery fire from east to west along the line as the attack developed.<sup>3</sup> (See [CMH] Map No. XIX.)

Perhaps the most striking element of the plan was its provision for a tremendous artillery preparation beginning 40 minutes before the assault groups moved out. Twenty-seven battalions of artillery, nine of them Marine, were to be prepared to mass fire on any section of the front. After 20 minutes of pounding the enemy's front lines, artillery would lift its fire and hit his rear areas for 10 minutes, in an effort to induce the Japanese to emerge from their underground positions; then the shelling would shift back to the enemy's front lines for the 10 minutes remaining until H Hour. This procedure was to be repeated for the attack of the 27th Division. During the preparation, aircraft and naval guns were to pound the Japanese rear areas. Rockets and 1,000-pound bombs were to be directed against the headquarters installations in Shuri. A landing force, covered by planes and naval guns and embarked in transports, was to feint a landing on beaches along the southeastern coast of southern Okinawa.

Behind the lines there was unceasing activity. General Hodge had remarked that the attack would be "90 percent logistics and 10 percent fighting";<sup>4</sup> the truth of this observation was borne out by the intensified activity along the beaches, the continuous bulldozing of the main supply routes, and the long lines of trucks and DUKW's laden with ammunition and supplies rolling toward the front night and day. Among the array of weapons poised for the attack were armored flame throwers, which were to be used for the first time on Okinawa in the attack of 19 April.

General Hodge viewed the prospect with high hopes, mingled with grim appreciation of the difficulties ahead. "It is going to be really tough," he said two days before the attack; "there are 65,000 to 70,000 fighting Japs holed up in the south end of the island, and I see no way to get them out except blast them out yard by yard." He saw no immediate possibility of large-scale maneuvers, but he did foresee opportunity for "small maneuver thrusts within the divisions," and possibly later within the Corps if the Americans broke through the Shuri fortified zone.<sup>5</sup>

### *The General Attack, 19 April*

As the morning mists cleared, the campaign's largest single air strike was delivered. A total of 650 Navy and Marine planes bombed, rocketed, napalmed, and machine-gunned the enemy. Six battleships, six cruisers, and six destroyers of the Fifth Fleet added their fire power to that of the planes and artillery. These sledge-hammer blows fell on about 4,000 combat veterans of the Japanese *62d Division* who were manning the positions.<sup>6</sup>

The greatest concentration of artillery ever employed in the Pacific war sounded the prelude to the attack at dawn. Twenty-seven battalions of Corps and division artillery, 324 pieces in all, ranging from 105-mm. to 8-inch howitzer, fired the first rounds at 0600. This concentration represented an average of 75 artillery pieces to every mile of front, and actually it was even greater as the firing progressed in mass from east to west. The shells thundered against the enemy's front lines for twenty minutes, then shifted 500 yards to the rear while the infantry simulated a movement as if beginning the attack; at 0630 the artillery shifted back to spray the enemy's front lines for the next ten minutes with

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<sup>3</sup> XXIV Corps FO No. 47, 16 Apr 45.

<sup>4</sup> Interv 1st I & H Off with Gen Hodge, 12 Apr 45.

<sup>5</sup> Ltr CG XXIV Corps to COMGENPOA, 17 Apr 45.

<sup>6</sup> XXIV Corps Arty Actn Report, Annex C. Incl 2: Daily Air Missions for XXIV Corps, 1 Apr to 21 Jun 45, p. 5; XXIV Corps G-3 Periodic Rpt, 19 Apr 45; 381st Inf Jnl. Msg No. 40, 19 Apr 45; Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 2, 2 Aug 45: *62d Division*, pp. 5-6.



time fire. In forty minutes American artillery placed 19,000 shells on the enemy's lines. Then, at 0640, the artillery lifted to enemy rear areas.

### *7th Division on the East*

The 7th was deployed with the 32d Infantry on the left and the 184th on the right. The plan of attack called for the 32d Infantry to seize Skyline Ridge, the eastern anchor of the Japanese line, and for the 184th to capture Hill 178 and the area westward to the division boundary, which lay just beyond a long coral spine later known as the Rocky Craggs. The main effort was to be made by two battalions down the center, along the lip of high ground leading to Ouki Hill, an extension of Skyline Ridge, high on the eastern slope of Hill 178. Once this point was reached the 2d Battalion, 32d Infantry, was to turn downhill along Skyline Ridge to the left (east), and the 2d Battalion, 184th Infantry, was to turn right (west) uphill against the crest of Hill 178.<sup>7</sup>

Two medium tanks and three armored flame throwers rumbled southward from the 7th Division's lines on the coastal flats, passed through Ouki, and quickly moved into position at the tip of Skyline Ridge. They poured shot and flame into the cluster of enemy-occupied tombs and emplacements at the lower extremity of the ridge. The long jets of orange flame probed all openings in the face of this part of Skyline, and dark, rolling masses of smoke billowed upward. This was a new spectacle for the waiting infantry, who watched fascinated. This phase of the attack lasted fifteen minutes, and then, just after 0700, the infantry moved up. All the Japanese on the forward face of the tip had been killed by the flame, but there were others on the reverse side who denied any advance across the crest. The battle of the infantry quickly erupted and smoldered along the narrow knife-edge line of Skyline Ridge. American troops clung desperately to the forward slope through two Japanese counterattacks, in which the enemy crowded forward into his own mortar fire to hurl grenades and satchel charges.

Higher up along the slope leading to Ouki Hill, the assault troops advanced about 500 yards without a shot being fired at them. Then suddenly. . . enemy weapons let loose and all forward movement stopped. Efforts to advance were unavailing throughout the day, and at 1620 the men pulled back to their former positions. The 3d Battalion [32d Infantry] was now compelled to give up its slight hold on the lower end of Skyline Ridge, where it had suffered almost one hundred casualties, including thirteen killed, during the day.

On the division's right, the coral spine of the Rocky Craggs, so named for the two dominating, jagged knobs, extended southward several hundred yards. It paralleled the direction of the American attack, pointing directly at the bold, white face of the Tanabaru Escarpment almost a mile away. For two days this ridge had been pounded by artillery. [The 2d Battalion, 184th Infantry]. . . was directly in front of the northern point of the Craggs. Patrols had not been molested. Company K advanced 200 yards. Then, at 0730, it. . . was pinned to the ground by the enemy fire. The adjoining company on the left, raked by enfilading fire from the Craggs, was also stopped. Shortly after noon, Company K pulled back from along the eastern slope of the northernmost of the craggs. At the end of the day there had been no gain.

### *96th Division in the Center*

Meanwhile the 96th Division was attacking farther west, with the 382d Regiment on the left (east) and the 381st on the right (west). The 382d Infantry had the task of taking Tombstone Ridge and the Tanabaru Escarpment; the 381st, that of seizing Nishibaru Ridge and the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment beyond. The 3d Battalion, 381st Infantry, on the division right at the saddle between Kakazu and Nishibaru Ridges, was a mile ahead of the division left.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The account of 7th Division operations on Skyline Ridge is based on Gugeler, 7th Div History.

<sup>8</sup> The account of 96th Div operations is based on Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. III.



On the left, the 2d Battalion of the 382d Infantry moved out at 0640 and began occupying the series of small hills to the front, only a few of which were held by the enemy. Sniper and mortar fire from the Rocky Crag on the left was a source of trouble and caused casualties. A few spots of resistance developed but were easily overcome. A few scattered grenade fights took place but did not prevent a gain of 800 yards on the division's left.

Immediately to the right there was no opposition to the advance of the 1st Battalion until. . . [it] started a pincer move against the northern tip of Tombstone Ridge, so named because of the large number of burial tombs on either side. About seventy-five feet high and half a mile long, it was the dominating terrain feature of the vicinity. As soon as. . . [1st Battalion] moved forward the Japanese positions on the ridge broke their silence. Company C was stopped on the east side by machine-gun and mortar fire, Company A on the west side by grenades. Artillery and tank fire was brought on the position to neutralize it. At noon Company A charged up the west slope only to find that it could neither stay on top nor go down the other side. At the end of the day the 1st Battalion held only a precarious position across the northwest nose of the ridge and along a portion of the west slope. The crest was nowhere tenable and the east side was wholly in the hands of the Japanese.

Up ahead and to the west, Nishibaru Ridge was under attack. Nishibaru Ridge was an extension of Kakazu Ridge, separated from it by only a wide, shallow saddle, through which passed Route 5, the Ginowan-Shuri road. The 1st Battalion, 381st Infantry, moved from its position just north of Kaniku through the western part of the town and pressed forward into the open, despite machine-gun fire from southeast Kaniku. A part of the battalion reached the northern face of Nishibaru Ridge, but even this slight gain was lost when the battalion withdrew from the exposed position at the end of the day.

On the division's right, the 3d Battalion of the 381st Infantry waited for thirty-five minutes in its place along the southern bank of the gorge for the 1st Battalion, still not in sight; the assault troops of the 3d Battalion then moved out. . . As soon as they passed over the lip of the gorge embankment, the troops. . . drew knee mortar, machine-gun, and rifle fire from cave and tomb positions in Nishibaru Ridge. Despite these difficulties two platoons managed by 0830 to advance over the crest of the ridge as far as the upper edge of the village of Nishibaru. Here all progress ended when showers of mortar shells and hand grenades formed a frontal barrier and enfilade machine-gun fire from both flanks was added. The survivors drew back over the crest and dug in on the forward slope, hoping that if they held out there help would come during the day.

On the right, the first three men of [3d Battalion] who tried to cross the hump of ground in front of Nishibaru Ridge were one after the other killed. Machine-gun fire came from the western end of Nishibaru Ridge directly in front and from the nose of Kakazu Ridge across the road to the right front. It was here that the 96th Division joined the 27th Division, the boundary running just west of the Ginowan-Shuri road at the saddle between Kakazu and Nishibaru Ridges. Lieutenant Colonel D. A. Nolan, Jr., commanding officer of the 3d Battalion, 381st Infantry, realized the necessity for coordinated effort after the morning of death and failure. He crossed over to the adjoining unit, Company C, 105th Infantry, 27th Division, to discuss with Captain John F. Mulhearn, its commanding officer, the possibility of a joint attack using five tanks which LTC Nolan had available. But this proposal could not be acted upon because CPT Mulhearn was then preparing, as part of a battalion movement, to start his men around Kakazu to the right. It was now midafternoon, and, realizing that he could not hope to advance with the Kakazu area on his right front vacated, LTC Nolan obtained authority from his regimental commander, COL Halloran, to move his men back into the protection of the gorge.<sup>9</sup> By 1700 the 3d Battalion had suffered eighty-five casualties, including sixteen killed.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 3d Bn, 381st Inf, Unit Jnl, Msg No. 20, 19 Apr 45.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Msg No. 21, 19 Apr 45; 381st Inf Jnl, Msg No. 90, 19 Apr 45.

### *27th Division on the West*

Following the two battalions of the 106th Infantry that had crossed Machinato Inlet under cover of darkness and had established themselves before dawn on the western end of the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment, the 3d Battalion of the 106th left Kakazu West at 0600; it was crossing Machinato Inlet when the general attack got under way elsewhere.

. . . the 1st Battalion of the 105th Infantry. . . was deployed along Kakazu Gorge, with Kakazu Ridge, immediately in front, its initial objective. The attack of the 1st Battalion was planned to combine a frontal assault against the ridge with a sweeping tank attack around the east end of Kakazu Ridge. The two forces were to meet behind the ridge near the village of Kakazu and to join in a drive to the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment beyond.

The troops began moving up to the ravine on schedule at 0730, fifty minutes after the attack began on the east and in the center. At 0823 the leading elements were on the crest of a little fold of ground lying a short distance beyond the ravine, facing Kakazu Ridge 200 yards away across open ground. Now, as they started to move quickly down into the open swale, machine-gun and mortar fire from close range struck them. At once there were casualties, and casualties kept mounting. Those in the open were pinned down; those behind could not reach them. The tip of Kakazu and the western slope of the saddle were ablaze with enemy guns.

At 0830, just before the infantry left the protection of the little fold in front of Kakazu, tanks in groups of three and four in column formation began moving across Kakazu Gorge; they then continued southward through the saddle between Kakazu and Nishibaru Ridges. Altogether about thirty tanks, self-propelled assault guns, and armored flame throwers moved out of the assembly area that morning for a power drive against the Japanese positions. . . Three tanks were lost to mines and road hazards in crossing the gorge and the saddle. As the tanks moved down the road in column, a 47-mm. antitank gun, firing from a covered position to the left on the edge of Nishibaru Ridge, destroyed four tanks with sixteen shots, without receiving a single shot in return. The tank column hurried on south to look for a faint track leading into Kakazu that had shown on aerial photographs: the column missed it, lost another tank to antitank fire, and then in error took a second little-used trail farther south and began working over enemy positions encountered in the face of the escarpment and in the relatively flat country to the east of Kakazu. Discovering that they could not reach the village from this point, the tanks retraced their way to the main road, turned back, found the right trail, and were in Kakazu shortly after 1000. They moved around and through the village, spreading fire and destruction; Kakazu was completely shot up and burned during the next three hours. Fourteen American tanks were destroyed in and around the village, many by mines and 47-mm. antitank guns, others by suicide close-attack units, and more by artillery and mortar fire.<sup>11</sup>

At 1330, since it was now evident that infantry would not be able to reach them, the tanks received orders to return to their lines. Of the thirty tanks that had maneuvered around the left end of Kakazu Ridge in the morning, only eight returned in the afternoon. The loss of twenty-two tanks on 19 April in the Kakazu area was the greatest suffered by American armor on Okinawa in a single

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<sup>11</sup> The account of the tank action is based on Love, 27th Div History; discussion and critique on the ground by 1st I & H Off and Co Comdrs, 1st Bn, 105th Inf, and personnel of Co A, 193d Tank Bn, and attached flame-thrower units, 5 Jul 45; interv XXIV Corps Hist Off with Col Walter A. Jensen, CO, 20th Armd Gp, and Maj Harley T. Kirby, S-2, 20th Armd Gp, 4 Jul 45, recorded in Okinawa Diary, XXIV Corps, kept by Maj Roy E. Appleman, XXIV Corps Historical Officer, on file in Hist Div WDSS. Japanese sources for the action are the following: 7th Div PW Interrog Rpt, No. 48, 2 Jul 45; Tenth Army Transl No. 118, 1 Jun 45: *62d Division* Battle Lesson Dispatch No. 19, 20 Apr 45; Transl No. 189, 28 Jun 45; *Furuta* Combat Intelligence Rpt No. 11, 20 Apr 45; 27th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 13, 22 Apr 45.

engagement.<sup>12</sup> The tanks had operated wholly without infantry support. Four of the twenty-two were armored flame throwers, and this was their first day in action.

While the tanks were operating alone behind the enemy's lines, the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry, was pinned to the ground in front of Kakazu Ridge. With the 1st Battalion. . . completely stopped, the 2d Battalion was ordered at 0907 to move up on the boundary at the extreme left and apply pressure along the Ginowan-Shuri road. In coming up to reconnoiter this ground, the battalion commander was hit four times when he jumped over a low stone wall into the open ground opposite the tip of Kakazu. When the 2d Battalion finally attacked at 1225 in an attempted movement around to the left, it was turned back at the east end of Kakazu Ridge. Simultaneously with the movement of the 2d Battalion, the 3d Battalion, which had relieved the 3d, 106th Infantry, in the morning, moved down from Kakazu West, bypassed Kakazu village, and by 1535 had two companies. . . on top the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment, on the east side of the 106th Infantry. During the afternoon, the weather had become increasingly unsettled, with high wind and some rain.

At 1530 Captain Ernest A. Flemig, who had assumed command of the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, earlier in the day, asked to be allowed to move around the west end of Kakazu Ridge to join the 3d Battalion on the [Urasoe-Mura] escarpment. This permission was given by Colonel W. S. Winn, the regimental commander, at approximately 1600. The battalion moved off and by 1800 had taken up a position on the slope at the base of the escarpment below the 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry. At the same time, the 1st Battalion, 105th, was ordered in front of the village of Kakazu to become regimental reserve. "Front" as represented by the position actually taken by the 1st Battalion was southwest of the village in front of the escarpment. Thus by late afternoon the entire Kakazu Ridge front had been abandoned by the 105th Infantry. It was just before this shift of positions that LTC Nolan made his suggestion for a joint attack. In front of Kakazu Ridge during the day, two battalions of the 105th Regiment had suffered 158 casualties: the 1st Battalion, 105, and the 2d Battalion, 53.

The big attack of 19 April had failed. At no point had there been a breakthrough. Everywhere the Japanese had held and turned back the American attack. Even on the west, where the front lines had been advanced a considerable distance by the 27th Division, the area gained was mostly unoccupied low ground, and when the Japanese positions on the reverse slopes of the escarpment were encountered further gain was denied. Everywhere the advance made early in the morning represented only an area lying between the line of departure and the enemy's fortified positions. As a result of the day's fighting the XXIV Corps lost 720 dead, wounded, and missing.

#### *Assaulting the Outer Shuri Defense Ring, 20-24 April*

The mood of the American troops on the morning of 20 April was far different from what it had been the morning before. The feeling now was one of weariness and awareness that breaking through would be slow and costly. The most immediate and pressing objective was to consolidate the line for further advance and, in particular, to eliminate the gap of approximately a mile that existed between the 96th and 27th Divisions when darkness fell. The strong Japanese position at Kakazu Ridge lay in the middle of this gap, bypassed by the 27th Division, and the heart of the Japanese stronghold was behind it to the south. If the enemy could take advantage of the gap he might counterattack and reach the rear of both the 27th and 96th Divisions. Two points of view existed with regard to bypassing Japanese positions. One was represented by Major General George W. Griner, Jr., 27th Division commander, when he ordered that the movement must be forward even if it meant bypassing Japanese and mopping them up later. The other was expressed by COL Halloran, the commanding officer of the 381st Infantry, 96th Division, when he said on a later occasion: "You cannot bypass a Japanese because a Jap does not

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<sup>12</sup> Interv XXIV Corps Hist Off with Gen Hodge, 6 Jul 45; 713th Tank Bn Actn Rpt Ryukyus, entry 19 Apr 45.

know when he is bypassed."<sup>13</sup> The primary responsibility for ensuring that dangerous gaps did not develop between units, and that the attack along unit boundaries was coordinated, rested upon the unit commander on the right.<sup>14</sup>

Facing the 7th Division on the east was Skyline Ridge, barring passage along the coast. On the right of the division was Rocky Crag. Between the two was a series of concrete blockhouses and strong points which guarded the approaches to Hill 178. In the center of the Corps line, on the 96th Division front, was Nishibaru Ridge - an extension of Kakazu Ridge - and Tombstone Ridge, the northwestern slopes of which were held by the 382d Infantry. On the west, in the area held by the 27th Division, was Kakazu Ridge. The Japanese atop this ridge commanded Nishibaru's western slopes and covered the 96th Division's right flank. In the Kakazu area a gap had developed between the two divisions, and the closing of this gap was to entail the reduction of Kakazu Ridge.

### *Operational Decisions*

The proved strength of the Japanese defenses, and the costliness of reducing them even with the aid of so powerful an arsenal of weapons as the American forces possessed, raised the question of making an amphibious landing south of the Shuri line to envelop the enemy's Shuri positions. It had been hoped that the 7th, 27th, and 96th Divisions, supported by massed artillery, could penetrate the Shuri line.<sup>15</sup> But failure of the attack of 19 April dispelled the expectation of an early and easy penetration of the enemy defenses.

The question of a second landing in southern Okinawa was considered by Tenth Army most seriously before 22 April. General Bruce . . . knew that his division would be committed in the Okinawa fighting as soon as Ie Shima was secured. At Leyte, the amphibious landing of the 77th Division behind the Japanese line. . . had been spectacularly successful. General Bruce and his staff wished to repeat the move on Okinawa and urged it on the Tenth Army command even before the division sailed from Leyte. As the Ie Shima fighting drew to a close, MG Bruce pressed his recommendation to land his division on the southeast coast of Okinawa on the beaches just north of Minatoga.

General Buckner rejected the idea. His assistant chief of staff, G-4, stated that he could supply food but not ammunition for such a project at that time. The Minatoga beaches had been thoroughly considered in the planning for the initial landings and had been rejected because of the impossibility of furnishing adequate logistical support for even one division. The reefs were dangerous, the beaches

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<sup>13</sup> Love, 27th Div History, p. 180

<sup>14</sup> XXIV Corps FO No. 47, 16 Apr 45, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> This section is of necessity based primarily on statements by and interviews with various commanders and staff officers. No contemporary records were found of the numerous discussions of the subject, which were largely informal. As is evident, it has been impossible to fix the time and content of the discussions with any great degree of accuracy. The sources used are as follows: statements of Brig Gen Elwyn D. Post, CofS, Tenth Army, 10 Jun 46; Brig Gen Laurence E. Schick, DCoFS, Tenth Army, 13 Jun 46; Brig Gen David H. Blakelock, ACoFS, G-4, Tenth Army, 8 Feb 46; Col Virgil Shaw, ACoFS, G-3, Tenth Army, 6 Feb 46; Brig Gen Oliver P. Smith, Marine DCoFS, Tenth Army, 30 Jul 46; Lt Gen John R. Hodge, CG XXIV Corps, 1 Feb 46; Lt Col Max Meyers, ACoFS, G-2, 77th Div, — Apr 46; Capt Edmund G. Love, 27th Div Hist Off, 23 Feb 47; interv 1st I & H Off with Gen Buckner, CG Tenth Army, 15 Jun 45; with Maj James H. McMullen, G-3 Sec, Tenth Army, 18 Jun 45; with Brig Gen Walter A. Dumas, ACoFS, G-3, Tenth Army, 9 Jul 45; with Lt Col James R. Weaver, ACoFS, G-2, 13 Jun 45; interv XXIV Corps Hist Off with Col John W. Guerard, ACoFS, G-3, XXIV Corps, 1 Jul 45; with Col Cecil W. Nist, ACoFS, G-2, XXIV Corps, 15 Jun 45; with Brig Gen Josef R. Sheetz, CG XXIV Corps Arty, 23 Jun 45; with Col Kenneth C. Strothers, DCoFS for Opns, XXIV Corps, 27 Jun 45; with Capt Mervin A. Elliott, G-2 Sec, XXIV Corps, 27 Jun 45. Interviews conducted by the XXIV Corps Hist Off are recorded in the Okinawa Diary, XXIV Corps, kept by Maj Roy Appleman, on file in the Hist Div, WDSS; Appleman, XXIV Corps History, Vol. IV, Annex II, has a useful discussion of the entire problem.

inadequate, and the area exposed to strong enemy attack. Although beach outlets existed, they were commanded both by the [Yaeju-Dake Yuza-Dake] escarpment to the west and by the plateau of the Chinen Peninsula. The Tenth Army intelligence officer reported that the Japanese still had their reserves stationed in the south. Both the *24th Division* and the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade* were still in the area and could move quickly to oppose any landings. Artillery positions on the heights overlooking the beaches were fully manned. The 77th Division would be landing so far south that it would not have the support of the troops engaged to the north or of XXIV Corps artillery. (See [CMH] Map No. III.)

Moreover, at the time the 77th Division was available, around 21 April, all three Army divisions in the line—the 7th, 27th, and 96th—were in a low state of combat efficiency because of casualties and fatigue. The Tenth Army commander felt that it was of paramount importance to relieve these divisions as far as possible in order to maintain the pressure against the Japanese. Furthermore, the full strength of the 77th would not have been available: the division had left garrison forces on the Kerama Islands and Ie Shima which would not be replaced immediately. General Buckner felt that any landing on the southeast coast would be extremely costly, "another Anzio, but worse." Unless a juncture between the diversionary force and the main body of his troops could be made within forty-eight hours of the landing he felt that he could not endorse the plan. A juncture within such a period of time being obviously impossible, the general's disapproval was patent.

Relying on the advice of his staff, LTG Buckner made his final decision against amphibious landings at some time between 17 and 22 April; thereafter the matter, although raised again, was not given serious consideration by Tenth Army. General Buckner came to the conclusion that the landings were not feasible either tactically or logistically. Admiral Nimitz later flew with his staff members from Guam to Okinawa to confer with LTG Buckner and other commanders present and concurred in the decision which had been made.<sup>16</sup>

#### *The Kakazu Pocket*

On 20 April. . . it was left to the 1st Battalion [105th Infantry] to mop up the Kakazu Pocket. All three rifle companies of the battalion were involved by noon in a grim fight for the village. The 96th Division had complained about the bypassed Japanese stronghold on its right flank, and MG Hodge. . . had ordered MG Griner to have Kakazu Ridge cleared by nightfall.<sup>17</sup> By 1635 the 1st Battalion had fought its way to the western edge of Kakazu village and had swept Kakazu Ridge almost to its eastern tip.

Just when it seemed that the 1st Battalion, 105th, might be able to clear the Kakazu Pocket, it was ordered to the [Urasoe-Mura] escarpment to support the 2d Battalion and prevent a break-through. Company A was left behind to clean up the village of Kakazu. A 16-man patrol went into the village and passed through its rubble-strewn streets without receiving a shot. At 1700 it reported to COL Winn that there were no enemy troops in Kakazu. He was not satisfied for he could hear small-arms fire from the direction of the village, and he instructed Captain Louis F. Ackerman, commander of Company A, to make another check of the village. The patrol was not fired on as it retraced its steps toward the village, but CPT Ackerman had barely stepped into the street when he went down with a shot in the back. Four men in succession were killed trying to rescue him, and then the entire patrol was scattered. Only one man returned that day. . . Kakazu was still a death trap.

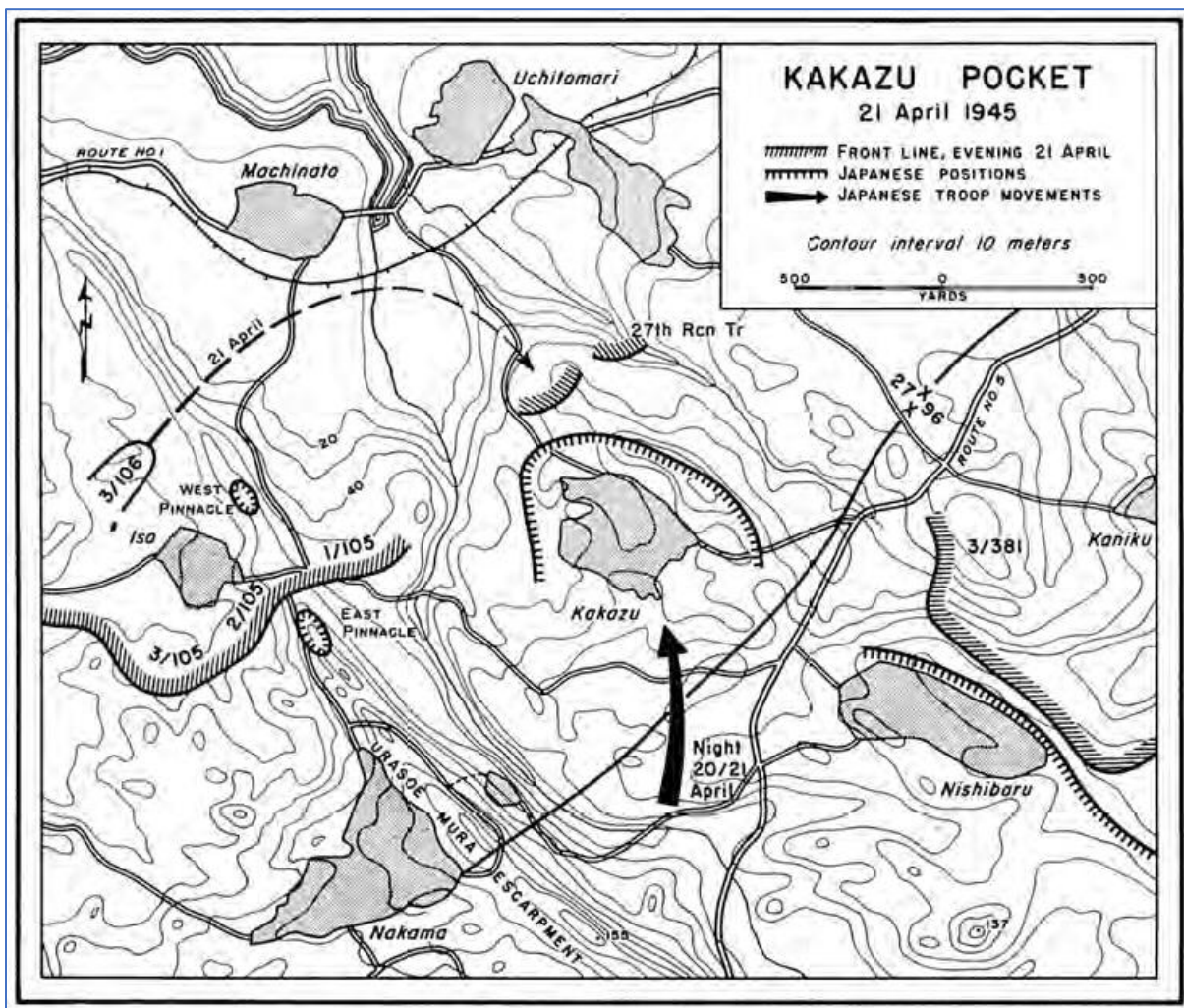
. . . the division Reconnaissance Troop slowly fought its way toward the village of Kakazu and reached its edge at 1145, 21 April. There the entire troop was pinned down, and a platoon of tanks was

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<sup>16</sup> New York *Herald Tribune*, June 18, 1945. Admiral Turner, in conferences recalled by Col. V. F. Shaw, G-3 Plans, Tenth Army, also expressed opposition to a second landing, because of lack of sufficient combat ships to screen another anchorage. Interv Hist Div, SSUSA, with Col. Shaw, 19 Jan 48.

<sup>17</sup> 27th Div G-3 Jnl, entry 61, 20 Apr 45.





called up. In three more hours of creeping and of fighting into the rubble of Kakazu only fifty yards were gained. The troop then pulled back, and at 1600 division artillery placed mass fire on the village. Later it tried to enter, but the Japanese emerged from underground and stopped it with a wall of fire. (See Map No. 5.)

The events of 21 April in the Kakazu Pocket placed the 27th Division in a bad situation. The enemy was in force behind its lines; the division had no reserve; and there was a broad gap between it and the 96th Division. Available combat strength was stretched thin. While retiring from the front lines as division reserve, the 3d Battalion, 106th Infantry, was ordered into position on Kakazu West, "that damned hill," as the men called it.<sup>18</sup> There they had dug in by nightfall.

On the evening of 21 April MG Hodge ordered Brigadier General William B. Bradford, Assistant Division Commander, 27th Division, to take command of operations in Kakazu Pocket with full authority to coordinate action with the 96th Division. At the same time MG Hodge directed that the right-flank elements of the 96th Division should not "be moved out of their own zone except by agreement with CG 96th Div. or specific orders from this Headquarters." XXIV Corps considered the enemy positions holding up the right flank of the 96th Division to be within the 27th Division zone of action.

<sup>18</sup> 106th Inf Actn Rpt, p. 13.

During the night of 21-22 April the Japanese placed heavy artillery fire on the lines of the 105th Infantry, and before daylight they started an attack around the regimental left flank. Naval star shells illuminated the front, and naval fire was called in to break up the attack.<sup>19</sup>

On the afternoon of 22 April MG Griner requested a battalion from XXIV Corps reserve to help deal with the enemy in Kakazu Pocket, estimating the Japanese force there to be at least a battalion. General Hodge ordered the 3d Battalion, 17th Infantry, to proceed at once from the 7th Division zone on the east to the Kakazu area. In the steadily worsening situation, MG Griner in the afternoon of 22 April directed the 102d Engineer Battalion to assemble near Machinato Inlet as division reserve and to be prepared to fight as riflemen. By night, there was not only a 1,200-yard gap between the 96th Division and the 3d Battalion, 106th Infantry, at Kakazu, but also a gap between the 3d Battalion, 106th, and the 1st Battalion, 105th, at the bottom of the escarpment. If the enemy broke through in either place he could cut through to the coast and the service installations in the rear. At 2000 MG Griner ordered the 2d Battalion, 165th Infantry, less Company F, to leave its position near Machinato and move to the left flank. With the aid of these troops the gap between the 105th Infantry and the 3d Battalion of the 106th was closed by 2110. The larger gap between divisions, however, remained open. At 2130, 22 April, the 27th Division had every rifle company committed to a defensive line that stretched southeast of Kakazu village to the west coast beyond Gusukuma.

On the night of 22 April MG Hodge decided to form a special force to eliminate Kakazu Pocket once and for all. A formidable force of four battalions of infantry was assembled from the 27th, 7th, and 96th Divisions, supporting units of tanks, armored flame throwers, self-propelled assault guns, and 4.2-inch chemical mortars, and was given the mission of taking the ridge and town of Kakazu. These units were placed under the command of BG Bradford, Assistant Division Commander, 27th Division, and were known as the Bradford Task Force. On 23 April plans were completed and the troops moved into place for an attack to take place the next day.

The 24th of April dawned dark and rainy after a night marked by unusually heavy enemy artillery fire. After a 13-minute artillery preparation the Bradford Task Force attacked at 0730, determined to fight its way through the Kakazu Pocket. No enemy resisted it; the Japanese had vacated their positions in the Pocket during the night. Within two hours all battalions reached their objectives. In the afternoon, adjacent battalions of the 96th and 27th Divisions dug in along the division boundary at the foot of the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment and had solid contact with each other for the first time since 19 April. On 24 and 25 April, when it was at last possible to examine the Kakazu area, approximately six hundred Japanese bodies were counted, and there was evidence of mass burials and of many dead in sealed caves.

The ease with which the Bradford Task Force gained its objectives the morning of 24 April was no isolated phenomenon. On the eastern side of the island the 7th Division walked up to the top of Hill 178 with only a few scattered, random rounds of artillery dropping in the area. There was no small-arms or automatic fire. All but a few enemy bodies had been removed or buried; the usual litter of war was largely missing and weapons and stores had been removed, indicating a planned and orderly withdrawal. (See [CMH] Map No. XXVIII.)

In the middle of the front in the 96th Division zone, the only Japanese found were stragglers and those behind the lines. The Americans occupied the Tanabaru Escarpment, the 1,500-yard-long ridge to the south of it, the village of Tanabaru, all of Nishibaru Ridge, and Hill 143. Other units advanced farther, crossing the draw and the Ginowan-Shuri road (Route 5) to take up positions at the foot of the eastern end of the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment. The day was not altogether without incident; scattered enemy were encountered, and occasional sudden bursts of long-range machine-gun fire exacted a toll.

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<sup>19</sup> 105th Inf Actn Rept, p. 20.

The pattern of easy and uncontested advance across the line was broken only on the west coast, where the 27th Division was unable to advance, and by the fierce and confused battle of Item Pocket which was raging behind the division's lines.

### *Strategic and Operational Decisions*

In Phase III of the original plan for ICEBERG, the island of Miyako, in the Sakishima Group just north of Formosa, was to be invaded after Okinawa had been taken. The V Amphibious Corps, scheduled for this operation, had suffered so severely at Iwo Jima that Tenth Army was directed on 13 April to keep III Amphibious Corps free from heavy commitment that would interfere with its possible use at Miyako. Reconnaissance of Okinawa after the American landings had disclosed that the island had far greater potentialities for development as an air base than had been thought, and the strategical aspects of the entire operation were therefore reconsidered. On 26 April Admiral Nimitz sent a dispatch notifying Tenth Army that the Miyako operation of Phase III had been postponed indefinitely by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, thus freeing the III Amphibious Corps for full use on Okinawa.

. . . Tenth Army had already considered the problem of where and how to commit the two Marine divisions standing by in northern Okinawa. If Marine troops were to be committed in the south, it would be much quicker to move the 1st Marine Division down the island by road to the established front. The 6th would not be available for the southern front until relieved of its security mission in north Okinawa; this was effected early in May by the 27th Division. The 1st Marine Division, however, could be moved south to enter the line at any time. . .

### *Assaulting the Second Shuri Defense Ring*

The forward surge of the American lines on 24 April marked the fall of the first Shuri defense ring everywhere but on the extreme right, in the Item Pocket area. The enemy had withdrawn to the next ring of prepared positions of the Shuri defense zone and was ready to repeat the process of making the invader pay for every foot of ground.

On 24 April MG Hodge radioed his division commanders that "operations today indicate enemy withdrawn his forces from the strong positions he has fought so desperately to hold," and ordered aggressive patrolling to determine the new enemy dispositions. At 1100 of the same day he directed the division commanders to regroup their forces and improve their positions by aggressive action, seizing all advantageous ground to their front and pushing in enemy outposts. They were to prepare for a general attack at 0600, 26 April.<sup>20</sup>

While the attack against the second ring of Shuri defenses was under way, there was a major regrouping of the weary American forces at the end of April everywhere on the line except on the 7th Division front. The 27th Division on the west was relieved by the 1st Marine Division, and the 96th Division in the center of the line was relieved by the 77th. These changes were completed by 30 April. The 7th Division was to remain on the line until relieved by the 96th after its 10-day rest.

By the end of April a shift of troops in the line had become necessary. The Japanese position was still strong and there was no indication that it would soon be reduced. The 96th Division, which had gone into Okinawa understrength, had suffered very heavy casualties. It needed a rest and an opportunity to assimilate its replacements; on the other hand, the 77th was relatively fresh, although it had fought in the Kerama Retto and on Ie Shima. The 27th Division had not been intended for combat duty on Okinawa but had been loaned temporarily to XXIV Corps when it became evident that the 7th and 96th could not break through the Shuri defenses alone. The 1st Marine Division in the north was to

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<sup>20</sup> XXIV Corps CofS Jnl, 24 Apr 45; Appleman, XXIV Corps History, p. 207.

go south first since it was closer to the Shuri line and could be moved into position more quickly than the 6th Marine Division.

On the west coast, in the 27th Division zone, the Item Pocket fighting was practically over by 27 April. The 165th Infantry spent the remaining days of the month patrolling the Kuwan Inlet south of Machinato airfield. On the division left, the 105th Infantry regrouped after the battles of the Pinnacles, pushed to the southern edge of Nakama on 26 April, organized a line, and held there until relieved on 1 May. In the division center the 2d Battalion, 106th Infantry, engaged in hard fighting on 27-28 April around Yafusu in an effort to straighten the line. But the division, overextended and all but exhausted, made no major offensive effort during the last days of April.<sup>21</sup>

On 30 April the 1st Marines of the 1st Marine Division relieved the 165th Infantry on the west coast, and the next day the 5th Marines of the same division completed the relief of that part of the line held by the 105th and 106th Infantry. Major General Pedro A. del Valle, commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, which had been attached to XXIV Army Corps, assumed responsibility for the former 27th Division zone of action at 1400, 1 May.

While at the Maeda Escarpment and in a few other sectors the American attack continued through the first week of May, yet, in general, this attack was brought to an unexpected pause after 3 May. (See [CMH] Map No. XXXI.) On 4 May the enemy launched a surprise counteroffensive by which he hoped to wrest back from the invaders all that they had so painfully gained. For a time most American troops had all they could do to hold their own.

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<sup>21</sup> Love, 27th Div History, Pt. IX.

## Defending Okinawa: 15 April-5 May

Excerpts from

(1) CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapters 8, 10, and 12.

(2) Leavenworth Papers No. 18, Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945, Chapters 2 and 4.

The Japanese were not idle. A *62d Division* order on 14 April warned of the attack: "The enemy is now preparing to advance on all fronts. Our front lines will necessarily be subjected to fierce bombardments." Unit commanders were ordered to strengthen positions. Strong points were to be so distributed that the loss of one point would not mean the break-up of the whole line. Units were to "secure their weapons by placing them under cover or in a position of readiness, so that they will not be prematurely destroyed." The enemy evidently anticipated the necessity of withdrawing, however, for he ordered secret documents to be burned "as the situation becomes untenable."<sup>1</sup>

During the lull before the attack, the enemy redoubled his attempts to teach his troops the proper defense against American tactics and weapons. The *44th Independent Mixed Brigade* on 13 April issued a "battle lesson—urgent report" describing defenses against American flame-throwing tanks and "yellow phosphorus incendiary shells." The *22d Regiment* on 15 April described American night defensive positions and how to infiltrate through them. The *32d Army* emphasized the importance of careful selection of points from which to make close-quarters attacks on American tanks.<sup>2</sup>

On 19 April, U.S. Army's XXIV Corps launched the major offensive it had been preparing for ten days along the whole Kakazu-Ouki line (see map 6). The *IJA 62d Division*, which held this line and had suffered in the 12 April attacks, was becoming increasingly weakened, to the point where the whole *32d Army Staff* agreed it would soon collapse. The *62d Division* had already been ordered, after the 12 April offensive, to put its reserve units on the line so that each of the *62d's* thinned battalions could shorten its front. By 19 April, the *62d Division* had lost 35 percent of its personnel and 39 percent of its artillery.<sup>3</sup>

The Japanese had guessed that a tank-infantry attack would try to penetrate their lines between Nishibaru Ridge and Kakazu Ridge, and they had prepared carefully for it. Their plan was based on separating the infantry from the tanks. The *272d Independent Infantry Battalion* alone devised a fire net of four machine guns, two antiaircraft guns, three regimental guns, and the 81-mm. mortars of the *2d Mortar Battalion* to cover the saddle between the two ridges. The machine guns were sited at close range. In addition, two special squads of ten men each were sent forward to the saddle for close combat against the infantry. One group was almost entirely wiped out; the other had one noncommissioned officer wounded and three privates killed. The enemy defense also utilized the 47-mm. antitank guns of the *22d Independent Antitank Gun Battalion* and close-quarters suicide assault squads. So thorough were these preparations that the Japanese boasted "Not an infantryman got through." (See [CMH] Map No. XX.)

It was here in the Kakazu-Urasoe-Mura Escarpment area that the most extensive reorganization of Japanese units had taken place just before the American attack. The remnants of badly shattered battalions were combined into a composite unit of about 1,400 men that consisted largely of members of the *272d Independent Infantry Battalion* but also included elements of the *13th*, *15th*, and *23d*

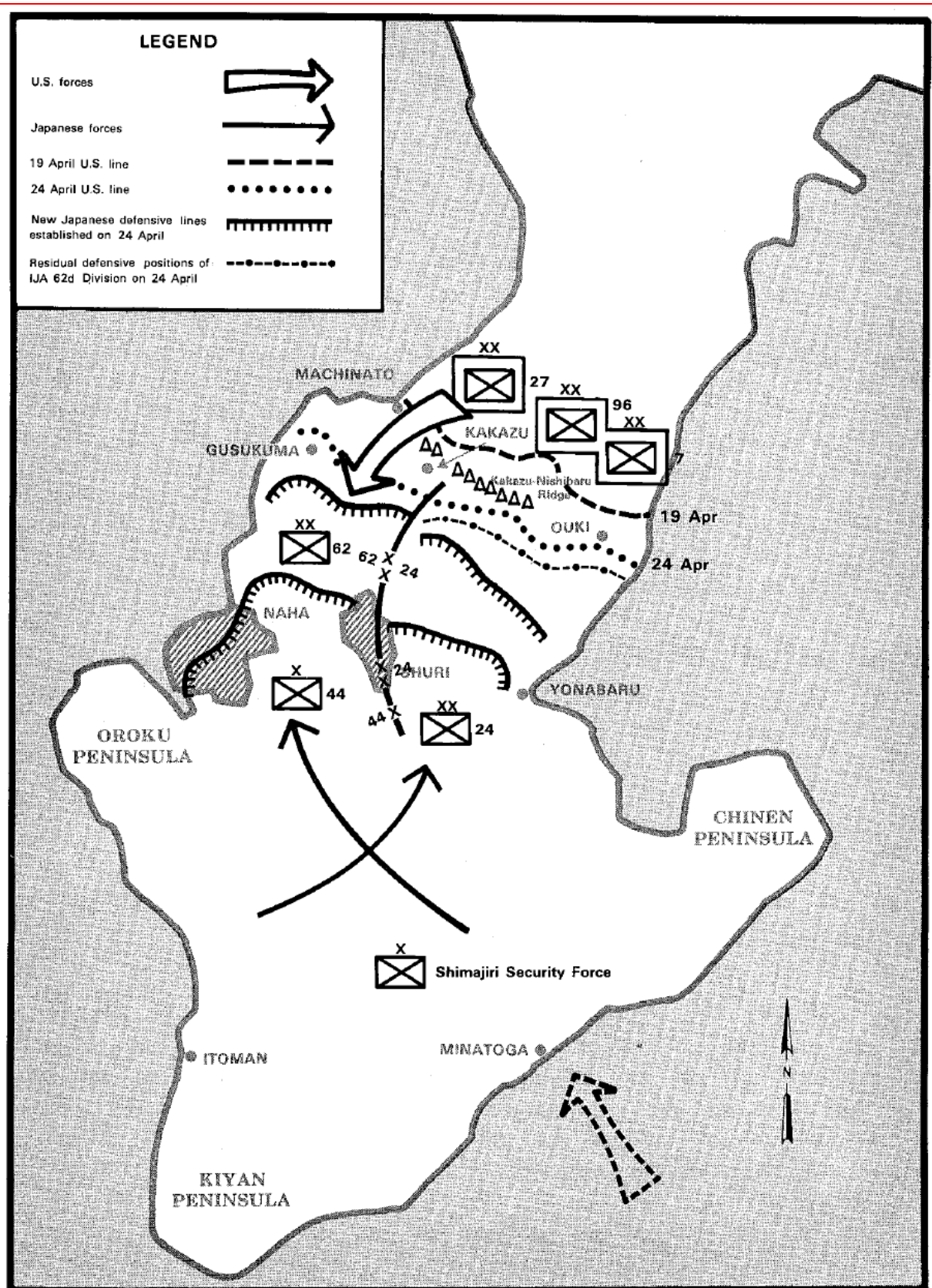
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<sup>1</sup> Tenth Army Transl No. 65, 11 May 45, and No. 115, 31 May 45.

<sup>2</sup> Tenth Army Transl No. 111, 2 Jun 45, No. 163, 18 Jun 45, and No. 122, 2 Jun 45.

<sup>3</sup> Mikami Masahiro, "62d Division Crisis and Commitment of the Bulk of 32d Army in the Northern Front," in *Okinawa Campaign, Data for MHX-85*, translated by Yanase Tokui (Tokyo: JGSDF Staff College, December 1985), 45-47.





Map 6. The IJA positions as of 25 April 1945

*Battalions. The 21st Independent Infantry Battalion stood ready to support the 272d. The 2d Light Machine Gun Battalion added its fire power.*<sup>4</sup>

After four days of the new American offensive, *62d Division* still held firm but had been pushed back one-half mile from its 19 April positions. In hard fighting it had relinquished Nishibaru Ridge in the center and the neighboring ridges on its right. The *62d Division* was most undermined, however, by the U.S. 27th Infantry Division's penetration on the Japanese left. By aggressive and persistent advances, the 27th had thrust a salient into the Japanese line just east of Gusukuma village, thus isolating the Japanese forces on the western coastal heights from the rest of the Japanese line.<sup>5</sup>

By 22 April, the *IJA 62d Division* had lost half of its original strength and was nearly broken through on the left. Operations Officer Yahara was in a quandary over this. He estimated that for every battalion, field gun, and mortar the *62d Division* had on the line, the U.S. XXIV Corps had 4, not to mention the 100 tanks and 640 aircraft Yahara calculated to be at XXIV Corps' disposal.<sup>6</sup>

In pondering the Americans' next move, however - Yahara's constant preoccupation - he judged that the U.S. Tenth Army had six divisions ashore, of which only the 27th, 96th, and 7th Infantry Divisions were deployed on the Kakazu-Ouki line. As he considered the operational facts from the American viewpoint, Yahara was convinced that it was in the Americans' best interest to use amphibious envelopment and land a force of a division or more on Okinawa's southeast coast at Minatoga. This would force Japanese combat units to fight on two fronts and could lead to an early collapse of the overextended Japanese perimeter. The U.S. Tenth Army did, in fact, send escorted transports to the Minatoga coast on 19 April to threaten a landing.<sup>7</sup>

For the *IJA 24th Division* to be facing the southwest coast and the *44th IMB* to be facing the southeast coast was an ideal arrangement to counter a second American front, but they could not be left there because the Japanese *62d Division* line in the north was itself about to disintegrate. So Yahara developed two alternatives to the present Japanese dispositions. One was to move the *24th Division* and *44th IMB* to the north to reinforce the *62d Division* line. The other alternative was to abandon the northern line and draw the *32d Army* into three strongpoints in the Shuri, Kiyan, and Chinen areas. Both approaches would shorten the perimeter being defended.<sup>8</sup>

Yahara felt on the whole that moving the bulk of *IJA* forces to the northern line was the sounder course, but he was dismayed still by the prospect of an American landing in the rear. He was so uncertain that he took all of these problems to LTG Cho on 22 April and asked him what to do. It is a measure of his consternation that this was the only time he ever consulted Cho about operations.<sup>9</sup>

Cho said without hesitation that the *32d Army* would be lost if the *62d Division* were not reinforced immediately. So *24th Division* and *44th IMB* must be moved north for that purpose. If the Americans landed in the south, the Japanese would address that when it happened. "A man who chases two rabbits won't catch either one," he added, quoting the Japanese proverb. Cho's decision was quick and clear, which made moving the troops north seem to be obviously the right course. Cho had a decisive confidence and radiated this to the staff around him. His cutting the knot put Yahara's tormented mind at ease. To reach the right answers quickly with-out worrying about them too much was Cho's forte. Yahara was grateful.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 2, 2 Aug 45: *62d Division*, pp. 5-6; XXIV Corps PW Interrog Rpt No. 54, 6 May 45.

<sup>5</sup> Appleman, *Okinawa*, Enclosed map 23.

<sup>6</sup> Yahara Hiromichi, *Okinawa kessen [Battle of Okinawa]* (Tokyo: Yomiuri shimbunsha, 1972), 225; and Mikami, "62d Division Crisis," Appendix 3, 67.

<sup>7</sup> Nichols and Shaw, *Okinawa*, 126.

<sup>8</sup> Mikami, "62d Division Crisis," 52; and Yahara, *Okinawa*, 225 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Mikami, "62d Division Crisis," 52-53; and Yahara, *Okinawa*, 225 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Mikami, "62d Division Crisis," 53; and Inagaki, *Okinawa*, 191.

Since the *IJA 62d Division* line was so badly pocked, Yahara decided to use only part of the reinforcements, elements of the *IJA 24th Division*, to take over the right half of the *62d Division's* line, while using the rest of the reinforcements to form a solid, fresh defense line a mile to the rear. The *24th Division* was to hold the line from Shuri eastward and the *44th IMB* was to hold it from Shuri westward, deploying behind the *62d Division*. This would allow defense of the forward line to be continuous and, at the same time, provide a still unencroached defensive position in the rear into which retreating forces could fall back gradually. The southern areas would be manned only by a so-called Shimajiri Security Force of 5,500 men, created out of rear-area supply units. Its job was to delay any American thrust from the south until main-force units could return to the area.<sup>11</sup>

By the night of 24 April, the *24th Division* and the *44th IMB* had moved into their new northern positions. The Japanese command, expecting American landings in the south and prepared to meet them, could not understand why they were not made. The prevailing opinion among the Japanese was that the American command wished to obtain as cheap a victory as possible by wearing down the Shuri line rather than to risk troops in a hazardous landing in the south, though the latter course might bring the campaign to a speedier end.

Colonel Yahara, having at last resolved the north-south problem and formed a sturdy defensive line, was content with the situation. The *32d Army* was implementing the kind of solid attrition defense Yahara had envisioned from the start. Despite their 10-to-1 advantage in firepower and 2-to-1 advantage in manpower, the Americans' advance was being held to a modest 100 yards per day. Moreover, by the end of April, the *32d Army* had become the only Japanese force to maintain organized resistance to an American island landing for over thirty days.

Yahara's optimism about *32d Army's* achievements was shared by only a minority of the *32d Army Staff*, however. Most of the other members suffered from a growing feeling of gloom, which fueled a growing sentiment for a bold attack that might break them out of the status quo. Unlike Yahara, who thought they were doing well with what they had, other members were preoccupied with absolute failure. The *32d Army* was being pushed inexorably back, and the eventual result of the current policy would be that all of them would perish and Okinawa would be lost. The somber mood of the staff was aggravated by conditions in the headquarters cave. American lines were getting closer, and shells fell thick around its entrances. Repeatedly, sentries posted there were killed. Smoke from exploding shells was pulled into the ventilator shaft, which caused great consternation when someone would yell "gas attack," sending the whole complement running for gas masks. The inherent stress of the situation, especially the element of certain death, was beginning to take its toll on everyone.<sup>12</sup>

### *The 29 April Meeting*

In this environment, LTG Cho called a staff meeting on 29 April to discuss operations. Cho argued that in the present state of affairs, the Americans had the upper hand. If the status quo continued, the *32d Army* eventually would be wiped out. The solution was to use their surplus resources for an offensive while they still could. In this way, they might break out of the current deadlock and avoid certain defeat.<sup>13</sup>

At this meeting, only Yahara spoke for continuing the war of attrition and avoiding an offensive. Yahara pointed out that in modern warfare a superiority of 3 to 1 was usually needed for successful attack. "To take the offensive with inferior forces ... is reckless and would lead to certain defeat," he said. Second, the high ground around Minami-Ubaru had already fallen into American hands, giving them a major advantage in defensive terrain. Third, Yahara argued, a hasty offensive would fail, with

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<sup>11</sup> See Mikami, "62d Division Crisis," 54, and Appendix 7, 71; and JM 135, 94-95.

<sup>12</sup> Yahara, Okinawa, 234-36.

<sup>13</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 194; and JM 135, 98.

thousands needlessly lost. Then, *32d Army's* reduced forces would be unable to hold Okinawa for a long period and unable to delay the U.S. invasion of Japan. A hasty attack would cause *32d Army* to fail in its duty.<sup>14</sup>

The 29 April staff meeting was as bitterly argued as the two earlier strategy meetings on 3 and 10 April had been. Like the April meetings, it did not settle the issue for Yahara. He continued to oppose an offensive, and Cho continued to favor one. Cho then tried this time to manage Yahara by sheer emotional force. At dawn on 30 April, before Yahara "had time to splash water on his face," Cho appeared at his quarters. Cho squeezed Yahara's hand and said with genuine enthusiasm that there had been nothing but trouble between them in the past and that they would probably both die together on Okinawa. Cho then asked if Yahara, on this one occasion, would go along with the offensive. As Cho spoke, his tears fell abundantly. Yahara was deeply moved, despite his aloof reputation, and before long he was weeping too. He was overcome by Cho's sudden display of emotion and said, "I consent."<sup>15</sup>

Lest this dose of sentimental pressure still not be enough, LTG Ushijima, commander of *32d Army*, took Yahara aside in the staffroom the same day and sternly counseled him not to undermine support for the attack. Mild-mannered Ushijima never spoke to anyone in this way, and Yahara sensed that Cho was also behind this chastisement. Yahara said he thought the offensive was a meaningless suicide attack but that he would support it since it was decided. Ushijima replied quietly that, of course, the offensive would be an honorable death attack.<sup>16</sup>

Even Yahara went along with the attack plans by the end of April, in public at least. There are a number of reasons why an immediate offensive was decided on even though its military use was doubtful. One of these was Cho's forceful personality, which sometimes simply overwhelmed those about him. Another was that the received doctrine of the *IJA* for many years had been to secure quick victory by attack, especially flank attack followed by close fighting. Cadets at the *IJA* Academy were taught that one Japanese division with a robust spirit of attack could defeat three Soviet divisions with superior equipment. Officers raised in this tradition had an exaggerated faith in the effectiveness of attack. Such habits of mind no doubt contributed to *32d Army's* decision for an offensive.<sup>17</sup>

A third reason for the *32d Army's* decision to attack was the spirit of gloom surrounding the staff. The staff's feeling of frustration at their resources being worn down to naught by the American advance caused them all to welcome a long-odds gamble that would at least give them hope. The attack would provide psychological relief from the stress of continuous defeat. Unfortunately, this was relief for the *32d Army Staff* only. The *62d Division*, steadily in combat, suffered stresses worse than the psychological kind and, in any case, was not to be active in the offensive. The *24th Division*, meant to carry out the attacks, had felt no stress needing relief because it had not yet been exposed to combat. On this point, the *32d Army Staff* may be criticized. Its mounting of a major offensive to relieve its own psychological discomfort was improper.<sup>18</sup>

After the 29 April meeting, Ushijima spoke for the first time in terms of an honorable death attack. Honorable death (*gyokusai*) and ritual disembowelment (*seppuku* or *hara-kiri*), self-destruction for units and individuals respectively, were a powerful part of Japanese military culture. Honorable death, literally "smashing the [imperial] jewel," meant that a unit fought until its last member died in combat, resisting the temptation to flee or surrender. Every school child was taught famous historical instances of the phenomenon. The concept probably evolved out of the conditions of Japan's Warring

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<sup>14</sup> JM 135, 97-99.

<sup>15</sup> Yahara, *Okinawa*, 236-37; and Inagaki, *Okinawa*, 195.

<sup>16</sup> Yahara, *Okinawa*, 238; and Inagaki, *Okinawa*, 196.

<sup>17</sup> Yahara, *Okinawa*, 235.

<sup>18</sup> Nishimura Hitoshi, "Command and Staff Activities in the Offensive Operations on 4 May 1945," in *Okinawa Campaign*, Data for MHX-85, translated by Yanese Tokui (Tokyo: JGSDF Staff College, December 1985), 91-94.

States period (1470-1600), when whole units sometimes fled or changed sides, but where the samurai closest to their feudal masters were expected to fight to the death and where soldiers were normally tortured and killed if taken alive. The Japanese may have felt more threatened than other societies by the possibility that the ordinary soldier would flee from battle and therefore had strong injunctions against flight. Being captured also raised a suspicion of disloyalty and selfishness. The samurai or officer who quit fighting to surrender put his personal convenience ahead of his cause, which showed a deeply flawed character. Related to this was the traditional treatment of war prisoners, which was that they were either killed, tortured and killed, or incarcerated with so few amenities that they soon died in captivity. That prisoners were worthy of respect and might be exchanged was an idea that did not exist in the Japanese mind. Rather, the Japanese believed, and with no soul searching, that for a unit to perish in combat was both very honorable and very expedient.

The notion of individual suicide for soldiers derived from similar considerations. The samurai or officer in danger of being captured alive was expected to take his own life, according to proper ritual forms if possible. If honorable death attacks failed, the officer and, in the 1940s, the private soldier as well, were obliged to commit suicide. This showed sincerity, avoided harsh captivity, and prevented the enemy from using captives to manipulate those still uncaptured. The tradition of suicide also may have relieved psychological stress, paradoxically, because its suffering was brief, self-administered, and held no loss of dignity, and because the soldier entering combat knew from the outset that nothing worse than that need happen to him. Suicide to avoid capture also helped guarantee normal military benefits for the victim's surviving family.

The *IJA 32d Army* thought increasingly in terms of honorable death attack and suicide in the latter part of the Okinawa campaign. Honorable death and ritual suicide held not only a practical military appeal but also a romantic appeal because of popular cultural traditions. Yahara opposed premature resort to honorable death, however, and often said so. He felt it was self-indulgent to make operational decisions because of romantic sentiment toward suicide and equally self-indulgent to seek an early and glorious escape instead of facing the heavy operational burdens still at hand.

#### *Preparing the 4 May Offensive*

Once the commanders had agreed on an offensive and formally scheduled it for 4 May, it was up to Yahara to draft the plans. . . . Yahara performed this task diligently but still had not abandoned his wish to minimize the ill effects of the offensive, and so he inserted a minor change likely to have a major consequence. The ambitious battle plan, in eight items, provided for counter-landings in the American rear by the *23d* and *26th Shipping Engineer Regiments* on the east and west coasts respectively (see map 7). The *62d Division*, holding the left half of the Japanese line, was to maintain its position, then go on the offensive once attacking units on its right had broken through. The *24th Division* was to provide the main weight of the offensive and punch through on the right half of the line. The preparatory barrage was to begin at 0450, on 4 May, and last for thirty minutes. The *24th Division* was then expected to sweep past the Tanabaru escarpment to the Minami-Uebaru hill and eventually reach Futema.<sup>19</sup>

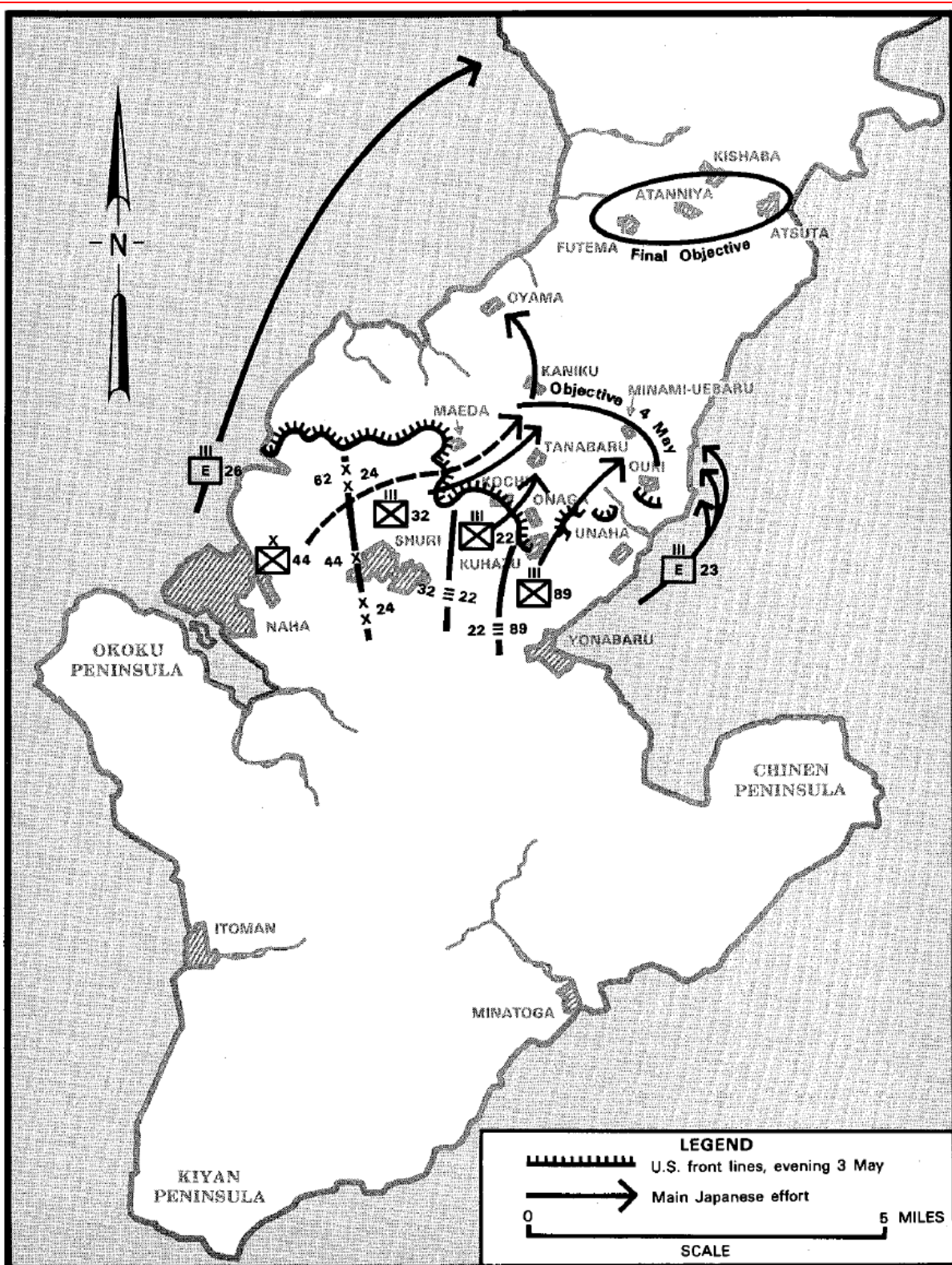
The *44th IMB* was to shift on 3 May from its reserve line behind the *62d Division* to a position northeast of Shuri. On 4 May when the *24th Division* went forward, the *44th IMB* was to drive northwest through the opening to the coast town of Oyama, thus cutting off the U.S. 1st Marine Division from retreat. Also, the *IJN's* infantry force was to put together four elite battalions and hold them in

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<sup>19</sup> Yahara, Okinawa, 237-39.



readiness, and the commander of 32d Army, as the lines moved forward, was to move his headquarters to Maeda.<sup>20</sup>



Source: Appleman, *Okinawa*, map XXXI

Map 7. Plan for the IJA 4 May offensive

The Japanese reasoned that success depended on the extent to which they could support their front-line troops with artillery, tanks, supplies, and communications. Their plans specified in detail the role that each of the support units was to play in the projected operations.

Artillery units were ordered to regroup in preparation for the attack. Guns and howitzers were pulled out of cave positions and set up farther south in more open emplacements for greater flexibility. When the infantry had driven through the American front lines, artillerymen were to move their weapons forward. The *27th Tank Regiment*, hitherto uncommitted, was ordered to move from its position near Yonabaru during the night over several routes and support the attack in the Maeda area.

Japanese signalmen had the task of putting in a trunk line between the Shuri headquarters and a point behind the front. As the troops moved forward, the line was to follow. Before dawn on the 4th, a signal net was to connect "break-through units" with artillery and transport elements. First-aid sections, two of which were assigned to each of the spearheads, would collect the wounded in caves and send the worst cases to the rear on trucks and carts. Engineers were responsible for road maintenance and for "mopping up" behind the assault troops.

The small, but critical, adjustment Yahara made in the plans was that he would have had the *44th IMB* move on 4 May, not 3 May. This change of a digit meant that *44th IMB* would not be on hand in time to participate in the attack, thus reducing the attack force by a third. Yahara's objective was, in fact, to hold *44th IMB* out of the battle and thereby reduce casualties. Cho caught the change in the first draft of the plans, however, and required Yahara to restore the original date. Yahara has earned both sympathy and criticism for altering the *44th IMB*'s movement date. He was doing what he thought was in the best interests of the army. But he was also personally subverting duly promulgated orders on which his superiors and the rest of the staff had agreed. Even though later events proved Yahara's judgment to be right, commentators have pointed to the impropriety of his conduct.<sup>21</sup>

Once the plans had been set and preparations were suitably underway, Ushijima and Cho held a pre-victory banquet in their chambers of the headquarters cave. The guests were nine general officers only. Electric lights blazed, and food and drink were plentiful. Cho's skilled chef prepared a feast from the pantry of canned goods. Fine Scotch came out of Ushijima's store. The headquarters office girls came dressed attractively to serve and pour, and smiles and laughter were inexhaustible. Ushijima and the rest, in high spirits, congratulated each other on the next day's certain victories. Yahara was reminded of Wellington's ball before Waterloo, and other officers aware of the banquet perhaps were too.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Yahara, *Okinawa*, 237-39.

<sup>21</sup> Inagaki, *Okinawa*, 197; and Nishimura, "Command," 97-99.

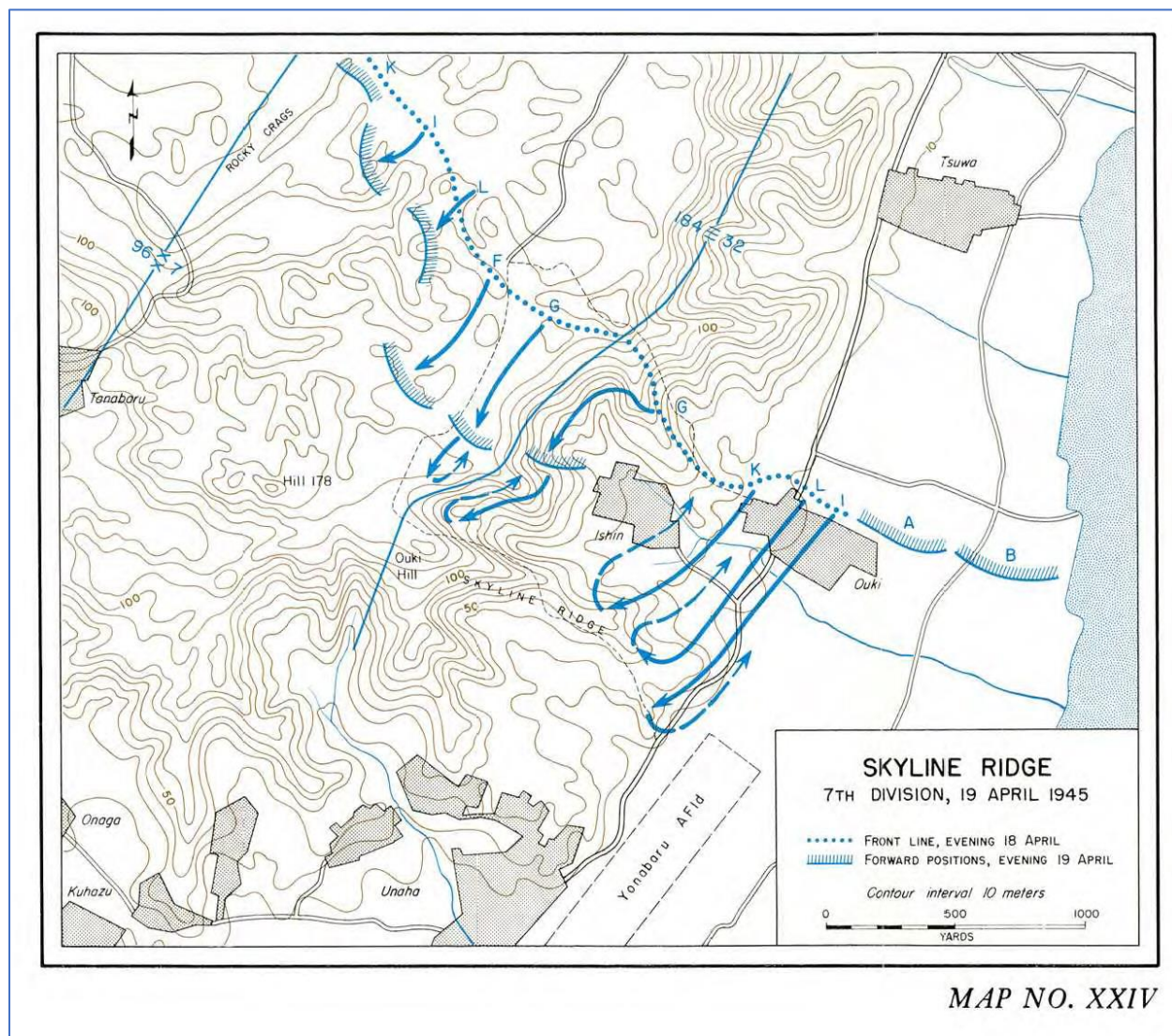
<sup>22</sup> Yahara, *Okinawa*, 243-44.



## Skyline Ridge

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 9.

The attack of the 7th Division on Ouki Hill had been stopped on 19 April after hard and bitter fighting. This was only the beginning of the struggle for Skyline Ridge, and, in order to see in proper perspective the events of 20 to 24 April, the action of the 7th on 19 April must be reconsidered in detail. (See [CMH] Map No. XXIV.)



At 0640 on 19 April, with Company G on the left and Company F on the right, the 2d Battalion of the 184th Infantry, 7th Division, led the advance along high ground toward Ouki Hill.<sup>1</sup> Company G of the 32d Infantry trailed at the left rear. The troops had advanced 500 yards when the first mortar shells fell. Quickly the number increased, and machine-gun fire was added; at 0830, 400 yards short of Ouki Hill,

<sup>1</sup> The account of operations of the 7th Division at Skyline Ridge is, unless otherwise noted, taken from Gugeler, 7th Div History; 7th Div G-3 Jnl, G-2 Jnl, and Periodic Rpts; 32d Inf Unit Jnl and Opn Rpt; Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 2, 2 Aug 45: *62d Division*; XXIV Corps PW Interrog Rpt No. 54, 6 May 45 (Kimura).

the advance stopped. The troops had reached the forbidden zone. The Japanese *11th Independent Infantry Battalion* with attached units was defending Skyline Ridge, the anchor of the enemy line, which fell off from Ouki Hill to Buckner [Nakagusuku] Bay. Composed of five rifle companies and attached gun, machine gun, and mortar companies, it had numbered about 1,400 men on 1 April, but by 19 April it had been reduced to from 800 to 1,000 men. In arranging the defenses of Skyline Ridge the Japanese placed most of their machine guns on the forward (north) face and on the northern and eastern slopes of Ouki Hill. The 81-mm. mortars were on the reverse (southern) slope of Hill 178 to the west of the battalion guns.

After a delay of fifteen minutes, First Lieutenant Daniel R. Leffel, commanding Company G, 184th Infantry, sent a squad. . . to feel out the enemy. Keeping close to the ground, the men had moved slowly forward fifty yards when a Japanese machine gun and enemy riflemen a few yards away fired point-blank into them. . . 1LT Leffel radioed for a flame tank. Each move of Company G brought an enemy mortar concentration immediately. Company G, 32d Infantry, on the left (east), also was stopped.

Down below along the coastal flat Company I, 32d Infantry, 7th Division, went through Ouki and, following tanks and armored flame throwers, moved against the lower tip of Skyline Ridge, while Company L maneuvered into position on the right (west) for a frontal attack against the ridge. One platoon of Company I assaulted the nose of the ridge after the flame tanks backed away, found that all Japanese at this point had been killed, and occupied the forward face of the tip at 0710. Mortar fire covered the crest and prevented further gain. By this time, the leading platoon. . . had climbed up the slope of Skyline to the right (west) and started west along the side of the ridge. One hundred yards ahead a northward jog in the ridge and a dip in the crest allowed the enemy on the reverse slope to fire eastward through the dip to the forward face of Skyline. Machine-gun fire, directed against. . . [the] platoon, now came through the depression, and . . . [the] men dashed to an abandoned pillbox on the crest. This brought the platoon within grenade range of Japanese on the other side, and the men were forced to scatter. Knee mortar shells began to fall, plummeting almost straight down. Watching the sky, the men could see the descent of the small black objects in time to dash from the calculated point of impact.

To the right. . . another platoon of Company L started up the slope and came into the line of fire of a machine gun that kept silent until the men were exposed. With its first burst the gun wounded nine men, almost half the platoon, which fell back disorganized to the base of the ridge. Meanwhile the third platoon of Company L, which had taken refuge from mortar fire in burial tombs near the lower tip of the ridge, was trapped inside by a Japanese machine gun that put a band of fire across the entrances of the tombs when anyone tried to get out. In the Ouki coastal area combat patrols of Company B protected the regiment's left flank, encountering several strong points and killing numerous enemy soldiers.

Just before 1200 a platoon from Company K, west of. . . [Company L's] position, reached a point within ten feet of the crest of Skyline Ridge. Japanese on the reverse slope made it impossible to occupy the crest, which was just wide enough for a footpath, and only glimpses of the southern side could be secured by a momentary raising of the head. Fortunately, the slope of the ridge was so steep that most of the grenades coming over the top rolled down the incline before they exploded. The Company K platoon was hit almost immediately by a counterattack of about fifty Japanese who crawled up on the reverse slope and began to throw grenades. Artillery was called for to help repel the counterattack, but four rounds fell short and killed or wounded most of the platoon. Another platoon was sent forward at once to replace it. Before it could dig in it was struck by a second counterattack of more than a hundred Japanese. The attackers pressed forward through their own mortar fire to a point just under the crest on the south side and engaged in a close-quarters grenade battle. The knife-edge crest of Skyline Ridge now looked from a distance as though it were smoldering. This close fight lasted for an hour, and at the end

all of the second platoon had been killed or wounded but six men, who dropped back to the base of the ridge.

Meanwhile enemy pressure against. . . [Company L] down the ridge to the left had not lessened, and it was evident at 1330 that the 3d Battalion did not have enough strength to push ahead. There were not more than twenty-five men of Companies L and K left on Skyline Ridge. These men were trying grimly to hold on in the hope that the 2d Battalion, higher up on the approach to Ouki Hill, could get through and start a drive down toward them, or that the platoon cooped up in the tombs below could escape and help.

During all this time the troops in front of Ouki Hill had made no progress. A flame tank had come up and burned out the position encountered by the unlucky squad in the morning. . . At 1525 the G Companies of the 32d and 184th Regiments undertook to resume the attack which had been stalemated since early morning, but with no great promise of success. Along the base of Ouki Hill both companies were pinned to the ground at 1620 by an extremely heavy enemy 81-mm. mortar concentration. Amid the din of exploding mortars slivers of flying metal filled the air. In small groups or singly the men dashed back in short spurts toward their former position.<sup>2</sup>

There was now no hope that the remnant of the 3d Battalion near the bottom of Skyline Ridge could stay there, and by 1730 the exhausted men had pulled back to their starting point of the morning. The 3d Battalion had lost approximately one hundred men along Skyline Ridge during the day. At 2000 the 32d Infantry was ordered by Major General Arnold [7 ID Commander] to resume the attack at 0730 the next morning. Rain, which had begun in the afternoon, continued steadily on into the night.

Though American disappointment was keen and losses heavy in the Skyline Ridge fight on 19 April, it was not a one-sided affair. During the day, the *1st* and *5th Companies* of the defending Japanese battalion had been all but annihilated. The *1st Company* was wiped out when a tank fired into a cave, setting off satchel charges and killing most of the men, whereupon the company commander committed suicide. The other three companies of the battalion were reduced to about fifty men each in the battles for Hill 178, Ouki Hill, and Skyline Ridge. The machine gun and battalion gun companies each had about eighty men left.

On 20 April, the attack centered against Ouki Hill. Skyline Ridge itself was left alone after the experience of the day before. The 2d Battalion, 184th Infantry, and Company G, 32d Infantry, moving out at 0730, were checked almost at once by enemy mortar and machine-gun fire, and the situation remained stalemated all morning. Two armored flame throwers, however, successfully penetrated 400 yards in front of the infantry to burn out an enemy mortar position on the west slope of Ouki Hill. This led Lieutenant Colonel Roy A. Green of the 184th to call Lieutenant Colonel John M. Finn of the 32d Infantry and obtain his approval of a plan for covering the Japanese positions on Ouki Hill and the eastern part of Hill 178 with a mortar concentration and smoke while blanketing Skyline Ridge with a 4.2-inch chemical mortar barrage, as a prelude to an attack on Ouki Hill in which tanks would precede the infantry. Company G of the 184th, now down to nineteen riflemen, was attached as a platoon to Company G of the 32d Infantry for the assault. It was launched at 1445.

The Japanese, blinded by the smoke, apparently did not see the advancing troops until they were on the lower slopes of Ouki Hill. Heavy mortar fire then began to fall, threatening to break up the American attack. At the critical moment. . . the platoon leader and the platoon sergeant of the leading platoon scrambled on toward the top of the hill, yelling to the others to follow. Individually and in groups of two's and three's the men responded, and a feeble line was built up just under the crest. It was none too soon, for a counterattack struck immediately from the other side. . . the Japanese were repulsed and lost thirty-five killed. Just before dark a platoon from Company F, 184th Infantry, joined the little group on Ouki Hill from the American lines 400 yards to the rear. Tanks brought supplies

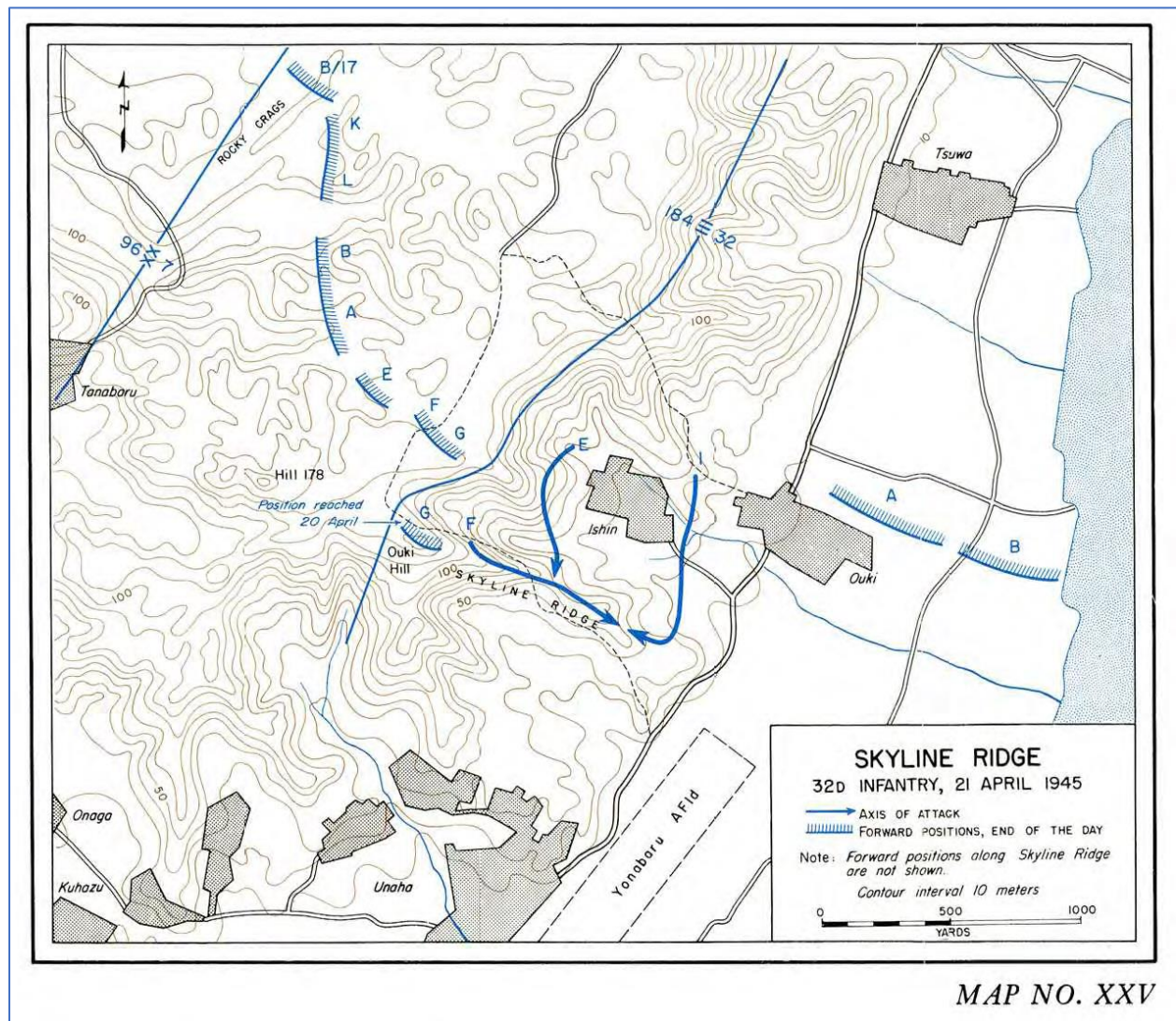
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<sup>2</sup> Personal Obsn of Capt Gugeler, 7th Div Historian.



to the isolated men, and halftracks evacuated the wounded. The Japanese shelled the forward face of the hill throughout the night. Five men were killed and eighteen wounded, all in their foxholes; the two company commanders and several platoon leaders were among the casualties. Before dawn, the enemy made another counterattack; although some Japanese came close enough to throw satchel charges, the attack was repulsed.

During the night Japanese with light machine guns infiltrated behind Company G's lines, and at an opportune moment on the morning of 21 April they opened fire, killing or wounding nine men before being killed themselves by tanks and armored flame throwers. It was nearly 0900 before Company F, hampered by enemy mortar and artillery fire, was able to start the attack down Skyline Ridge. At first there was no resistance, and within forty-five minutes the men reached a deep road cut through the middle part of the ridge. Here they were halted by mortar fire. Company E, 32d Infantry, coming up on the left (east), was stopped in the cut by a Japanese machine gun emplaced on the narrow crest and by grenades that were rolled down on the leading third platoon. The mortar section then adjusted on a point where Japanese had been seen, not more than twenty yards ahead of the foremost man. (See [CMH] Map No. XXV.)



At 1230 MG Arnold. . . arrived at LTC Finn's observation post. A discussion of the situation led these commanders to conclude that it would be best to delay assault on the lower half of Skyline Ridge until the fall of Hill 178, which would make the enemy's position on the lower ground untenable. Orders to this effect were received by Major John H. Duncan, commanding the 2d Battalion, 32d Infantry, a few minutes after 1400. The order was nullified, however, by an incident then taking place.

When, east of the road cut, a man in the stalled third platoon, Company E, was killed, Sergeant Theodore R. MacDonnell, a 91st Chemical Mortar Company observer, was impelled to drastic action. MacDonnell had frequently joined men on the line and shown qualities of a determined infantryman. Now, infuriated, he gathered up a handful of grenades and ran in the face of the machine-gun fire along the slope to a point underneath the spot where he believed the enemy gun to be located, and then started up the 20-foot embankment. When he looked over the crest he failed to spot the gun, but he did see three enemy soldiers and grenaded them. He made two trips to the bottom of the embankment for fresh supplies of grenades, but it was not until his third trip to the crest that he located the machine gun. MacDonnell then slid back to the bottom, grabbed a BAR, and mounted the embankment with it, only to have the weapon jam after the first shot. He skidded to the bottom, seized a carbine, and went back up for the fifth time. On reaching the crest he stood up and fired point-blank into the machine-gun position, killing the gunner and two covering riflemen. MacDonnell then hurled the machine gun down the slope behind him. A mortar that he found in the position was also sent crashing down the hillside.

Company E. . . sent troops to reinforce MacDonnell immediately, and the position was consolidated. Then Company F, on orders given as a result of this sudden development, pressed the attack down Skyline Ridge, and by 1800 the entire forward face of the ridge was occupied and only a knob at the lower tip was causing trouble.

The next day, 22 April, the 32d Infantry held the forward face of Skyline Ridge but made no effort to advance. Patrols, however, worked over large sections of the southern slope and one patrol reached the eastern face of Hill 178, finding few Japanese. Three sets of trench lines were found on the southern slope of Skyline Ridge, one of them at the very top. There was a maze of caves, and, though many were blasted shut, others could be examined. On the lower tip of Skyline Ridge one cave contained approximately 200 Japanese dead, another about 100, a third 50, and a fourth 45. Bodies had been neatly stacked. Altogether, about 500 dead Japanese were counted on Skyline Ridge. Most of the bodies showed artillery and mortar wounds; many others had neat rifle holes or had been burned by flame. Approximately 200 rifles, 4 heavy machine guns, and a number of knee mortars were found piled in a cave, apparently salvaged from the battlefield. These circumstances seemed to indicate that the Japanese had intended to bury their dead and use the weapons at a later time. Japanese weapons destroyed or captured on Skyline Ridge totaled 250 rifles, 4 heavy machine guns, 19 light machine guns, 20 knee mortars, a 20-mm. gun, and a 75-mm. field piece.

On the night of 22-23 April Skyline Ridge was well covered by enemy artillery. On 23 April, the 32d Infantry remained on the north slope of the ridge except when patrolling or closing caves. An enemy pillbox 400 yards away, which had survived three direct hits by a 37-mm. gun, restricted movement on the south slope until it was destroyed the following day.

The *11th Independent Infantry Battalion* had defended Skyline Ridge effectively and well; for this, together with subsequent action in the vicinity of Maeda on the other side of the island, it was to receive a unit commendation from the commanding general of the *62d Division*. The battalion had only about three hundred men by the night of 22-23 April and was relieved by elements of the *22d Regiment*. This was the first appearance of *24th Division* troops in front-line combat positions.

During the night of 23-24 April a heavy fog set in over southern Okinawa. Under its protection, while delivering heavy artillery fire against the American front lines, the Japanese withdrew from their remaining positions around Hill 178.

## Nishibaru Ridge

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 9.

To the west of the 7th Division, in the center of the line, the 96th Division was having a difficult time.<sup>1</sup> (See [CMH] Map No. XXVI.) Early on 20 April the 1st Battalion, 382d Infantry, fought off an attempt by the Japanese to wrest from them the toe hold gained the day before on Tombstone Ridge. The 3d Battalion relieved the 1st at 0730 and attacked south from the northern part of Tombstone Ridge. Company L ran into trouble at a small, tree-covered, conical hill just east of the southern end of Tombstone Ridge. A bitter fight lasting all afternoon took place there. The Japanese held firm and finally even counterattacked with bayonets through their own knee-mortar fire. Company L withdrew at 1700 after suffering thirty-two casualties. On succeeding days, this particular Japanese strong point was to hamper operations against Nishibaru Ridge. Meanwhile Company I fought down the length of Tombstone Ridge, wiping out the enemy in caves and tombs, and reached the southern end in time to help Company L by supporting fire. But because of the strong point in front of Company L the battalion was unable to cross the draw between Tombstone and Nishibaru Ridges.

The 3d Battalion, 382d Infantry, having drawn abreast at the southern end of Tombstone Ridge, and the 1st Battalion, 381st Infantry, in position to the right (west), attacked Nishibaru Ridge at 1100. The attack, launched without artillery support, surprised the Japanese, and Companies A and B were on the crest of Nishibaru Ridge at 1125. The inability of the 3d Battalion of the 382d to cross the draw from Tombstone Ridge left the 1st Battalion of the 381st exposed on the left. Company C of the 1st Battalion, ordered up to protect this exposed flank, was met by heavy enemy fire and suffered many casualties in the three and a half hours it took to cross the draw, but at 1600 it was abreast of Company A on Nishibaru Ridge.

The success of the 1st Battalion of the 381st in reaching Nishibaru Ridge led COL Halloran, the regimental commander, to order the 2d Battalion of the 381st to attack at 1300 and come abreast on the right. Japanese guns on the tip of Kakazu covered much of the ground over which the attack had to be made, and the platoon nearest Kakazu lost half its strength in crossing the 250 yards to Nishibaru Ridge. The 3d Battalion, 381st, still farther over on the division right, was unable to move at all because of the bypassed Kakazu position. Spigot mortar fire was heavy all day in the Nishibaru Ridge area, for it was here that the Japanese had one of their main concentrations of these huge mortars.<sup>2</sup>

Severe punishment was meted out to the 2d Battalion of the 381st, exposed on its right flank to automatic weapons fire from Kakazu Ridge and to a heavy mortar barrage, but Companies E and G held firm. By nightfall, the 96th had five rifle companies dug in along the northern slope of Nishibaru Ridge.

In the fighting for Nishibaru Ridge maneuver was difficult. On the division left flank, enemy positions in the Rocky Crags dominated the 2d Battalion, 382d, and limited activity to patrols. On the division right flank, Japanese fire power located on the tip of Kakazu Ridge in the 27th Division zone immobilized the 3d Battalion, 381st Infantry. This meant that the division's effort had to be made in the center. The foothold gained on 20 April on the western part of Nishibaru Ridge indicated that the logical move would be to attack to the left (east) along the ridge from the positions already gained.

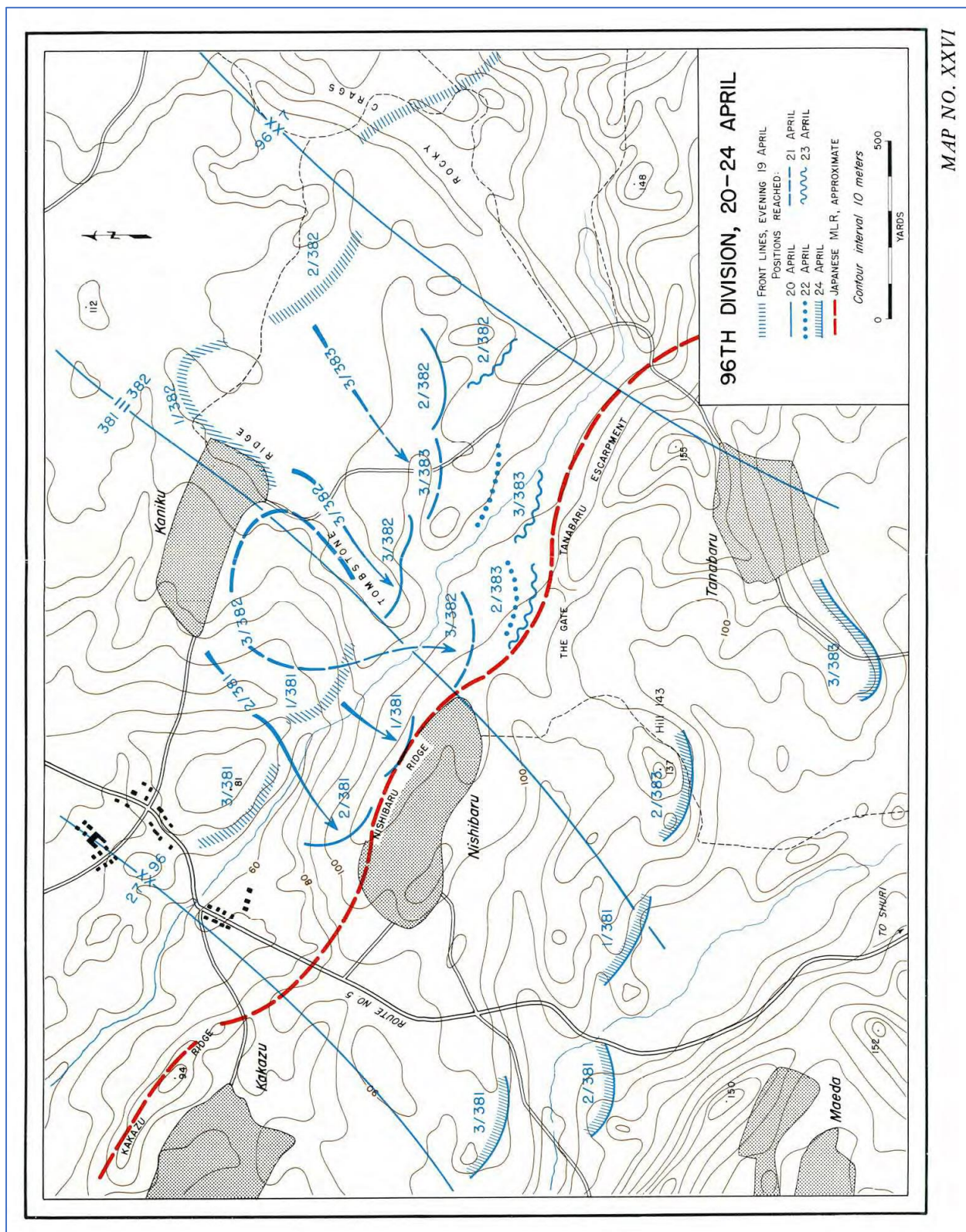
The 1st Battalion, 382d Infantry, replaced the 3d Battalion, 382d, at the southern end of Tombstone Ridge, and at 0720, 21 April, the latter began a circling march to the rear and westward to reach Nishibaru Ridge through the 381st Infantry. Once on the ridge to the left of Company C, the battalion reorganized and attacked eastward. It gained ground steadily until 1245, when the first of

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<sup>1</sup> The account of operations of the 96th Division at Nishibaru Ridge is, unless otherwise noted, taken from Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. III; 96th Div Actn Rpt, Ch. VII; 382d Inf Actn Rpt, Ch. VII; 383d Inf Actn Rpt.

<sup>2</sup> 11 See Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 11, 4 Aug 45: *1st Artillery Mortar Regiment*





MAP NO. XXVI

three Japanese counterattacks struck. The first counterattack, of platoon strength, was beaten off. A second counterattack, of company strength, was launched at 1330 from the village of Nishibaru and developed into a bitter close battle. The heavy machine guns of Company M were carried up the steep

northern slope and aided greatly in beating back the attack. At another point American 60-mm. mortars used an elevation of 86 degrees to fire on Japanese knee mortars only 30 yards away. In repulsing this counterattack the 3d Battalion, 382d Infantry, killed approximately 150 Japanese.<sup>3</sup> A third counterattack at 1515 from Hill 143, 400 yards south of Nishibaru, was easily stopped. During the day, the 3d Battalion, 382d, accounted for 198 of the enemy. The 3d Battalion, 383d Infantry, had tried to come up on the left of the 3d Battalion, 382d, while the latter was under counterattack to give help, but hidden machine guns and mortar fire had stopped it at the gorge.

On the right portion of the division's center, the 1st and 2d Battalions, 381st Infantry, undertook a coordinated attack at 0630, 21 April, to capture Nishibaru village. The 1st Battalion was on the left and the 2d Battalion was on the right. Because the slope of the ridge was too steep to negotiate, tanks could not be used. The 1st Battalion and Company E on its right had just cleared the crest of Nishibaru Ridge when they were stopped in their tracks by intense enemy fire. Company G, on the right of the two battalions, moved down to the southwest corner of the village of Nishibaru. Here it received a hurricane of mortar fire and discovered enemy troops infiltrating on its right front and massing on its left in the village. In the fight that followed, the heavy machine guns attached to Company G were fired like BAR's, braced without tripods against a low stone wall. Cross machine-gun fire from the tip of Kakazu on the west and from the southern slope of Nishibaru Ridge to the east laced across Company G's position. At 1400 a smoke screen was laid, and the battalion withdrew to a line just over the crest of the ridge, carrying its dead on hastily improvised sapling-and-poncho litters. At the end of the day the reverse (southern) slope of Nishibaru Ridge and the village of Nishibaru were still in enemy hands.

By the evening of 21 April the heavy casualties inflicted on the 382d Infantry had reduced its combat efficiency about 50 percent, and it was relieved by the 383d Regiment on 22 April. The 2d Battalion, 382d, having suffered little in the preceding days, was now attached to the 383d Regiment for operational control.

The 383d Infantry picked up the attack against Nishibaru Ridge, directing its assault against the "Gate," a saddle in the ridge. To the left (east) of the Gate the ridge line rose again to the bold Tanabaru Escarpment. The 2d Battalion of the 383d, on the right, attacked at 1100 down the Ridge toward the Gate. Nishibaru, a hornet's nest the day before, was occupied by Company E without difficulty, and Company G occupied high ground facing Hill 143 to the south. Company F, advancing against the front of the ridge, encountered heavy fire and lost four company commanders, killed or wounded, in half an hour. Satchel charges, hand grenades, and knee mortar shells hurled into the company by the Japanese forced it back beyond throwing range of the coral pinnacles.

The 3d Battalion, attacking the Gate on the left, made no appreciable gain. Of one group of ten men, including the Company L commander, on the side of a small hill, all were wounded except the officer. Company I, farther to the left, ran into fire from ten enemy machine guns emplaced near the Tanabaru Escarpment. The foremost platoon leader was killed just as he ordered his men to withdraw from this overwhelming volume of fire. Light tanks came up to the gorge in front of the ridge, and since they were unable to cross they remained there and poured thousands of rounds of machine-gun fire at the slope in a vain effort to silence the enemy guns.

On 23 April, an armored bulldozer came up and prepared a crossing over the gulch. Medium tanks of Company B, 763d Tank Battalion, then crossed over and took the ridge and the Tanabaru Escarpment under direct attack. Armored flame throwers joined in the assault and burned the north face of the escarpment and the slope of the ridge as far west as the Gate. The infantry made only limited gains despite the effective work of the armor. The Japanese held out on the high points and repulsed the attacks by grenades and satchel charges. Elsewhere in the division zone the fighting tapered off sharply.

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<sup>3</sup> See also 3d Bn, 382d Inf, Unit Jnl, 21 Apr 45.



It was clear on the evening of 23 April that the Nishibaru-Tanabaru line was nearly broken. Four battalions were on the ridge line, and all the high ground had been occupied except the Tanabaru Escarpment and the extreme western part of Nishibaru Ridge opposite the tip of Kakazu. These were taken the next day with ease because the bulk of the Japanese forces had withdrawn to the south.

## Machinato Inlet and the Pinnacles

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 8, 9 and associated maps.

### *Preliminary Attack of the 27th Division, 18 April*

A captured Japanese document gave Maj. Gen. George W. Griner, Jr., commander of the 27th, an idea for the tactics to employ. This document, issued by the 62d Division, informed the Japanese troops that "the enemy generally fires during the night, but very seldom takes offensive action." A copy of the translation reached 27th Division headquarters as the plans for the attack were being laid, and impelled the division staff to decide on a night attack to surprise the enemy. The 27th had trained in night maneuvers shortly before embarking for Okinawa. Moreover, the terrain in front of the division made a night attack most desirable. More than 1,000 yards of open ground lay between its front lines in the Uchitomari area and the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment, which was an initial objective of the 27th. An attack during daylight across this ground, obstructed as it was by Machinato Inlet on the west, rice paddies and streams in the center, and rough ground on the division's left (east), would enable the enemy to exploit his complete observation of the area and to bring in prearranged fires on the exposed troops. A night attack would avoid this peril and might catch the enemy napping.<sup>1</sup>

General Griner's plan also took advantage of the fact that the Machinato area was not held in strength by the enemy but merely outposted. Accordingly, the 106th Infantry on the right (west) was to cross Machinato Inlet, advance under cover of darkness during the night of 18-19 April toward the escarpment, and by daylight reach Urasoe-Mura where Route 1 cuts through it; then the assault troops were to push down the escarpment to the southeast and seize the vital high ground in its sector. On the division's left (east), the 105th Infantry was to undertake an entirely different type of attack—a powerful daylight push, lacking deception or maneuver, designed to obliterate Japanese opposition by main force. The 105th was to attack from its positions before Kakazu on the morning of the 19th, clean out the town of Kakazu, and advance straight ahead to gain the crest of Urasoe-Mura Escarpment, where the regiment would hook up with the 106th on its right (west). "Nothing must be allowed to stop the forward movement," MG Griner ordered.<sup>2</sup>

### *Mounting the Attack*

The mounting of the attack furnished a ticklish engineering problem, which was complicated by the need for secrecy. Four bridges at Machinato Inlet were to be built during the night of 18-19 April—a footbridge for the assault troops to move across during the night, two Bailey bridges, totaling ninety feet, for supporting weapons, and a rubber ponton bridge strong enough to carry 2½-ton trucks loaded with supplies. Erecting these bridges in the dark would be difficult enough, but, to make matters worse, the 102d Engineer Combat Battalion, the division engineers, had had no experience with the Bailey bridge. The division had left the United States before the adoption of this type of structure and had fought on small islands where large spans were not required. Fortunately, an officer who had helped construct several Baileys in Tunisia, First Lieutenant Irving S. Golden, had recently joined the division. Under his direction the engineers spent several days building, tearing down, and rebuilding Bailey bridges in a division rear area.

Secrecy was vitally important, but very difficult to maintain because of the excellent enemy observation and the intense activity necessary for the attack. The appearance of stock piles of bridge equipment near Machinato Inlet would alert the Japanese to the plan of crossing the inlet in strength.

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<sup>1</sup> Love, 27th Div History, pp. 36-38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Consequently the 102d Engineers assembled its equipment in rear areas in readiness for instant transportation. Pontons were inflated, and bridge sections were assembled to the maximum size that trucks could carry.

Another piece of deception was also executed cunningly. The route leading to the proposed ponton bridges was a shell-pocked, deeply rutted little jeep road which ran by O'Hara's Knob [Kakazu West] and ended in a rice paddy 250 yards short of the objective, the northeast edge of the inlet. The road had to be made ready to carry the traffic of trucks loaded with bridge equipment, but attempts to improve it might arouse Japanese suspicions. During daylight hours in the period before the attack a bulldozer puttered about on this road, in plain view of the enemy. When an occasional jeep became bogged down, the bulldozer chugged over to extricate the vehicle, remaining to push dirt and rocks into the ruts. The operator alternately slept, tinkered with the engine, and expressed his annoyance with sweeping gestures when still another jeep became bogged down. But at night he worked feverishly. By 18 April, the road had been extended and improved and reached almost to the edge of the inlet, although it would have been difficult for an observer to estimate just what had been done to the road and when.

As the time for the attack approached, the plans took final form. General Griner hoped for a break-through and insisted that "no matter what else happens, we must advance. We do not have time to wait for units on our flanks. If they cannot move, we will push forward anyway. I do not want to hear any unit commander calling me and telling me that he cannot advance because the unit on his flank cannot advance."<sup>3</sup>

#### *Night Attack on the Escarpment*

At 1607 on 18 April a lone smoke shell, like a tentative mistaken shot, landed 200 yards east of Machinato Inlet. A breeze wafted the smoke west toward the sea and spread a thin haze over the inlet. Assault troops who had assembled casually on the northeast side of the inlet during the afternoon now waited tensely. Within a few minutes other shells landed. Veiled by smoke, infantrymen sprinted along a pipeline to the western edge of the inlet. In a few minutes Company G, 106th Infantry, had crossed the inlet in this manner and had assembled under cover of the cliffs that border the inlet on the west.

Company G's mission was to clean out the enemy outposts in the Machinato village area in order that the bridge construction and the movement of troops across the inlet during the night might proceed without detection. Operating by platoons, the company scaled the cliffs and maneuvered around the enemy outposts. By midnight, after a series of skirmishes, ambushes, and brief fire fights in the dark, the Japanese in the Machinato area had been cleaned out.

The 27th Division was now on the move. At 1930 trucks carrying Bailey bridge equipment began moving out of a coral pit in the village of Isa and rolling south to the inlet. The last truckload of Bailey equipment was followed at 2000 by the first full load of material for the footbridge. The ponton bridge was shuttled forward at 2030. Shortly after dark the bulldozer began to put the finishing touches on the approaches to the footbridge and ponton bridge to enable the trucks to drop their loads at the edge of the inlet. Working in the darkness, quietly and without interruption, the engineers completed the 128-yard footbridge by midnight and both Bailey bridges by 0300, 19 April. Only the ponton bridge caused trouble; the receding tide carried away the anchor line and some of the pontons, delaying completion of the bridge until noon of 19 April.

The 106th Infantry moved out shortly after midnight. Throughout the night a steady stream of men trudged across the footbridge. The enemy made no move to stop the crossing; Company G had done its work well. Company F of the 106th passed through Company G's lines just before dawn and quietly advanced single file along Route 1 toward the road cut at the northwest end of Urasoe-Mura

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<sup>3</sup> Love, 27th Div History, p. 43.

Escarpment. Since the cut was believed to be defended, a frontal assault up the highway would be costly, even during darkness. Near the base of the escarpment, one platoon of the company turned off the road to the right (west) and started climbing the brush-covered slope. Half an hour later the troops reached the top, still undetected by the enemy.

The platoon swung left (southeast) on the crest and silently moved down the ridge line of the escarpment toward the cut. It was now daylight. Near the cut they found Japanese soldiers sitting around fires, preparing their breakfast. The Americans immediately opened fire. Some of the enemy dropped; others fled toward the cut, leaving their weapons behind. The enemy was now alerted. Soon mortar fire began dropping on the rest of Company F as it moved up the highway. The platoon on top of the escarpment began sweeping rapidly toward the cut. For thirty minutes there was a brisk fight as the Americans closed in on the enemy; then, outflanked, the Japanese gave way and fled south from the cut.

The 106th began consolidating its hold on the northwest end of Urasoe-Mura. By 0710 additional platoons were arriving on the crest near the cut and the few remaining Japanese were being flushed out of their hiding places. The 106th prepared to push down the escarpment toward an eventual junction with the 105th.

### *The Battle of the Pinnacles*

The long, high Urasoe-Mura Escarpment was a natural defensive position that became progressively more difficult to breach eastward from the coast. Toward the middle of the island it was higher and its northern face was almost sheer cliff. This part of the escarpment fell within the left end of the 27th Division zone and continued on into that of the 96th Division. The village of Iso, which lay just beyond the crest of the escarpment, was a key Japanese defensive position occupied by the *21st Independent Infantry Battalion* and by elements of the *1st Heavy Mortar Regiment*, armed with spigot mortars. On 20 April, the Japanese *64th Brigade* took over the line from the crippled *63d Brigade* as far east as Nishibaru. Its troops, deployed from the west coast eastward, consisted of the *23d*, the *21st*, the *15th*, and the *273d Independent Infantry Battalions*. The *4th Independent Machine Gun Battalion*, cooperating with the *22d Antitank Battalion*, supported the *62d Division* in the Kakazu-Ginowan area. In the fighting from 19 to 22 April the *4th Independent Machine Gun Battalion* was to be more successful than at any other time on Okinawa.<sup>4</sup>

The heart of the defensive network around Iso was a high, rocky pinnacle, designated "West Pinnacle," which rose from forty to fifty feet above the ridge itself, just northeast of the village of Iso. Studded with caves, crevasses, and scores of little nooks and crannies, this pinnacle was difficult to approach from any direction and was impervious to artillery and mortar fire. Tunnels branched out from it in all directions; some emerged in Iso, others as far away as 200 yards to the west. The other strong point was a towering height on the escarpment, the "East Pinnacle," located from 450 to 600 yards southeast of the West Pinnacle. The crest of the escarpment here was hollowed out with burial vaults, most of which had courtyards in which the Japanese had carefully placed machine guns interdicting all approaches. Midway between the two pinnacles a road climbed to the top of the escarpment and cut through the crest in a sharp turn. A strong road block filled the cut, and the road itself was mined.<sup>5</sup>

On the night of 19 April the 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry, was on the top of the escarpment, spread around one end of the West Pinnacle. The 2d Battalion, 105th, was not on top of the escarpment

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<sup>4</sup> Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 2, 2 Aug 45: *62d Division*; No. 5, 27 Jul 45: *The Independent Machine Gun Battalions*; No. 11, 4 Aug 45: *Artillery Mortar Regiment*.

<sup>5</sup> The account of operations of the 27th Division at the Pinnacles is, unless otherwise noted, taken from Love, 27th Div History, Pt. VIII.

but joined the 3d at the road cut through the ridge and then bent its line eastward down the slope. On the morning of 20 April heavy fighting developed quickly around the two pinnacles. Colonel Winn, 105th regimental commander, ordered his 2d and 3d Battalions to continue the attack south after the 2d Battalion came up on the escarpment abreast of the 3d Battalion. Enemy guns from the pinnacles, however, interdicted the crest of the escarpment in this area and the 2d Battalion was unable to reach the top. Colonel Winn came up to look over the situation, and at 1200 he ordered the two battalions to attack at 1230, regardless of fire conditions. Colonel Winn himself organized the 2d Battalion and launched an attack by a new route. Company E was left to attack as before, but Companies F and G were sent along the base of the escarpment to a point beyond the East Pinnacle, where they turned west and scaled the cliffs to reach the top north of the village of Nakama. Both companies immediately started south down the reverse slope toward a road at the bottom. In this rapid movement they approached the Japanese in the area from the rear and surprised them. (See [CMH] Map No. XXVII.)

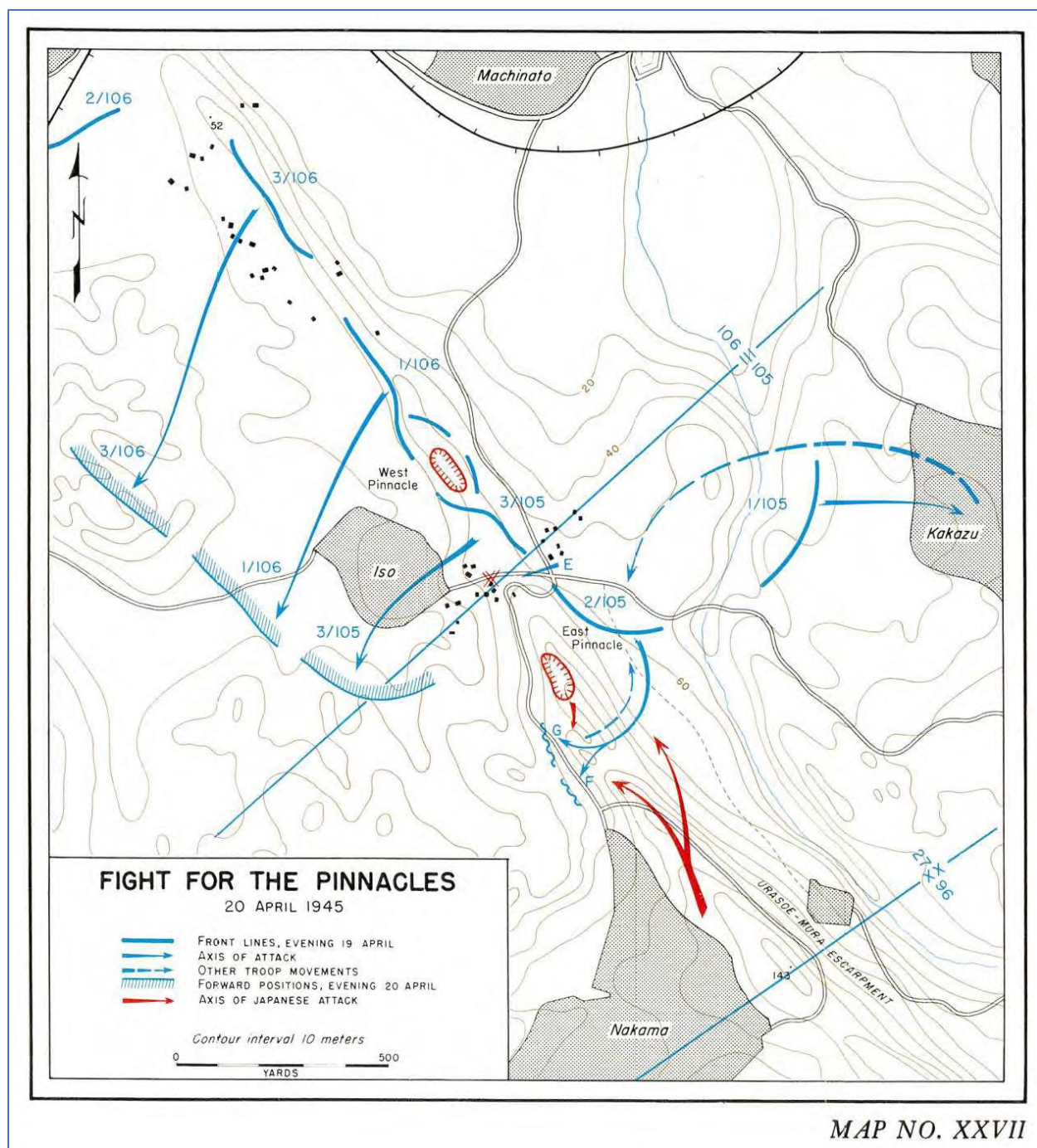
At the road both companies halted, F on the left and G on the right, to organize for an attack on Nakama to the south. While the two company commanders were discussing by radio the tactics to be used in the attack, Company F received the first blow—an intense mortar barrage that fell on its left flank, nearest Nakama. Japanese could be seen swarming through the town. After half an hour Captain Edward C. Kidd, commanding Company F, radioed Captain Louis F. Cudlin, who commanded Company G, that the enemy was working around Company F's left flank and into the rear. The two company commanders decided to pivot their lines to face eastward to meet the threat. From his position Cudlin could see only part of one platoon of Company F. He decided to make the shift when these men changed position.

Just after the two company commanders finished their radio conversation, CPT Kidd was wounded and his radio destroyed. Machine-gun and mortar fire was now coming from directly behind Company F. Within only a few minutes all the remaining officers and most of the noncommissioned officers were killed or wounded. Without leaders and smothered with fire, Company F lost all organization and most of the men ran for the edge of the escarpment. But the little group out front on the right in view of Company G was oblivious to what was happening behind them; it held fast and fought on, and the Japanese soon turned their attention to them. Shortly the group discovered that they were all alone, and one of them came running over to CPT Cudlin, shouting, "Where the hell is F Company?" This was the first inkling Cudlin had that anything was seriously wrong.

Captain Cudlin immediately ordered his platoon leaders to execute the swinging movement to face east, but it was too late; Japanese were already closing in on his right rear from the East Pinnacle, and the force which had just finished off Company F was closing in from the other side. The two assault platoons of Company G were deployed along the forward (south) edge of the road, which was cut into the reverse slope of the escarpment. The north side of the road was a 6-foot embankment, and in trying to escape the men had to dash across the road, scramble up the embankment, and then climb a 100-yard slope that ran at a 35- to 50-degree angle to the top of the escarpment. Enemy machine guns set up on either side swept this ground with enfilading fire as soon as the first man started back. Mortars and grenades filled the area with flying metal fragments, and enemy riflemen fired as fast as they could reload. In the dash up the slope some of the men were killed and others wounded; still others dropped down to hide behind rocks and bushes.

The 3d Platoon and the machine guns had been left on the edge of the escarpment when the two assault platoons of Company G moved to their advanced positions. Disorganized elements of Companies F and G now fell back through these men. It was discovered at this time that Japanese had infiltrated to the low ground below the escarpment on the north, and this added to the prevailing consternation. The Japanese, now in a good position on the flanks along the escarpment, set up a merciless fire on the men stampeding down the cliff. Men were hit and fell to the bottom to lie still; others stumbled and went sprawling headlong to the ground below. Still others, running with all their





might, reached the lines of the 1st Battalion, which had come up and had faced east to meet the Japanese. Companies F and G had been completely surrounded and badly mauled by enemy from the bypassed East Pinnacle and by Japanese, estimated at two companies, who had turned Company F's left flank.

The 3d Battalion, 105th, with the 1st Battalion, 106th, abreast, had meanwhile, after some initial delay, advanced without too much opposition some 200 yards southwest of Iso and had taken up positions there for the night.

During this disastrous day the 2d Battalion lost fifty men killed and forty-three wounded, nearly all of them in Companies F and G. Total casualties of the 27th Division on 20 April amounted to 506 men—the greatest loss for an Army division during any single day on Okinawa.<sup>6</sup>

On the next day, 21 April, the struggle for control of the escarpment continued, still centering on the fight for the two pinnacles. The 1st and 2d Battalions, 105th Infantry, were reorganized overnight and operated against the East Pinnacle. Both the 3d Battalion, 105th, and the 1st Battalion, 106th, turned back to deal with the West Pinnacle. Neither of these efforts met with success. At one time four different groups were working on the West Pinnacle, while a Japanese sniper sat somewhere in the folds of coral, picking off men one by one.

The day, however, saw one definite improvement. On the day before a Japanese officer had been killed and a map was found on his body showing the location of mine fields on the road from Machinate to the top of the escarpment. By 0900, 21 April, the road was cleared of mines and a supply line opened as far as the road block on top of the escarpment, and by noon the road block itself had been removed. At 1400 tanks went through the cut, and armor was at last on the escarpment. In the meantime the problem of supplies on the crest of the escarpment had become critical, and air drops for the 2d Battalion of the 106th Infantry were necessary on 21 and 22 April.<sup>7</sup>

On 22 April the 1st Battalion, 106th Infantry, supported by self-propelled guns of the 106th Cannon Company, which moved over a path prepared by an armored bulldozer, systematically searched out and destroyed enemy positions in its rear along the escarpment. Japanese soldiers were still hidden somewhere in the West Pinnacle, which the enemy used as an observation point and as a control center for spigot mortar fire. But the enemy machine guns behind the lines at this point had been destroyed, and supply lines to Iso were for the first time free from serious harassing fire. The 1st Battalion, 106th, now had pulled back 600 yards to straighten and shorten the lines along the escarpment and to establish contact with the 105th Infantry on the east. In the 105th Infantry zone, COL Winn continued to reorganize the 1st and 2d Battalions.

On 23 April two assault companies of the 1st Battalion, 105th, which had relieved the 2d Battalion, climbed on top of the escarpment to the east of the East Pinnacle in much the same manner as had the 2d Battalion on 20 April, and similarly caught the enemy by surprise. Company C reached the crest of the escarpment at the edge of the East Pinnacle stronghold and found itself in the midst of the enemy. A wild hand-to-hand fight ensued in which bayonets, clubs, and grenades were used, and more than a hundred Japanese were killed within an hour. At the end of the day the 27th Division held the escarpment as far east as the edge of Nakama, the division boundary.

The end of the West Pinnacle fight came abruptly, on the night of 23 April. Precisely on the hour of midnight the enemy bugler within the pinnacle, who had in previous days and nights frequently sounded his bugle as a signal, blew a call, and thirty Japanese soldiers emerged in a wild yelling banzai charge, rushing straight into the lines of the 1st Battalion, 106th Infantry, dug in south of Iso. There they were wiped out.

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<sup>6</sup> See 27th Div Actn Rpt, p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> See 106th Inf Actn Rpt, pp. 13-14.

## Item Pocket

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 9.

In accordance with MG Griner's plan, Col. Gerard W. Kelley, commander of the 165th Infantry, on 20 April had two battalions abreast and ready to attack on the right of the 27th Division line. The 1st Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel James H. Mahoney, was on the left, and the 2d Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel John McDonough, on the right. A mile southwest of the 165th lay Machinato airfield and three miles beyond the airfield was Naha—both important objectives. Although photographs and maps did not reveal to any precise degree the strength of the Japanese or the nature of the terrain, regimental headquarters was optimistic.<sup>1</sup>

The center of the Japanese resistance lay in the I section of Target Area 7777, which came to be called "Item Pocket" - in military terminology I is called Item. Actually, the pocket was the hub of the enemy position; from it, like spokes of a giant wheel, extended four low ridges, separated from each other by ravines and rice paddies. Potter's Ridge ran north from the hub, Charlie Ridge to the northeast, Gusukuma Ridge to the southeast, and Ryan Ridge<sup>2</sup> to the southwest. Lying between Gusukuma and Charlie Ridges and sloping to the east was a cone-shaped hill called by Americans "Brewer's Hill." A gulch ran along each side of the hill - Andersen's Gulch on the north and Dead Horse Gulch on the south. Both ran in an easterly direction, crossing Route 1 at small bridges just north of Gusukuma. The ground was superbly suited for active defense. Typical Japanese positions were connected by tunnels along the sides and under the crests of the ridges; Ryan Ridge, in particular, was honeycombed with such defenses. From Item Pocket the enemy had excellent command both of the coastal areas to the north and west and of the open land to the east where Route 1 ran north-south. The Japanese had long been aware of the defensive value of this position against either a beach landing on the northwest or an attack from the north. Months before the Americans landed, Japanese troops and Okinawan laborers were boring tunnels and establishing elaborate living quarters and aid stations. The area was held by two companies of the *21st Independent Infantry Battalion* of the *64th Brigade, 62d Division*, supported by an antitank company, a machine gun company, and elements of antiaircraft, artillery, and mortar units. At least 600 Japanese occupied the Pocket, reinforced by several hundred Okinawans.

### 20 April

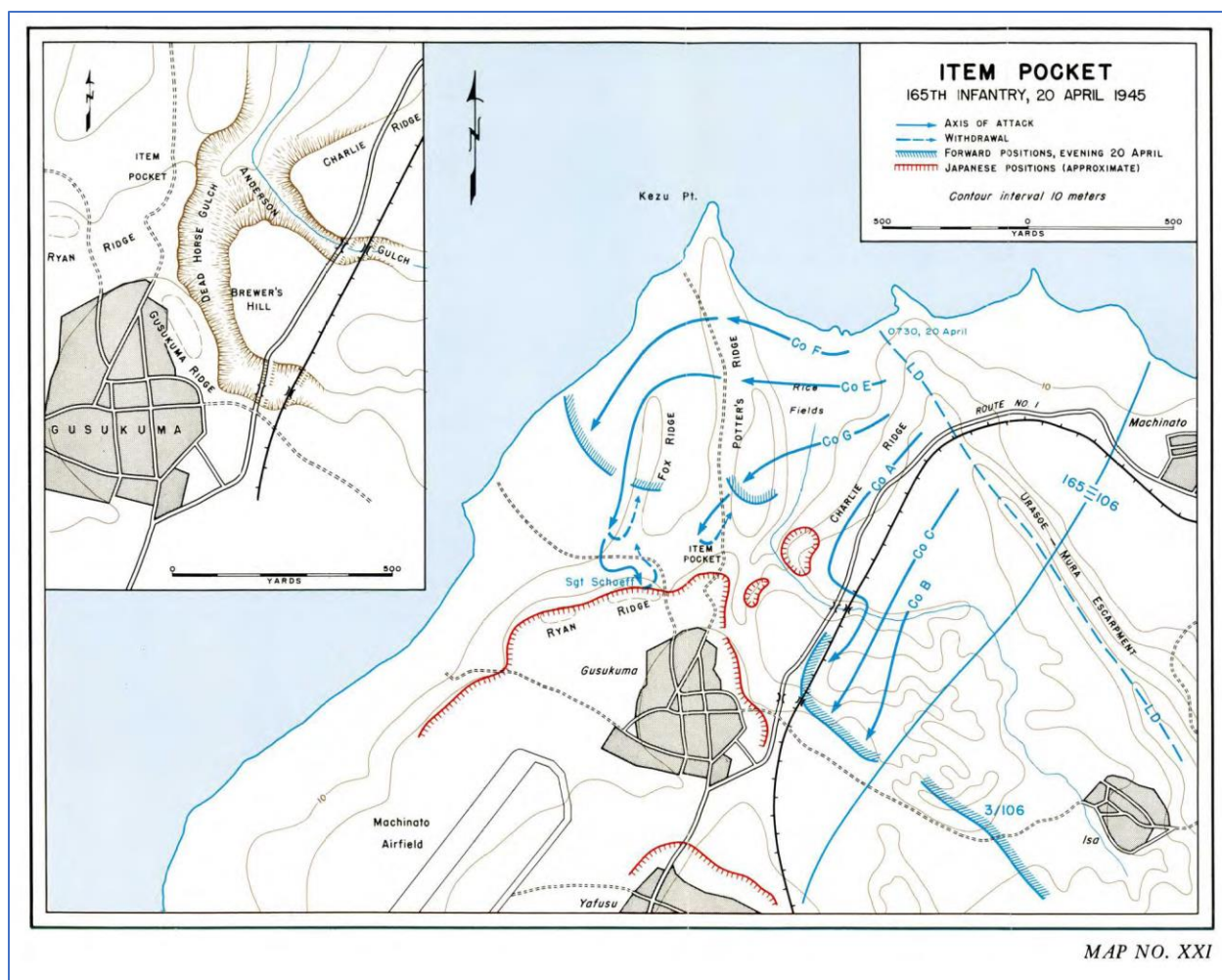
When the 1st Battalion drove south along Route 1, the Japanese entrenched in this area cut off the forward elements with heavy mortar and machine-gun fire, killing five and wounding twenty-two. Only by dogged efforts was the battalion able to reach a point east of Gusukuma by nightfall. It had then lost contact with the 2d Battalion, which was meeting equally stiff resistance west of the Japanese position. (See [CMH] Map No. XXI.)

Infantrymen of the 2d Battalion, 165th Infantry, operating on the right of the 1st Battalion, cleaned out a system of dugouts and tunnels on the southeast nose of Potter's Ridge on the 20th but LTC McDonough's men made little more progress after that day. When the 2d started a pivoting movement to join up with the 1st Battalion on its left, the troops came under intense flanking fire from the left rear out of the Pocket. Japanese mortars on Ryan Ridge knocked out the machine gunners when they tried to lay down covering fire. The troops retreated to Potter's Ridge after several hours' fighting which cost them twelve casualties.

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<sup>1</sup> The account of the 165th Infantry in Item Pocket is taken from Love, 27th Div History, Pt. VI.

<sup>2</sup> Compiler's note: this terrain feature did not have an actual name until after it was seized by CPT Bernard Ryan's Company F, 165th Infantry on 24-25 April. This name is used for orientation purposes.



Farther to the west infantrymen managed to reach Fox Ridge, a low rise due west of the hub of the Pocket. Colonel McDonough then ordered Company E on his extreme right to use Fox Ridge as cover and to attack south to seize Ryan Ridge. The leading platoon was well up on the slope of Ryan when Japanese on top opened up with mortars, machine guns, and artillery, cutting off the rest of Company E. While the company commander, his clothes torn by bullets, and the rest of the company straggled back to Fox Ridge, the leading platoon continued doggedly ahead. Its leader, Technical Sergeant Earnest L. Schoeff, managed to reach the top with eight of his men despite almost constant fire. He was ordered by radio to hold until relief came. The men hugged the ground as darkness slowly descended. Then from three directions from fifty to sixty heavily armed Japanese set upon the Americans. In wild hand-to-hand fighting the nine men beat off the attack. With grenades, rifle butts, and the enemy's own weapons, Schoeff and his men killed another dozen before the Japanese withdrew. With two of his men killed, another missing, and two wounded, Schoeff led the survivors back to his company during the night.

*21 April*

Two blown bridges along Route 1 east of the Pocket were holding up vehicles of support units. During the previous night, fire from the Pocket had driven off an engineer platoon working at the site and killed the platoon leader. Early on the 21st 1LT Golden, the Bailey bridge expert, came up with ten



truckloads of material. His engineers worked for an hour but had to stop in the face of almost ceaseless fire from the Pocket.

Colonel Kelley then ordered scouts to find another stream crossing. A bulldozer cut a bypass around Anderson's Gulch near the railroad, but when, about 1000, the operator nosed his machine out in the open, he was shot in the ear. General Griner, in COL Kelley's observation post at the time, ordered Lieutenant Colonel Walter F. Anderson, commander of the 193d Tank Battalion, to push the bypass through. Anderson himself climbed into his battalion's sole remaining "tank-dozer" and completed the bypass. A 47-mm. antitank gun, hitherto silent, scored a direct hit on Anderson's tank, killing him and a guide. The bypass was now blocked and had to be abandoned.

This break-down in supply over Route 1 seriously affected operations east of Gusukuma. Colonel Mahoney's 1st Battalion attacked southwest early on the 21st into Gusukuma, but without tanks or cannon the troops made little ground against machine guns in the village and fire from Item Pocket on the right rear. Mahoney's left company did reach a point 400 yards north of the village of Yafusu—the farthest advance yet registered by XXIV Corps since 19 April—but here the troops were stopped by a network of enemy positions.

At 0630 on 21 April the 2d Battalion launched another attack across the mouth of Item Pocket. The troops were supported by antitank guns which had been unloaded at the sea wall, hand carried almost 1,000 yards, and set up to fire directly into the hub of the Pocket. Within ten minutes the entire left of the battalion line was pinned down. Efforts to advance against interlocking lanes of fire were fruitless and the men withdrew to Potter's Ridge later in the morning. During the afternoon troops on the battalion's right, protected from Item Pocket by Fox Ridge, moved several hundred yards along the coast on amphibian tractors. But an attack east toward the Pocket was abortive. As soon as the infantry climbed over the sea wall, the enemy blazed forth from Ryan Ridge with light artillery pieces and small arms. The first rounds were wild, and every man scrambled back safely over the wall. Another attempt under such conditions seemed out of the question. Again the troops pulled back to Fox Ridge. (See [CMH] Map No. XXII.) Thus with little difficulty the Japanese defending the western approaches of Item Pocket repulsed the Americans on 21 April.

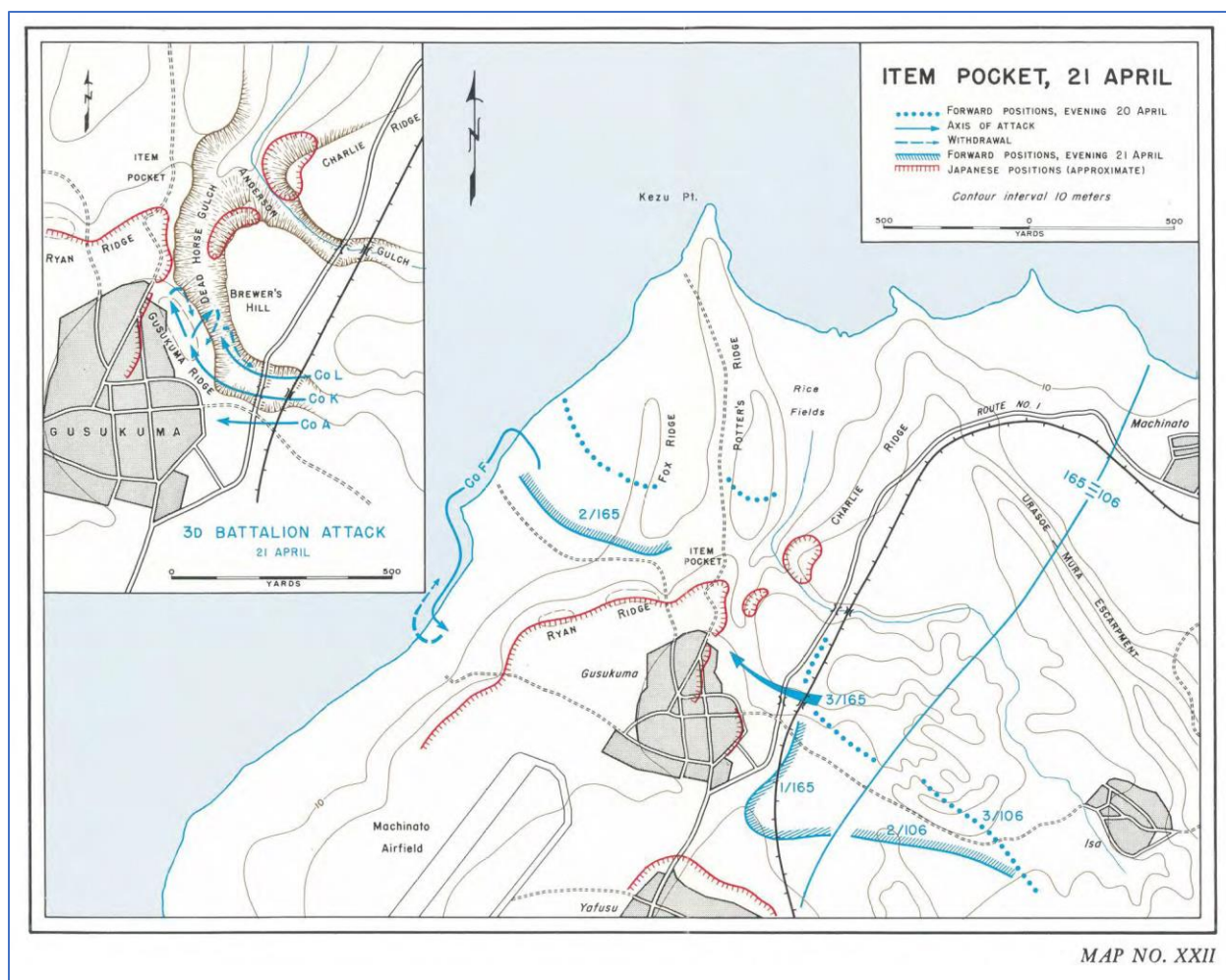
#### *Fight of Dead Horse Gulch*

Colonel Kelley, back at his headquarters, was becoming increasingly worried about the wide vertical gap between his 1st and 2d Battalions. Early on 21 April he decided to commit his 3d Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Dennis D. Claire, in a move designed to plug the gap and break into Item Pocket in one blow. Using Route 1 as its line of departure, Company L was to push west through Dead Horse Gulch, outflanking the Japanese covering Anderson's Gulch. Simultaneously Company K, on L's left, would attack northwest toward the Pocket along Gusukuma Ridge. Even moving into the line of departure was so difficult in this area swept by fire from artillery, spigot mortars, and light arms that it was 1515 before the battalion attacked.

Under a heavy smoke screen, Company L advanced along Dead Horse Gulch. In forty-five minutes the infantry was pinned flat to the ground under a hail of light-arms fire. The men could only crawl into holes. When the smoke cleared, Japanese machine gunners worked over the area. At dusk, the company retreated down the gulch.

Company K, commanded by Captain Howard E. Betts, Jr., was the other prong of the battalion attack. The company skirted the eastern edge of Gusukuma under heavy fire and drove up to the crest of Gusukuma Ridge. From here CPT Betts launched an attack down into Dead Horse Gulch with one platoon and sent the other along the crest of the ridge to cover the men on the low ground. In a savage encounter Company K fought its way almost into the heart of the Pocket. But the odds were against it; within an hour it had lost 6 men killed, 3 missing, and 15 wounded. The troops could advance no farther





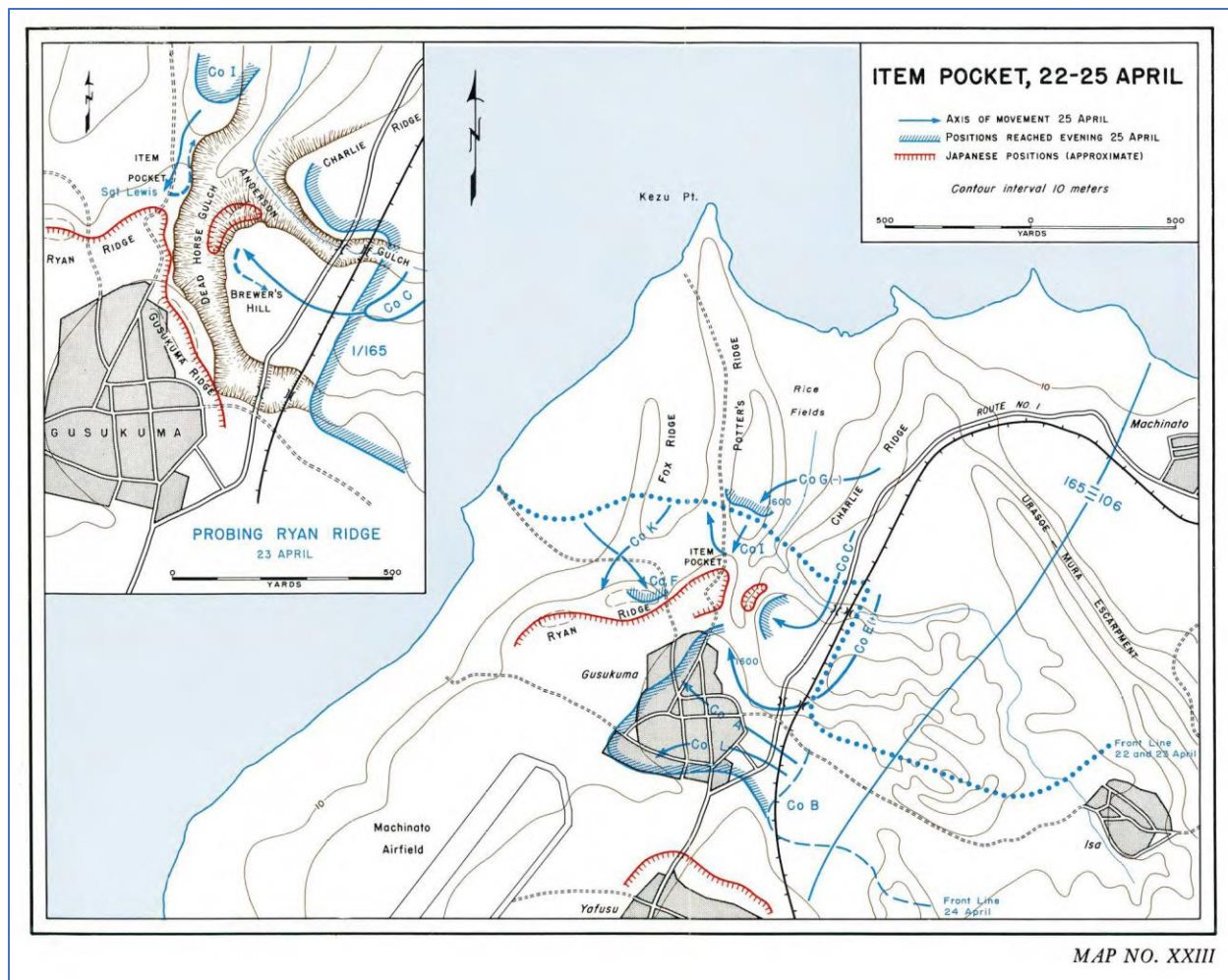
against the virtually intact Japanese defenses. Under cover of smoke and twilight, Betts pulled his men back to the crest of Gusukuma Ridge. He was forced to leave behind several of his wounded, who crawled into caves.

Company K had hardly begun digging in on the rocky crest of Gusukuma Ridge when the Japanese began a series of attacks that lasted four hours. The first, well-supported by enemy artillery, was driven off by the troops and artillery, but all men still in the gulch were killed in the onslaught. Low on ammunition and unable to evacuate the wounded, the men of Company K hung on under heavy fire and incessant sniping. At 2300 the enemy launched an all-out attack, striking simultaneously from Gusukuma and from the gulch. The Japanese overran and captured two machine guns and turned them on the outnumbered and disorganized Americans. Betts managed to pull his remaining men back to the 1st Battalion line, 200 yards to the south. Company K was now down to half-strength.

The engagement had a grim aftermath. Early the next morning the Japanese attacked the caves in Dead Horse Gulch where some wounded Americans had hidden. With grenades and bonfires the Japanese forced some of the Americans into the open, where they were shot; the others were stifled to death inside.

22 April

On 22 April MG Griner, who was mainly concerned with coordinating the movements of his 105th Infantry with the 96th Division on the left (east) and was not too much impressed by the strength of the enemy in Item Pocket, ordered COL Kelley to hold and improve his positions. In conjunction with the 106th on his left, Kelley therefore shortened his 1st Battalion line to present a more compact front. A heavy air strike was delivered on the Pocket without major effect. Patrol action was intensified. All remaining Japanese were cleared out of Potter and Charlie Ridges. Artillery, well registered in, prevented the enemy from retaking any ground. (See [CMH] Map No. XXIII.)



The patrols brought back information on Japanese dispositions, providing the basis for the next day's plan. Under that plan Company I was to attack from the nose of Potter's Ridge across the mouth of the Pocket and seize the face of Ryan Ridge. Meanwhile Company C would send a platoon over Brewer's Hill and down into the heart of the Pocket. Then Company I was to consolidate its hold on Ryan and, together with Company K, drive along Ryan Ridge to Machinato airfield. A special assault squad was set up to establish the all-important "beachhead" on the face of Ryan Ridge. Commanded by Staff Sergeant Howard Lewis, this squad consisted of twelve men, heavily armed with BAR's, rifles, bazookas, demolitions, and a portable flame thrower.

### *23 April*

... Sergeant Lewis worked his squad through the tombs on the nose of Potter's Ridge to the bare flat ground at the base. A Japanese mortarman opened fire on them from the top of Ryan Ridge just above the center of the Pocket. Sergeant Lewis spotted the position and sent his men toward it as their first objective. One by one the men sprinted toward Ryan Ridge. Two Japanese machine guns opened up. The lead man, together with most of the squad, took cover at the base of Ryan. Below, other enemy machine guns were firing. Lewis was now cut off from reinforcement.

Climbing from rock to rock on the craggy nose of Ryan Ridge, the squad made its way to within forty yards of the mortar position. A shower of potato masher grenades stopped the advance. Lewis deployed his squad, sending four to the right and two to the left and bringing up his bazooka man for direct fire into the position. Advance was impossible; the area now seemed to be swarming with Japanese trying to move in to finish off the squad. Crawling from rock to rock. . . the Americans held them off. Lewis called for artillery fire within forty yards of his position. The rest of Company I, still waiting on Potter's Ridge, put long-range fire on the enemy. The enemy replied with machine guns and mortars. The Pocket was an inferno of bursting shells and of rifle and machine-gun fire.

For three hours Lewis and his men held out, but it was a hopeless fight. At 1300 he called his company on the radio and said that he had only three men left capable of fighting, three being dead and seven wounded. The supporting platoon from Company I had been stopped short. The platoon from Company C had reached the crest of Brewer's Hill but had not been able to climb down the steep side. The troops lowered charges on ropes over the side and set them off at the cave entrances, but the charges seemed to make little impression. Lewis received orders to pull back with his wounded. Two more Americans were hit on the way back, but most of the wounded were brought out. Only Lewis and one other man returned unwounded.

Item Pocket—on the fourth day of the assault—was still in enemy hands.

### *24-25 April*

The man on whom most now depended was Captain Bernard Ryan, commanding Company F, 165th Infantry. Subjected nightly to intense artillery concentrations, harassed by numerous enemy patrols in force, compelled to evacuate his wounded and bring in his supplies by water around Kezu Point, lacking direct fire support except from his own mortars, CPT Ryan had operated largely on his own initiative. From 20 to 24 April he had watched Companies E, G, K, and I assault the Pocket from different directions. He correctly reasoned on 24 April that his turn would be next.

Captain Ryan proposed to LTC Claire a plan calling for an attack by Company F at 0200 on the following day, 25 April, along the same general route as had been followed by Company E on 20 April. This plan was accepted by higher headquarters. Ryan was therefore astonished to receive a telephone call from LTC Claire at 1900 on 24 April, ordering him to attack Ryan Ridge in one hour over an entirely different route—that followed by Sergeant Lewis on the 23d. There had been a hopeless mix-up of orders.

It was now necessary for CPT Ryan to execute a complete change of dispositions and attack preparations in the dark. He was calling together platoon leaders for a new briefing when the regular evening barrage began landing in his company. Soon his communications were out and his men pinned down. Later, a series of patrol actions by the enemy slowed his reorganization. In the morning, when COL Kelley discovered that Ryan Ridge was still in enemy hands, he ordered LTC Claire to attack immediately and secure the ridge. Claire felt that the task was impossible and demurred. Kelley thereupon relieved Claire, and Major Herman M. Lutz, executive officer, assumed command. Kelley ordered Lutz to attack at 0630; Lutz decided to use Ryan's original plan.

Captain Ryan realized that the chief obstacles were the Japanese positions in Ryan Ridge and in the heart of the Pocket. From these positions the enemy dominated much of the area between Ryan and Fox Ridges. Captain Ryan's key to the problem was artillery fire. He reasoned that, since the direction of fire of supporting artillery would be perpendicular to his direction of attack, and the greatest possible lateral deviation would be fifteen yards, he need not worry about overs or shorts. He ordered a 20-minute preparation on the slopes of the ridge. In briefing his company Ryan stressed the need for a speedy ground attack to exploit the artillery support. The mission would put heavy demands on a company that was tired, undermanned, and low on food, water, and ammunition.

The two assault platoons of Company F started off at a dead run the moment the first shells were fired on the morning of the 25th. Mortars, machine guns, and antitank guns supported them. The attacking infantry was thinned out by enemy fire and natural obstacles, but thirty-one reached the top of Ryan Ridge. They found themselves perched atop a rugged razorback, full of rocks, holes, and blasted vegetation. As the artillery fire receded, Japanese began emerging from "spider holes," pillboxes, caves, and tunnels. The thirty-one Americans were ready for them. In twenty minutes of fighting similar to previous encounters on Item Pocket ridge tops they killed thirty-five Japanese and chased a larger number off the ridge. Five of the Americans were killed and two were wounded.

The crux of the situation lay in CPT Ryan's ability to consolidate his position; repeatedly units had gained footholds on these ridges, only to lose them to the enemy. By late afternoon, the twenty-four effectives on the ridge had an average of only six rounds of rifle ammunition. They had no medical supplies, and all the aid men were casualties. Radio communication was out. The Japanese, after their first unsuccessful sortie, had rigged a noose around the perimeter and were slowly tightening it. Holding the ridge now depended on Ryan's initiative.

Ryan fully understood the critical situation. He arranged for Company I to be moved around to his right flank. He planned to repeat the move that had worked so well in the morning. At 1605, fifteen minutes after artillery support opened up, Ryan and the rest of the company reached the crest, suffering five casualties on the way. Company I failed to make the top, having been cut off on the slopes. After reorganizing his company Ryan departed with two men to find reinforcements—a risky mission in the dark. Company I was still unable to move up, but CPT Betts of Company K was quick to help. By midnight all of Company K were on the ridge.

With more than a hundred men now on the ridge, Ryan and Betts could take the offensive. During the morning of the 26th they swept along the crest of Ryan Ridge in opposite directions. Company F advanced rapidly southwest to a point just opposite the north end of Machinato airstrip. Betts made some progress, then ran into heavy fire near the nose of Ryan Ridge and built up a defensive position. The main task now was systematic burning out and blowing up of caves on the western slope of the ridge. The Japanese still held several areas in Item Pocket, but the Americans were on Ryan Ridge to stay. The 165th could now establish an unbroken regimental line and prepare to continue the advance south.

#### *Item Pocket Reduced, 26-27 April*

Captain Ryan's attack on the 25th coincided with an assault launched southwest of Ryan Ridge on Gusukuma by other companies of the 165th. In bitter fighting that lasted all day the troops moved from wall to wall and tree to tree into the debris of Gusukuma. At one time Company A was receiving fire from eight machine guns, at least one 47-mm. antitank gun, and mortars. Much of it came from the eastern slope of Ryan Ridge, not yet reduced.

Fighting in and around Item Pocket raged on through the 26th. American troops were now pressing in on the heart of the Pocket from all directions. Casualties were still running high. On the 26th, a full week after the 165th began its attack, the regiment, as a result of enemy fire on Route 1, was still

operating without tanks or self-propelled mounts. Attack after attack by the infantry slowly constricted the Japanese-held area. By the night of the 26th the enemy had been cleaned out of Gusukuma, Ryan Ridge, and all the area west of the Pocket. Cave positions commanding the key bridges on Route 1 were sealed off, and engineers then resumed work.

General Griner had become increasingly distressed over the slow progress of the 165th. He was especially disturbed by the confused disposition of the regiment; disorganization had begun as early as 21 April and had increased as COL Kelley was forced to split up battalions and detach companies for various missions. On 27 April MG Griner, on authority from MG Hodge, relieved COL Kelley from command of the 165th.



## Maeda Escarpment

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 11.

The eastern end of the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment dominated the 96th Division front in the center of the line. It loomed directly ahead on the division right - a huge, forbidding, sheer cliff. The part of the escarpment lying within the 96th Division zone was called by the division the "Maeda Escarpment" after the village of Maeda, situated just over the crest on the reverse (south) slope. It was also called "Hacksaw Ridge" and the "Big Escarpment." The hill mass centering on the eastern end of the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment was often called Hill 196 in the official reports.<sup>1</sup> (See [CMH] Map No. XXX.)

At its eastern end the escarpment terminates abruptly in a gigantic sentinel-like monolith, called "Needle Rock." To the left (east) of Needle Rock a 200- yard saddle dips toward Hill 150, and 400 yards east of Hill 150 across another saddle is Hill 152, which marks the corner where the high ground of the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment formation turns at right angles to the southwest. The Ginowan-Shuri road (Route 5) bends around the corner of Hill 152 and then heads southwest toward Shuri, following the slope of the high ground on the west.

On 25 April the 96th Division was deployed with the 383d Regiment on the left, extending from the vicinity of Kochi to Hill 150; on the division right (west) the 381st Regiment stood in front of the escarpment. All of 25 April was spent by the 96th Division in studying this formidable terrain and in pounding known or suspected enemy positions in it. Thirty-six artillery concentrations, comprising 1,616 rounds, were fired in the zone of the 381st Infantry alone. Air strikes burned the escarpment with napalm bombs.

### *The Japanese Rampart Holds*

On 26 April, the attack against the Maeda Escarpment was launched. The infantry had little trouble in moving up the forward face, but when Company G of the 381st Infantry clambered to the top of the escarpment it suffered eighteen casualties in a matter of minutes. The Japanese on the Maeda Escarpment used to perfection their technique of reverse-slope defense. It was not difficult to occupy the forward slope of the ground, but the crest and the reverse slope were forbidden land. There the battle was to be fought.

Company F at Needle Rock tried to place men on the point of the escarpment by means of a human ladder, but the first three men to reach the top were killed at once by machine-gun fire. Just before dark Company E attempted to occupy some small knolls in Maeda, south of the Hill 150 saddle, but once the men were on the ground the knolls were swept by fire from about a dozen machine guns, which immediately killed two men and wounded six. Four hundred rounds of 81-mm. and 4.2-inch smoke shells were used in screening the withdrawal of the company in the gathering dusk.

Farther to the east there was, for a time, promise of considerable success. Elements of the 383d Regiment reached the crests of Hills 150 and 152 to find the ground below alive with Japanese. They estimated that they could see 600 of the enemy, who were unaccountably exposed. Machine gunners, BAR men, and individual riflemen had a field day. Tanks and armored flame throwers were able to move into the edge of Maeda and wreak havoc. Scores of the enemy were driven from caves by flame and then shot down as they fled.

This action on the crest and reverse slopes of Hills 150 and 152, and the penetration of the armor to Maeda on 26 April, had immediate and violent repercussions at 32d Army headquarters. At 1600 in the afternoon LTG Ushijima issued a terse order:

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<sup>1</sup> The account of operations of the 96th Division at Maeda Escarpment is, unless otherwise noted, taken from Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. III.

The enemy with troops following tanks has been advancing into the southern and eastern sectors of Maeda since about 1300. The 62d Division will dispatch local units . . . attack the enemy advancing in the Maeda sector and expect to repulse him decisively.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, adjacent *24th Division* units were ordered to cooperate in this effort regardless of division boundary. Two hours later the Japanese commanding general issued another order: "The army will crush the enemy which has broken through near Maeda. The 24th Division will put its main strength northeast of Shuri this evening."<sup>3</sup> In these orders can be seen the underlying reason why in the ensuing four days the 96th Division gained only yards. The Japanese meant to hold at Maeda and they did.

#### *Reverse Slope Classic*

On the left of the escarpment, at the corner where the high ground turns sharply southwest, the 1st Battalion, 381st Infantry, and elements of the 383d Infantry on 27 April worked their way through the saddle between Hills 150 and 152, supported by tanks of the 763d Tank Battalion and armored flame throwers of the 713th. In a notable example of tank-infantry action they engaged in hours of carnage. The tanks and flame throwers burned and blasted enemy positions, flushing out of their underground positions hundreds of Japanese who were then cut down by the infantry or by the machine guns of the tanks. Tanks and infantry penetrated to the south edge of Maeda, but here the infantry was stopped by enemy fire. On top of the escarpment an all-out effort was made to reduce the large underground pillbox that separated Companies F and G, but the attempt failed.<sup>4</sup> Although many Japanese were killed southeast of the escarpment, no ground was won permanently this day except for very slight advances in Maeda near Hills 150 and 152.

On 28 April Company K of the 381st Infantry, in an effort to weaken resistance at the escarpment, moved through the 27th Division zone to the west and attacked southeast through Nakama toward the "Apartment House." This was a large concrete school building, used as barracks, which was a center of Japanese strength; it was situated south of the escarpment between the villages of Nakama and Maeda. In a half hour of hand-to-hand fighting, Company K was repulsed with heavy losses, and survivors withdrew under smoke. Company K was now down to twenty-four effectives. Because both were greatly reduced in numbers, Companies K and I, 381st Infantry, were combined into one company which had a consolidated strength of only 70 men, 4 machine gunners from the heavy weapons company, and 1 artillery observer.<sup>5</sup>

During the early morning of 29 April, Japanese counterattacks were common across the entire 96th Division front. At 0515 the 2d Battalion, 383d Infantry, was attacked heavily by enemy armed with grenades and spears. One platoon of Company G was reduced from 30 to 9 men in this fight. In repulsing two counterattacks, the 383d Infantry killed approximately 265 Japanese.<sup>6</sup> Later in the day tanks and armored flame throwers spearheaded the action, during which they killed more than 200 of the enemy.<sup>7</sup>

The left (east) flank of the division on 29 April surged ahead to thrust a salient closer to Shuri than any other point of the Corps line. The crest of Hill 138 was seized again by Company L of the 383d Infantry in furious close combat. Tanks worked into position near the top of Hill 138 and engaged in

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<sup>2</sup> Tenth Army Transl No. 272, 13 Jul 45: 32d Army Ord No. 174, 26 Apr 45.

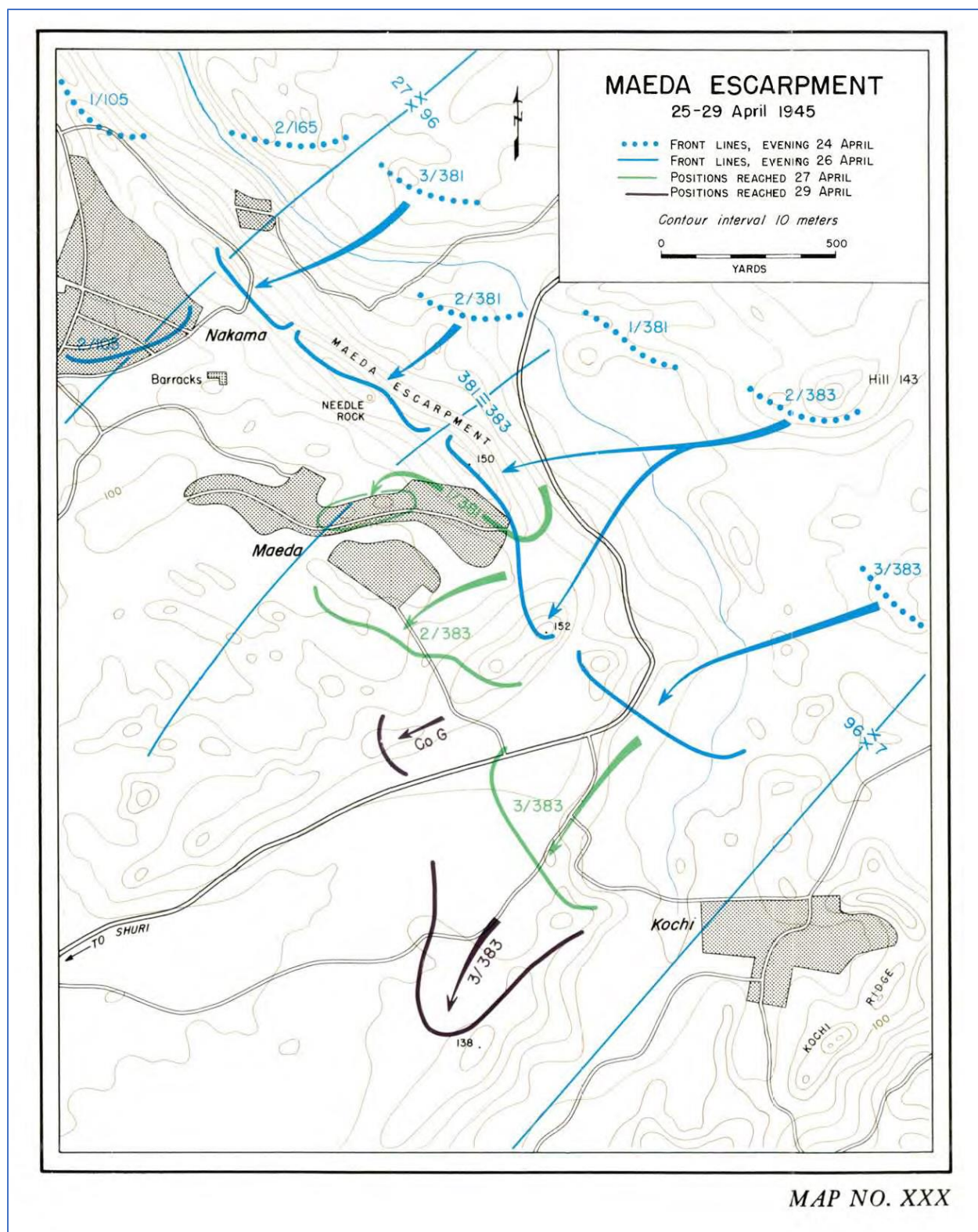
<sup>3</sup> Tenth Army Transl No. 273, 13 Jul 45: 32d Army Ord No. 175, 26 Apr 45.

<sup>4</sup> See also 713th Tk Bn Actn Rpt, Ch. 1, pp. 6-7; 96th Div Actn Rpt, Ch. VII, pp. 25-26

<sup>5</sup> See also 96th Div Actn Rpt, Ch. VII, pp. 26-27

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> See also 713th Tk Bn Actn Rpt, Ch. I, p. 8.



duels with enemy 47-mm. antitank guns to the south; for the first time in the month-old Okinawa battle direct fire was placed in Shuri, a little over a mile to the southwest.<sup>8</sup>

On 29 April, the 307th Infantry of the 77th Division took over the Maeda Escarpment part of the line from the 381st Infantry, and the next morning the 306th relieved the 383d Infantry on the 96th Division left. At noon on 30 April, MG Bruce. . . assumed responsibility for the former 96th Division zone of action on the Corps front. The end of April also witnessed a regrouping among the Japanese units on the line. In response to the urgent orders of the Japanese commander on 26 April, when the Maeda sector was threatened, the *32d Regiment* of the *24th Division* hurried northward to the Maeda sector but apparently did not take over front-line duty until 28 April. It then went into the middle sector between the *22d Regiment* of the *24th Division* on the east and the badly mauled *62d Division*, which was now occupying the western third of the front.

By the time it was relieved, the 381st had been reduced to about 40 percent combat efficiency and had suffered 1,021 casualties, 536 of them in the Maeda Escarpment fighting of the past four days. Some platoons were down to five or six men.<sup>9</sup> Many of the men were so exhausted that they did not have the energy to carry their equipment down the slope to the road below where trucks were waiting to take them to the rear.

### *Demolition Battle*

When the 307th Infantry moved into the line on 29 April, it found itself on the flat top of an escarpment which at its eastern end at the Needle Rock was not more than two feet wide. From this point westward the escarpment crest gradually widened until it was from 100 to 150 feet across. The reverse slope dropped abruptly, but its height was not as great as that of the northern face. It was on this reverse (southern) slope of the escarpment that the Japanese had their intricate network of caves and tunnels connecting with pillboxes on top of the escarpment. The nature of this underground fortress is illustrated by an incident of 2 May. On that day a tank fired six phosphorus shells into a cave and within fifteen minutes observers saw smoke emerging from more than thirty other hidden openings along the slope.<sup>10</sup>

There were innumerable attacks and counterattacks, grenade duels, satchel-chargings of dugouts and caves, horrifying night encounters, and many little stratagems used by both sides to win advantages in the hand-to-hand demolition battle of the Maeda Escarpment. Air strikes, employing both demolition and napalm bombs, were made almost daily against the escarpment positions. Tanks and armored flame throwers worked against the southeastern slope. Yet the top of the escarpment, in the words of the men who fought there, was "all hell rolled into one." It took Lieutenant Colonel Gerald D. Cooney's 1st Battalion, 307th Infantry, on the left side of the line, five days to gain control of Needle Rock. Men of the battalion were driven from Needle Rock and the top of the escarpment nine times before they held them for good.

During the night of 30 April-1 May, the 1st Battalion, 307th, brought up to the escarpment four 50-foot ladders and five cargo nets, the latter borrowed from the Navy. On 1 May Company A troops mounted the ladders at the eastern end of the escarpment, but every man who stood up was killed or wounded. Farther to the west, however, Company B, using the cargo nets, had two platoons on the edge of the escarpment by nightfall. About midnight Japanese counterattacked in this area and drove the men off the escarpment.

On the division right the 3d Battalion, 307th Infantry, on 1 May moved through the 27th Division zone behind the escarpment to Nakama village, from where it attacked eastward toward the Apartment House barracks area. During this action, a Japanese shell exploded an ammunition dump in Nakama,

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<sup>8</sup> 96th Div Actn Rpt, Ch. VII, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> 381st Inf Actn Rpt, pp. 36-37.

<sup>10</sup> The account of operations of the 77th Division at Maeda Escarpment is based on the following: Leach, 77th Div History, Vol. II; 77th Div Actn Rpt Okinawa, pp. 35-43; Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 259-64.

killing five men and disrupting ammunition supply for hours. On 2 May, Companies A and B placed men back on the edge of the escarpment but made no real gain. During 3 May the 1st Battalion, 307th Infantry, fought a desperate grenade battle to win the top of part of the escarpment. The Japanese showered the top with grenades and knee mortars from the reverse slope and with 81-mm. mortar fire from a distance.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Maeda Escarpment Bastion Falls*

The fighting was especially fierce on top the escarpment on 4 May. Colonel Cooney's 1st Battalion successfully executed a complicated demolition assault on the big cave-tunnel-pillbox network about 200 feet west of the eastern end of the escarpment. The battalion then held the newly won ground against repeated counterattacks from the southern side. It was estimated that 600 enemy were killed by the 307th Infantry in the fighting at the escarpment on 4 May. Slowly, on 5 May, the reverse slope was taken and caves blasted and closed. On the night of 5-6 May the Japanese staged several counterattacks in an effort to win back the escarpment. An especially severe attack struck the 3d Battalion, 307th Infantry, on the regimental right. In repelling it the 3d Battalion killed 250 enemy troops, largely in hand-to-hand fighting. During 6 May, all battalions of the 307th Infantry advanced southward to the slopes of Hill 187. The battle of the escarpment was over.

The losses in the escarpment battle had been heavy. In the 1st Battalion, 307th Infantry, no less than eight company commanders were wounded in one 36-hour period. It had gone up on the escarpment on 29 April with a strength of about 800 men; it came down on 7 May with 324. The 77th Division estimated that it had killed upwards of 3,000 Japanese in the 7-day battle for the escarpment.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Leach, 77th Div Hist, Vol. II, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, p. 264; 77th Div Actn Rpt, p. 43.



## Kochi Ridge

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 11 and associated maps.

On the eastern side of the Corps line, the 7th Division, although not realizing this immediately, faced a new enemy combat unit. On 23 April, the *22d Regiment* of the *24th Division* took over the eastern part of the Shuri defense zone. At last the *62d Division*, which for three weeks had borne the brunt of the American attack, was to have help. It was time, for the *62d* was but a remnant of its former self. The boundary between the *24th Division* and the *62d Division*, which now was assembled in the western half of the line, ran generally from Shuri Castle north to the front lines west of Kochi and Tanabaru. The Ginowan- Shuri road (Route 5) marked roughly the boundary between the two major units of the Japanese *32d Army*. The change in command along the front was effective at 1100, 23 April. The order directing the new deployment of *24th Division* troops stated that "in particular, liaison forces with the *62d Division* near Kochi, must be strongly protected." The front lines of the *22d Regiment* extended from the east coast northwestward through the villages of Gaja, Kuhazu, Onaga, and Kochi. The rest of the *24th Division* was in reserve northeast of Shuri or in the Oroku area. The *22d Regiment*, fresh and never before in combat except for small groups that had participated in the abortive counterattack of 13 April, faced the 7th Division at Kochi and eastward to the sea.<sup>1</sup>

Directly south of Hill 178, two miles away, stood dominant Conical Hill, guarding the coastal passage. Hill 178 and Conical sent long ridges downward toward each other which terminated, 800 yards short of meeting, in a low, flat area, an inward bulge of the coastal flat which reached at this point as far as Onaga. A half mile west of Onaga was the village of Kochi. Between these two villages was high ground, the northern part of which was known as Horseshoe Ridge, and the 500-yard-long southern arm as Kochi Ridge. Beyond Kochi Ridge the ground rose in ever higher broken ridges and hills southwestwardly toward Shuri.<sup>2</sup> (See [CMH] Map No. XXIX.)

To the southwest of Kochi Ridge was Zebra Hill, a long, high stretch of ground which climbed toward the still higher ground north of Shuri. A deep road cut separated the lower extremities of Kochi Ridge and Zebra. Opposite the road cut on the east, the Onaga side, were How and Item Hills, both of them flanking this important area. On the other side (west) of Kochi Ridge, and paralleling it, was Hill 138. This high ground surrounding Kochi Ridge on three sides was held by the Japanese. From these points the enemy had observation of the Kochi area, and from the same circle of high ground mortars and machine guns could concentrate their fire on Kochi Ridge, which was also a well-organized strong point.

### *The 17th Infantry Attacks Kochi Ridge*

On 25 April the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry, against surprisingly little resistance, advanced 600 yards across the flat ground on the 7th Division right (west) to occupy the slope of Horseshoe Ridge. The next day the 1st Battalion tried to advance along the west side of Kochi Ridge, and the 2d Battalion along the east side. As soon as this effort began, the reverse-slope fighting technique of the Japanese came into play, and prearranged mortar and machine-gun fire from surrounding heights swept over the area. The attack was stopped and all the troops fell back to their former positions except one platoon of Company G that dug in on the east side of the ridge for a precarious foothold. Neither battalion had

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<sup>1</sup> Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 3, 2 Aug 45: *24th Division*; Transl No. 246, 8 Jul 45; *32d Army* Ord No. 170, 22 Apr 45; Transl No. 244, 7 Jul 45; *32d Army* Ord No. 172, 23 Apr 45; 7th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt Nos. 26-28 and 34, 26-28 Apr and 4 May 45, especially PW Interrog Rpt No. 14 in G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 28, and Transl No. 23 in G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 27.

<sup>2</sup> The account of operations of the 7th Division in the Kochi sector is taken from Gugeler, 7th Div History, Ch. 5.



observation of the other's movements; neither could gain possession of the crest of the ridge; each fought essentially an isolated action on its own side of the ridge. By the evening of 26 April, it was evident that the 17th Infantry had come up solidly against the Japanese manning the Kochi sector of the line. The next day, a rainy, muddy day, efforts to establish physical contact between the 1st and 2d Battalions failed. There was no gain but there were many casualties.

Before dawn of 28 April the 3d Battalion, 17th Infantry, relieved the 1st Battalion on the west side of Kochi Ridge and took up the attack under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Lee Wallace. Colonel Wallace hoped to move men around Kochi Ridge into the cut between the ridge and Zebra, and then to take the Kochi Ridge defenses in the rear and flank. He succeeded in getting Company K through Kochi to the cut, while Company L moved southward along the west slope. But once at the cut the company received a blast of machine-gun fire that killed four and wounded eight. Thereafter Company K kept under cover until it could work its way back. In the meantime Company L was unable to reach the crest.

The attack remained stalled on 29 April. Whenever any serious movement threatened, the Japanese concentrated the fire of from twelve to fourteen mortars on the endangered spot and denied it to the attackers. To add to the misfortunes of the men, twelve rounds of friendly 105-mm. artillery shells fell short, landing in the midst of Company G on the east side of Kochi Ridge. Five men were killed and eighteen wounded in one platoon, and an adjacent platoon was left with only twelve men. In addition to the killed and wounded, there were eighteen cases of concussion and shock. Company G now had only twenty-seven men left in the rifle platoons.

On the morning of 30 April, Company E took the place in the line formerly held by Company G and started forward. Suddenly, at 0845, it was hit by cross fire from about eight machine guns located on both flanks and to the front. This was followed by a mortar concentration. Losses were heavy. Twenty men were killed, and in one squad only two men were left. The wounded were helpless. Smoke placed over the men was blown away quickly by a brisk wind and offered almost no protection; even those not wounded were unable to withdraw, and relief parties could not come forward. Medical supplies were finally dropped by a cub plane from a height of fifty feet, in the face of small arms fire. After dark most of the wounded were brought back.

Farther down the slope toward Onaga, Company I was struck by a Japanese counterattack of about 25 men at 1100, and 5 men were killed and 11 wounded. On the same day, a carrier-based Corsair strafed behind the lines of the 17th Infantry, killing 6 and wounding 19 in a tragic blunder. Unquestionably, 30 April was a bad day for the 17th Infantry Regiment. Since 26 April, the regiment had suffered more than 60 casualties from friendly fire.

While the 17th Infantry was trying vainly to find some way of taking Kochi Ridge, the 32d Infantry to its east was delayed in opening an attack by lack of success around Kochi. On 28 April, an attack on the ridge southwest of Kuhazu put armored flame throwers into the village, but the infantry was stopped by heavy mortar concentrations. On the 29th, when tanks tried to reach Onaga from the coast, one of them hit a mine on a narrow road among the rice paddies near Unaha and was knocked out, blocking the road. Three of the remaining four tanks turned over or threw their tracks and were lost in trying to turn around. The 32d Infantry was now trying to help the situation at Kochi by putting pressure on enemy positions to the southeast.

In a predawn attack on 30 April the 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, successfully placed Company C on "Chimney Crag" and Company A in the "Roulette Wheel" on the ridge southwest of Kuhazu. Japanese in large numbers infiltrated behind the lines of these companies during the night and disrupted the relief of the 32d by the 184th, the completion of which was to take place before dawn of 1 May but was not accomplished until 1730 in the afternoon. In fighting its way back after being relieved in the line, the 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, lost eleven men killed and twenty-two wounded.

That night, 1-2 May, a penetration was made by Company L, 184th Infantry, to Gaja Ridge just in front of Conical Hill. The advantage gained by this surprise move was lost at the end of the day when the men were withdrawn by company officers in direct violation of orders to hold the ground despite heavy casualties.

#### *The Kochi Fight Continues*

The fight at Kochi Ridge continued during the early days of May, the 17th Infantry making only negligible gains. On 1 May an armored bulldozer prepared an approach from the west to the top of Kochi Ridge between Knobs 1 and 2. An armored flame thrower moved up the approach and twice burned the area, but it was unable to reach the enemy strong points on the east side just over the crest. Onaga was mopped up during the day, but otherwise the infantry undertook no movement and remained in their dug-in positions, engaging in intermittent grenade duels.

At dawn of 2 May the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry, relieved the 2d Battalion on the east side of Kochi Ridge. It was a bad day, dark with mist and rain. Once again the flame thrower climbed to the saddle between Knobs 1 and 2 and spurted flame at enemy positions. Troops of the 1st Battalion then tried to take Knob 1 from the east side but failed, largely because of the heavy mortar fire which fell on them. During the night sniper positions were dug through the ridge by both battalions to give observation of areas that were hidden from view.

On 3 May, after a dawn artillery preparation, the 1st Battalion on the east and the 3d Battalion on the west side moved forward for a coordinated attack, which included a movement by Company C against How Hill on the east flank of Kochi Ridge. The entire effort came to nothing as the enemy soon halted all forward movement by a mass of artillery and mortar fire, together with intense machine-gun and rifle fire. Grenades also were brought into play.

General Hodge. . . was disturbed by the continued failure of the 7th Division to make gains at Kochi Ridge. This failure was largely caused by the fact that limited knowledge of the mutually supporting Japanese positions hindered the launching of a coordinated divisional attack. Here, as in so many other sectors on Okinawa, the thorough integration of the Japanese defenses across the entire front brought combined fire power on one American regimental sector so great that the troops were denied the freedom of movement necessary to effective attack.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 274-75.



## The Second Japanese Counterattack

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 12.

### *Plan for the Ground Attack*

The Japanese planned their ground attack with extreme care. This was to be no banzai charge. The enemy's intelligence had formed an accurate estimate of American dispositions, and his orders were clear and explicit. Divisions, regiments, battalions, and companies were given definite objectives and precise boundaries. Units in close support followed designated routes. Commanders were ordered to dispatch infiltrating squads to gain up-to-date information. The efforts of supporting arms, such as artillery, tanks, and engineers, were thoroughly integrated with the infantry action.<sup>1</sup>

The *24th Division*, occupying the eastern half of the front, was to open the attack at daybreak of "X Day," 4 May. "After effecting a quick rupture of the enemy front lines," LTG Amamiya's order read, "the division will continue penetration and annihilate him at all points by continuous night and day attacks." By sunset of the first day the Japanese were to have penetrated two miles into the opposing lines to a point northeast of Tanabaru. The final objective was an east-west line at Futema, site of the 96th Division command post, which the Japanese mistakenly thought to be LTG Buckner's headquarters.

... the *89th Regiment* on the east was to break through in the Onaga area. The *32d Regiment*, also supported by artillery, was to penetrate American lines in the Maeda area. Tanks were to support both prongs. Raiding and infiltration units were ordered to follow in the wake of the "break-through troops." Once the *24th Division* was established at the first objective northeast of Tanabaru, the Japanese troops were to dig in against American counterattacks, set up antitank traps, and prepare to continue the attack northward.

The *22d Regiment* and the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade* had special missions. Located in the center of the *24th Division's* line, the *22d Regiment* was to screen the advance of the other two regiments with smoke and fire. Then, echeloned to the left rear of the *89th Regiment*, the *22d* would join in the attack. The *44th Independent Mixed Brigade*, a fresh unit, was ordered to protect the Japanese left flank during the attack. Following the expected break-through east of Maeda, the *44th* was to turn left toward Oyama on the west coast and thus cut off the 1st Marine Division. The enemy high command evidently considered the break-through at Maeda to be the critical blow, for his troops were especially well supported by tanks, artillery, and antitank elements. (See [CMH] Map No. XXXII.)

### *The Offensive Under Way*

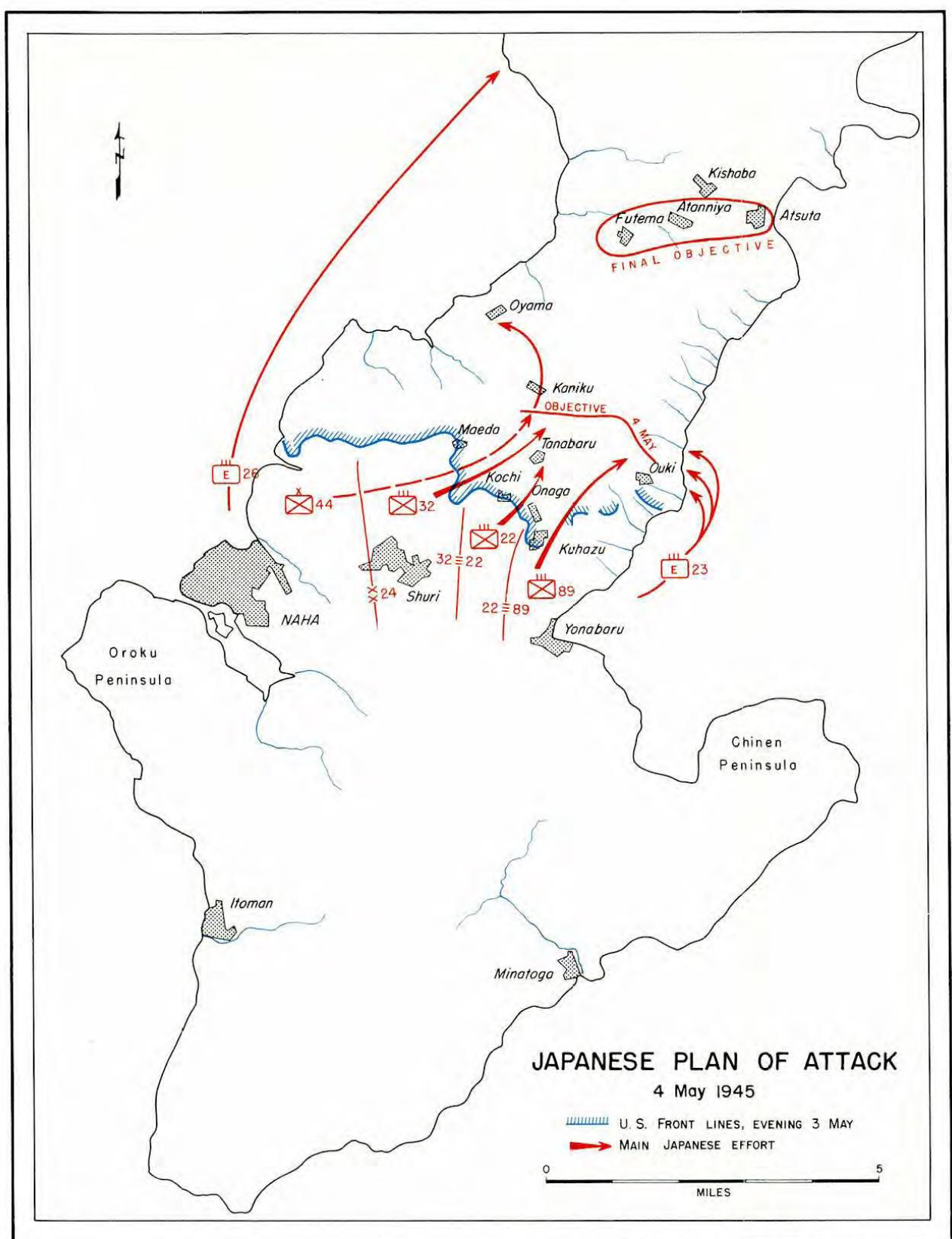
All these preparations the Japanese concealed with remarkable skill. On 2 May Colonel Cecil W. Nist, XXIV Corps intelligence officer, noted a definite decrease in the volume and intensity of enemy artillery fire, and sound-plots located Japanese pieces nine miles south of their front lines. Colonel Nist conjectured that the enemy was withdrawing his guns farther south—a move which could foreshadow a general Japanese withdrawal. No one divined the enemy's real intent. General Buckner believed that the enemy's rigid type of defense made it impossible for him to launch more than minor counterattacks.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Seven Japanese orders for the attack were later captured. Two were *24th Division* orders covering the entire ground attack; the others were regimental and battalion orders. The *32d Army* orders were not recovered. For copies of the orders see Tenth Army Int Monograph, Pt. I, Sec A, p. 13; 96th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt, No. 42, 13 May 45, and No. 44, 15 May 45; 7th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 36, 6 May 45. See also Interrog Yahara and Shimada; Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 4, 1 Aug 45: *44th Independent Mixed Brigade*.

<sup>2</sup> XXIV Corps G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 32, 3 May 45; interv 1st I & H Off with Gen Buckner, 1 May 45.





MAP NO. XXXII

Japanese rear areas, quiescent during the daylight hours when there was constant air observation, burst into activity soon after sundown on 3 May. Artillery opened up with heavy concentrations on American front lines. Enemy troops moved up to their appointed positions. Small units of three or four men, variously designated as "reconnaissance raiding" and "rear harassing" teams, proceeded toward the American lines to attack command posts, heavy weapons, communications, and depots and to send back information by means of smoke signals. The *27th Tank Regiment* rumbled up to Ishimmi, several of its tanks being severely damaged by American artillery fire en route.<sup>3</sup> On beaches south of Naha and Yonabaru, men of the shipping engineer regiments piled into barges and assault boats.

### *Sorties in the Night*

Armed with antitank guns, heavy machine guns, light arms, and thousands of satchel charges, several hundred men of the *26th Shipping Engineer Regiment* headed under overcast skies for landing places below Yontan and Kadena airfields. They miscalculated their position and turned into the shore at a point where it was heavily defended. At 0200 riflemen of the 1st Marine Division on the sea wall near Kuwan caught sight of ten barges and opened up with concentrated fire. Naval flares lighted up the area. One company fired 1,100 rounds from 60-mm. mortars. Several enemy barges burst into flames. One platoon of marines used fifty boxes of ammunition and burned out six machine-gun barrels as it sprayed the Japanese trying to cross the reef. (See [CMH] Map No. XXXIII.)

Many of the enemy managed to reach the shore; some of these fled back to the Japanese lines and others were cornered in Kuwan, where the marines mopped them up at leisure. All the landing boats were destroyed. A smaller group of Japanese advanced almost as far as Chatan, landing one and one-half miles south of there at Isa, but they were contained without major difficulty and during the following day were destroyed.<sup>4</sup>

The shipping engineers were even less successful on the east coast of Okinawa. After a trip northward in various types of boats, including native-type boats rowed by *Boeitai*, several hundred tried to land behind the 7th Division lines, but most of them were killed by fire from ships in Buckner Bay or by the 7th Division Reconnaissance Troop and 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion on land.<sup>5</sup>

The amphibious attack was a complete fiasco. The enemy lost from 500 to 800 men and almost all their landing craft. The engineer regiments never mounted another amphibious attack of any proportion; the survivors fought as infantry in the final operations on Okinawa.

### *The 24th Division Attacks*

Never had the 7th Infantry Division in its long combat in the Pacific experienced such shelling as swept its front lines during the night of 3-4 May. The enemy, using all types of weapons down to 20-mm., fired more than 5,000 rounds on the division during the night. To reach the Americans in their foxholes, he used airburst artillery and 70-mm. barrage mortar shells which burst in the air and in turn scattered more explosives to blow up on the ground. With their field pieces now in the open enjoying wide fields of fire, the Japanese artillerymen were gambling that the infantry attack would overwhelm XXIV Corps artillery before it could search out and destroy their weapons.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 8, 25 Jul 45: *27th Tank Regiment*.

<sup>4</sup> XXIV Corps PW Interrog Rpt No. 82, 14 May 45; G-2 Summary No. 8, 29 Apr-5 May 45, p. 4; Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 6, 3 Aug 45: Shipping Engineers; Stockman, 1st Mar Div History.

<sup>5</sup> 7th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 34, 4 May 45; Gugeler, 7th Div History, p. 243; Tenth Army PW Interrog Rpt No. 10, 2 Jun 45.

<sup>6</sup> 7th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 34, 4 May 45.





In the pitch darkness Japanese troops made their way toward the American front lines. At 0500 two red flares ordered them to attack. As the artillery fire became heavy, a guard of Company A, 17th Infantry, on a hill just north of Onaga, dropped back below the crest for cover. He thought that the enemy would not attack through his own artillery, but the enemy did just that. A few Japanese appeared on the crest and set up a light machine gun. Soon the whole company was in action and drove the enemy off the crest. The Japanese abandoned three light machine guns, four mortars, and much ammunition.<sup>7</sup>

At another point a surprise attack nearly succeeded. On high ground 1,000 yards east of Onaga a group of Japanese crept up the hill in front of Company I, 184th, commanded by Captain James Parker. In the sudden onslaught that followed, two heavy machine gun crews abandoned their positions. One of them left its weapon intact, and the Japanese promptly took it over and swung it around on the company. Parker, watching the attack from the ridge, had anticipated the move. The Japanese managed to fire one burst; then Parker destroyed the usurped weapon with his remaining heavy machine gun. For an hour or two longer the Japanese clung to the forward slopes, firing their rifles amid shrill screams, but they made no further progress.

By dawn the general pattern of the Japanese attack on the left (east) of the XXIV Corps line was becoming clear. In the 184th's sector the enemy's *89th Regiment*, following instructions to "close in on the enemy by taking advantage of cover,"<sup>8</sup> had advanced around the east slopes of Conical Hill, crept across the flats, and assembled in force around the "Y ridges" east of Onaga. They had outflanked three companies of the 184th on Chimney Crag and the Roulette Wheel north of Kuhazu, and had also managed to evade the forward battalions of the 17th around Kochi. Another Japanese element had attacked 7th Division lines on the high ground north of Unaha.

At dawn First Lieutenant Richard S. McCracken, commanding Company A, 184th, observed 2,000 Japanese soldiers in the open area east and north of Kuhazu. They were perfect "artillery meat." Unable to get through to his artillery support, McCracken called his battalion commander, LTC Maybury, and described the lucrative targets. Maybury was equally pleased. McCracken suggested, however, that the Colonel should not be too happy - a group of Japanese at that moment was within 100 yards of Maybury's observation post.

"Oh no," Maybury said, "that's a patrol from Company K down there."

"I don't know who the hell it is," McCracken said, "but there's a lot of them and they've got two field pieces that are pointed right at your OP."

There was indeed a party of Japanese busily unlimbering two 75-mm. howitzers just below Maybury. But Company C, 17th Infantry, had spotted this activity, and within a few minutes maneuvered tanks into position and scattered the enemy group. Artillery eliminated the Japanese caught in the open.

The 3d Battalion, 184th, beat off an attack by 200 Japanese, who thereupon withdrew to the ruins of Unaha and set up mortars. A mortar duel ensued, sometimes at ranges of 250 yards. The 3d Battalion, 32d, also poured fire on the enemy there. After the impetus of the attack was lost, a Japanese officer stood out on open ground and waved his saber to assemble his men for an attack. American mortarmen waited for a worth-while target to develop, then put mortar fire on it. Four times the officer assembled a group, only to have his men killed or scattered, before he was finally killed.

By 0800 the Japanese had been driven beyond grenade range on the entire 7th Division front. But they did not abandon their attack, perhaps because they had been ordered to advance "even until the last man."<sup>9</sup> They made the mistake of milling about in the exposed flatland, where they became

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<sup>7</sup> The account of the operations of the 7th Division during the Japanese attack is taken from Gugeler, 7th Div History.

<sup>8</sup> 7th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 36, 6 May 45.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

perfect targets; they neither pressed the attack nor essayed an organized withdrawal. American heavy weapons fenced off avenues of retreat in order to contain the enemy in open areas. "We laid them down like ducks," a platoon sergeant reported.

#### *Tank-Infantry Attack in the Center*

While the 7th Division was repelling the Japanese attack in the eastern sector of the XXIV Corps line, the 77th Division was blunting the other enemy "spearhead" in the center. Here the Japanese *32d Regiment*, supported by tanks and engineers, attacked behind intense artillery fire. This sector was the critical point of attack, for a break-through here would enable the supporting *44th Independent Mixed Brigade* to cut west and isolate the 1st Marine Division.

Transportation difficulties beset the *32d Regiment* almost from the start. During the night light tanks drove out of Shuri up the Ginowan road (Route 5), but American artillery interdicting the road prevented medium tanks from following. The mediums had to take a long detour, which was in such poor condition that only two of the tanks could enter into the attack. Trucks and artillery also were slowed down. Even foot troops had trouble in moving. These difficulties severely handicapped the *32d Regiment* in ensuing operations.<sup>10</sup>

Supported by nine light tanks, the *3d Battalion* led the assault of the *32d Regiment* against the 306th Infantry, 77th Division, before dawn on 4 May. The enemy mounted his assault from southeast of Hill 187 and hit the 77th where Route 5 curled around the east end of Urasoe-Mura Escarpment. The Japanese drove into the front lines of the 1st Battalion, 306th, near Maeda. Although the enemy found the weak points of the line, American automatic fire split up the attacking forces. As in the case of their right "spearhead," the Japanese were unable to move into the American lines at any place with sufficient force to break through. The enemy's only success consisted of driving a platoon off one of the hills. American artillery was called in against the Japanese tanks. Several were knocked out, and, as the infantry stalled, the rest withdrew.<sup>11</sup>

Shortly before daylight, when the Japanese infantry had failed to take its initial objectives east of Hill 187, Colonel Murakami, commanding the *27th Tank Regiment*, became impatient and recklessly committed his own infantry company, a standard element of a Japanese tank regiment. American artillery fire destroyed one platoon, disrupting the attack, and daylight found the surviving troops in a precarious position across from the American lines. Colonel Murakami ordered the company to withdraw, but artillery fire prevented a retreat during the day. When the Japanese used smoke for concealment, the Americans simply blanketed the obscured area with shell fire. The survivors straggled back to their front lines after nightfall. All the light tanks that had supported the attack were lost.<sup>12</sup>

By 0730 the 306th Infantry had driven off the enemy. Broken up into small groups, the Japanese tried to pull back over ground swept by tremendous volumes of artillery and mortar fire, but few got through. Continued attack was impossible. At 0800 the commander of the Japanese *3d Battalion* radioed the *32d Regiment* command post at Dakeshi: "Although the front lines on the high ground southeast of Maeda advanced to the line of the central sector and are holding, further advance is very difficult due to enemy fire. There is no tank cooperation."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 8, 25 Jul 45: *27th Tank Regiment*; Transl No. 154, 15 Jun 45; Interrog Shimada; 96th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 45, 16 May 45.

<sup>11</sup> The account of the operations of the 77th Division during the Japanese attack is, unless otherwise noted, based on Leach, 77th Div History, Vol. II, Ch. II.

<sup>12</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 310-11; XXIV Corps PW Interrog Rpt No. 144, 15 Jun 45.

<sup>13</sup> 77th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 51, 16 May 45.



### *Japanese Penetration to Tanabaru, 5 May*

General Amamiya refused to abandon the attack. Although both "spearheads" of his *24th Division* had smashed vainly against the American defenses, suffering heavy losses in the process, he ordered another assault for the night of 4-5 May. The *1st Battalion, 32d Regiment*, and the attached *26th Independent Infantry Battalion* were directed to penetrate XXIV Corps lines northwest of Kochi in a night attack. The *1st Battalion* had been used in support of the Japanese left "spearhead" on the 4th, but it had not been fully committed and was still relatively intact.

The reason for Amamiya's persistence after the morning's debacle is not clear, but one event of the day may well have led to his decision. Unknown to XXIV Corps, elements of the *1st Battalion, 22d Regiment*, had penetrated more than 1,000 yards behind the American lines near Kochi. After dusk on the 4th these elements were ordered to pull back to their regimental lines. Amamiya may have reasoned that he had found a weak point in the American defenses. In any event the *1st Battalion* of the *32d* was given a similar route of approach, lying near the boundary between the 7th and 77th Divisions.<sup>14</sup>

#### *Breakthrough at Night*

The Japanese, having shelled the lines of the 306th Infantry during the night of 4-5 May, at 0200 launched an attack on the 306th where it straddled Route 5 northwest of Kochi. American artillery broke up this attempt. Three hours later the enemy attacked in battalion strength, supported by tanks. Although six tanks were soon knocked out, the Japanese pressed on through artillery and mortar fire to engage the 306th in close combat. They isolated a battalion observation post and killed or wounded its five occupants. Despite hostile heavy mortar fire, the Japanese set up knee mortars and heavy machine guns close to the American lines and even tried – unsuccessfully – to emplace a 75-mm. gun.<sup>15</sup>

Fierce fire fights developed along the regiment's entire line. One enemy force, moving up a draw in close column formation, marched squarely into a company and was destroyed by automatic weapons fire. Most of the Japanese, unable to close in for hand-to-hand fighting, took refuge in ditches just in front of the American positions. Grenade duels and exchanges of automatic fire continued until midday. By dawn, however, the 306th had the situation in hand. American tanks moved along the ditches and machine-gunned the enemy. Some of the surviving Japanese, using smoke for concealment, managed to withdraw to their lines. They left 248 dead in the 77th Division's sector, together with numerous machine guns, mortars, rifles, and several hundred rounds of 75-mm. ammunition for the gun they had failed to get into action.

Behind this noisy fire fight along Route 5, a large portion of the Japanese *1st Battalion, 32d Regiment*, managed to infiltrate through the XXIV Corps line. The Japanese made their penetration at a point between Route 5 and Kochi. This route lay within the 77th Division sector but close to the divisional boundary between the 7th and 77th. About ninety of the infiltrating Japanese made their way into the command post of the 306th Infantry, but they did little damage and were killed during the following day. Most of the Japanese, numbering approximately 450, crossed the divisional boundary and reoccupied the town of Tanabaru and Tanabaru Ridge. The deepest penetration was more than a mile behind the Corps front.<sup>16</sup>

The town and ridge had constituted a strong point on the first Shuri defense line, dominating much of the adjacent area. This position had never actually been taken by American troops; the

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<sup>14</sup> 7th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 37, 7 May 45, and No. 38, 8 May 45; Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 3, 2 Aug 45; *24th Division*; 96th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 41, 12 May 45.

<sup>15</sup> Leach, 77th Div History, Vol. II, Ch. II, pp. 37-40; Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 313-15.

<sup>16</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 316-17.

Japanese had abandoned it on the night of 23 April when the rest of the line cracked. The escarpment dropped abruptly in a steep coral cliff on the north. The town stretched along the southeast slope of the ridge and was divided by a road running south to Onaga and Kochi. The front-line battalions of the 17th Infantry, 7th Division, were supplied over this road. While the Japanese held at Tanabaru, this supply road was effectively cut.

### *Battle Behind the Lines*

Through field glasses sentries of the 17th Infantry could see in the moonlight a column of troops moving northwest against the skyline on Tanabaru Escarpment. The 17th fired on some of the troops but was handicapped by fear of endangering friendly troops. Other Japanese columns apparently passed undetected. The enemy quickly located and cut the telephone wires between regimental headquarters and the three battalions, but the regiment was able to record enemy movements through its units in the rear areas. The Japanese also surrounded and attacked supply dumps at the base of the ridge and were barely prevented from destroying them.<sup>17</sup>

The job of cleaning out the infiltrating Japanese fell to Company E, which sent a patrol of platoon strength up the east slope of the escarpment. When the Japanese on the heights held up this patrol with fire, First Lieutenant Walter J. Sinkiewicz, commanding Company E, committed the rest of his unit. One platoon almost reached the top, but the enemy drove it back with mortar, machine-gun, and light-arms fire, killing two and wounding seven. A sharp fire fight developed, during which Sinkiewicz and his three platoon leaders were all wounded.

The Japanese were meanwhile making the most of their position. Their fire covered the 1st Battalion's supply dump and motor pool on the north side of the ridge, rendering them inaccessible to the Americans. Enemy groups in Tanabaru mined the supply road through the town and blanketed the road with machine-gun fire. A half-track carrying medical supplies was disabled by a mine, and a medical officer was killed as he tried to escape. The Japanese occupied the vehicle and converted it into a pillbox. An American patrol killed eleven Japanese in and around the vehicle.

By noon of 5 May there was apprehension at the regimental command post, which had not fully appreciated the strength of the infiltration. From a hill near the command post Lieutenant Colonel Albert V. Hartl, executive of the 17th Infantry, could plainly see several Japanese soldiers 600 yards away on Tanabaru Escarpment. The Japanese were in turn watching American activity.

With Company E stalled on the east slope of the escarpment, Company F attempted a broad flanking attack. Two of its platoons on the line, supported by tanks, pushed through Tanabaru and knocked out hastily established defenses. Beyond the town the company drew heavy fire from numerous caves, and it spent the rest of the day destroying the Japanese in these positions. Company E thereupon took over the burden of the attack, and by 1730 it had reached the top of Tanabaru Escarpment behind a mortar preparation. This move enabled the 1st Battalion to transfer its vehicles and supplies to a safer location, but the supply route was still blocked.

Early in the morning of 6 May a force of Japanese just below Company E pressed in on the Americans with grenades and satchel charges. After suffering sixteen casualties in half an hour, Company E retreated off the top to a protected ledge just below. Here the survivors formed a line and bombarded the top of the hill with grenades to deny it to the enemy. While some members of the company hauled new boxes of grenades up the steep trail, the others lobbed several hundred grenades on the Japanese, who withdrew from the exposed top at dawn.

Company F returned to Tanabaru the same morning for a second sweep through the town and killed eight Japanese. Supported by mortar fire and aided by small-arms fire from Company E, Company

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<sup>17</sup> The account of the operations of the 7th Division in retaking Tanabaru Escarpment is, unless otherwise noted, based on Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 255-63.

F initially made rapid progress on the slope but then ran into a series of coral outcroppings. With portable flame throwers, mortar fire, and quantities of grenades, the troops eliminated all resistance on the slope by evening.

On the following day, Company F attacked the crest of Tanabaru Escarpment from the west behind mortar fire and quickly gained the top. Trenches were littered with Japanese dead, most of them killed by 81-mm. mortar fire. The amount of Japanese and American equipment found on the escarpment explained the ability of the enemy to hold out so tenaciously. Enemy equipment included one 75-mm. pack howitzer with ammunition, 2 heavy machine guns, 6 light machine guns, 2 knee mortars, 3 magnetic mines, and a large quantity of ammunition. Their American weapons consisted of 1 light machine gun, 2 BAR's, 3 carbines, and 3 Tommy guns. A total of 462 Japanese were killed in the area of Tanabaru during the 3-day battle, most of them on the escarpment and others as they tried to make their way back to their lines.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> XXIV Corps G-3 Periodic Rpt No. 37, 7 May 45; 7th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 37, 7 May 45.

## Tenth Army Attacks: 6-31 May

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 12, 13, 14, and 15.

American casualties during the enemy offensive were heavy. On 4 May 335 were killed or wounded, excluding 352 casualties of the 1st Marine Division, which was not involved in the enemy ground attack. On 5 May, the two divisions hit hardest by the counterattack and penetration, the 7th and 77th, suffered 379 casualties. These losses are comparable to those previously incurred during the heaviest fighting in the Kakazu Ridge struggles and in the first few days of the general attack starting 19 April.<sup>1</sup>

The XXIV Corps now resumed its attack, which in several sectors of the front had hardly been interrupted by the Japanese offensive. Because the Japanese had used almost all their fresh reserves in the counterattack, LTG Buckner could feel confident of the launching sometime in May of a general attack on the Shuri defenses. On 7 May MG Hodge ordered that preparatory to this coordinated Tenth Army attack the advance was to continue to the Asa-Dakeshi-Gaja line, to be seized by the evening of 8 May. Upon reaching this line, "a bare minimum," the attack was to continue in order to gain as much ground as possible for later offensive action.<sup>2</sup>

By 11 May XXIV Corps, though still far from the minimum line set by MG Hodge, had eliminated many Japanese positions in preparation for the full-scale attack that was to follow. The week of 3-10 May had been one of general consolidation of the line that ran from Ouki on the east coast to Asa-Kawa on the west. At the expense of more than 20,000 casualties, including nonbattle,<sup>3</sup> the American forces on the Shuri line had extended their line at Maeda, Kochi, and Awacha, thus making their lines of communication more secure and gaining more favorable terrain for the Tenth Army attack scheduled for 11 May.

### *The May Attack on the Shuri Defenses*

With both corps now on the line, Tenth Army on 7 May assumed direct control of operations on the southern front for the first time. By 11 May, the III Amphibious Corps in the north (consisting of the 6th Marine Division and Corps troops) had been relieved by the 27th Division and had moved into position on the right of the southern front. The Corps assumed control again of the 1st Marine Division, which had been attached to XXIV Corps since the latter part of April. The XXIV Corps' zone of action now extended eastward from the 1st Marine Division boundary to Yonabaru. From west to east, the 6th Marine Division, the 1st Marine Division, the 77th, and the 96th occupied successive positions on the line. The 7th Division was in XXIV Corps reserve, enjoying a period of rest and rehabilitation.

The plan of attack called for Tenth Army to renew the assault on the Shuri defenses with its two corps abreast, III Amphibious Corps on the right, XXIV Corps on the left. The initial scheme of maneuver was an envelopment of Shuri by the Marine divisions on the west and the Army divisions on the east, while a strong holding attack was maintained in the center.<sup>4</sup> The Tenth Army staff believed that the

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<sup>1</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, p. 324.

<sup>2</sup> XXIV Corps FO No. 49, 7 May 45.

<sup>3</sup> XXIV Corps G-3 Periodic Rpt No. 41, 11 May 45. The figure cited in the text is only approximate because 1st Marine Division losses during 7-10 May were estimated on the basis of previous losses during 30 April-6 May, when the division was under XXIV Corps.

<sup>4</sup> Tenth Army Opns Ord 8-45, 7 May 45; interv 1st I & H Off with Brig Gen Walter A. Dumas, ACoFS, G-3, Tenth Army, 9 Jul 45. There is still some question as to the precise scheme of maneuver. The Tenth Army operation plan overlay, which according to the text of the plan was to show the scheme of maneuver more precisely than the

Japanese positions were weaker on the right and that the fresh Marine divisions had a chance for a quick break-through on that flank. Moreover, the terrain was more favorable along the western coast. The wide flanking maneuver around Shuri that later developed was not projected in the original plans. General Buckner explained on 10 May that there would be nothing spectacular. He added:

It will be a continuation of the type of attack we have been employing to date. Where we cannot take strong points we will pinch them off and leave them for the reserves to reduce. We have ample firepower and we also have enough fresh troops so that we can always have one division resting.<sup>5</sup>

The initial order for the attack provided for a 30-minute general preparation by the artillery just before the ground attack. This provision was revoked two days later in favor of pinpointing of targets. The new order stated that "the maximum practicable number of known enemy guns and strong points will be destroyed or neutralized" prior to the infantry assault. This change resulted, in all probability, from recognition of the failure of the mass preparation for the attack of 19 April. The elaborate system of Japanese underground positions across the entire front made it necessary to use precision fire, hitting each cave entrance.<sup>6</sup>

The attack launched on 11 May, although coordinated initially along the entire front, soon broke down into a series of intense battles for particular points with the western, central, and eastern sectors presenting relatively distinct situations. At many places the American efforts were merely an intensification of assaults that had begun on previous days.

For ten days of continuous fighting, from Sugar Loaf on the west coast to Conical Hill on the east, the Japanese, except for local and relatively minor retreats, held tenaciously to their long-prepared positions. Finally, on 21 May, after some of the bitterest action of the battle of Okinawa, the American forces were to seize the eastern slope of Conical Hill, close to the east coast, and thereby to make an opening in the enemy lines which permitted an attempt at envelopment.

The break, when it came, was a twofold surprise. General Hodge had believed that the high ground east of Shuri would have to be taken before Conical Hill, which is farther to the south, somewhat lower, and one of the strongest natural positions on Okinawa, could be successfully assaulted. For his part, Major General Bradley, commanding the 96th Division, was convinced after his reconnaissance of the terrain that Conical Hill would have to be approached from the northwest, by advances down the ridge line of the chain of hills. As events turned out, Conical Hill was reduced before Oboe Hill and the high ground at Shuri, and by attack from another direction. Furious fighting was still in progress in the inner areas for many days after capture of Conical's eastern face had opened the way for American troops to pass down the coast to Yonabaru and spill out into southern Okinawa.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of the third week of May the fighting had penetrated to the inner ring of the Shuri defenses. The Tenth Army's hopes had been raised by the capture of the eastern slopes of Conical Hill, which, permitting the 7th Division to funnel through the corridor by Buckner [Nakagusuku] Bay, opened

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order itself, indicated a very close envelopment of Shuri by the two divisions immediately north of the Japanese headquarters city. The XXIV Corps field order indicated pressure across the line by both its divisions rather than major effort near the center of the Army line. Despite the scheme of maneuver outlined on the Tenth Army overlay, it seems that the actual plan was for uniform pressure across the line which would crack the Japanese defenses at some point and be immediately exploited wherever the particular break might come.

<sup>5</sup> Interv 1st I & H Off with Gen Buckner, 10 May 45.

<sup>6</sup> Change No. 1, to Tenth Army Opns Ord 8-45, 9 May 45; interv XXIV Corps Hist Off with Brig Gen Josef R. Sheetz, CG XXIV Corps Arty, 23 Jun 45.

<sup>7</sup> Interv 1st I & H Off with Gen Buckner, 15 Jun 45; Goth Div FO No. 21, 10 May 45; Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. IV, pp. 13, 14.



up the possibility of an envelopment of the enemy forces. But the bid for envelopment was destined to fail. From 22 to 29 May, except for certain gains on the flanks, there was no appreciable progress against any part of the Japanese inner defense ring. The enemy line held with hardly a dent against every attack.

The stalemate was due in large measure to rain, mud, and the bogging down of all heavy equipment. The weather during April and thus far into May had been unexpectedly good; there had been far less rain than pre-invasion meteorological tables had predicted. But now the days of grace from the skies were over: the heavens were about to open and the much talked-about "plum rains" of Okinawa were to set in and continue day after day. Mud was to become king, and it was impossible to mount a large-scale attack during this period.

### *The Fall of Shuri*

As the end of May approached, conflict had been raging on the Shuri line nearly two months and many an American soldier wondered whether Shuri would ever be taken or whether he would be alive to witness its capture. The American gains in southern Okinawa had been confined to a rather small area of hills and coral ridges which, aside from Yontan and Kadena airfields seized on 1 April, had no important value for the attack on the Japanese home islands. It is true that these airfields, the flat extent of Ie Shima, and certain coastal areas of central Okinawa suitable for air base development were already swarming with naval and army construction battalions, at work on the task of making the island over into a gigantic, unsinkable carrier from which to mount the final air assault on Japan. But this was just a beginning. Most of the big prizes - the port of Naha, the big anchorage of Nakagusuku Bay, Yonabaru, Shuri, Naha airfield, and the flat coastal ground of southern Okinawa - were still effectively denied to the Americans, long after they had expected to capture them.

Casualties on the American side were the heaviest of the Pacific war. At the end of May, losses of the two Marine divisions, whose fighting included approximately a month on the Shuri front, stood at 1,718 killed, 8,852 wounded, and 101 missing. In two months of fighting, chiefly on the Shuri front, the XXIV Corps suffered 2,871 killed, 12,319 wounded, and 183 missing. The XXIV Corps and the III Amphibious Corps had lost a total of 26,044 killed, wounded, or missing. American losses were approximately one man killed to every ten Japanese.<sup>8</sup>

Nonbattle casualties were numerous, a large percentage of them being neuropsychiatric or "combat fatigue" cases. The two Marine divisions had had 6,315 nonbattle cases by the end of May; the four Army divisions, 7,762. The most important cause of this was unquestionably the great amount of enemy artillery and mortar fire, the heaviest concentrations experienced in the Pacific war. Another cause of men's nerves giving way was the unending close-in battle with a fanatical foe. The rate of psychiatric cases was probably higher on Okinawa than in any previous operation in the Pacific.<sup>9</sup>

The fighting strength of the American combat units engaged in southern Okinawa at the end of May stood at 45,980 for the III Amphibious Corps and 51,745 for the XXIV Army Corps. The infantry divisions, especially those of the Army, were considerably below strength. On 26 May the 77th Infantry Division had a strength, exclusive of attached units, of only 9,628 enlisted men; the 96th Infantry Division, 10,993. At the end of May the American troops were exhausted. Out of 61 days the 96th Division had been in the line 50 days, the 7th Division 49, the 77th Division the last 32, the 1st Marine Division the last 31, and the 6th Marine Division more than 3 weeks. In the two months of fighting in

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<sup>8</sup> Tenth Army G-3 Periodic Rpt No. 67, 1 Jun 45. For comparative figures see ASF Monthly Progress Rpt, Sec. 7, 31 May 45, pp. 17, 19; 30 Sep 45, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> ASF Monthly Progress Rpt, Sec. 7, 30 Sep 45, p. 6; interv 1st I & H Off with Col F. B. Westervelt, Tenth Army Surgeon, 31 May 45.

southern Okinawa the 7th and 96th Divisions had seen the most continuous service. The 7th Division in that time had had one rest period of 12 days, the 96th Division one of 11 days.<sup>10</sup>

American armor, which played so important a part in the ground action, had suffered heavily. By the end of May, not counting Marine tank losses, there had been 221 tank casualties in the four Army tank battalions and the one armored flame thrower battalion. Of this total, 94 tanks, or 43 percent, had been completely destroyed. Enemy mines had destroyed or damaged 64 tanks and enemy gunfire 111. Such mishaps as thrown tracks or bogging down in bad terrain had accounted for 38, of which 25 were subsequently destroyed or damaged, mostly by enemy action. The 221 tank casualties constituted about 57 percent of the total number of Army tanks on Okinawa. At least 12 of the valuable and irreplaceable armored flame-throwing tanks were among those lost.<sup>11</sup>

American staff officers believed that the Japanese would fight at Shuri to the end. The struggle had gone on so long in front of Shuri that everyone apparently had formed the opinion that it would continue there until the last of the Japanese defenders had been killed. In a staff meeting at Tenth Army on 19 May Colonel Louis B. Ely, intelligence officer of the Tenth Army, said that it looked as though the Japanese would fight at Shuri to the death. In another staff meeting, on the evening of 22 May, COL Ely, in commenting on the passage of the 7th Division down the Conical corridor, noted the absence of strong resistance to the move and interpreted this as supporting the view that the "Japs will hole up in Shuri." At the same time LTG Buckner remarked: "I think all Jap first line troops are in the Shuri position. They don't appear to be falling back." On 25 May the Tenth Army periodic intelligence report stated that "evidence of captured documents, POW [Prisoners of War] statements, and air photographs tends to indicate that the enemy intends to defend the Shuri area to the last."<sup>12</sup>

From 22 May until the end of the month aerial observation over the enemy's rear areas was limited by the almost constant overcast and the hard rains. Planes, however, were over the enemy's lines for short periods nearly every day, and on 22 May groups of individuals, believed to be civilians, were observed moving south at dusk from Kamizato. The movement continued the following day. It was not believed that these people were soldiers since they were wearing white cloth. Leaflets had previously been dropped behind the Japanese lines telling the Okinawan civilians to identify themselves by wearing white and thus avoid being strafed and bombed. On 24 and 25 May aerial observation noted continued movement southward, but the impression persisted that it was civilian.<sup>13</sup>

The first doubt of the correctness of this view came on 26 May. In the afternoon, the overcast lifted long enough for extensive aerial observation over the south end of the island. Movement extending from the front lines to the southern tip of the island was spotted. About 2,000 troops were estimated to be on the move between Oroku Peninsula and the middle part of the island below the Naha-Yonabaru valley. At 1800 from 3,000 to 4,000 people were seen traveling south just below Shuri. About a hundred trucks were on the roads in front of the Yaeju-Dake. At noon two tanks were observed pulling artillery pieces, and an hour later a prime mover towing another artillery piece was spotted. During the afternoon seven more tanks, moving south and southwest, were seen.

Pilots strafed the moving columns and reported that some of the soldiers seemed to explode when the tracers hit them - an indication that they probably were carrying satchel charges. Artillery and

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<sup>10</sup> Tenth Army G—3 Periodic Rpt No. 67, 1 Jun 45; G-1 Periodic Rpt No. 8, 30 May 45, in G-3 Jnl, 2 Jun 45. The strength figures cited are confined to effective strength of organic and attached units of III Amphibious Corps and XXIV Corps only.

<sup>11</sup> XXIV Corps G-2 Summary No. 12, 5 Jun 45, incls 2 and 7: Results of Enemy Action against Tanks as Submitted by 20th Armored Group; Tenth Army Ordnance Periodic Summary, 23 May 45, in G-3 Jnl, 24 May 45.

<sup>12</sup> Notes of Tenth Army Staff Meetings, in Okinawa Diary kept by Lt Col Stevens and M/Sgt Burns, 19 and 22 May 45; Tenth Army G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 60, 25 May 45.

<sup>13</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, p. 464.

naval gunfire, guided by spotter planes, hit the larger concentrations of movement and traffic with destructive effect. Naval gunfire alone was estimated to have killed 500 Japanese in villages south of Tsukasan, and to have destroyed 1 artillery piece and 5 tanks.<sup>14</sup>

Just before dark, at 1902, a column of Japanese with its head near Ozato, just west of the Yuza-Dake, was seen in the far south of the island, moving north. Fifteen minutes later it was reported that this road was blocked to a point just above Makabe with troops moving north. The troop column extended over about 5,000 yards of road and was estimated to be in regimental strength. This was the largest enemy troop movement ever seen in the Okinawa campaign.<sup>15</sup>

The reports of the aerial observers on the 26th were perplexing. Enemy troops were moving in all directions. The majority, however, were headed south; the main exception was the largest column, which was moving north. The heaviest movement was in an area about five miles south of Shuri. It was noted that artillery and armor were moving south. What did it all mean? One careful appraisal concluded that the Japanese were taking advantage of the bad weather, poor aerial observation, and the general stalling of the American attack to carry out a relief of tired troops in the lines by fresh reserves from the south. It was believed that artillery was being moved to new emplacements for greater protection and for continued support of the Shuri battle.<sup>16</sup>

The next day, 27 May, little movement was noted behind the enemy's lines in the morning, but in the afternoon from 2,000 to 3,000 troops were seen moving in both directions at the southern end of the island.<sup>17</sup> . . . General Buckner issued. . . an order directing that both corps "initiate without delay strong and unrelenting pressure to ascertain probable intentions and keep him [the Japanese] off balance. Enemy must not be permitted to establish himself securely on new positions with only nominal interference."<sup>18</sup>

On 28 May the Tenth Army intelligence officer observed in a staff meeting that it "now looks as though the Japanese thinks holding the line around north of Shuri is his best bet. . . . It is probable that we will gradually surround the Shuri position."<sup>19</sup> General Buckner indicated at this meeting that he was concerned about the possibility of a Japanese counterattack against the 7th Division on the left flank. He asked, "What has Arnold in reserve against counterattack?"<sup>20</sup> On the following day, however, LTG Buckner said it looked as though the Japanese were trying to pull south but that they had made the decision too late.<sup>21</sup> On the day before, a total of 112 trucks and vehicles and approximately 1,000 enemy troops had been observed on the move to the south and southeast, in the vicinity of Itoman on the west coast, and around Iwa and Tomui in front of the Yaeju-Dake, a strong terrain position in the south.<sup>22</sup>

On 28 May Marine patrols found evidence of recently evacuated enemy positions west of Shuri.<sup>23</sup> At 0730 on 29 May the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, left its lines and started forward toward Shuri Ridge, where patrol action the previous day had indicated a possible weakness in the enemy's lines. The high ground was quickly occupied. The 1st Battalion was now on the ridge that lay at the eastern edge of Shuri. Shuri Castle itself lay from 700 to 800 yards almost straight west across the Corps and division boundary. From all appearances, this part of the Shuri perimeter was undefended and the castle could

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<sup>14</sup> Tenth Army G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 62, 27 May 45; CTF 51, Summary No. 80, 27 May 45, in Tenth Army G-3 Jnl, 28 May 45.

<sup>15</sup> Tenth Army G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 62, 27 May 45; XXIV Corps G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 56, 27 May 45.

<sup>16</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 466-67.

<sup>17</sup> XXIV Corps G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 57, 28 May 45. See also Tenth Army G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 63, 28 May 45.

<sup>18</sup> Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 7-III-24, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Notes of Tenth Army staff meeting in Okinawa Diary kept by Lt Col Stevens and M/Sgt Burns, 28 May 45.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 May 45.

<sup>22</sup> Tenth Army G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 64, 29 May 45.

<sup>23</sup> III Amph Corps Actn Rpt, p. 56.

be captured by merely walking up to it. The battalion commander immediately requested permission from his regimental commander to cross the Corps boundary and go into Shuri Castle. The request was approved, and at mid-morn Company A of the 5th Marines started toward the spot that had been so long a symbol of Japanese strength on Okinawa. At 1015 Shuri Castle was occupied by Company A.<sup>24</sup> Everywhere else around Shuri the Japanese still held their covering positions in the front lines.

As a result of the unexpected entrance into Shuri, the 1st Marine Division at 0930 ordered the 1st Marines to bypass Wana Draw, leaving its position in the line next to the 77th Division, and to move around to the southwest to relieve the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, in Shuri. This move was carried out with the 3d Battalion leading and the 1st Battalion following. Enemy positions were bypassed on the right, and by night the two battalions had established a perimeter in the south of Shuri.

The elements of the 1st Marine Division which entered Shuri Castle had crossed over into the 77th Division zone of action and line of fire without giving that unit notice that such a movement was under way. The 77th Division learned of the move barely in time to cancel an air strike on the Shuri Castle area which it had scheduled.<sup>25</sup>

On 29 May there was almost no aerial observation because of a zero ceiling, and on 30 May practically no movement was seen behind the enemy's lines. . . Marine units at Shuri Castle and south of Shuri did not move, except for small patrols that were turned back by heavy machine-gun and 47-mm. antitank fire a few hundred yards north of the castle. Vehicles could not reach the marines in Shuri and their supplies were critically low. Carrying parties of replacement troops formed an almost unbroken line from the west coast dumps all the way to Shuri. Many men collapsed from sheer exhaustion. Five air drops through heavy clouds to the marines in Shuri relieved somewhat their critical supply situation on 30 May.<sup>26</sup>

The entrances to the caves under Shuri Castle were still held by the enemy at 1330 on 30 May, and no additional ground had been taken in Shuri itself.<sup>27</sup> The two Marine battalions, dug in, merely formed a pocket within the Japanese perimeter on which the enemy's rear guard was fighting the holding battle around Shuri. The occupation of Shuri Castle did not cause these Japanese to withdraw from their covering positions or result in the occupation of Shuri itself; nor did it, so far as is known, affect the enemy's plans. The marines themselves had all they could do to get food and water and some ammunition up to their position in order to stay.

Dorothy Hill, a fortress directly east of Shuri and a tower of strength in the enemy's inner line for the past two weeks, was attacked by the 3d Battalion, 307th Infantry, 77th Division. The first platoon to reach the base of the hill was pinned down by heavy fire, the platoon leader and all noncommissioned officers being wounded. Other platoons maneuvered into position and finally one squad reached the crest at the right end. This entering wedge enabled two companies to reach the top, from which they discovered three levels of caves on the reverse slope. They went to work methodically, moving from right to left along the top level, burning and blasting each cave and dugout, the flame-thrower and satchel-charge men covered by riflemen. When work on the top level was finished, the second level of caves and tunnels received similar treatment, and then the third and lowest level. That night fifteen Japanese who had survived the day's fighting crawled out of the blasted caves and were killed by Americans from their foxholes. A great amount of enemy equipment, including ten destroyed 150-mm. guns and twenty-five trucks, was found on the south (reverse) side of Dorothy Hill, testifying to the

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<sup>24</sup> The account of the capture of Shuri Castle is, unless otherwise noted, taken from 1st Mar Div Special Actn Rpt Phase III, pp. 7-8; Stockman, 1st Mar Div History, pp. 40-42; III Amph Corps Actn Rpt, p. 56

<sup>25</sup> 77th Div Actn Rpt Okinawa, p. 62; Leach, 77th Div History, II, 96-98.

<sup>26</sup> See also Tenth Army G-4 Periodic Rpt No. 66, 31 May 45.

<sup>27</sup> Tenth Army G-2 Summary, 30 May 45, in Tenth Army 6-3 Jnl, 31 May 45.

enemy fire power at this strong point. On 30 May, the 77th Division also took Jane Hill on its left flank and then almost unopposed took Tom Hill, the highest point of ground in the Shuri area, by 1700.<sup>28</sup>

For nine days elements of the 96th Division had been stalemated at the base of Hen Hill, just northeast of Shuri. On the 30th, Company F and one platoon of Company G, 382d Infantry, resumed the attack on Hen Hill.

To the left (east), Company F at the same time engaged in a grenade battle for Hector Hill, using ten cases of grenades in the assault on the crest. It was finally won after a satchel charge was hurled over the top and lit in the enemy trench on the other side, parts of Japanese bodies and pieces of enemy equipment hurtling into the sky in the blast. Hen and Hector Hills had fallen by 1400.<sup>29</sup>

On the 96th Division's left rapid advances were made on 30 May. In the afternoon, the 3d Battalion, 383d Infantry, left its foxholes on Oboe, where it had experienced so great an ordeal, and proceeded down the reverse slope of the hill, finding only a few scattered Japanese. That night the 383d Infantry expressed a heartfelt sentiment when it reported "infinite relief to have Conical Hill behind us." Although there had been suicidal stands in a few places by the last of the holding force, the advances had been rapid.<sup>30</sup>

On 31 May the 77th Division walked over 100 Meter Hill at the eastern end of Wana Ridge and on into Shuri. The marines from the vicinity of Shuri Castle moved north without opposition to help in the occupation of the battered rubble. Overnight the enemy had stolen away. When darkness fell on 31 May the III Amphibious Corps and the XXIV Corps had joined lines south of Shuri and the 77th Division had been pinched out in the center of the line at Shuri. The troops rested on their arms before beginning the pursuit south with the coming of dawn.<sup>31</sup>

### *Crater of the Moon*

Shuri, the second town of Okinawa, lay in utter ruin. There was no other city, town, or village in the Ryukyus that had been destroyed so completely. Naha too had been laid waste. Certain villages which had been strong points in the enemy's defense, such as Kakazu, Dakeshi, Kochi, Arakachi, and Kunishi, had been fought over and leveled to the ground. But none of these compared with the ancient capital of the Ryukyus. It was estimated that about 200,000 rounds of artillery and naval gunfire had struck Shuri. Numerous air strikes had dropped 1,000-pound bombs on it. Mortar shells by the thousands had arched their way into the town area. Only two structures, both of concrete - the big normal school at the southwestern corner and the little Methodist church, built in 1937, in the center of Shuri - had enough of their walls standing to form silhouettes on the skyline. The rest was flattened rubble. The narrow paved and dirt streets, churned by high explosives and pitted with shell craters, were impassable to any vehicle. The stone walls of the numerous little terraces were battered down. The rubble and broken red tile of the houses lay in heaps. The frame portion of buildings had been reduced to kindling wood. Tattered bits of Japanese military clothing, gas masks, and tropical helmets - the most frequently seen items - and the dark-colored Okinawan civilian dress lay about in wild confusion. Over all this crater-of-the-moon landscape hung the unforgettable stench of rotting human flesh.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Leach, 77th Div History, II, 99; XXIV Corps G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 61, 1 Jun 45; Appleman, XXIV Corps History, p. 454.

<sup>29</sup> Mulford and Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158-60; XXIV Corps G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 60, 31 May 45; 383d Inf Actn Rpt, p. 33; Appleman, XXIV Corps History, p. 455.

<sup>31</sup> 306th Inf Actn Rpt, Narrative Acct, p. 13; 1st Mar Div Special Actn Rpt, Phase III, p. 7; Leach, 77th Div History, II, 990-100.

<sup>32</sup> For the description of Shuri see Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 458-62.



On a high oval knob of ground at the southern edge of the town, Shuri Castle had stood. Walls of coral blocks, 20 feet thick at the base and 40 feet in height, enclosed the castle area of approximately 290 acres. The castle in its modern form had been constructed in 1544, the architecture being of Chinese origin. Here the kings of Okinawa had ruled. Now the massive ramparts, which had been battered by 14- and 16-inch shells from American battleships, remained intact in only a few places. Inside the castle area one could discern the outline of the rubble-strewn and pitted parade ground. Magnificent large trees that had graced the castle grounds were now blackened skeletons on the skyline.

By 30 May, the XXIV Corps lines showed a large and deep bulge on the left flank below the Naha-Yonabaru road; here the American lines were approximately two miles farther south than at any other part of the cross-island battlefront. On the American left flank the envelopment of Shuri had almost succeeded in catching the Japanese army.

## Defending Okinawa, 6-31 May

Excerpts from Leavenworth Papers No. 18, Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945, Chapter 4.

Overall, the news on 5 May was so discouraging that, at 1800, Ushijima. . . took it on himself to suspend the entire offensive and recalled all units to their pre-4 May positions. He thus spared Cho and other staff officers from having to make this humiliating decision. Ushijima summoned Yahara and told him of the planned retreat. That night, the order was sent by coded radio to all units. Ushijima told Yahara that Yahara had been right after all, that the attack had failed, and that he would give Yahara more latitude in the future.<sup>1</sup>

In two days, the *32d Army* had lost 7,000 men of its original 76,000-man force. The *62d Division* had only one-fourth of its strength remaining, the *24th Division* three-fifths, and the *44th IMB* four-fifths. Moreover, the capability of the *5th Artillery Command* was sharply reduced. Many of its tubes were lost because they were moved out of their caves toward the front lines to give better support for the offensive. Besides that, a large volume of shells had been expended so that the daily ration of shells per gun was reduced from fifty to fifteen per day. Overall, artillery firepower was thus reduced to about 50 percent of its original strength.<sup>2</sup>

All in all, while the 4-5 May offensive was a catastrophe, it was a brilliant catastrophe in the sense that it was a bold and imaginative stroke. It was useful for morale before it happened because it gave hope to staff members who were aware of the plans for it. It also may have had some value in keeping American commanders off-balance, forcing them to keep more guard details in rear areas and the like, though there is little evidence of this. A bold surprise is often advantageous in a campaign, even against long odds. That proved not to be the case for the 4 May offensive, however. The Japanese lost precious troops and materiel and, from then on, would have to rely more and more on converted service forces.

### *The 29 May Withdrawal*

After the suspension of the 4 May offensive, American forces again took the initiative and made deep incursions into the Japanese lines along both the east and west coasts. By 22 May, the *32d Army Staff* was again debating what should be done. The answer that ultimately emerged was that all of *32d Army* would withdraw to the Kiyau Peninsula in the south, form a new line, and fight on. The withdrawal would demonstrate two characteristic features of *32d Army's* performance: first, its being torn still between romantic self-sacrifice and rational economy of force, and second, its aptitude for deft and effective maneuver in stressed circumstances.

After the failure of the 4 May offensive, *32d Army's* only plan was to hold its lines. Since that approach was failing, Cho and others decided an appeal should be made to *IGHQ* for a massive air attack on the American fleet that would disrupt the U.S. Tenth Army's supply and cause its advance to falter. Yahara, although he did not interfere, opposed this plan on the grounds that with six divisions ashore, the American campaign would not be much affected by such additional air support as *IGHQ* could muster. The ten aggressive kamikaze attacks already launched on U.S. shipping around Okinawa had had only a limited effect on the ground fighting. Moreover, Yahara felt it would appear self-serving to ask

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<sup>1</sup> Nishimura, "Command," 88; and Inagaki, Okinawa, 199-200.

<sup>2</sup> Rikusen-shi kenkyu fukyu kai, ed. [Land Warfare Research and Publicization Association, ed.] Okinawa sakusen, Daijiji sekai taisen shi, Rikusen shishu 9 [Okinawa strategy, history of World War II, land warfare history collection, vol. 9] (Tokyo: Hara shobo, 1974[1968]), 198; and Nishimura, "Command," 112.

that planes husbanded for the final defense of the homeland be used up instead on the Okinawa campaign.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the U.S. Tenth Army resumed its offensive on 11 May. Through sustained pressure and hard fighting for particular objectives such as Conical Hill on the east coast and Sugar Loaf on the west coast, the Americans pushed the whole Japanese line back a half mile by 21 May. They achieved especially deep lodgments on the two extreme flanks, which was their intention. Especially on the eastern flank, elements of the U.S. 96th Infantry Division had probed as far as Sugar Hill and were close to turning the Japanese flank at Yonabaru.<sup>4</sup>

The *32d Army* faced the same situation it had in mid-April. Its line was crumbling at both ends and about to collapse. This time, however, there were no reserves available to bring forward, once more placing the *32d Army Staff* in a dilemma. Yahara, who had responsibility for the army's operations, felt withdrawal to the Kiyan Peninsula would be best. By this time, however, his relations with Cho had become so adversarial that he dared not even mention this solution. Instead he arranged for a junior staff member. . . to submit to Cho a short position paper that spelled out abundant pros and cons but tended to favor the Kiyan withdrawal. Cho characteristically preferred an unyielding defense of the Shuri area where the *32d Army* already was.<sup>5</sup>

To resolve the question, Cho convened a meeting of all major unit chiefs of staff on 22 May. The meeting considered three proposals. The first was to encircle Shuri and prepare a concentrated defense. Such a position would be too concentrated to hold the 50,000 surviving troops and the many long-range guns that were still intact, however. Moreover, such a restricted area would be extremely vulnerable to artillery fire.<sup>6</sup>

The second option considered was to withdraw from the Shuri line to the Chinen Peninsula. The Chinen was favorable as defensive terrain. It offered obstacles to easy tank movement and was encircled by sea and cliffs that would make amphibious envelopment more difficult. But the Chinen did not have good road access, which would hamper Japanese transport. Besides that, the Americans, who were already breaking through on the east, threatened the withdrawal routes to the eastward-lying Chinen Peninsula. The main difficulty with the Chinen, however, was that its defenses had been developed earlier by the relatively small *44th IMB*. It therefore did not have caves enough or stored stockpiles enough to accommodate the entire *32d Army*.<sup>7</sup>

The third possibility was to withdraw and form a line across the Kiyan Peninsula. The Kiyan had two defensible peaks, Yaeju-Dake and Yuza-Dake. Much of the coastal front was protected by thirty- to forty-meter-high precipices to frustrate amphibious landings in the rear. Having been developed by the larger *24th Division*, the Kiyan had caves and stockpiles enough to provide for the entire *32d Army*. The major disadvantage was that much of the terrain was open and even, thus allowing tanks to move freely. This terrain defect was the more serious since by this time *32d Army's* antitank guns and mines, and for that matter its best antitank soldiers, already had been lost.<sup>8</sup>

Colonel Ueno, chief of staff of the *62d Division*, spoke first, in urgent tones. He said that the *62d Division* had nearly exhausted its resources, above ground and below, and lacked the energy and means for a withdrawal. Moreover, the division had several thousand wounded that it could not bear to leave behind. Therefore, the men in the *62d Division* wished to be allowed honorable death on the Shuri line.

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<sup>3</sup> Yahara, *Okinawa*, 262-63; and Inagaki, *Okinawa*, 215.

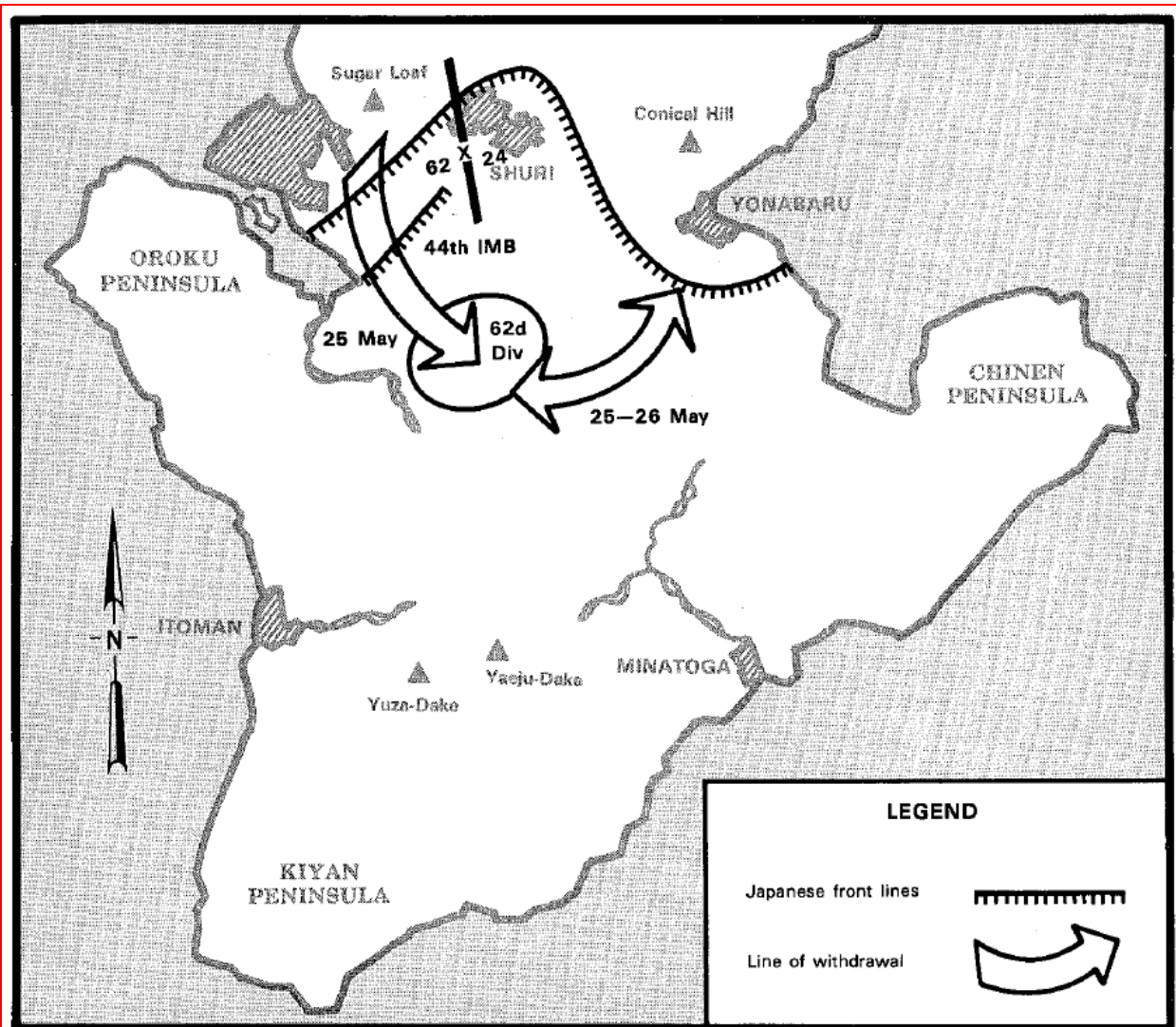
<sup>4</sup> Appleman, *Okinawa*, 311-23, Enclosed map 35.

<sup>5</sup> Inagaki, *Okinawa*, 207-833.

<sup>6</sup> JM 135, 116.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.



Map 9. Preliminary withdrawal of the 62d Division, 25 May 1945

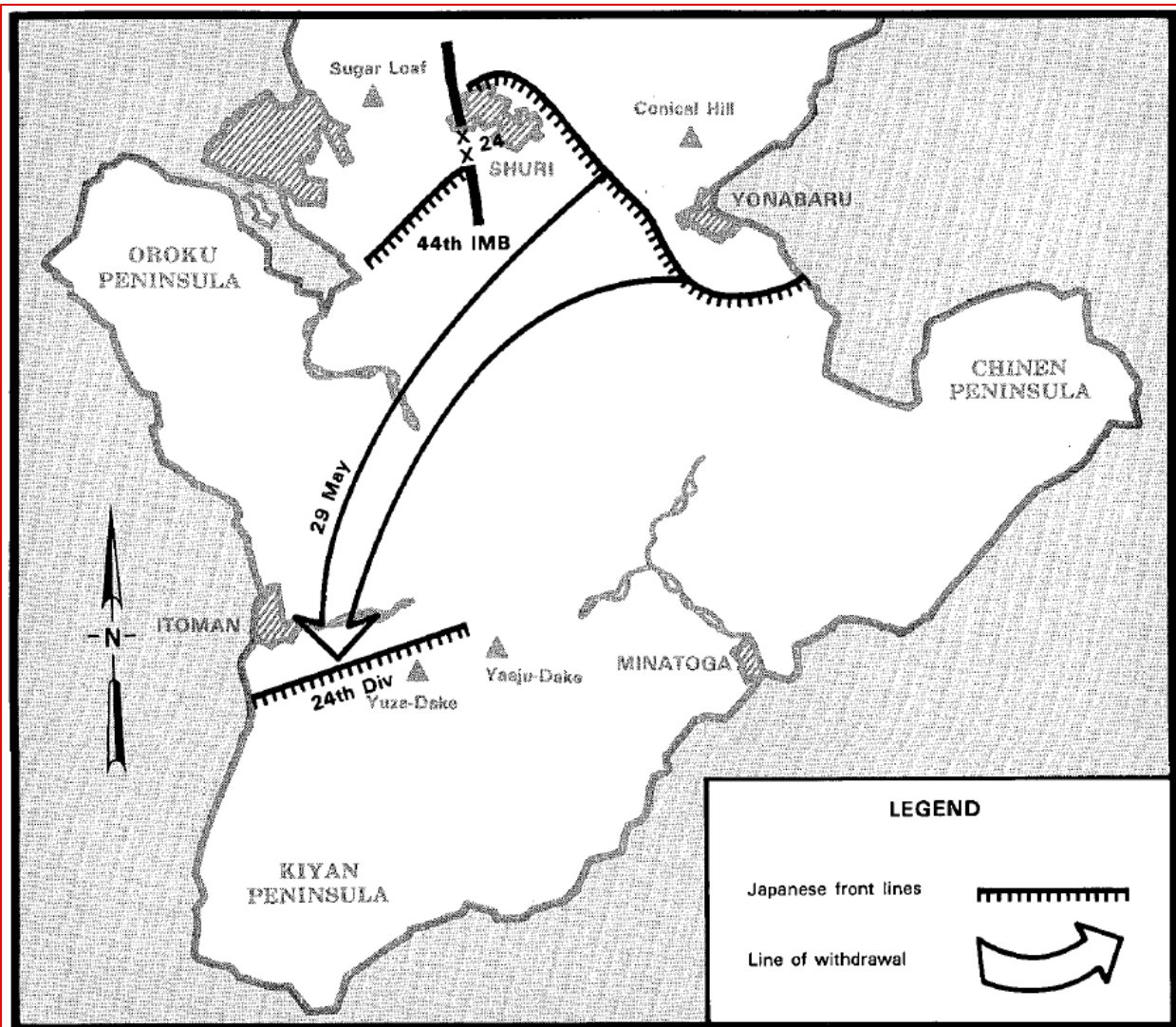
Most of their friends had already died there. The other *32d Army Staff* officers, hearing Colonel Ueno's plea, were deeply moved.<sup>9</sup>

The chief of staff of the *24th Division*, Colonel Kitani, then spoke, describing the advantages of moving the army to the Kiyan Peninsula. He pointed out that the *24th Division's 24th Transportation Regiment* still had eighty trucks intact that could be used to move the army. A staff officer of the *44th IMB* then gave his opinion in favor of moving the army to the Chinen Peninsula. In fact, each unit's chief of staff wished the new line placed in the area where each unit had developed its own respective fortifications before the battle began. Each unit apparently wished to fight on familiar ground and in familiar works.<sup>10</sup>

After the meeting was dismissed Yahara carried his recommendation to Cho, not changed by the meeting, that *32d Army* should withdraw to a new line across the Kiyan Peninsula. He challenged the point of view of Colonel Ueno and the *62d Division* that they should fight on around Shuri. He said that seeking honorable death at Shuri because comrades had died there was pure sentimentality. The Shuri

<sup>9</sup> Yahara, *Okinawa*, 292.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



Map 10. Withdrawal of the 24th Division, 29 May 1945

position, once surrounded, would be indefensible and lead to a military disaster. Okinawa forces would fail to delay the coming struggle for the homeland. To die casually and with no good results was barbaric. The army's policy had to be realistic, and that meant moving to the Kiyan Peninsula.<sup>11</sup>

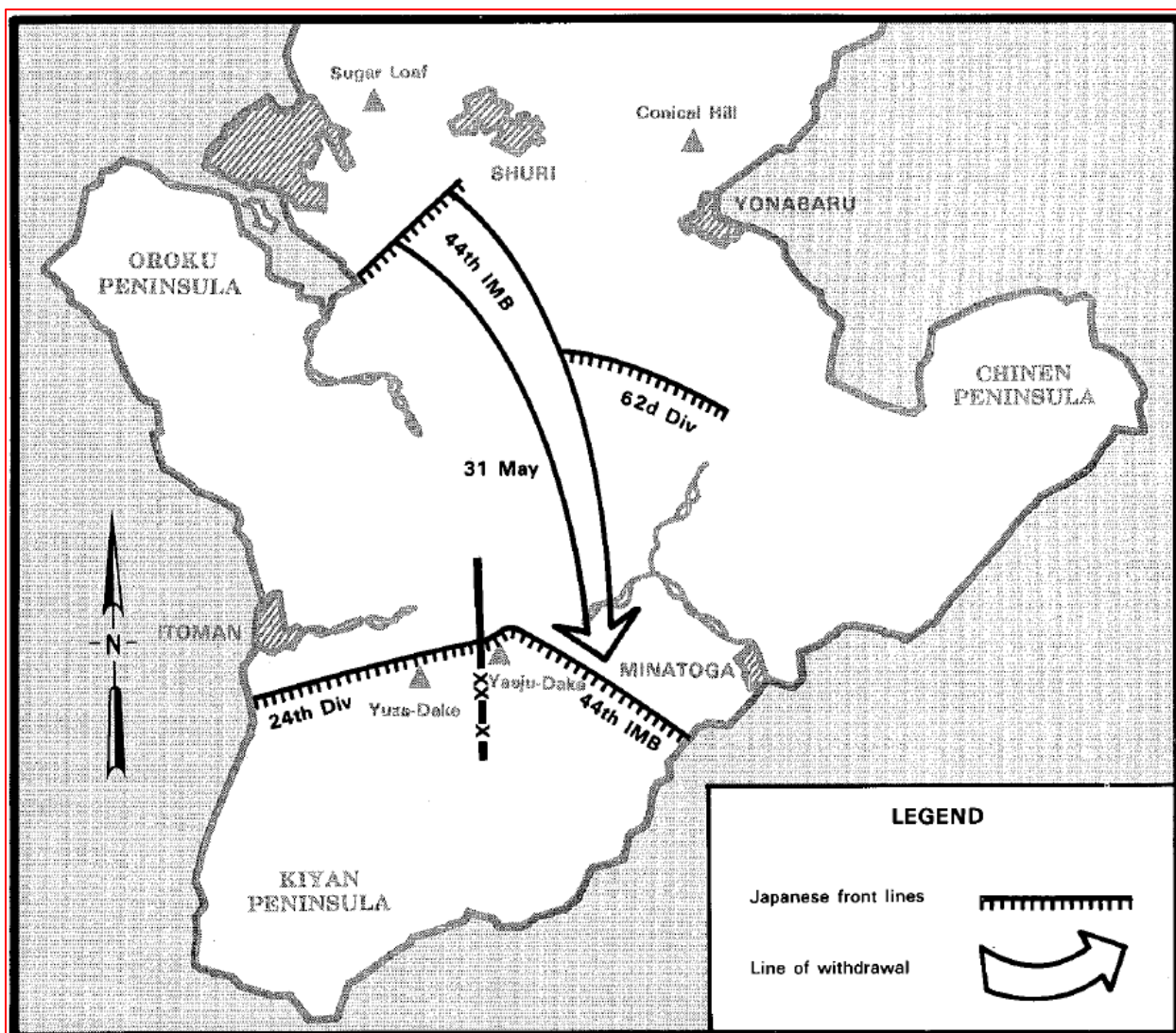
Yahara was evidently braced for another struggle with Cho over whether spiritual or operational priorities should prevail, but unnecessarily. The likable and unpredictable Cho straightforwardly agreed with the recommendation and wisely refrained from commenting on the argument. Retreat to Kiyan thus became *32d Army's* policy on the next day, 23 May, when endorsed by Commander Ushijima. Movement of the wounded and munitions was to begin at once.<sup>12</sup>

The *32d Army Staff* was eager to conduct the retreat from Shuri in such a way that the Americans did not break through the Shuri line and destroy the Japanese forces in detail while they were moving. In fact the Japanese would be so successful at this that the Americans had no idea a retreat was taking place until the day before it was completed. The *32d Army Staff* was especially concerned that the Americans' deep inroads along the east coast near Yonabaru might produce an

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>12</sup> Yahara, *Okinawa*, 294; and JM 135, 119.



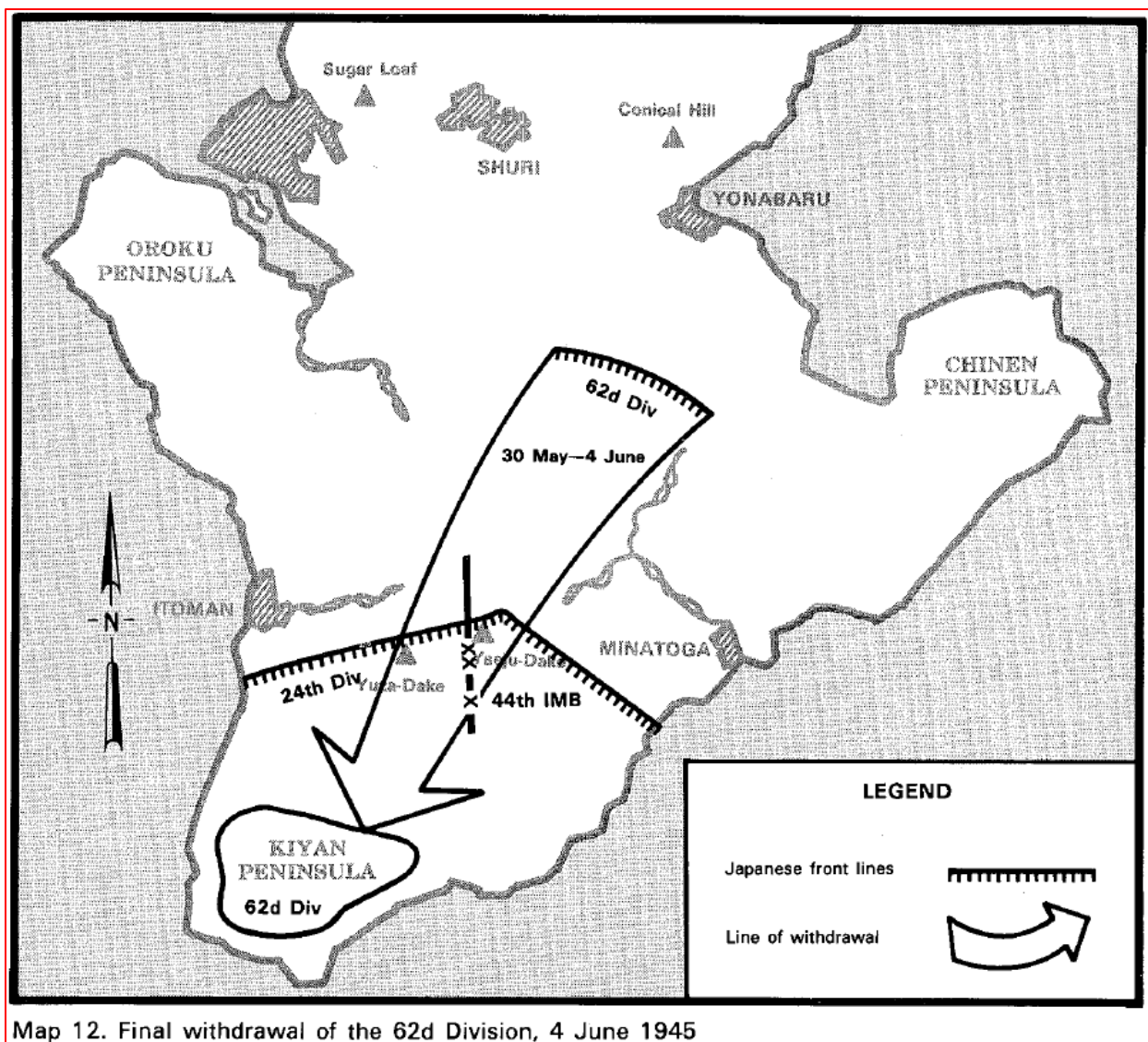


Map 11. Withdrawal of the 44th Independent Mixed Brigade, 31 May 1945

American breakthrough at the east end of the line. The U.S. 77th Infantry Division in that case could sweep westward and cut off the Japanese retreat, thus encircling large portions of the Japanese force, which would be caught in the open.

To prevent this, the remaining men of the *62d Division* were to withdraw behind the Shuri lines on 25 May and attack the Yonabaru salient, thus containing the U.S. 77th Infantry Division and pushing it back away from the retreat routes (see map 9). This would allow the retreat of the Japanese main IJA line units on 29 May. In the event *IJA 62d Division* withdrew south of Shuri on the night of 24-25 May and did attack American positions at Yonabaru on the night of 25-26 May. This did not hurl the Americans back, but it did slow the U.S. 77th Infantry Division's forward progress and prevented its achieving an untimely breakthrough. The impression this made on the American commanders, who were unaware of the imminent retreat, was that the Japanese were fighting fiercely to maintain existing lines.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> JM 135, 123, 126; and Appleman, *Okinawa*, Enclosed map 44.



Map 12. Final withdrawal of the 62d Division, 4 June 1945

After the east flank was somewhat stabilized, the *IJA 24th Division* pulled back from the northeast part of the line to the southwest on 29 May (see map 10). The *44th IMB* pulled away from the northwest part of the line to the southeast on 31 May (see map 11). The *62d Division* completed its withdrawal from its intermediate lines south of Shuri to a reserve area south of the new Kiyan lines on 4 June (see map 12). The *24th Division* was also required to leave behind a screening force, which fell back to successively southward positions according to a timetable, reaching the Kiyan position also on 4 June.<sup>14</sup>

The withdrawal of 29 May to 4 June was completed in an orderly way, and the American forces did not inflict heavy losses by pursuit. These advantages were achieved by the retreat's being carefully planned and because the spring rainy season began in the last week of May, a little later and harder than usual. This hampered American tanks and reconnaissance aircraft. The rains also hampered the Japanese retreat transport, however, and turned the shafts of *IJA* caves into "small rivers." All of the

<sup>14</sup> JM 135, 122-24.

Japanese movements were carried out under cover of darkness, and the *24th Transport Regiment* of the *24th Division* performed yeoman service with its eighty trucks.<sup>15</sup>

Visibility on 29 May was zero, and air observation was impossible. Nevertheless, by 30 May, because of vacated *IJA* positions found west of Shuri and other accumulating bits of evidence, U.S. Tenth Army intelligence finally reached a consensus that the Shuri lines were being abandoned. But the Americans did not know where the new lines were and assumed they were about two miles behind the old ones, just enough to straighten out the salients the Americans had built up on the east and west.<sup>16</sup>

American forces elbowed into Shuri on 31 May, completing the reduction of the formidable Shuri line. They realized by this time that they were dealing only with a rear guard. The American force prepared to pursue the Japanese southward on 1 June, but by this time, the *44th IMB*, the last *IJA* unit in the vicinity, had already completed its withdrawal. Moreover, given the sheltered nature of the Japanese defenses, it was impossible for the Americans to move forward safely if even a few Japanese remained in the pillbox caves. Those last few had to be eliminated, and that inevitably took days. The problem remained even after the Shuri line fell, because the *IJA 62d Division* and the *24th Division's* rear guard both manned intermediate positions between Shuri and the Kiyan area. Even though the *IJA* screening forces were few, safe and rapid forward pursuit by the Americans was impossible. In the upshot, U.S. Tenth Army units were not aligned and ready to engage the new Kiyan lines until 6 June.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Yahara, Okinawa, 303; JM 135, 125; and Appleman, Okinawa, 392.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 392.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 396-400, 424-27, 434-39.

## Kochi Ridge Secured

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 12.

... the chief obstacle to the 7th Division's advance was a network of Japanese positions around Kochi Ridge and Zebra Hill just south of the town of Kochi. Previous attacks had demonstrated that the defenses here could not be overrun in a single attack but required a tedious, methodical destruction of individual enemy soldiers and positions. Any large-scale attack by the 17th Infantry, even though coordinated among battalions, was doomed to fail because of the combined fire power of enemy positions stretching from Shuri to Conical Hill—a volume of fire greater than a regiment could control.<sup>1</sup>

The struggle for the Kochi positions, which had started on 26 April, was resumed after the Japanese counteroffensive failed. By 6 May, the 3d Battalion, 17th Regiment, was fighting for Knob 2 on Kochi Ridge and was trying to burn the Japanese out of the east side by rolling 10-gallon cans of napalm, gasoline, and motor oil over the top. On the same day two platoons of infantry seized a small portion of How Hill but, contrary to orders, retreated in the face of heavy fire from Kochi Ridge. At this point the 7th Division was under heavy pressure from XXIV Corps to push more aggressively. Accordingly, Brigadier General Joseph L. Ready, the assistant division commander, ordered Colonel Francis Pachler's 17th Infantry to attack Zebra Hill on the next day, 7 May.

Tanks and infantry of the 3d Battalion moved out the next morning through Kochi. Their initial objective was an enemy strong point in the road cut between Zebra Hill and Kochi Ridge. This strong point formed the western anchor of the Japanese line running toward Kibara, from which the Japanese *22d Regiment* was ordered on 7 May "to exact as heavy a toll of the enemy as possible."<sup>2</sup> Heavy artillery fire held up the infantry, but the tanks plunged through Kochi to the west end of the road cut, and the troops followed as soon as the artillery slackened off. The strong point was a cave in the north side of the cut. Japanese fire from Knob 4 and neighboring heights, combined with the steep walls of the narrow passage, made this position almost inaccessible. Tanks poured flame and shells into the road cut, but when they prepared to return for resupply the enemy on Knob 4 opened up on the troops. After exchanging fire with the Japanese until midafternoon, the 3d Battalion withdrew.

Meanwhile the 1st Battalion again seized How Hill and gained more ground on Kochi. Rain began on the afternoon of the 7th and continued into the next day, but the tired men of the 17th Infantry did not give up the attack. The platoon of Second Lieutenant William T. Coburn, who had joined Company G nine days before as a replacement, followed him to Knob 4 but was soon driven back by mortars and machine guns. Infuriated by the loss of two men killed and three wounded, Coburn and Staff Sergeant George Hills returned to Knob 4 and hurled grenades at an enemy mortar crew in the road cut below. Although a mortar shell had severely wounded Hills, he and Coburn killed the Japanese in the cut.

By 9 May, when the 17th was relieved by the 382d Infantry, 96th Division, the hold of the Americans on Kochi was almost complete. A straight and firm regimental line ran from How Hill to the crest of Kochi Ridge and thence to the southern end of Kochi town. However, the cave in the road cut, as well as all of Zebra Hill, was still in enemy hands. On 9 May, the battalion of the Japanese *22d Regiment* which had held this area for three days was relieved by other units and commended by the regimental commander for "inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The account of operations of the 7th Division from 5 to 10 May is taken from Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 264-85.

<sup>2</sup> 96th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 47, 18 May 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



## Chocolate Drop Hill

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 13.

Of all the strongly defended terrain features that made up the concentric ring of defenses around Shuri, Chocolate Drop Hill was undoubtedly the most insignificant in appearance. Its name, which was coined by 77th Division troops while headquarters was still calling it Hill 130, was aptly descriptive. The hill, a bare, brown hump of earth with a slightly peaked crest, rising abruptly from a flat expanse of ground, did indeed resemble a chocolate drop resting on a slightly tilted saucer.<sup>1</sup>

Several circumstances made the "Drop" an almost impregnable position. Movement across the saucer was extremely difficult. Except for low scrub growth in a few spots there was no cover on the surrounding ground. The west part of the saucer, near Route 5, was low and marshy - unsuited for tanks and other heavy weapons. Near Chocolate Drop was one of the largest mine fields on Okinawa. This area was covered by fire from Flattop Hill on the east, from Ishimmi Ridge on the southwest, and from other heights the entire way around the circle except to the north where the Americans were advancing. The Japanese also had the usual reverse-slope defenses on Chocolate Drop and on Wart Hill, a knob 500 yards east of Chocolate Drop on the long ridge running southwest between Flattop and Chocolate Drop.

At 0700 on 11 May, immediately after the 30-minute artillery preparation, the infantry moved out. The 3d Battalion, 306th Infantry, was to make the main effort on the left (east) of the 77th Division sector. The troops had advanced a little more than 200 yards when they were stopped by a hail of artillery and mortar fire. Fields of crossed machine-gun fire, converging just north of Chocolate Drop, also barred the way. By 0900 one company was engaged in close-in fighting near the north base of the hill. Other troops tried to advance on the left but were stopped by enemy entrenched around the base of Wart Hill.<sup>2</sup>

Tanks, self-propelled guns, artillery, mortars, and other infantry heavy weapons supported the attack, but no weapon seemed capable of reaching the Japanese dug in on the reverse slope of the Drop. Japanese weapons on Flattop took a heavy toll. One platoon, exposed to Flattop, sustained eleven casualties in the first few minutes of its attack. Japanese 47-mm. antitank guns raised havoc with tanks attempting to cross the open ground. Two tanks were destroyed and six others damaged by this fire. Another tank threw a track and was later destroyed by a Japanese satchel charge. After sustaining fifty-three casualties during the day, the battalion was withdrawn to the previous night's positions.

On the following day, 12 May, the 306th held its position and aided the advance of friendly forces on both flanks. The 2d Battalion, 306th, supported by a platoon of tanks, anchored the right flank of the 96th Division. The 1st Battalion, 306th, supported the advance of the 305th Infantry. This regiment was having extremely hard going in the broken ground west of Route 5. Japanese here held positions in large, well-protected caves.

The plan for 13 May was a combined attack on Flattop Hill and Chocolate Drop. After a short but intense artillery preparation, the 306th renewed its attack on the Drop. The 2d Battalion led the assault, moving down the high ground on the northeast. The leading company reached the hill in thirteen minutes, only to stall at its northern base under intense artillery and mortar fire. An effort to swing left into the area between Chocolate Drop and Flattop was stopped quickly: there the troops were more

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<sup>1</sup> Personal Obsn of 1st I & H Off. The precise location of Chocolate Drop Hill is not clear. While XXIV Corps and 77th Division records place it in Target Area 8073P of the 1: 25,000 map of Okinawa, observation of the ground and study of photographs indicate that the hill is located from 200 to 300 yards northeast of that point.

<sup>2</sup> The account of the capture of Chocolate Drop is taken from Leach, 77th Div History Okinawa, Vol. II, Ch. III, pp. 48-87; Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 341-51; 77th Div Actn Rpt Okinawa; 306th Inf Actn Rpt; 307th Inf Actn Rpt; 706th Tk Bn Actn Rpt.



exposed than ever. The infantry managed to secure part of the slope of Chocolate Drop but was soon forced back to the base of the hill. At 1400 the enemy scored twenty hits with 150-mm. artillery in the area just north of Chocolate Drop. Supported by all available artillery pieces, tanks, and self-propelled guns, the battalion made a third attempt to seize the hill. The troops, however, could not gain a tenable position, and they withdrew 300 yards to a fold of ground north of the hill. Two American medium tanks, one of them equipped with a 105-mm. howitzer, were destroyed during the day.

Some troops managed to dig in at the base of Wart Hill and to hold their position despite withdrawal of the forces on Chocolate Drop. Japanese who occupied trenches on the other side of Wart attacked this small group during the night. The fight was so fierce that the Americans were driven out of their holes. In the dark they did not dare to shoot for fear of hitting comrades. With grenades, bayonets, and entrenching tools, the men stormed back to their holes, now occupied by a dozen Japanese, and quickly regained their position.

By 14 May, the 306th Infantry was so depleted in strength that the remaining riflemen were grouped into one battalion. Led by five tanks, this composite battalion attempted to advance beyond Wart Hill. As soon as the assault platoon reached the slope of Wart, a holocaust of fire from the front and both flanks hit the troops. In a few minutes the platoon was cut down to half strength, and the platoon leader, a platoon sergeant, and a squad leader were all casualties. Enemy antitank fire hit six tanks soon after they appeared on the crest. The line of dead infantrymen at one place near Chocolate Drop looked to one observer like a skirmish line that had lain down to rest. Further efforts to take Chocolate Drop and the high ground to the east were fruitless. On the next morning, the 306th Infantry, which had suffered 471 casualties since 6 May, was replaced by the 307th.

The 307th Infantry attacked through the 306th at 0900 on 15 May. The scheme of maneuver was a simultaneous assault on Flattop on the left (east) and on Chocolate Drop on the right. The troops moved slowly toward their objectives under heavy fire from rifles, machine guns, and mortars. Simultaneously elements of the 96th Division were making progress in their sector east of the 77th, and this aided the 77th's advance. By noon, the 3d Battalion was at the north base of the Drop and was working up the north slopes of Flattop. The 2d Battalion moved around to the right of the 3d Battalion and advanced about 500 yards before being held up by intense mortar and machine-gun fire. But the Americans were still unable to capitalize on their advances. To move through the saddle between Chocolate Drop and Flattop was to invite fire from the reverse slope of the Drop as well as from the entire system of defenses to the south. Several more tanks were disabled before the advance ended.

For the first time, however, the assault elements of the 77th Division were able to hold their positions directly north of Chocolate Drop and just below the crest on the north slope of Flattop. During the night the enemy tried to break the 307th's hold on the immediate approaches to Chocolate Drop. From huge caves on the reverse slope of the hill, groups of Japanese armed with knee mortars attacked the Americans twice during the dark. These attacks were warded off. During the night, however, the Japanese discovered in a ditch just east of Chocolate Drop five men who had been cut off after the assault company withdrew from the hill on the previous evening; they killed two of the group and wounded one.

The 307th continued the attack on 16 May, but this was another day of frustration. One platoon of the 3d Battalion reached the crest of Flattop; then enemy mortar and machine-gun fire forced the troops back. Four times more during the day the 3d Battalion reached and attempted to hold the crest, but each time the troops fell back to the north slope. The 2d Battalion continued to probe around the sides of Chocolate Drop in an effort to reach the enemy on top and on the reverse slope. One platoon was forced off Chocolate Drop late in the afternoon, but other infantrymen were able to hold positions gained during the day on the saddle east of the hill.

Slowly the 77th Division forces between Flattop and Route 5 were reducing enemy positions bearing on the area in front of the 307th Infantry. By 17 May this progress began to show in the

advances of the foot troops around Chocolate Drop. Covered by company heavy weapons out on both flanks, infantrymen worked around both sides of the hill to the huge caves on the reverse slope. Inside were 4 antitank guns, 1 field piece, 4 machine guns, 4 heavy mortars, and 2 American 60-mm. mortars. By nightfall, the caves had been partially sealed off. During the night an enemy force launched a counterattack against the American positions around the hill but was repulsed with the loss of twenty-five Japanese killed.

During the next two days the 3d Battalion consolidated and expanded its positions around Chocolate Drop. Reducing the tiny hill continued to be ticklish work because enemy positions to the south still overlooked the area. The fighting was still so confused that three wounded Americans lay south of Chocolate Drop for two days before relief arrived. By that time two had died and the third was so delirious that he thought he was still fighting Japanese and had to be forcibly subdued. By 20 May the caves were completely sealed off. The enemy made a final attempt to retake Chocolate Drop, attacking in company strength, but was repelled with the loss of half his force. On the same day the 3d Battalion, using tanks, flame throwers, and demolition teams, finally secured the crest of Flattop.

## Ishimmi Ridge

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 13.

Ordinarily on Okinawa the Americans attacked in the morning, dug in on the new position late in the afternoon, and held a tight perimeter defense during the night. On a few occasions, however, the 77th Division made night attacks. Such an attack was made on 17 May by the 307th Infantry, which had relieved the 306th on the division left on 15 May in an attempt to capture Ishimmi Ridge, lying west [east]<sup>1</sup> of the town of Ishimmi. This attack, which developed into a desperate effort to hold a position surrounded by the enemy, was typical of the ordeal that many infantrymen had to go through on Okinawa to register even minor gains.

### *Through the Japanese Lines to Ishimmi Ridge*

Shortly before dark of 16 May First Lieutenant Theodore S. Bell, commanding Company E, 307th Infantry, took his platoon leaders up to the 2d Battalion observation post atop a coral pinnacle, pointed out Ishimmi Ridge, dimly visible in the dusk, 1,200 yards to the south, and announced that Company E had been ordered to make a surprise night attack on the ridge. In the few minutes remaining before dark the officers studied the lay of the land. A heavy machine gun section from Company H and a reinforced rifle platoon from Company C were attached to Company E for the attack. The members of the reinforced company, many of them replacements without previous combat experience, were ordered to load and lock their weapons and to fix bayonets.<sup>2</sup>

Company E moved out in the dark at 0300, 17 May. Going down through the west part of the valley, the troops at 0400 reached the line of departure, where they were joined by the platoon from . Several gaunt trees on Ishimmi Ridge, showing dimly in the light of the frequent flares, served as guide points. Although Japanese controlled the ground, the Americans were not detected. Troops froze in their tracks whenever flares exploded overhead. The sound of battle - rifle and automatic fire and the whir of artillery shells - was always around them.

The company reached Ishimmi Ridge just before dawn and began taking up positions along a 125-yard sector of the flat crest. Digging in was difficult because of the coral and rock formation. The crest of Ishimmi was hardly ten yards wide at the center but flared out on either end. The 3d Platoon moved to the left, the 2d Platoon formed the center, the platoon from Company C took the right flank, and the 1st Platoon protected the rear. Lieutenant Bell established his command post in a pocket twenty yards north of the narrow part of the ridge.

By dawn the men were in position but the enemy was still unaware of their presence. A Japanese officer and his aide, talking and laughing as they emerged from a tunnel, were killed before they noticed the Americans. The 2d Platoon found a dozen sleeping Japanese in one trench and dispatched them with bayonets and rifle fire. By 0530, however, the enemy was fully alerted. Japanese troops began to pour out of tunnels in a ridge south of Ishimmi and tried to cross the intervening valley. American machine-gun fire cut them down. Soon enemy artillery, mortar, machine-gun, and rifle fire was sweeping the bare crest, forcing the troops to lie flat in their shallow holes. The Japanese were firing from all directions, including the rear, and were delivering mortar fire even from tunnel openings along the lower slopes of Ishimmi Ridge itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Compiler's note: Photographic evidence indicates the ridge is east, not west of Ishimmi village.

<sup>2</sup> The account of the night attack of Company E, 307th Infantry, is based entirely on the signed statement of 2d Lt Robert F. Meiser, commanding 2d Platoon, Company E. This statement is recorded in Leach, 77th Div History Okinawa, Vol. II, Ch. III, pp. 67-82.

### *The First Day*

The Japanese quickly spotted Company E's automatic weapons. One heavy machine gun was blown to pieces as its crew was setting it on the tripod; the other heavy was destroyed before it had fired one box of ammunition. Almost all the members of the crews were killed. Both light machine guns had been knocked out by 0700, one being completely buried. All but one of the light mortars were out of action by 1000. Lieutenant Bell's communications with Battalion were also a target. Of five radios brought along by his company and by the artillery forward observer, one was smashed by mortar shells, another was set on fire, and two had their aerials shot off. Only one remained intact.

As the American fire power was reduced, the Japanese tried to close in to destroy the beleaguered force. The 3d Platoon, occupying an exposed position on the eastern part of the ridge, repulsed three bayonet charges on its left. The Americans suffered many casualties from grenades. Japanese in the ridge south of Ishimmi took a heavy toll of the 2d Platoon, occupying the center. Two knee mortars, firing in unison 100 yards off either flank, systematically swept the American positions from one end to another. The dead lay in pools of blood where they fell, or were pushed from the holes to make room for the living. An aid man, although wounded himself, continued his work until his supplies were exhausted.

During the day, the 307th Infantry could not reinforce the company over the fire-swept approaches, but supported the force with artillery and self-propelled guns. Cannon company weapons put direct fire on Japanese trying to storm the hill. Many American shells landed so close to the encircled troops that the men were showered with rock. The one remaining radio enabled Lieutenant Bell to pinpoint targets for support fire. Mortars and heavy machine guns also helped to break up enemy charges.

The combined fire piled up the Japanese on the slopes of Ishimmi, but their attacks continued. By midday, the 2d and 3d Platoons were at half strength and the rest of the company also had suffered heavily. Realizing that he could not possibly hold his extended positions during the night, 1LT Bell ordered the 2d and 3d Platoons late in the afternoon to pull into the command post and form a perimeter around it. Withdrawal was difficult, for the 2d Platoon had six badly mangled men in its sector. These were placed on ponchos and dragged out sled-fashion. One casualty was killed by machine-gun fire on the way out.

During the night, a rescue force tried to get through to Company E, but the Japanese ambushed it and the survivors turned back. The Americans on Ishimmi Ridge, bombarded during the night by artillery, mortars, and "buzz bombs," repelled several attempts at infiltration. Flares kept the area well lighted and enabled Company E to see the approaching Japanese. Sleep was impossible. The tired, tense men hunched in their foxholes and waited for the dawn.

### *The Second Day*

The order came by radio in the morning of 18 May to stay at all costs. Lieutenant Bell said firmly, "We stay." The men resigned themselves to a last-ditch stand. Their grenades exhausted and their machine guns and mortars destroyed, the remaining men salvaged every clip of ammunition from the bandoleers of the dead. Spare workable rifles were loaded and bayonets laid alongside. Enemy pressure increased steadily during the day. Some Americans were shot at close range as they darted from hole to hole to escape grenades. At one time eight knee mortars were pounding the ridge, firing in pairs. Friendly artillery could to some extent keep off the charging Japanese but seemed unable to ferret out the enemy mortars, which were well protected.

The moans of wounded men, many of whom were in pitiful condition from lack of water and of medical aid, added to the strain. All canteens had been emptied the previous night. Nevertheless, battle discipline remained excellent. The worst problem concerned the replacements, who were courageous but inexperienced. Thrust suddenly into a desperate situation, some of them failed at crucial moments.

One man saw two Japanese attacking a sergeant thirty feet away, but his finger froze on the trigger. Another shouted wildly for a comrade to shoot some Japanese while his own rifle lay in his hands. Another saw an enemy soldier a few yards from his hole, pulled the trigger, and discovered that he had forgotten to reload. By the end of the ordeal, however, the replacements who survived were battle-hardened veterans.

During the afternoon, the 307th attempted to reinforce the small group. Elements of Company C tried to cross the open ground north of Ishimmi Ridge. Only the commander and five men reached Company E. The men scrambled safely into foxholes, but the commander, shot through the head while racing toward the command post, fell dead on the parapet of the command post foxhole. Spirits rose considerably when word came later in the afternoon that a litter-bearing unit of eighty men would try to get through in the evening.

Enemy fire slackened after dark, and the first of the litter bearers arrived at about 2200. They immediately started back carrying casualties. Walking wounded accompanied them. The litter bearers moved swiftly and managed to avoid being seen in the light of flares. Through splendid discipline and good luck eighteen men were carried out in two and a half hours, and others walked out. The litter teams had brought some water and ammunition and the troops drank for the first time since the day before. The second sleepless night on the ridge passed.

### *The Third Day*

On 19 May the enemy seemed to intensify his efforts to recapture Ishimmi Ridge. The besieged troops wondered whether his supply of men and ammunition was inexhaustible. The Japanese launched several attacks which were repulsed with great difficulty. Only the support of artillery and mortars, together with self-propelled mounts firing with precision on both flanks of Ishimmi Ridge, prevented the enemy from making an attack in strength which would have overrun the American positions. One enemy attack of platoon strength was dispersed by mortar and machine-gun fire and by a four-battalion time-on-target artillery concentration. Japanese mortar fire continued to fall on Ishimmi, however, and took its toll during the day.

A message arrived during the morning that Company E would be relieved that evening. By noon, the radio had become so weak that further communication with the company was impossible. The day wore slowly on. By 2100 there was still no sign of the relief. Shortly afterward, however, rifle fire intensified to the rear, a sign of activity there. At 2200 Company L, 3d Battalion, 306th Infantry, arrived. The relief was carried out in pitch darkness; each member of Company E left as soon as a replacement reached his position. As the haggard survivors were about to descend the ridge at 0300, a bursting shell hit two of the newcomers; one of them had to be evacuated on a poncho. Carrying its own wounded, Company E followed a white tape to the rear and arrived safely.

Of the 204 officers and men of the reinforced company that had made the night attack on Ishimmi, 156 had been killed or wounded. There were 28 privates, 1 noncommissioned officer, and 2 officers left of the original 129 members of Company E. The platoon sent in relief by Company C had gone out with 58 effectives and returned with 13. Of the 17 men in the heavy weapons section only 4 came back. Company E had spearheaded a several-hundred-yard advance toward Shuri, however, and with the help of supporting weapons had killed hundreds of Japanese around Ishimmi.

During the battle to hold Ishimmi Ridge, the 305th Infantry had continued its attack along Route 5. The enemy held tenaciously to his positions in the finger ridges running west from the highway. Fierce fire fights flared up, often holding up the advance for a substantial time. The network of small hills and ridges afforded the Japanese almost complete interlocking fire; many positions were covered by five or six others. Even though the 305th utilized all its supporting arms, including medium tanks, self-propelled howitzers, antitank guns, and armored flame throwers, it was almost impossible to keep all the



supporting strong points neutralized at the same time. The 306th Infantry relieved the 305th on 21 May, as the troops were reaching the northern outskirts of Shuri.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 77th Div G-3 Periodic Rpts Nos. 54-57, 18-21 May 45; Leach, 77th Div History Okinawa, Vol. II, Ch. III, pp. 85-86.

## Flattop and Dick Hills

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 13.

The right elements of the 96th Division were still fighting for Zebra Hill when the Tenth Army attack order went into effect on 11 May. Southwest of Zebra were other formidable positions that were to engage elements of both the 96th and 77th for ten days. These positions were built into Flattop and into the Dick Hills, east of Flattop. The Dick Hills and Flattop were so close to one another that their reduction depended on close coordination of troops of the 96th and 77th across the divisional boundary. A captured Japanese map showed these hills to be on the perimeter of the inner core of the Shuri defenses.

The Japanese had a miscellaneous collection of troops in the Flattop-Dick Hills area. Although heavily reduced during the past weeks, the *22d Regiment, 24th Division*, was still ably commanded and capable of effective defense in the scores of available positions in the Flattop area. Supporting the *32d Regiment* were troops of the *24th Transport Regiment*, the *29th Independent Battalion*, and the *27th Tank Regiment*. The remaining six tanks of the *27th* were dug in behind Flattop and used as stationary pillboxes. Engineers from the tank regiment had mined roads and other approaches and had constructed bell-shaped foxholes from which satchel charges could be thrown against American tanks. The Japanese had salvaged a number of 7.7-mm. machine guns from destroyed tanks to round out their defenses.<sup>1</sup>

The Dick Hill mass consisted of four heights, known officially as Dick Baker, Dick Able, Dick Right, and Dick Left. The highest and most heavily fortified of these was Dick Right (ordinarily called Dick Hill), which was a companion hill mass to Flattop and lay just southeast of it. Dick Baker was close to Zebra and just west of the narrow road running southwest from Onaga along the southeast slope of Zebra. Dick Able was southeast of Dick Baker. Dick Left, another well-fortified and strongly defended height, was the southern elevation of the ridge running south from Dick Right. (See [CMH] Map No. XXXIX.)

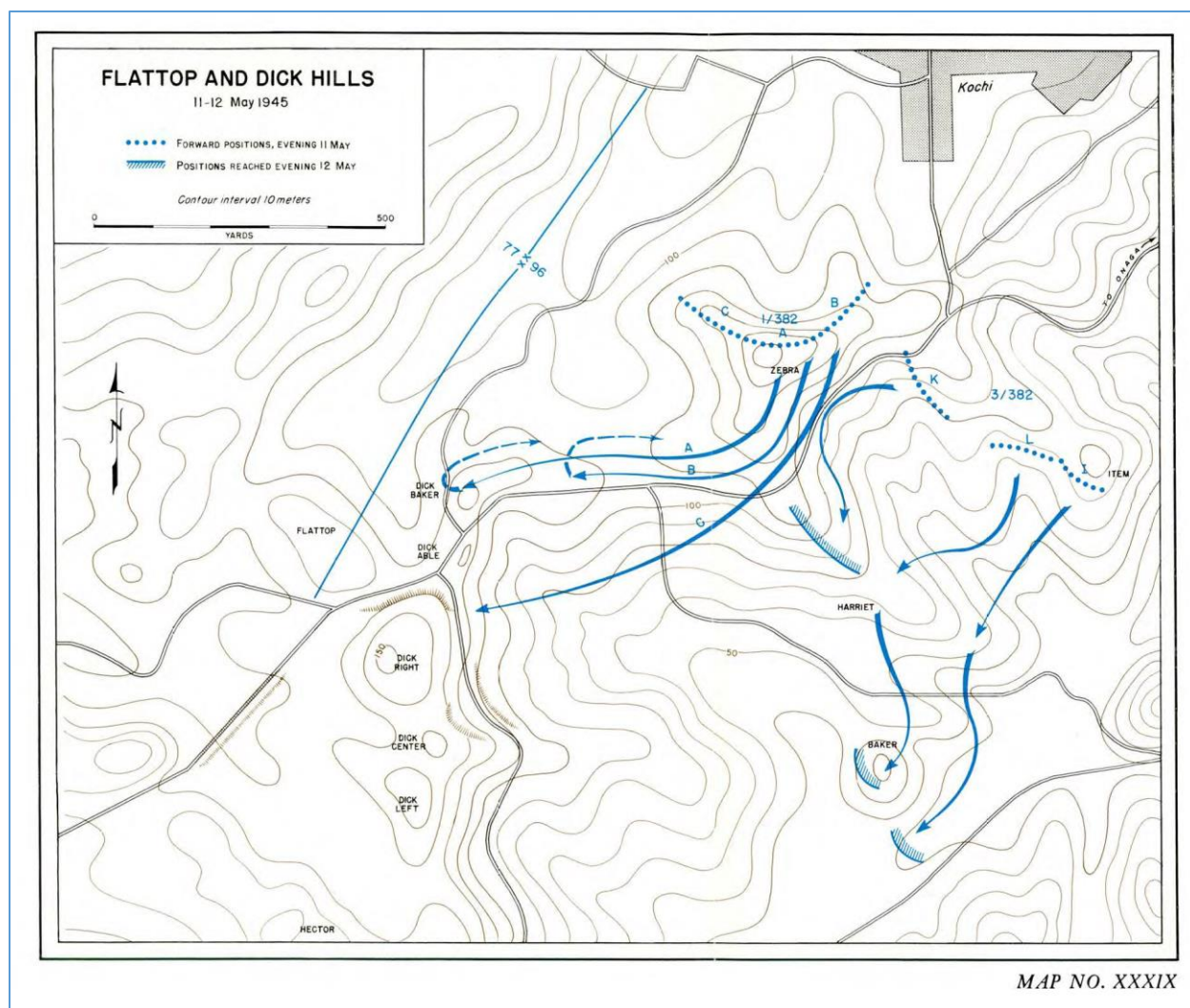
During the night of 10-11 May a fight raged on the crest of Zebra Hill as the Japanese tried to oust the Americans from positions occupied on the previous day. Not until 0730 was the enemy forced off the hill, leaving 122 of his number dead. During the 11th, the 382d Infantry, 96th Division, commanded by Colonel M. L. Dill, consolidated its positions on Zebra. Operating on the reverse slope of the hill was difficult since Japanese positions in the Dick Hills area commanded that slope. An attempt to move over open ground to Dick Baker, undertaken later in the day, proved abortive because of accurate enemy fire. One assault platoon lost all its noncommissioned officers and a private first class was in command at the end of the day.<sup>2</sup>

The 382d attacked again on 12 May, with the 1st Battalion on the right (west) and the 3d Battalion on the left. Block and tackle were used to haul 37-mm. antitank guns up to the top of Zebra for direct fire into Japanese positions on heights to the south. Artillery fire and the 37-mm. fire enabled the attack of the 3d Battalion to get off to a good start toward Baker Hill. While the tank-infantry teams of the 1st Battalion cleared out the reverse slope of Zebra, the 3d Battalion advanced slowly between Zebra and Item Hills. The 1st Battalion attacked toward Dick Baker but was surprised by fire from its rear. Despite the efforts of the two battalions, some Japanese on the reverse slope of Zebra had survived. Nevertheless, assault troops of the 1st Battalion reached Dick Baker and dug in on the crest under a heavy smoke screen. Heavy fire soon forced them to withdraw.

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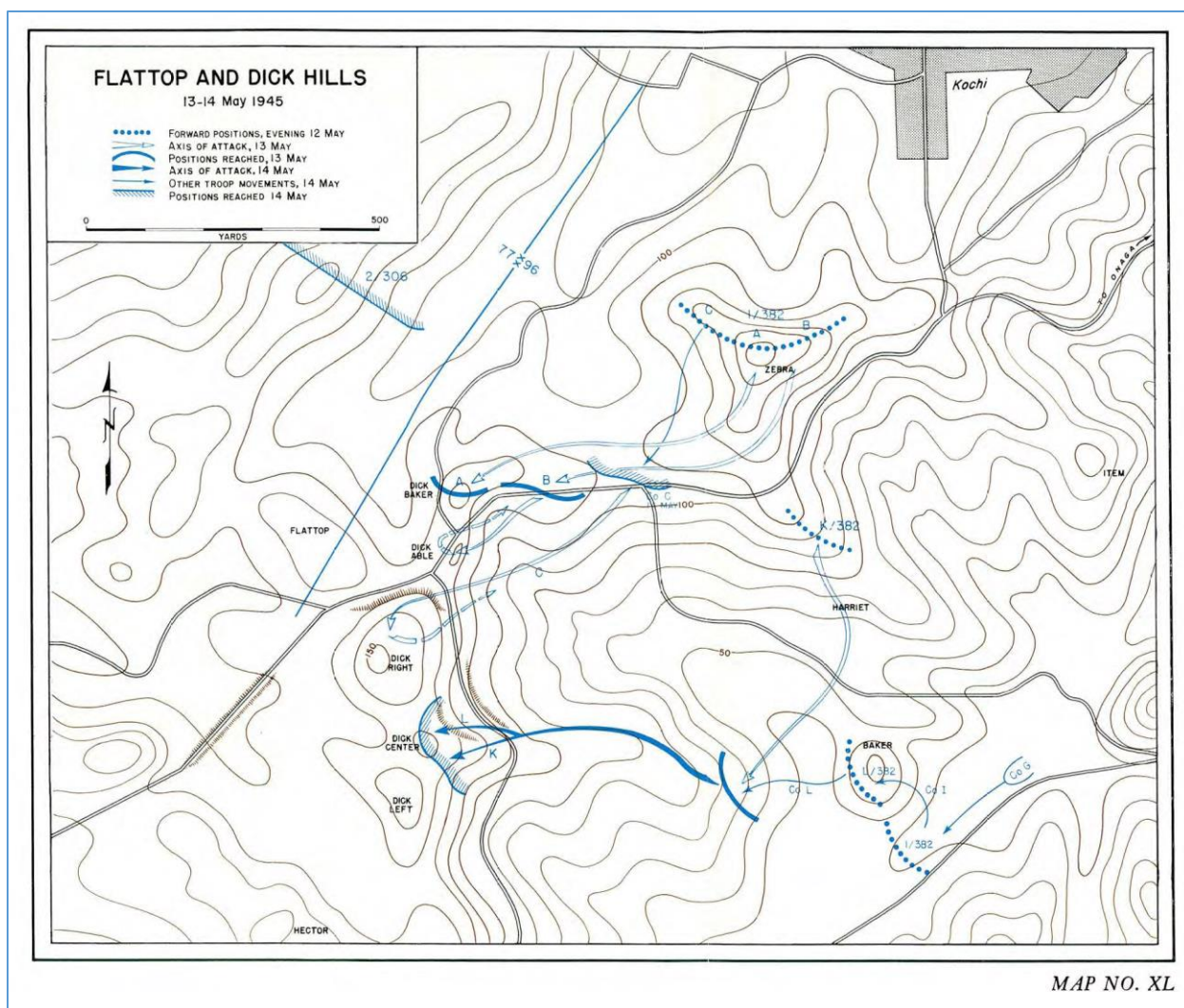
<sup>1</sup> 96th Div G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 47, 18 May 45; Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 369-70.

<sup>2</sup> The account of operations of the 96th Divisions at Dick Hills is based on Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. IV, pp. 25-31, 58-62, 64-67, 72-74.



In the afternoon Company A attacked up the east slope of Dick Baker. The troops were halfway to the top when most of them were pinned down by heavy fire from the south. Lieutenant Woodrow W. Anderson and three soldiers continued the assault. Anderson covered two huge caves on the east face of Dick Baker by fire while Private First Class Amador G. Duran made a dash between them to the crest. Anderson and the two other men joined him. Suddenly a terrific mortar barrage descended on the hill. Anderson and Duran were killed instantly when a shell landed squarely in their foxhole; the two survivors ran down the northwest slope to friendly territory. No further progress was made during the day. The regiment's only success of the day was the 3d Battalion's capture of Baker Hill, 600 yards south of Zebra.

The effort of 13 May was closely coordinated with the advance on the right made by the 306th Infantry, 77th Division. The 1st Battalion, 382d Infantry, pushed off shortly after 1100. The plan was for Company A, leading, to attack Dick Baker while Company B swung out to the left toward Dick Able. For a time everything went smoothly. Both companies reached the crests of their objectives, meeting little fire, and they promptly began blowing up caves and pillboxes. But Japanese gunners were waiting. Suddenly a storm of explosives hit the forces on Dick Able. Over 200 rounds of 90-mm. mortar fire, together with 150-mm. artillery rounds and knee mortar shells, fell on the small, exposed crest. The commander of Company B and all but one or two of the fourteen men with him were killed. Company A was able to hold its position on Dick Baker. (See [CMH] Map No. XL.)



The Japanese reinforced their positions in the Dick Hills area during the night of 13-14 May. On the next morning enemy fire was so strong that tanks had to be used to transport supplies to the forward troops. It was a risky procedure to leave a foxhole on Dick Baker even to receive supplies from tanks at the base of the hill. In the afternoon, after coordinating with the 306th Infantry on his right, COL Dill launched an attack on Dick Able and Dick Right. Supported by Company A on Dick Baker, Company B managed to reach the crest of Able without difficulty. The heavy pounding of support weapons during the morning had evidently knocked out many of the mortars covering this position. A platoon of Company C then attacked Dick Right from the north. Five infantrymen advanced halfway up the slope, but the first three were killed by rifle fire. The enemy also opened up on the platoon with mortars, and the Americans were forced to withdraw.

The 3d Battalion also attacked Dick Right, advancing from the Baker Hill area toward the east fingers of Dick. Company K managed to reach the military crest on the north slopes of the fingers. As Company L, supported by a platoon of tanks, started up a draw leading to Dick Right, a barrage of mortar shells descended on it. Some of the rounds hit the tanks and had the same effect on the accompanying foot troops as air bursts. All but two of the twenty-three men in the leading platoon were killed or wounded. Despite the continuing mortar fire, the company commander rallied his remaining men and led them to the military crest on Dick Right, where they tied in on the right of Company K. In obtaining this precarious hold on Dick, the 3d Battalion had lost six killed and forty-seven wounded.



During the night heavy rain fell, adding to the difficulties the troops already were having with the steep terrain. Before the rain the soft earth had made climbing much like scaling a sand dune; now the hillsides were slick with wet clay. During the morning, the 3d Battalion, 382d, was able to consolidate its position. It was still difficult, however, to move from the military crest to the topographical crest of Dick Hill; one platoon made seven attempts to seize and hold positions on the skyline but each time was forced back just below the crest. Troops were able only to extend their hold westward along the north slope of the long ridge. These attacks brought the 382d Infantry into close conjunction with the fighting around Flattop on the west, toward which the left elements of the 77th had been driving for several days. (See [CMH] Map No. XLI.)

Seen from the north, Flattop resembled what its name implied—a long, tabletop ridge, dropping abruptly to narrow saddles at both ends. It stood on the right flank of the rugged hill masses extending southeast to Conical Hill and constituting the eastern defenses of Shuri. Flattop dominated the Kochi Valley for 1,300 yards to the north, including Chocolate Drop on the northwest. Just to the east, on the other side of a saddle deepened by a road cut, was Dick Hill, objective of the 96th Division. Flattop had a fairly steep reverse slope with the usual profusion of enemy defenses.<sup>3</sup>

Flattop was one objective of the 306th Infantry, 77th Division, when that regiment moved out in the Tenth Army attack of 11 May. Chocolate Drop was the other objective. Flattop commanded both Chocolate Drop and the west slopes of Dick Hill, and only after Flattop was taken could the others be entirely reduced. On 11 May elements of the 3d Battalion started to work slowly along the extended swell of ground north of Flattop. On the 12th, tank-infantry teams tried to reach Flattop but failed. Japanese fire power prevented the troops from coming within range of the height. Similar efforts on the 13th and 14th were frustrated, but each day artillery and other support weapons heavily pounded the hill. The 307th relieved the 306th Infantry on the morning of 15 May.

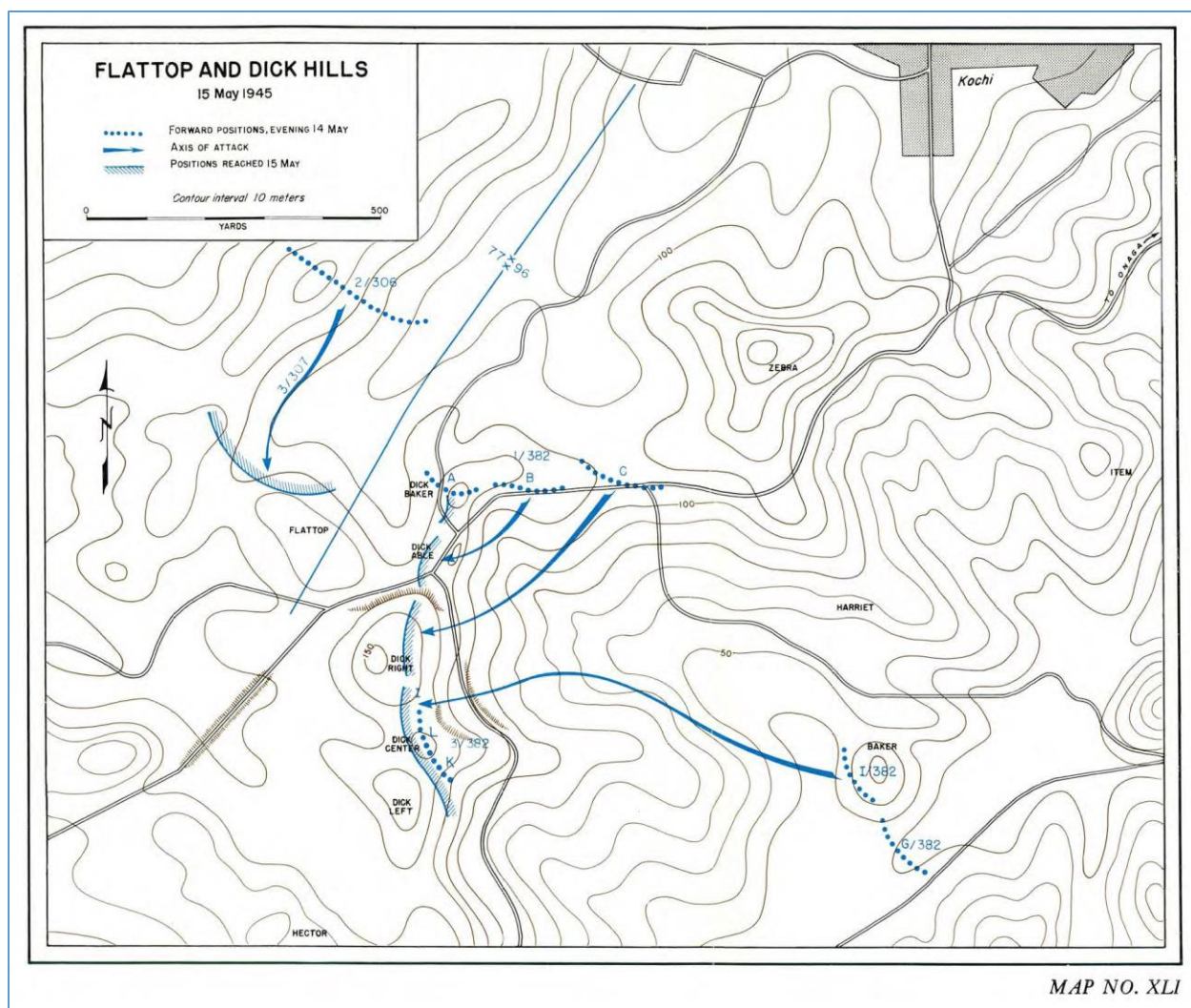
Throughout the rainy night of 14-15 May, artillery pounded Flattop and the neighboring hills. The 3d Battalion, 307th Infantry, attacked at 0900 in the morning. Troops moved up the slippery face of Flattop with grenades, satchel charges, and portable flame throwers. Tanks put direct fire on the crest and face of the hill. The troops spent the afternoon in a grenade battle with the enemy and dug in for the night just below the crest. On the next day, a platoon reached the top of the hill, but shortly afterward a heavy mortar concentration from enemy positions on Tom Hill, 1,000 yards to the south, forced the Americans off the crest. Meanwhile, support tanks had quickly knocked out the six enemy tanks dug in around Flattop. A member of the Japanese *27th Tank Regiment*, amazed by the accuracy of American tank fire, described it as "100 shots—100 bulls eyes." The destruction of these tanks with their 37-mm. guns scarcely affected the Flattop fighting. The real trouble was with mines and 47-mm. antitank fire, which together knocked out three American tanks during the day.

On the 17th another bitter struggle raged on Flattop. The struggle swayed back and forth across the narrow crest of the hill. Company K, the assaulting unit, had been reduced to fourteen infantrymen by the end of the day; finally it was forced back off the top. Tanks tried to go through the road cut between Flattop and Dick Hill, but two of them were disabled by mines, leaving the cut blocked. The road cut was later blown along its entire length by seven tons of bangalore torpedoes to remove the mines. The infantry continued its close-in fighting with the enemy on 18 May while more tanks tried to move through the cut. A 47-mm. antitank gun destroyed one of the first tanks to emerge from the cut, but it was knocked out in turn by an American 105-mm. self-propelled gun. Other tanks of the 77th and 96th Divisions came up in support.

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<sup>3</sup> The account of operations of the 77th Division at Flattop Hill is based on Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 366-77, and Leach, 77th Div History Okinawa, Vol. II.





Now for the first time the Americans could place direct fire on the reverse slopes of Flat Top and Dick Hill. This was to prove decisive. Tanks and assault guns put destructive fires on Japanese positions throughout the next day, 19 May. Bayonet charges by the enemy from southwest of Flat Top were dispersed by artillery and mortar fire. On 20 May the final American attack started with a saturation shower of grenades. A chain of men extending from the base of Flat Top passed hand grenades to the troops lined up along the crest, who threw the missiles as fast as they could pull out the pins. Having seized the advantage, the infantry moved down the reverse slope blasting caves with satchel charges and flame throwers. Tanks along the road cut accounted for many of the Japanese. By 1545 Flat Top had fallen. More than 250 enemy bodies lay on the crest and reverse slope of the hill.

In the zone of the 382d Infantry, 96th Division, the bitter struggle for Dick Hill continued from 15 to 20 May. All attempts to move over the crest of the hill were met by grazing machine-gun fire from Oboe Hill to the left (east) and from Flat Top to the right. The 2d Battalion relieved the 1st Battalion on the morning of the 16th. During the previous night the American lines had been pushed back down the south slope of Dick Hill; thus a part of the work had to be done over again. There seemed to be no decrease in Japanese resistance, and the battle raged into the night. Efforts to hold the crest of Dick Hill on the west exposed the men to fire from Flat Top. The 382d made little more progress on the 17th.

The seizure of the road cut between Flat Top and Dick Hill on 18 May was the turning point in the Dick Hill fighting as it had also been in the struggle for Flat Top. On 19 and 20 May the hold of the 382d

on the reverse slope of Dick Hill was steadily enlarged. Despite continuing heavy antitank fire from enemy positions to the south, tank-infantry teams methodically destroyed Japanese strong points in the immediate Dick Hills area. On one occasion an armored flame thrower flushed fifty Japanese out of a cave; all fifty were cut down as they fled. Pockets remained to be cleaned out as late as 21 May. By that time, however, the 382d was involved in another grinding effort to take Oboe Hill on the regimental left.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. IV, pp. 78-81, 95-97, 103-06, 110-11, 119-21.

## Conical Hill

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 13.

The Navy, pouring expensive shells into Conical Hill from Buckner [Nakagusuku] Bay, marked it with a "Million Dollar" price tag. The peak rose 476 feet high above the Yonabaru coastal plain, less than two miles south of Hill 178. From it radiated six long, sharp ridges. A long eastern spur ran down toward Buckner Bay; a second jutted northeast to Gaja Ridge, and another due north. Others ran northwest to King Hill, due west to Love, and due south for 800 yards along the coast to end in a rounded knob called Sugar Hill, just northwest of Yonabaru. The flat plain between Conical Hill and Buckner Bay was about 400 yards wide, and Route 13, the important east coast thoroughfare, passed through it. (See [CMH] Map No. XLII.)

A mile northeast of Conical Peak on the coastal flat was the enemy's projected Yonabaru airstrip, grass-covered and barely distinguishable. Unaha lay west of the airstrip, and behind that village the ground rose steeply to Hill 178. This high ground formed the northern edge of a U-shaped bowl the open end of which faced the bay. A chain of hills known from north to south as Tare, William, Easy, Charlie, and King shaped the base of the U, while Conical itself was the southern arm. The enclosed area was flat and sometimes swampy, except for Gaja Ridge, which rose by the village of Yonagusuku (or Gaja) near the middle of the southern arm.

A valley running behind Fox, Charlie, King, and Conical Hills, the entire way down to the Naha-Yonabaru road, separated the Conical Hill sector from the inner ring of Shuri defenses. The Oboe Hill mass, guarding Shuri's eastern flank, lay a mile northwest of the peak of Conical, across the valley.<sup>1</sup>

About 1,000 Japanese, heavily armed with mortars and organic 75-mm. artillery, occupied positions on Conical Hill itself. Defense of the sector was entrusted to Colonel Hotishi Kanayama's *89th Regiment of the 24th Division*, reinforced by the *27th Independent Battalion*, one of a number of harbor construction battalions which had changed their designation to "Sea Raiding Battalions." Also attached were one company of the *3d Independent Machine Gun Battalion* and the *23d Antitank Company*. A captured Japanese map dated 8 May placed two battalions of the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade* as guarding the ground between the peak of Conical and Yonabaru, but it appears that these units were moved to the Dakeshi sector soon afterward. Their place was taken by the converted airdrome-maintenance squadron from the Naha airfield and also by the *29th Independent Battalion*.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Attack That Failed*

The task given the 383d Infantry, 96th Division, when on 10 May it relieved the 184th Infantry, 7th Division, was the capture of Conical Hill. The 1st Battalion, which was to make the main effort, effected the relief on William Hill and the eastern slopes of Easy Hill. Easy was a symmetrical, oblong hill on a north-south axis, with steep sides. A deep, narrow cut separated Easy from Charlie Hill on the south. Charlie Hill on its eastern side was also steep. It was roughly circular and had three prominent noses: one to the northeast offering an approach, one on the southwest pointing to Love Hill, and a third running almost due south to a cut separating it from a U-shaped hill called King. Fox Hill lay to the west of Easy, its southern tip ending in a steep little rise west of Charlie known as Fox Pinnacle.

The big attack on 11 May started auspiciously. After a thorough mortar preparation Company B took Easy Hill without too much difficulty and then moved through the cut between Easy and Charlie to flank Fox from the southeast and gain positions on its crest. Company C, after jockeying for favorable

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<sup>1</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 385-87; Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. IV, pp. 7-10.

<sup>2</sup> The account of operations of the 96th Division at Conical Hill is taken from Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. IV; 96th Div Actn Rpt, Ch. VII; G-2 Periodic Rpts for the period.





injured. Another platoon from the same company tried unsuccessfully to take Fox Pinnacle. On the same day Company L, 3d Battalion, which on 13 May had taken up positions to seal the draw between Charlie and King Hills and thus close a gap between the 1st and 2d Battalions, attacked King and gained the entire crest.

Although the reverse slopes of Charlie and King had not been reduced, an attack on Love Hill, a low, bare ridge running generally east and west, was launched on 16 May as part of a plan which was intended to clean out Charlie and put Company L on the western end of King to supply a base of fire. From Love Hill, fire could reach the reverse slope positions on the southwest side of Conical Hill and support the 382d Infantry's attack on Oboe. Because of the inherent strength of Love's defenses the attack did not succeed; nor was progress made on Charlie's southern slopes against the large number of caves, swarming with Japanese. Tanks helped a platoon of Company C to reach Love Hill but ran out of ammunition and withdrew. A murderous barrage, from an estimated fifty machine guns firing from Love itself and from Conical and Oboe Hills and the reverse slopes of King and Charlie, then hit the platoon. Six men, all of them wounded, made their way back to the American lines that night; twenty were left on the objective.

On 19 May Company E established itself on the western end of King Hill but was driven off by fire from Charlie and Love Hills and the reverse slope of King. Since the 96th Division had taken over this sector, more than 300 had been killed or wounded in trying to move down this series of hills. Constant attack and the use of tanks and demolitions had been unavailing, and the strain was beginning to tell on the troops. On 20 May an air strike was run against the reverse slopes of Charlie, toward the American lines, but, although the planes dropped their 500-pound bombs accurately from an altitude of only a few yards, the Charlie pocket continued to withstand assault. It was still alive with Japanese, and supporting fire from Love Hill was deadly. Charlie pocket was not to be finally eliminated or Love Hill taken until 30 May, after nineteen days of bitter struggle.

#### *The Hole in the Dike*

The 13th of May, hot and clear, was a turning point in the battle for Okinawa. On the two preceding days the 2d Battalion, 383d Infantry, had cleaned out Gaja Ridge and, by working south from Yonagusuku (Gaja) and the twin villages of Tobaru and Amaru, had opened the possibility of reaching Conical's peak from the north and northeast. On the 12th a toe hold had been gained on Conical's northern spur, which ran down to Tobaru and Amaru, and Company G had made an extensive reconnaissance and destroyed many enemy positions up the draw on the west side of this spur. When MG Hodge read the 96th Division's report that evening, he immediately telephoned its commander, MG Bradley, and directed that the frontal assault on Conical Hill from the north be pushed. "We'll have the key to the Shuri line if he can make it," MG Hodge told his associates.<sup>3</sup>

At 1100 on the 13th LTG Buckner arrived at the observation post of COL May, who had decided that the time was ripe for the assault on Conical Hill. Company F had spent the morning clearing Yonagusuku (Gaja) of Japanese who had infiltrated during the night; two platoons of tanks from Company B, 763d Tank Battalion, working with Company E, had pounded enemy positions in Conical's northern slopes all morning; but Company G, attacking strong points west of Conical's northern spur, was prevented from climbing to the crest by fire from Charlie Hill in its rear and from Conical itself. Colonel May ordered Lieutenant Colonel Lee Morris, 2d Battalion commander, to attack Conical frontally with Companies E and F and to have tanks move with the infantry up the hill.

Two platoons of Company F on the left drove toward Conical's northeast spur and reached a series of boulders halfway up with surprising ease. The two platoon sergeants, Technical Sergeant Guy J. Dale and Technical Sergeant Dennis O. Duniphan, held a hasty consultation and decided to move up to

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<sup>3</sup> Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. IV, p. 49.



the crest without waiting for orders from the company commander, First Lieutenant Owen R. O'Neill. By 1300 the men had reached the northeast crest of the ridge.

Japanese reaction was intense. Knee-mortar fire fell on the two platoons as they dug in, and at 1525 a counterattack of at least company strength struck frontally and on Company F's exposed left flank. Sergeant Duniphan stood up and emptied a BAR into enemy soldiers ten feet away, then grabbed a rifle and continued to fire at the attackers. Lieutenant O'Neill sent a runner down the hill to order First Lieutenant Richard W. Frothinger, leader of the 2d Platoon, to come up immediately. Lieutenant Frothinger led his platoon up the hill in a headlong dash through hostile machine-gun fire. An American artillery spotting plane flying over Conical watched the fight and called for fire. Suddenly an overwhelming concentration of artillery air bursts and 4.2-inch mortar fire splattered the area just beyond the crest. The fire was perfectly timed, and the Japanese were repulsed.

Meanwhile Company E had climbed the eastern slopes of Conical's northern spur and the steep sides of the peak itself, taking positions on Company F's right, fifty yards east of Conical's peak. At dusk Company G dug in facing west along the northern spur; thus the lines extended continuously in a generally east-west direction high up on Conical's northern slopes. The eastern anchor of the Shuri line was weakening. The Japanese, having surmised correctly that the main effort against Conical Hill would be down the Charlie-King ridge line, had disposed their forces to meet the threat from that quarter. But the 383d Infantry had discovered and used a naturally stronger but less heavily defended avenue of approach; two American platoon leaders had taken the initiative and led their men up the hill at a moment of precious opportunity.

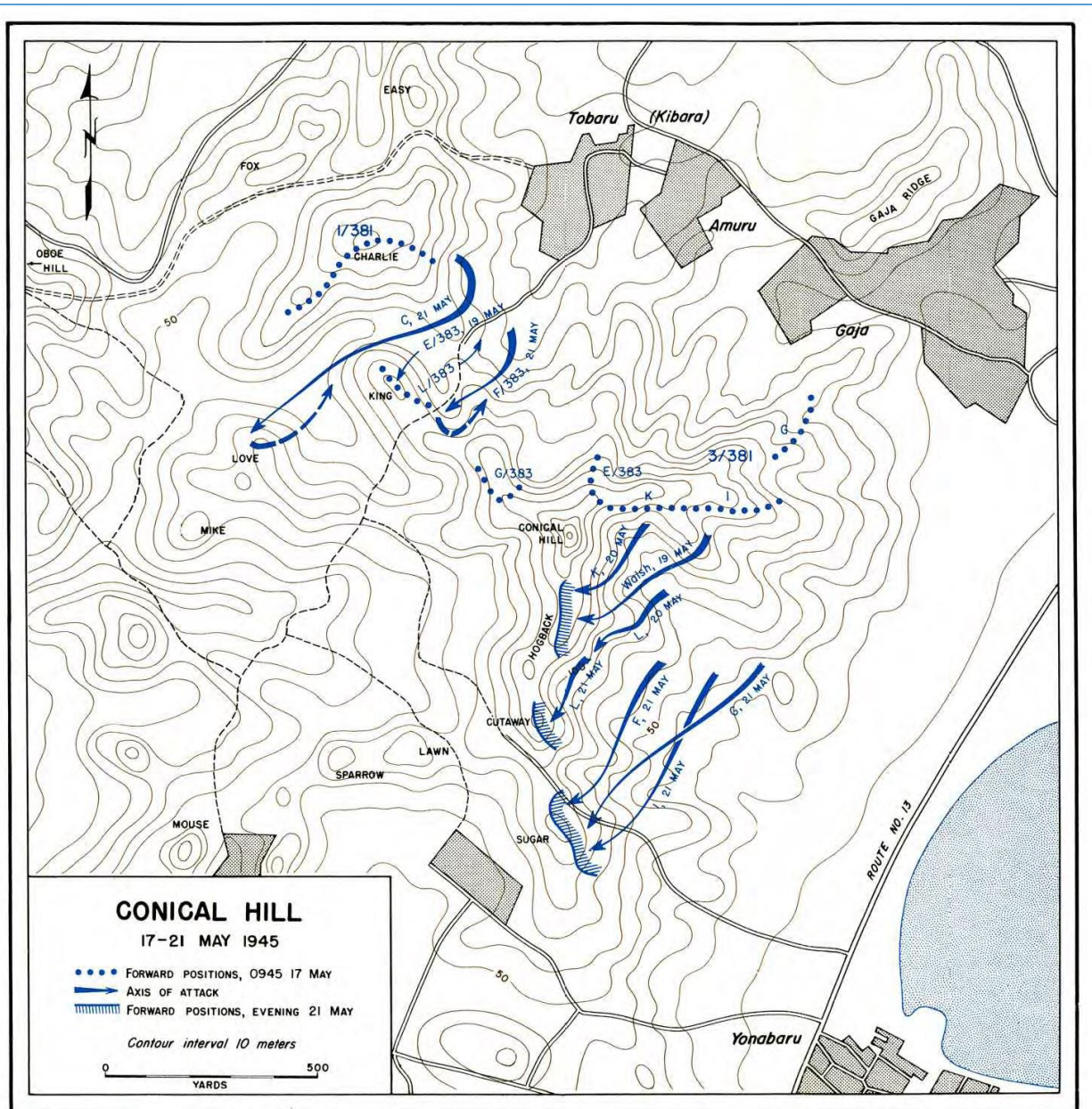
#### *South to Sugar Hill*

In what COL May called "the greatest display of courage of any group of men I have ever seen," two platoons of Company G, 383d Infantry, on 15 May moved up the northwest spur of Conical Hill from King Hill through extremely thick mortar fire. They dug in not far below Conical Peak. An earlier attempt by the company's reserve platoon to establish physical contact with the rest of the company from Conical's north spur around the base of the peak itself had been stymied when the six men engaged in the maneuver were all hit and tumbled seventy-five feet to the bottom of the peak.

Tanks worked over Japanese positions on Conical's eastern slopes and advanced as far south as the outskirts of Yonabaru on 16 May, and Company F secured slightly better positions, preparatory to a main attack down the east side of Conical Hill. On the following day, the 3d Battalion, 381st Infantry, relieved Companies E and F of the 383d, placing all three regiments of the 96th Division in the line. If the fresh battalion succeeded in clearing the eastern slopes of Conical Hill, the 7th Division could be called from reserve to sweep down the coast and flank the Shuri line. (See [CMH] Map No. XLIII.)

Sugar Hill, at the southern end of the 800-yard hogback that extended south from Conical's peak, was the objective of the 381st Infantry. On the eastern face of the hogback a number of finger ridges ran down into the Yonabaru coastal flats. Reducing the Japanese emplacements which covered the finger ridges from the west would be difficult, for the crest of the hogback would continue to be untenable because of fire from Love, Mike, and other hills to the west. It would be necessary to deny the crest to the enemy and to guard every inch of the military crest as soon as it was captured, to ward off Japanese attempts to establish positions on the skyline.

Second Lieutenant Leonard K. Warner, a Hawaiian, on 18 May led a platoon of Company K, 381st Infantry, down to the third finger ridge. On the way 2LT Warner had dashed up the second finger with two satchel charges and crossed the crest of the hogback to throw them into a heavy machinegun emplacement. On the third finger the platoon was receiving heavy fire from its rear, chiefly from emplacements between the first and second fingers, when 2LT Warner's company commander called him and asked whether he could move on to Sugar Hill.



MAP NO. XLIII

"Hell yes," said Warner. "The way the Japs are shooting me in the back they'll chase me all the way down there."<sup>4</sup>

Fire from Cutaway Hill, a peak shaped like an eyetooth and located on the hogback two-thirds of the way between Sugar Hill and Conical's peak, added to the platoon's troubles, and it had to withdraw under smoke. An outpost line on the first finger was held during the night. During the day, tanks working from the flats had had a difficult time and in the end had been forced to withdraw by heavy fire from Chinen Peninsula.

Lieutenant Colonel Nolan, commander of the 3d Battalion, 381st Infantry, on 19 May sent fifteen men with demolitions to attack the enemy emplacements between the first and second fingers.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

After they failed in an attempt to climb the precipitous slope during the day, Second Lieutenant Donald Walsh led the men after dark to the northernmost of the machine-gun positions. They killed its occupants and discovered that it commanded the Japanese defensive system on the reverse slopes of the Conical hogback. The enemy counterattacked persistently but unsuccessfully all night. On the next day, the battalion engaged in fierce fighting southward to within 200 yards of Cutaway Hill, and Company L consolidated for the night between the second and third fingers. That night Company K secured the area between the peak of Conical Hill and the second finger, and fought bitter grenade battles with Japanese twenty yards away on the other side of the ridge line. On the 21st the company used 1,100 grenades in hanging on to its position.

On 21 May, while Company L was heavily engaging the enemy on Cutaway Hill and on the hogback to the north of it, Companies I and F attacked across the heavily serrated ground on the east side of the hogback toward Sugar Hill. The men paused at each ridge to set up a base of fire and pound the reverse slopes of the next fold with hundreds of mortar shells, then moved on with tanks to flush the Japanese from their caves and pillboxes. The company's 60-mm. mortars and heavy machine guns, giving heavy and effective support, were advanced from ridge to ridge just behind the troops. Artillery fire pounded the reverse slopes of Sugar Hill and broke up a strong attempt to reinforce this position by small groups of enemy advancing from the southwest across open ground. Company F, on the right, had to send its men by individual rushes across the open fields below Cutaway Hill to the north slopes of Sugar. This company consolidated its lines on Sugar Hill, but plunging fire from Cutaway was to plague the men for a week. Company I captured the eastern part of Sugar without much difficulty, and Company G came up to strengthen the line against the anticipated counterattack. Company F took the brunt of the attack that night and killed fifty Japanese. The day's gain had cost the 381st Infantry 56 casualties, but the regiment had disposed of 403 Japanese.<sup>5</sup>

All of Conical Hill's eastern slopes were now in American hands, and the 7th Division could proceed down the corridor by Buckner [Nakagusuku] Bay without molestation from its right flank. The western side of Conical and the reverse slope of Cutaway remained firmly in the hands of the Japanese.

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<sup>5</sup> Casualty figures from 381st Inf Jnl, Msg No. 65, 21 May 45.

## Oboe Hill

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 14.

... elements of the 382d Infantry, 96th Division, holding positions at the foot of Hen Hill, just across the boundary from the 77th Division, were unable to move from their mud foxholes. The Japanese had perfect observation of this area from Tom Hill, just east of Shuri, and brought down mortar and machine-gun fire on any activity. There was little movement except for an occasional patrol. Mud, low supplies, and drooping spirits prevailed here too.

To the east the lines of the 382d Infantry crossed over the jaw-like clay promontory of Oboe, which stood like a rampart a thousand yards east of Shuri. On 21 May bitter fighting had placed elements of the 382d Infantry on the lip of Oboe. For the next week, the crest of Oboe was a no-man's land, and around it, and even down the forward face, supposedly in American hands, a close and unending grenade and bitter hand-to-hand fight raged. Here, more than anywhere else on the cross-island line during the period of mud, action was always near at hand. Here it was hardest to maintain the status quo described by Lieutenant Colonel Howard L. Cornutt, Assistant G-3 of the 96th Division, when he stated ironically: "Those on the forward slopes of hills slid down; those on the reverse slopes slid back. Otherwise, no change."<sup>1</sup>

An hour after midnight, in the morning of 24 May, a platoon of Japanese started through a gap between Companies C and L on Oboe and succeeded in knocking out the three right-hand foxholes of Company C. The light mortars of the 1st Battalion were at the base of Oboe, and when the attack developed they fired into the gap between the companies for the next four hours at the rate of a round and a half a minute. Communication lines were out: enemy mortars had cut every phone line, and the radio to the Navy had been drowned out by the rain. Artillery and illumination by the Navy could not be called over the area. By 0330 a full company of Japanese was attacking through the gap, and two platoons were assaulting Company A on the left of Company C. In the foxhole next to the three that had been knocked out by the Japanese, Private First Class Delmar Schriever, though wounded by mortar fire which killed the other two men in the foxhole with him, held his position single-handed until morning. Companies A and B were forced back off Oboe to the bottom, but the few men left in Company C remained near the top under the courageous leadership of Private First Class John J. Kwiecien, who took over command of the 1st Platoon when the platoon leader was wounded. In the 2d Platoon on the right only one man out of fourteen was unwounded when daylight came. These men on Oboe had used thirty-five cases of grenades during the night; only fifty rounds of 60-mm. mortar remained. By 0530 the foxholes on the right of Company C at the crest of Oboe had been won back from the Japanese. At this time Japanese were seen forming for another attack, but a timely resupply of mortar ammunition enabled the embattled troops to repel this effort. During the Japanese counterattack against Oboe the 362d Field Artillery Battalion fired 560 rounds of shells in helping to stem the enemy onslaught.

When the Japanese attack subsided, 150 enemy dead lay on top of Oboe and on the slope immediately beyond. The Japanese dug in on the reverse slope of Oboe only twenty-five yards from the American foxholes. Between the two dug-in forces, on 24 May, there was an interchange of hand grenades all day long.

The heavy losses incurred by the 1st Battalion, 382d Infantry, in repelling this furious Japanese night assault compelled a reorganization of the battalion. The three rifle companies, A, B, and C, were combined into one company under the Company C commander, with a total strength of 198 officers and enlisted men. This is another example of how battalions were reduced to company strength at Shuri. On

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<sup>1</sup> The account of operations of the 96th Division at Oboe Hill was taken from Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. IV, pp. 141-44; 96th Div Actn Rpt, Ch. VII; 382d Inf Actn Rpt, Ch. VII.

24 May MG Bradley. . . ordered the 3d Battalion, 383d Infantry, to take over the left part of the line of the 2d Battalion, 382d, on Oboe. The ranks of the 2d Battalion had become too thin to withstand another attack like that of 24 May.



## Breakthrough at Yonabaru

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Chapter 14.

When elements of the 96th Division seized the east face of Conical Hill and of Sugar Hill at the southern end of the Conical hogback, a path was cleared for the execution of a flanking maneuver around the right end of the Japanese line. The flanking force, once through the corridor and past Yonabaru, could sweep to the west up the Yonabaru valley and encircle Shuri from the rear. The main force of the Japanese army would then be trapped. This was the plan which the XXIV Corps was ready to put into effect when night fell on 21 May.<sup>1</sup>

### *Funneling Through the Conical Corridor*

Strengthened by 1,691 replacements and 546 men returned to duty from hospitals since it left the lines on 9 May, the 7th Division moved up to forward assembly areas just north of Conical Hill and prepared to make the dash through the corridor. At 1900 on 21 May the 184th Infantry, chosen by MG Arnold to lead the way, was in place at Gaja Ridge, at the northern base of Conical. The initial move of the envelopment was to be made in the dead of the night and in stealth.<sup>2</sup> General Buckner felt that "if the 7th can swing round, running the gauntlet, it may be the kill."<sup>3</sup>

Rain began to fall an hour before Company G, 184th Infantry, the lead element, was scheduled to leave its assembly area. The rain increased rapidly until it was a steady downpour. Up to 0200 on 22 May, the hour of departure, the men huddled under their ponchos listening to the dull, heavy reverberations of the artillery preparation, which sounded even louder and nearer in the rain. Then, in single column, the company headed south through the black night, the rain, and the sludge. No one fired as two Japanese dodged into the shadows and the debris of Yonabaru, and at 0415 the company formed at a crossroads in the ruined town, platoons abreast, ready to push on to Spruce Hill. It accomplished this advance without incident. Once on the crest of Spruce Hill, Company G sent up a flare signaling Company F to come through and try to reach Chestnut Hill.

Daylight, a dull and murky gray, had come when Company F reached the crest of Chestnut, 435 feet above the coast 1,000 yards southeast of Yonabaru. Only one man was wounded in this phase of the assault. As Company F reached the crest of Chestnut and looked down over the southern slope, several enemy soldiers were spotted climbing the hill, apparently to take up defense positions. Complete surprise had crowned the American effort. It was learned later that the Japanese command had not expected the Americans to make a night attack or to attack at all when tank and heavy-weapons support were immobilized by rain and mud.<sup>4</sup>

The 3d Battalion followed the 2d through Yonabaru. It then began advancing to the south toward Juniper and Bamboo Hills on a line southwest of Chestnut, the other high ground which the 184th was to seize before it would be considered safe for the 32d Infantry to come through the corridor and turn west to cut behind Shuri. The attack continued on the rainy morning of 23 May, with the 2d and 3d Battalions pressing forward to these initial objectives. At the end of the day, except for a small

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<sup>1</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 415ff. After the battle for Okinawa General Hodge stated that he had planned to use the 7th Division in such a maneuver even before the division had been relieved and before the attack of 11 May. See, however, Okinawa Diary, XXIV Corps, kept by Capt. Donald Mulford, 13-20 May 45, which indicates that General Hodge was even at that date somewhat uncertain about the maneuver.

<sup>2</sup> The account of operations of the 184th Infantry, 7th Division, through the coastal corridor was, unless otherwise indicated, taken from Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 292-313.

<sup>3</sup> Notes of Tenth Army Staff Meeting, 20 May 45, in Okinawa Diary kept by Lt Col Stevens and M/Sgt Burns.

<sup>4</sup> Interrog Yahara

gap between Company G on Juniper Hill and Company L on Bamboo Hill, the 184th Infantry had won a solid line stretching from the seacoast across the southern slope of Chestnut Hill and then across to Juniper and Bamboo. In two rainy days the 184th had forced a 2,000-yard crack in the enemy's defenses south of Yonabaru and accomplished its mission. Now the 32d Infantry could begin the second and decisive phase of the enveloping plan.

### *The 32d Infantry Attempts an Envelopment*

While the 184th Infantry held the blocking line from Chestnut to Bamboo and thus protected the left flank and rear, the 32d Infantry was to drive directly west along the Naha-Yonabaru valley to cut off Shuri from the south. The success of the entire plan of encirclement depended upon the 32d Infantry's carrying out its part.

On 22 May, while the 184th Infantry was pressing south, Company F of the 32d Infantry moved to the southern tip of Conical Hill, just west of Yonabaru, to help protect the right side of the passage. The main body of the 32d Infantry, however, did not start moving until the morning of 23 May, after LTC Green of the 184th Infantry radioed that his attack was going well and that it would be safe for the 32d to proceed. At 1045 on 23 May the 2d Battalion, 32d Infantry, passed through Yonabaru and headed west. Its initial objective was the string of hills west of Yonabaru and south of the Naha-Yonabaru road, centering on Oak Hill just below the village of Yonawa. By nightfall two battalions, the 2d and 3d, were deployed a mile southwest of Yonabaru facing west, ready to make their bid for envelopment. Already heavy machine-gun fire had slowed the advance and served notice that the enemy would bitterly oppose a drive up the Yonabaru valley. The continuing rains had by this time mired the tanks in their assembly areas north of Conical Hill, and the armor which commanders had counted on to spearhead the drive to the west was unable to function. Heavy assault guns likewise were immobilized. The infantry was on its own.<sup>5</sup>

During 24 May, the 32d Infantry developed the line where the Japanese meant to check the westward thrust of the 7th Division. This line ran south from Mouse Hill (southwest of Conical Hill), crossed the Naha-Yonabaru road about a mile west of Yonabaru, and then bent slightly southwest to take in June and Mabel Hills, the latter being the key to the position. Mabel Hill guarded the important road center of Chan, which lay two miles almost directly south of Shuri. Oak Hill, an enemy strong point, was somewhat in front of this line. Tactically, it was apparent that this line protected the Shuri-Chan-Karadera-Kamizato-Iwa road net, the easternmost of two routes of withdrawal south from Shuri.

The Japanese reacted slowly to the initial penetration below Yonabaru. Mortar and artillery fire, however, gradually increased. The scattered groups of second-class troops encountered plainly did not have the skill and determination of the soldiers manning the Shuri line. On 23 May elements of the Japanese *24th Division* were dispatched from Shuri to retake Yonabaru.<sup>6</sup> This effort took shape in numerous counterattacks on the night of 24-25 May against the 184th Infantry, which had just secured a lodgment on Locust Hill, a high, broad coral escarpment half a mile south of Chestnut Hill. At 0230 the Japanese counterattack also struck elements of the 32d Infantry west of Yonabaru. The enemy made some penetration of American lines at this point, and fighting continued until after dawn, when the Japanese assault force withdrew, leaving many dead behind.<sup>7</sup>

On 25 or 26 May, the main body of the enfeebled *62d Division* left Shuri and made a circuitous march to the southeast to join the fight against the 184th Infantry below Yonabaru.<sup>8</sup> Its arrival on the

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<sup>5</sup> The account of operations of 32d Infantry was, unless otherwise indicated, taken from Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 313-14, 320-27, 345-49, 362-66; 32d Inf Actn Rpt, pp. 23, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Interrog Yahara

<sup>7</sup> XXIV Corps G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 55, 25 May 45.

<sup>8</sup> Tenth Army PW Interrog Summary No. 2, 2 Aug 45: The *62d Division*.

Ozato-Mura front had no important effect except to strengthen the covering and holding force. The Hemlock-Locust Hill Escarpment area was cleared of the enemy on 26 May, and thereafter the 184th Infantry met no serious opposition as it pressed south to the vicinity of Karadera.<sup>9</sup> Patrols sent deep to the south reported encountering only scattered enemy troops. It became increasingly evident that the Japanese had pulled back their right flank, were fighting only a holding action there, and had no intention of withdrawing into the Chinen Peninsula as had been thought possible by American commanders.

It was on the right end of the 7th Division's enveloping attack that the Japanese brought the most fire power to bear and offered the most active resistance. The high ground at this point, where the southwest spurs of Conical Hill came down to the Naha-Yonabaru valley, was integrated with the Shuri fortified defense zone. American success at this point would cut the road connections south from Shuri and permit its envelopment; hence the Japanese denied to the 96th Division any gains in this area which would have helped the 32d Infantry in its push west.

### *The Japanese Hold*

The bright promise of enveloping Shuri faded rapidly as the fighting of 23-26 May brought the 32d Infantry practically to a standstill in front of the Japanese defense line across the Yonabaru valley. The Japanese had emplaced a large number of antitank guns and automatic weapons which swept all approach routes to the key hills. Mortars were concentrated on the reverse slopes. Had tanks been able to operate, the 32d Infantry could perhaps have destroyed the enemy's fire power and overrun the Japanese defenders, but the tanks were mired. On 26 May torrential downpours totaled 3.5 inches of rain; the last ten days of May averaged 1.11 inches daily.<sup>10</sup> General Hodge stated later that no phase of the Okinawa campaign worried him more than this period when the 32d Infantry was trying to break through behind Shuri.<sup>11</sup>

Decisive action in the Japanese holding battle took place in the vicinity of Duck and Mabel Hills, east of Chan. Here, on 26 May, the 32d Infantry tried to break the enemy resistance, but in a fierce encounter on Duck Hill it was thrown back with heavy casualties. The fighting was so intense and confused that five Japanese broke through and attacked Technical Specialist Fifth Class William Goodman, the only medic left in Company I, who was bandaging wounded men in a forward exposed area. Goodman killed all five Japanese with a pistol and then held his ground until the wounded were evacuated. In the withdrawal from Duck Hill the dead had to be left behind. No gain was made on the 27th, and on the 28th there was no activity other than patrolling.<sup>12</sup>

In front of the 184th Infantry to the southeast, the enemy fought a delaying action on 28-29 May at Hill 69, commonly called Karadera Hill, just north of the village of the same name. When patrols of the 184th Infantry penetrated deep into the Chinen Peninsula on 30 May without encountering the enemy, it was obvious that this rugged region would not become a battlefield.<sup>13</sup>

The most significant gains of the 32d Infantry in its drive west were to come on 30 and 31 May, when all three of its battalions launched a coordinated attack. By the end of 30 May the 32d had taken Oak, Ella, and June Hills; the advance brought the regiment directly up against Mabel and Hetty Hills and the defenses of Chan. On the last day of the month the 32d Infantry seized Duck Hill, consolidated positions on Turkey Hill, north of Mabel, and occupied the forward face of Mabel itself. The enemy still

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<sup>9</sup> 184th Inf Actn Rpt, pp. 16-17.

<sup>10</sup> Tenth Army G-4 Summary No. 99 in G-3 Jnl, Msg No. 35, 31 May 45.

<sup>11</sup> Interv XXIV Corps historian with Gen Hodge, 6 Jul 45.

<sup>12</sup> XXIV Corps G-3 Jnl, 29 May 45.

<sup>13</sup> Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 352-58; XXIV Corps G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 60, 31 May 45.

held the reverse slope of Mabel and occupied the town of Chan. The Japanese encountered were not numerous, but they had to be killed in place. They were the rear-guard holding force.

## Tenth Army Pursues, 1-17 June

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 15.

American opinion on the meaning of the Japanese movements crystallized on 30 May. After a meeting with III Amphibious Corps and XXIV Army Corps intelligence officers the Tenth Army intelligence officer reported at a staff meeting on the evening of 30 May that they had reached a consensus that the "enemy was holding the Shuri lines with a shell, and that the bulk of the troops were elsewhere." He estimated that there were 5,000 enemy troops in what he hoped would be the Shuri pocket, and stated that he did not know where the bulk of the Japanese troops were.<sup>1</sup> At a staff meeting held on the evening of 31 May, it was suggested that the enemy would make his next line the high ground from Naha-Ko and the Oroku Peninsula on the west to Baten-Ko below Yonabaru on the east. At this meeting LTG Buckner stated that "he [General Ushijima] made his decision to withdraw from Shuri two days too late."<sup>2</sup> During the following days it became clear that the Americans had underestimated the scope of the enemy's tactical plan and the extent to which it had been executed.

### *The Push South to the Yaeju-Dake-Yuza-Dake Barrier*

On 31 May LTG Buckner extended the Army boundary along the road joining the villages of Chan, Iwa, and Gushichan. He ordered his two corps to complete the encirclement of Shuri in order to cut the remaining Japanese troops into large segments. General Buckner and his staff still hoped to isolate a large portion of the 32d Army and prevent its withdrawal from Shuri; thus the two corps were directed to converge at Chan "in order to pocket enemy north this point." III Amphibious Corps was then to secure Naha and its airfield while XXIV Corps drove rapidly southeast to prevent the enemy from retiring into the Chinen Peninsula. General Buckner expected the Japanese, without skilled men or adequate transportation or communications, and hindered by boggy roads, to experience trouble and disorder during their mass retreat.<sup>3</sup>

Mud was a major concern of American commanders. Nearly twelve inches of rain had fallen during the last ten days of May and more was expected during the first part of June. Although 400 trucks had been used on 30 May to dump coral and rubble into the mudholes on Route 5, the main north-south road through the center of Okinawa, it was closed the following day to all but the most essential traffic. Other supply routes along the east and west coasts were in almost impassable condition. At the time when LTG Buckner ordered his troops to "drive rapidly," supply trucks were moving toward the front only as fast as they could be dragged by winches or bulldozers through the numerous quagmires. Units on each flank were using boats or amphibian tractors to transport supplies from rear areas to forward dumps, but they still faced the problem of moving food and ammunition from the beaches to the front-line foxholes. Center divisions were under a still greater strain. Much of the ammunition, food, and water was carried forward by reserve units—sometimes by men from the assault companies.

The XXIV Corps occupied the southernmost positions of the American front. General Hodge shifted the 7th Division toward the east and ordered the 96th to move south, relieve the 32d Infantry, and take up the western end of the Corps line. The 77th Division became responsible for protecting the rear of the 96th and for mopping up the part of the Shuri line which was in the XXIV Corps sector. By

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<sup>1</sup> Notes of Tenth Army staff meeting in Okinawa Diary (Stevens—Burns), 30 May 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 May 45.

<sup>3</sup> Notes of Tenth Army Staff Meeting, in Okinawa Diary kept by Stevens and Burns, 30 May 45; Tenth Army Opns Order No. 12-45, 31 May 45.



evening of 31 May, the 7th and 96th Divisions reached the Corps' objective, and they were ready to start south on the following morning.<sup>4</sup>

The lines of the III Amphibious Corps stretched from Shuri to a point 1,000 yards southeast of Naha; its nearest position was more than 3,000 yards from the dominating ground near Chan where LTG Buckner still hoped to converge spearheads of his two corps and to reduce Ushijima's force to segments. This hope disappeared by the night of 31 May, when the performance of the 96th and 7th Divisions indicated that LTG Ushijima had already accomplished his sly withdrawal despite the difficulties of mud and communications. When it became apparent that the Japanese withdrawal had frustrated American hopes of splitting the enemy forces, Tenth Army revised its plans and permitted the III Amphibious Corps to attack down the west coast and the 7th Division to proceed down the east flank.<sup>5</sup> (See [CMH] Map No. XLVI.)

... mud was ankle-deep as the Americans attacked south to catch up with Ushijima's escaped army before it should have time to burrow into a new defensive line. On 1 June, the Japanese defended two hills in front of the 7th Division, and during 1-2 June they made a solid stand in the zone of the 96th near Chan. Otherwise there was only spotty resistance of delaying and nuisance value until 6 June. On that day the pace of the American troops was retarded by vigorous enemy action to the front and by the overextension of the supply lines of the front-line units.<sup>6</sup>

After the first day of the pursuit, rain was more troublesome and constant than enemy interference. The 184th Infantry waded south and east over the green and rain-soaked hills on Chinen Peninsula against light opposition that indicated an absence of enemy plans for a defense of that area. General Arnold, moving to speed up operations, committed the 32d Infantry to patrolling the northern part of the peninsula.<sup>7</sup> Late in the afternoon of 3 June, patrols from the 1st Battalion, 184th, reached the southeast coast of Okinawa near the town of Hyakuna and completed the 7th Division's first mission. It had been, LTG Buckner said, a magnificent performance.<sup>8</sup>

[Recently promoted to] Lieutenant General, Hodge doubted that his corps could have continued its pace had it not been for previous experience in the marshes of Leyte.<sup>9</sup> Only flimsy resistance faced the 1st Marine Division, but its supply system had collapsed and the battalions had to rely upon air drops or carrying parties. By 3 June, the gap in depth between the two corps had increased to 3,000 yards, and the 383d Infantry was subjected to harassing fire from its exposed right flank. To protect his corps' flank, LTG Hodge sent the 305th Infantry, 77th Division, south to fill the increasing void.<sup>10</sup>

With the elimination of possible defensive terrain on Chinen Peninsula and in central southern Okinawa, it was becoming evident by the evening of 3 June that LTG Ushijima intended to stage his final stand on the southern tip of the island, almost certainly on the Yaeju-Dake Escarpment, which lay within the zone of the III Amphibious Corps. Moreover, if the XXIV Corps maintained its pace for one or two days longer, as seemed likely, it would have secured its portion of southern Okinawa. In order to deny the enemy a breathing spell before the final period of combat, LTG Buckner shifted the Corps' boundary to the west so that the entire escarpment fell within the zone of the XXIV Corps. Effective at noon on 4 June, the boundary between the corps changed from the road connecting Iwa with Gushichan to the road connecting Iwa with Yuza, Ozato, and Koruesu.<sup>11</sup> (See [CMH] Map No. XLVII.)

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<sup>4</sup> XXIV Corps FO No. 52, 31 May 45; Appleman, XXIV Corps History, p. 490; XXIV Corps G-3 Periodic Rpt, 31 May 45.

<sup>5</sup> Interv 1st I & H Off with Lt Col J. R. Weaver, ACofS, G-2, Tenth Army, 5 Jun 45.

<sup>6</sup> Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 381-84; Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. IV, pp. 171-72.

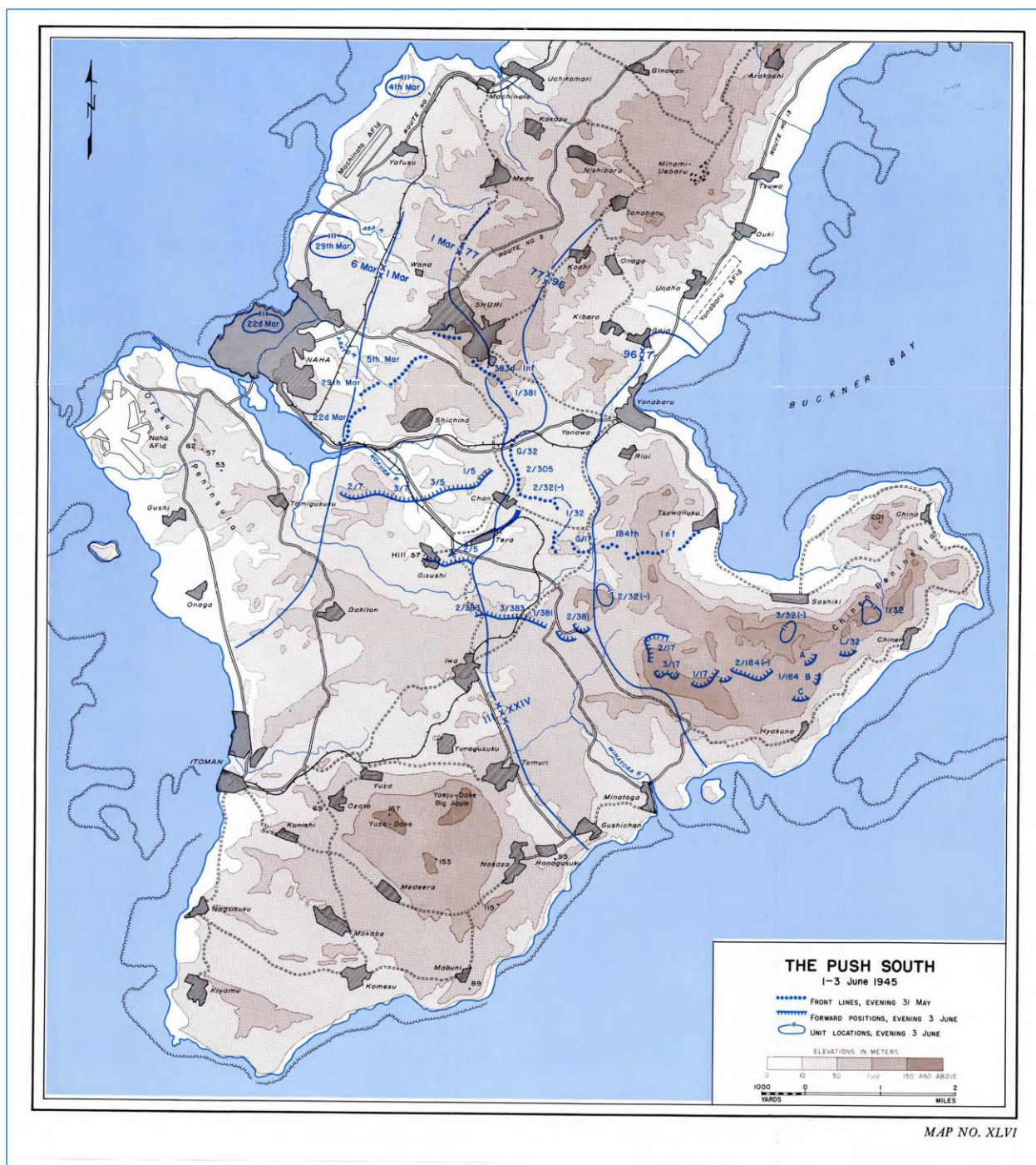
<sup>7</sup> Gugeler, 7th Div History, p. 384.

<sup>8</sup> Notes of Tenth Army Staff Meeting, in Okinawa Diary kept by Stevens and Burns, 4 Jun 45.

<sup>9</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, p. 515.

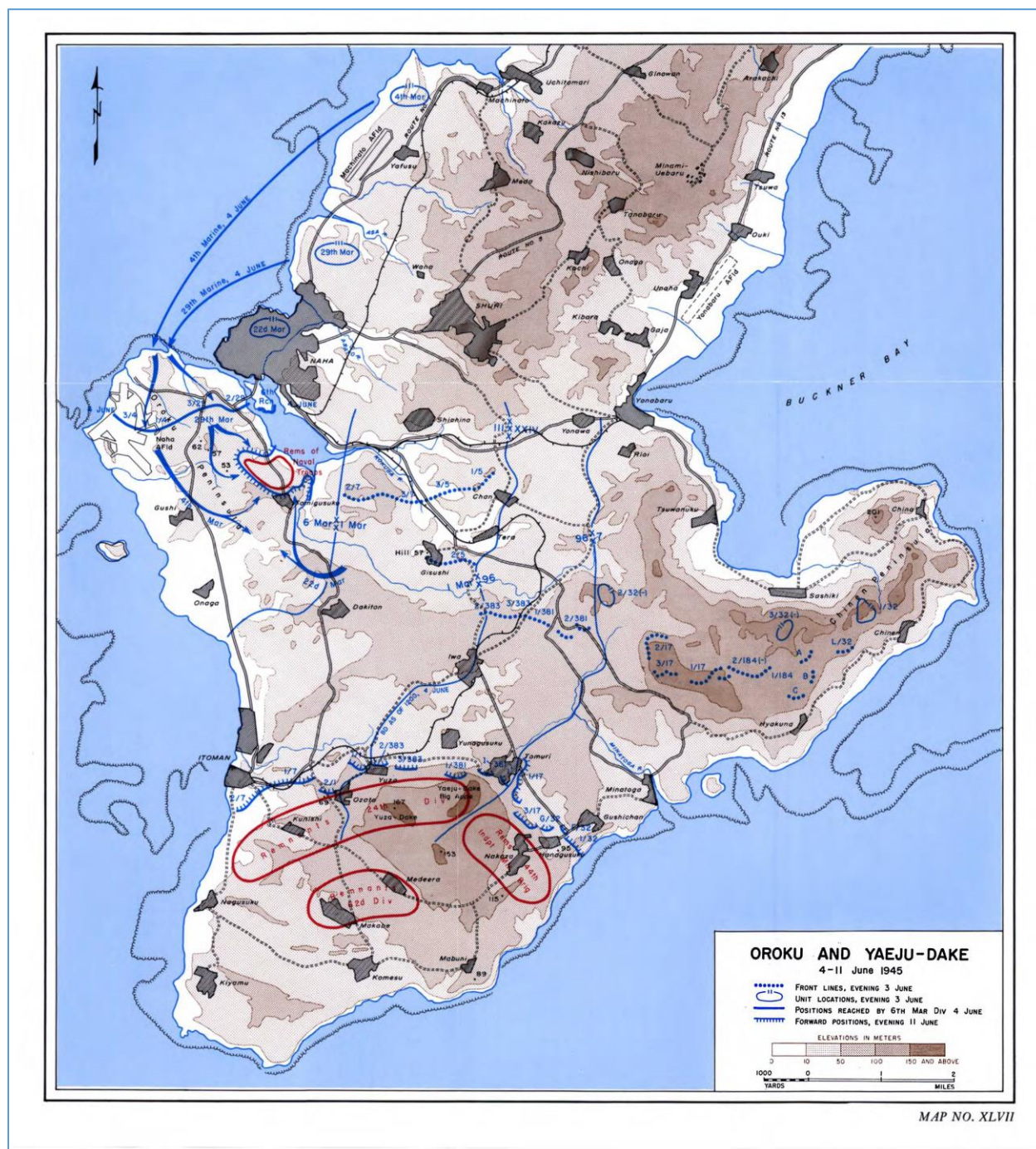
<sup>10</sup> Stockman, 1st Mar Div History; III Amph Corps G-3 Periodic Rpt, 1 Jun 45; Appleman, XXIV Corps History, p. 503.

<sup>11</sup> Tenth Army Opns Ord No. 13-45, 4 Jun 45; Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 503-04.



Shifting their direction of attack on 4 June to the southwest, LTG Hodge's troops moved across the small, tidy fields, the rice paddies along the sea, and the hills luxuriantly green from the continuing spring rains. By midafternoon, the 7th Division had secured more than 6,000 yards of coast line and had reached the soggy banks of the Minatoga River. Infantrymen waded the swollen stream, the only bridge having been destroyed. The 96th joined on the west to extend the Corps line from Minatoga to Iwa. To the south the Japanese had prepared the outposts of their next important line, which was to be their last. Behind the American lines the supply routes, now stretched beyond an unbridged river, were





strained to the limit. Commanders immediately explored the possibilities of landing supplies at Minatoga. During the several days that followed, the American troops crowded steadily but more cautiously forward against a heavy and determined opposition that was reminiscent of previous fighting and suggested that the enemy's last line was close at hand.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Gugeler, 7th Div History, p. 386.

### *Assaulting the Last Defense Line*

When the rainy period on Okinawa ended on 5 June, troops of the XXIV Corps occupied a solid line across 6,000 yards of soft clay. Supply was critical and was partially dependent upon air drops. Tanks could not operate, and to the front, 1,000 or 1,500 yards away, stood the craggy Yaeju-Dake and Yuza-Dake hill masses—physical barriers which, together with Hill 95 on the east coast, formed a great wall across the entire XXIV Corps sector from Gushichan to Yuza. The highest point of this 4-mile-long cliff was the Yaeju-Dake Peak, which rose 290 feet above the adjoining valley floor. Because of its shape the troops who fought up its slopes named it the "Big Apple." The Yuza-Dake stood at the west end of the line and then tapered off into Kunishi Ridge, which extended across the III Amphibious Corps' sector. Hill 95, which paralleled rather than crossed the direction of attack, formed the eastern anchor. On the seaward side of Hill 95 there was a 300-foot drop to the water; on the side next to Hanagusuku village there was another sheer drop of about 170 feet to the valley floor. The only break in this defensive wall was in the 7th Division's sector, where a narrow valley pointed south through Nakaza. This approach to the high tableland beyond the escarpment cliff was subject to fire and observation from both flanks.

Both sides watched warily and prepared for the Americans' next assault. The state of supply, the condition of the narrow roads linking assault elements with supply dumps at Yonabaru, and the lack of armored and direct-fire weapons prevented an immediate large-scale attack by the XXIV Corps. American commanders probed the enemy line with patrols, regrouped their forces, and assembled necessary supplies through the little port of Minatoga, which was in operation by 8 June.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Fight Before the Caves*

After gaining the top of Hill 95 and the rim of the Yaeju-Dake, only a generally level plateau separated the XXIV Corps front lines from the cave headquarters of LTG Ushijima's army which, according to prisoners of war, was located in a great coral ledge at the southern extremity of the Corps sector. This entire tableland, although evenly contoured, was liberally covered with coral heads. Some were grouped densely and formed a partial barrier; others were little larger than stumps or bushes and appeared to have grown from the earth. A few coral bulges were large and prominent enough to afford the Japanese strong positions. The largest of these were the Big Apple and Yuza-Dake Peaks at the north end of the 96th Division's sector. Within the zone of the 7th Division were Hills 153 and 115, jagged protuberances of coral which, after the fall of the Yaeju-Dake and Hill 95, became LTG Ushijima's last hope of defending the eastern end of his line.

The 5-day battle for these hills and the fields of coral outcroppings on the surrounding plateau, lasting from 13 to 17 June, was as much like hunting as fighting. It was a battle of massed tanks which operated ahead of the usual infantry support, blasting the coral rocks with shell bursts and almost constant machine-gun fire. The battlefield was perfect for armored flame throwers, which poured flame into the caves and clusters of rocky crags and wooded areas, either killing the Japanese at once or forcing them into lanes of machine-gun fire. In five days flame tanks of the 713th Armored Flame Thrower Battalion directed more than 37,000 gallons of burning gasoline at the enemy.<sup>14</sup> It was also a battle of infantry platoons or individual infantrymen against disorganized but desperate enemy soldiers.

Some of the largest cave defenses in southern Okinawa were in the Yaeju and Yuza Peaks. Infantrymen of the 96th Division destroyed these positions with hand and rifle grenades, satchel charges, and portable flame throwers. For the infantrymen it was a search for the enemy's hiding places, often followed by a few minutes of reckless combat. Troops of the 381st Infantry occupied the

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<sup>13</sup> XXIV Corps Actn Rpt, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup> Actn Rpt, 713th Tank Bn, Armored Flame Thrower, Prov, pp. 23-29.

commanding ground on the Big Apple Peak on 14 June but, for lack of enough explosives to seal the numerous caves in the area, were forced into a night-long fight with Japanese who emerged from the caves after darkness.<sup>15</sup> Yuza Peak fell two days later, on 16 June. On the same day, the 17th and 32d Regiments reached Hill 153 and Hill 115, but another day of bitter fighting was required before the Japanese forces were completely destroyed.

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<sup>15</sup> The action on the Big Apple is described in Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, pp. 213-24.



## Defending Okinawa, 1-17 June

Excerpts from Leavenworth Papers No. 18, Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945, Chapter 5.

The IJA's new Kiyan Peninsula line was largely in place by 3 June. The American forces had formed a line opposite it by 6 June and began their probing attacks on the east flank. The American forces did not reach the west part of the line until 9 June, being reluctant to move forward until the Oroku pocket was isolated, and did not attack in the west until 12 June, when the Oroku fighting had finished. The Americans had formed a continuous line, though the west end of the line did not approach the Japanese western positions until several days after contact had been made in the east. The Americans' advance was deliberate and cautious, so that they reached the Japanese line with the full benefit of their organization and firepower.<sup>1</sup>

The Japanese position was about five miles across and four miles deep. It was anchored along a line running from Kunishi Ridge in the west through Yuza-Dake and Yaeju-Dake peaks, to Hanagusuku village and Hill 95 on the east (see map 14). Manning this line from Kunishi to Yaeju-Dake were the *24th Division's 32d and 89th Regiments*. The *24th Division* set its headquarters at Medeera and held its *22d Regiment* in reserve at nearby Makabe. Manning the line on the east, from Yaeju-Dake to the sea, were the *44th IMB's newly formed 6th Specially Established Regiment* and the *15th Independent Mixed Regiment (IMR)*. The *44th IMB* headquarters was placed above the coastal cliffs at Mabuni. Remnants of the *62d Division* were held as a reserve at the southernmost tip of the peninsula. The *32d Army* located its new headquarters at Mabuni near that of the *44th IMB*.<sup>2</sup>

The arithmetic of units was now becoming crucial for the *32d Army Staff* because they were simply running out. The U.S. Infantry 7th Division pushed hard at the two ends of the *44th IMB* position, at the Yaeju-Dake end and at the ridge running northeast from Hill 95. From 9 to 11 June, the Americans made a concerted attack against the center around Azato village and against Hill 95 on the east, resulting in their capture of Hill 95 on 11 June.<sup>3</sup>

On the night of 11-12 June, the 3d Battalion of the U.S. 17th Infantry Regiment accomplished a night infiltration that ejected the *IJA 6th Special Regiment* from the eastern foot of Yaeju-Dake. The *6th Specially Established Regiment* was untried and had few combat soldiers in it. It had occupied the eastern foot of Yaeju-Dake rather than the summit, as ordered, because it could obtain no water on the summit.<sup>4</sup>

By 12 June American forces had penetrated both flanks of the *44th IMB* portion of the Kiyan line, thus threatening also the east flank of the *24th Division's* part of the line. Under these circumstances, the *32d Army Staff* hastened to send in its last reserves to stem the American advance. On 11 June, soon after the American attacks began in earnest on 9 June, the *32d Army Staff* had already rushed some reinforcements to the critical Yaeju-Dake area. These were assorted small units, equal to about six companies, that *32d Army* headquarters had on hand. They were drawn from the *5th Artillery* units, a signal unit, and a field fortification unit. Unfortunately, because these troops were "equipped poorly as well as inadequately trained," they suffered heavy casualties on contact, and their efforts were "as ineffective as throwing water on parched soil."<sup>5</sup>

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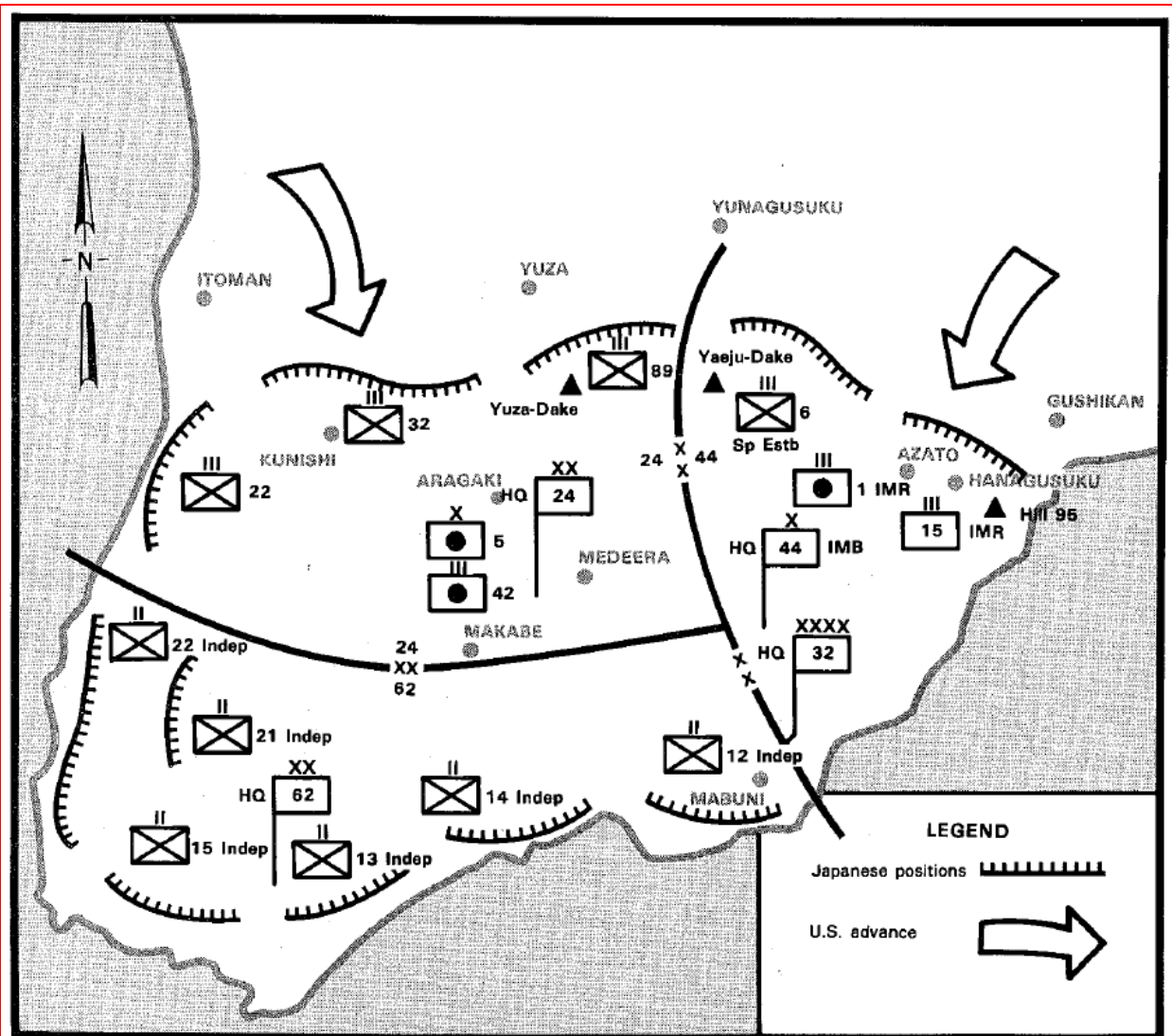
<sup>1</sup> JM 135, 134-35; and OHRS, Enclosed map 5.

<sup>2</sup> JM 135, 132A.

<sup>3</sup> Appleman, Okinawa, 439-43.

<sup>4</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 216.

<sup>5</sup> JM 135, 138.



Map 14. The IJA Kiyon line, 4 June 1945

After the fall of Yaeju-Dake to the Americans on 12 June, the commander of the 24th Division made urgent pleas to 32d Army to recapture it and so secure 24th Division's exposed right flank. Therefore, on 13 June, the 32d Army ordered the 15th Independent Infantry Battalion to drive the Americans out of the Yaeju-Dake area and the 13th Independent Infantry Battalion to attack the Americans on the extreme right, in the vicinity of Hill 95. Both of these battalions belonged to the 62d Division, the 32d Army's last reserve. These attacks, however, had almost no success. The 13th Independent Infantry Battalion promptly moved up to the line on the extreme right but lost more than half of its fighting strength on the first day. This was in part because the Americans had already taken Hill 95, leaving little terrain cover to the advancing 13th.<sup>6</sup>

The 15th Independent Infantry Battalion was not able even to reach the front expeditiously. The 24th Division commander protested the delay, and Operations Officer Yahara gave a direct order from the 32d Army to the 15th Independent Infantry Battalion commander to attack immediately. This kind of order, outside the chain of command, was almost unheard of. Even so, the 15th Independent Infantry

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 138-40.

*Battalion* was unable to advance. It encountered American tanks as it tried to move out of its reserve area toward Yaeju-Dake and did not have a single antitank gun. . . the Americans secured their hold on Yaeju-Dake beyond retrieval.<sup>7</sup>

By 15 June, with both flanks already staved in, the *44th IMB*'s line was broken into fragments. Therefore, the *32d Army* ordered the remainder of the *62d Division* reserve force into the *44th IMB*'s zone. The *62d Division*'s [new] commander, Lieutenant General Gen Nakajima, was given command of the *44th IMB* as well as his own division. By 16 June, the remainder of the *62d Division* had made very slow progress toward the east, however, because of "unfamiliar terrain, darkness, and furious enemy shelling." Meanwhile, the extreme right flank unit of the *44th IMB*, the *15th Independent Mixed Regiment*, had lost contact with other units, and its headquarters was under attack by American tanks.<sup>8</sup>

By 17 June, the *44th IMB* had fallen back to a new line running south-east from Yuza-Dake to the sea. This was held more thinly than the Yaeju-Dake-Hanagusuku line, but was at least a continuous line. The *62d Division* intended to form a line behind this point, then advance to it. But the *62d Division* had still made so little progress that it was ordered directly by *32d Army* to advance its line as far as Mabuni, that is, up to within a half mile of where the *44th*'s line was. Only on 18 June was this movement accomplished. The *62d Division*'s *64th Infantry Brigade* held the sector running from Yuza-Dake southeast to a point east of Medeera, and *63d Infantry Brigade* held the sector running from a point east of Medeera to a point east of Mabuni and the sea.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 140; and Inagaki, Okinawa, 216.

<sup>8</sup> JM 135, 140-42.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 142-43.

## Hill 95, Yaeju-Dake, and Yuza-Dake

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 17.

### *Locating Enemy Strength*

Nearest the Big Apple Peak was the 381st Infantry, first to venture into the Yaeju-Dake and the first to be driven back. West of the Big Apple was a secondary escarpment, like a step, about halfway to the top. Colonel Halloran ordered the 1st Battalion to explore this area and, if possible, to seize a lodgment on the lower part of the escarpment which would permit an attack against the Big Apple from the west and against the flank of the enemy's most dominating fortification.<sup>1</sup>

On the morning of 6 June the battalion commander, Major V. H. Thompson, leapfrogged his companies through Yunagusuku against only half-hearted opposition and then sent Company B . . . forward to test the escarpment wall. Three squad-sized patrols crept through bands of fire from machine guns, some of which were so far inside caves that they could not be destroyed with grenades, and reached the lower of the two escarpments. The rest of the company followed, and Thompson ordered Company C to move abreast and left of Byers' men. It was midafternoon, and the first attempt at penetration of this largest escarpment on Okinawa was proceeding with promise of success. Company C started across the open rice paddies to the base of the cliff, and Company B moved up a steep trail leading to the intermediate level of the escarpment. This movement went beyond the line of enemy delaying action and into the area where LTG Ushijima had ordered his army to "bring all its might to bear" to break up the American attack and exact a heavy toll of the attacking force. "To this end," he instructed, "the present position will be defended to the death, even to the last man. Needless to say, retreat is forbidden."<sup>2</sup>

The Japanese waited patiently until both companies were in a belt of preregistered fire, then opened up with machine guns and 20-mm. dual purpose guns in sufficient quantity to lace both companies with beads of automatic fire. Major Thompson immediately started to organize a withdrawal and employed ten battalions of artillery to drop smoke shells in front of his trapped men, even this was inadequate and many of the troops did not return until after dark.

For the next three days the 96th Division blasted the coral escarpment with artillery and air strikes and watched it closely for possible gun positions and strong points. The heaviest fighting occurred on the extreme eastern flank of the 7th Division, where Company B, 184th Infantry, faced unyielding opposition on a tapered ridge that pointed northeast from the tip of Hill 95. One of the roughest single terrain features on Okinawa, this 800-yard-long ridge was a jumbled mass of coral that was as porous as sponge and as brittle and sharp as glass. There were several fortified positions on the ridge as well as numerous cavities which protected individual enemy riflemen. The entire ridge was also under fire and observation from other positions on Hill 95. The advance was tedious, and the company made only slight progress. The largest gain from 6 to 9 June was in the zone of the 17th Infantry, which forced advances up to 1,800 yards and occupied the green knolls at the base of the escarpment. These small hills were not heavily defended but they were exposed to enemy fire from the face of the Yaeju-Dake and from the tableland above.<sup>3</sup>

The 32d Infantry. . . moved south on the afternoon of 8 May and effected relief of the 184th. Road conditions were improved and a large quantity of supplies reached Minatoga on 8 June; two companies of medium tanks were near the front lines and others were moving forward. General Arnold planned to strike the first blow against the new Japanese line and ordered the attack to commence at

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<sup>1</sup> Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. IV, pp. 185-89.

<sup>2</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, p. 528

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 500; Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 393-419.

0730 on 9 June. There were two immediate objectives. The task of reducing Hill 95 and the rough-hewn coral ridge that lay in front fell to the 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert C. Foulston; the 3d Battalion, 17th Infantry, under LTC Wallace, was to secure a lodgment on the southern and low end of the Yaeju-Dake at a point just north of the town of Asato.

#### *First Break in the Japanese Wall*

Dawn patrols proceeded unmolested toward the coral ridge in front of Hill 95, but the Japanese reacted quickly before the remainder of Company C of the 32d Infantry, which carried the burden of the attack, had moved 100 yards. As long as the men kept their heads down the enemy fire subsided, but any attempt to move forward attracted rifle and machine-gun and knee-mortar fire which blasted sharp chips from the coral formation. The company commander. . . held up the frontal assault, placed artillery shells on Hill 95, used about 2,000 mortar shells on his objective, and then tried working a platoon forward on the Gushichan side to eliminate two strongly defended knobs near the end of Hill 95. This effort was partially successful; the men killed thirteen Japanese and located the source of the most troublesome automatic fire, but toward evening they had to be recalled.

The first and greatest obstacle confronting Wallace's attack was the open ground over which both assault companies had to move. Wallace used all available support and the men camouflaged themselves with grass and rice plants, but enemy fire began almost as soon as the leading platoons moved into the open. The infantrymen crawled through the slimy rice paddies on their stomachs. Within an hour Company I was strung from the line of departure to the base of the objective which two squads had reached. About this time the Japanese opened fire with another machine gun, separating the advance squads with a band of fire. This left one squad to continue the attack; the remainder of the company was unable to move, cut off by fire or strung across the rice paddies.

Those men in the squad still free to operate lifted and pulled each other to the edge of the cliff and crawled quietly forward through the high grass on top. Another squad reached the top of the escarpment about an hour later but was caught in cross and grazing fire from three machine guns, and the entire 8-man squad was killed. Gradually, however, a few more men reached the top, and by evening there were twenty men from Company I holding a small area at the escarpment rim.

Company K had a similar experience. Accurate enemy fire killed one man, wounded two others, and halted the company when it was from 200 to 300 yards from its objective. For forty-five minutes the attack dragged on until Staff Sergeant Lester L. Johnson and eight men maneuvered forward through enemy fire, gained the high ground, and concentrated their fire on the enemy machine gun that was firing on the remainder of the company. This did not silence the gun but did prevent the gunner from aiming well, and Johnson waved for the rest of the company to follow. By 1330 of 9 June Company K was consolidated on the southeastern tip of the Yaeju-Dake. That evening, three small but determined counterattacks, with sustained grenade fire between each attempt, hit the small force from Company I, which held off the attackers with a light machine gun and automatic rifles.

Tanks stirred dust along the narrow roads when, at 0600 on the morning of 10 June, they started for the front lines. A full battalion was on hand to support the 7th Division; two companies operated with the 96th Division, which began its assault on the Yaeju-Dake that morning. The character of warfare on Okinawa changed, and until the end of the campaign there was a freer, more aggressive use of tanks. Weather and terrain were more favorable, and flame tanks became the American solution to the Japanese coral caves; interference from enemy shells became less with the destruction of each Japanese gun; and, more important, through experience the infantrymen and tankers developed a team that neared perfection. Improved visibility also aided observation of artillery fire and air strikes. The



battle for the southern tip of Okinawa blazed with orange rods of flame and became a thunderous roar of machine guns, shells, rockets, and bombs.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Pumping Flame Through a Hose*

Company C, 32d Infantry, still bore the responsibility of destroying the Japanese in front of Hill 95. When the fighting flared again on the second day of the attack, Navy cruisers fired on the seaward side of the ridge; artillery and tanks shelled and machine-gunned the top and sides of Hill 95; and the 2d Battalion attacked toward the village of Hanagusuku. . . The Japanese did not withdraw; Company C killed them as it advanced. By early afternoon, the men had eliminated all enemy fire except that from a few scattered rifles and several fortified caves in two rocky knobs near the northeast end of Hill 95. Colonel Finn advocated the use of flame. . . and Captain Tony Niemeyer, 6-foot 4-inch commander of Company C, 713th Armored Flame Thrower Battalion, moved one tank to the base of the two knobs. Then he attached a 200-foot hose, a special piece of equipment for delivering fuel to an area inaccessible to the tank. Staff Sergeant Joseph Frydrych, infantry platoon leader, CPT Niemeyer, and Sergeant Paul E. Schrum dragged the hose onto the high rock and sprayed napalm over the two strong points, forcing out thirty-five or forty enemy soldiers whom the infantryman killed by rifle or BAR fire. Except for stray rifle fire, all enemy opposition in the coral ridge was gone when the 1st Battalion set up defenses for the night. The Japanese came back, however, during the night; they harassed Company C with mortars and grenades and prowled in the open in front of the other advanced companies. Two days of fighting through the rough terrain had cost Company C forty-three casualties, ten of whom were killed.

Niemeyer was active again on the morning of 11 June, when the 32d Infantry proceeded against the high end of Hill 95. Company B had taken the lead and pushed against the northeast end of the hill; although tank and artillery fire on Hill 95 was so heavy that the hill was partially obscured with haze, several machine guns fired from caves which could not be reached, and the men were temporarily stopped. When this approach failed, Niemeyer, LTC Finn, and Captain Dallas D. Thomas, Company B commander, decided to use the flamethrower tanks to burn a path to the top of the 170-foot coral cliff. Captain Niemeyer, a daring soldier who was enthusiastic over the capabilities of his flamethrower tanks, moved them to the Hanagusuku side of Hill 95 and forced streams of red flame against the portion of the cliff where the infantrymen expected to make the ascent. This flame eliminated any threat of close-quarters resistance from caves in the face of the escarpment. The next step was to reach the flat top of the hill and secure a toe hold on the high ground. At 1100 Niemeyer and a platoon under First Lieutenant Frank A. Davis fastened one end of a hose to a flame tank and began dragging the other end up the almost vertical side of the hill. The tanks, artillery, mortars, and machine guns stepped up their rate of fire to keep down enemy interference, the men being as exposed as spiders on a bare wall. This spectacular attack was also slow, and it was forty-five minutes before the men reached a small shelf just below the lip of the escarpment. They stopped here long enough to squirt napalm onto the flat rocks above them in case any Japanese were waiting for them there, then scrambled over the edge and poured flame onto the near-by area. Davis and his men fanned out behind the flame. The remainder of Company B followed immediately; the company quickly expanded its holding across the northeast end of the hill and then pushed south, still using flame against suspected enemy strong points. When the fuel from one tank was exhausted the hose was fitted to another tank.

Colonel Foulston reinforced his attacking company with two platoons from Company A. When evening came the 1st Battalion had destroyed the enemy force on the northeast end of the tableland. The men were involved in close-in fighting with Japanese hiding in rocks and crevices but their grip on the tableland was firm.

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<sup>4</sup> 763d Tk Bn S-3 Periodic Rpt, 10 Jun 45; 711th Tk Bn Actn Rpt, p. 18.

When it was time for front-line troops to dig in on the evening of 11 June, one battalion from each of the 7th Division's attacking regiments held a small corner of the enemy's main line on southern Okinawa. During the three days since the assault against Hill 95 and the Yaeju-Dake began on 9 June, the right (western) end of the XXIV Corps line had remained relatively unchanged. The 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry, softened its end of the Yaeju-Dake with lavish use of artillery, to destroy enemy strong points on the plateau above the escarpment, and employed tanks and cannon company weapons directly against caves in the face of the cliff.<sup>5</sup>

#### *The 96th Attacks in the Center*

Meanwhile, the 381st and 383d Infantry Regiments hammered away at the high peaks of Yaeju-Dake and Yuza-Dake. On 10 June, the 383d attacked toward the town of Yuza, which it reached the following day. There was heavy fighting from one wall to the next in the battered town and, in addition, constant fire from Yuza-Dake, which towered over the southern edge of the town. The troops withdrew that evening when enemy fire increased.<sup>6</sup>

With its approach blocked by the highest and steepest section of the Yaeju-Dake wall, the 381st Infantry struck toward the saddle between the Big Apple Peak and the Yuza-Dake, where the escarpment rose in two levels. Major Thompson's 1st Battalion had unsuccessfully explored this route on 6 June when Companies B and C reached the intermediate level, immediately drew preregistered fire, and were forced to abandon their gains under smoke. After shelling the Japanese emplacements for four days these two companies attacked over the same route, this time with tank support. Difficult terrain and mines prevented effective use of the tanks, but Companies B and C pushed ahead without them and, by 0900 of 10 June, three of the attacking platoons were back on the ledge where the previous attack had stalled. Japanese machine guns opened fire as promptly and accurately as before, and the advance again ended suddenly with half of the men on the first ledge of the escarpment and the rest scattered in the rice paddies to the rear.

Throughout the day the company commanders tried to maneuver the trailing elements of their units forward. Each effort failed until, late in the afternoon, another smoke screen was laid down, this time to cover the advance of the rear elements and the preparation of defensive positions for the night. When the smoke had cleared, both companies were in place. A few minutes later about a hundred Japanese troops, believing the smoke had covered a withdrawal as on 6 June, emerged from their holes and gathered near a building at the southern end of the flat area, where they began to change to civilian clothes for their customary night infiltrations. Captain Philip D. Newell, commanding Company C, adjusted artillery fire in their midst and most of them were killed.

An ammunition-carrying party took supplies to the forward companies that night, enabling the men to defend their gain successfully against a counterattack that came early the next morning. Just before dawn on 11 June the remainder of the battalion joined the two advance companies. The 381st Infantry made no attempt to extend its holdings on 11 June but conducted heavy tank and artillery fire against the cave openings on the Big Apple Peak. The next important thrust against the Japanese line was to occur in the sector of the 17th Infantry where COL Pachler was planning a night attack against his portion of the Yaeju-Dake.

#### *Night Move onto the Yaeju-Dake*

Colonel Pachler had good reasons for favoring a night move. The advantages of observation belonged almost completely to the defending force, and this had seriously interfered when the 3d Battalion, 17th Infantry, seized the southeast end of the escarpment. The coral wall of the escarpment

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<sup>5</sup> Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 405-11, 420.

<sup>6</sup> Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. IV, pp. 191-99.

in front of the 1st Battalion was higher at this end; at the same time the two suitable routes leading to the high ground were narrow and could be easily controlled by Japanese fire. The troops had held positions at the base of the 170-foot cliff for several days and were familiar with the terrain. They had, in fact, been looking at the escarpment so long that, as their commander, Major Maynard Weaver, said, they were anxious to get on top so that they could look at something else.<sup>7</sup>

Although the night attack was planned principally for the 1st Battalion, Colonel Pachler also decided on a coordinated move to enlarge the area held by the 3d Battalion. The final plan included three assault companies: Company A was to occupy a cluster of coral about a hundred yards beyond the edge of the escarpment and next to the boundary between the 7th and 96th Divisions; Company B had a similar objective about 200 yards to the southeast; and Company L was directed against the small hill between the 1st Battalion's objectives and the positions occupied by the 3d Battalion on 11 June. Each company was to take a separate route. Company A's path led directly up the face of the cliff to its objective. Company B had to travel south to a break in the escarpment face and then, once on the high ground, turn right toward its objective. The objective of Company L was near the edge of the escarpment and easily approached.

Movement was to begin at 0400 on 12 June. Since the attack was based on stealth, no artillery preparation was used. However, 2 battalions of 105-mm. artillery, 1 battery of 155-mm. howitzers, and an 8-inch howitzer battalion were scheduled to deliver heavy harassing fires during the early part of the night. Also a total of 21 batteries registered their fires on the afternoon of 11 June and were prepared to surround the objectives with protective artillery fire if trouble developed after they were reached. One section of heavy machine guns was attached to each assault company.

Colonel Pachler had planned the attack carefully and insisted that every man participating know all details of the movement. Reconnaissance patrols had examined the trails leading to the high ground, and demolition teams had satchel-charged known cave positions in the face of the cliff. Nevertheless, everyone concerned with the attack dreaded the possibility of confusion that might result from the unknown conditions during darkness. This apprehension increased at 2000 on the night of 11 June when the 7th Division G-2 Section reported interception of an enemy radio message that evening which said, "Prepare to support the attack at 2300." A little later another intercepted message read: "If there are any volunteers for the suicide penetration, report them before the contact which is to be made one hour from now."<sup>8</sup> At the same time, from dusk until nearly 2300, the Japanese fired an extremely heavy concentration of artillery which front-line troops fully expected to be followed by a counterattack. The counterattack came but was aimed against the 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, which had reached the top of Hill 95 that afternoon, and against the 96th Division. There was no enemy activity in the 17th Infantry's sector.

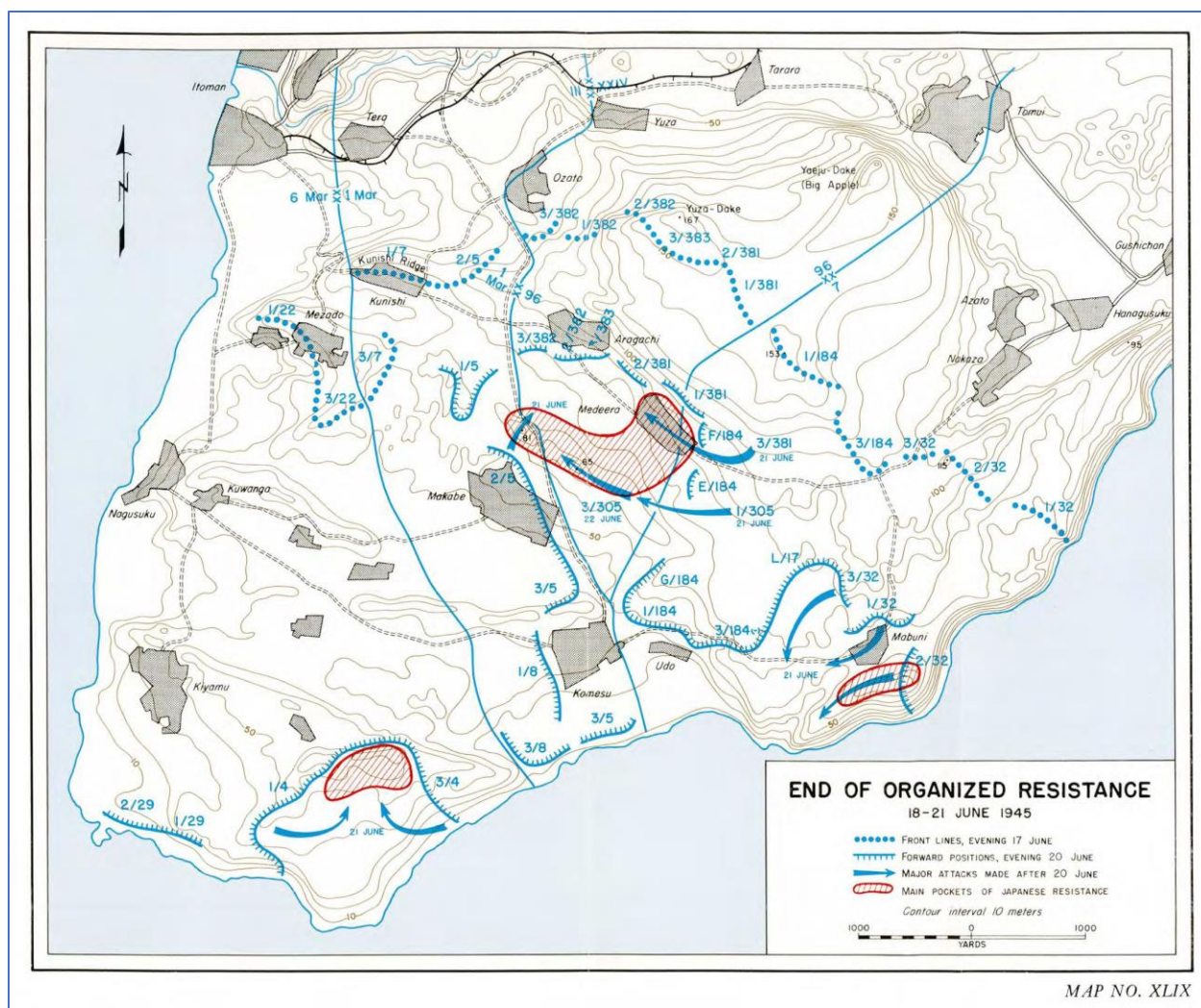
Night illumination and harassing shell fire ceased shortly before 0400, and thereafter the execution of the attack followed the plan almost without variation. The attacking companies moved out in single file. As promptly as if it had been scheduled, a heavy fog settled over southern Okinawa. It was of the right density—allowing visibility up to ten feet—to provide concealment but still allow the men to follow their paths without confusion. On the high ground Company A found a few civilians wandering about, and the leading platoon of Company B met three Japanese soldiers just after it reached the shelf of the escarpment. The men ignored them and walked quietly on. Nor did the enemy open fire. By 0530, a few minutes after dawn, Companies A and B were in place and no one had fired a shot. (See [CMH] Map No. XLVIII.)

Without incident Company L reached its objective and then, anxious to take advantage of the fog and the absence of enemy fire, its commander sent his support platoon to another small hill fifty

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<sup>7</sup> Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 421-29.

<sup>8</sup> 7th Div G-2 Jnl, Msg Nos. 31, 32, 39, 11 Jun 45.



yards beyond. This objective was secured within a few minutes, after two enemy soldiers were killed. The platoon leader called his company commander to report progress and then frantically called for mortar fire. Walking toward his position in a column of twos were about fifty Japanese. The Americans opened fire with rifles and BAR's, broke up the column formation, and counted thirty-seven enemy soldiers killed; the others escaped.

Men in the 1st Battalion were pleased no less with the success of the night attack. A few minutes after Company A was in place, four enemy soldiers came trudging up toward them. They were killed with as many shots. Four others followed these at a short interval and were killed in the same way. Company B was not molested until about 0530, when some Japanese tried to come out of several caves in the center of the company's position. Since the cave openings were reinforced with concrete they could not be closed with demolition charges, but the men guarded the entrances and shot the Japanese as they emerged. Soon after daylight Company C began mopping up caves in the face of the escarpment, and later it joined the rest of the battalion on the high ground. By 0800 the situation was settled and the 17th Infantry held strong positions on the Yaeju-Dake. The Japanese had withdrawn their front-line troops from Yaeju-Dake during the night in order to escape harassing artillery, but they had expected to reoccupy it before "the expected 0700 attack." Fifteen hours after the 32d Infantry burned its way to the top of Hill 95, the 17th Infantry had seized its portion of the Yaeju-Dake in a masterfully executed night attack.

### *Progress in the Center*

At 0600 on the same day, 12 June, COL Halloran's 381st Infantry delivered the next blow against the Japanese main line of resistance. Since 10 June, when the 381st launched its attack against the escarpment, the 1st Battalion had gained a toe hold on the intermediate level in the saddle between the Yaeju-Dake and the Yuza-Dake Peaks. The 3d Battalion had cleaned the enemy troops out of Tomui but was unable to proceed against the blunt and steep segment of the escarpment that lay in its zone. For 12 June COL Halloran committed his reserve battalion, the 2d, on the west end of his flank to fight abreast of the center salient and, at the same time, close a gap between his regiment and the 383d. Then, depending upon the success of the 17th Infantry's night attack, the 3d Battalion was to press its attack against the adjoining portion of the escarpment.<sup>9</sup>

Despite extensive use of artillery and tanks on previous days to batter cave openings in the face of the cliff, enemy fire flared as briskly as ever when the 3d Battalion. . . reached the base of the escarpment on the morning of 12 June. Realizing that a frontal assault against this defended wall would be both slow and costly, LTC Nolan left Company K to contain the enemy and to mop up near the bottom of the cliff; he ordered Capt. Roy A. Davis to take Company L around to the southeast, climb the escarpment in the 7th Division's zone, and then move back along the edge of the cliff to a position above Company K.<sup>10</sup>

It was nearly midafternoon before Davis and his men were in place on the high ground. Company K, meanwhile, worked along the base of the cliff under a steady volume of rifle fire but with protection of smoke. An effort to join the two elements of the battalion for the night failed, but the 381st Infantry had broken a 3-day stalemate at the steepest part of the escarpment and was now ready to pry the next section from Japanese control.

Japanese troops still controlled the Big Apple Peak, which rose about sixty feet above the general level of the plateau, but by evening of 12 June the 7th and 96th Divisions had forced the reconstituted *44th Independent Mixed Brigade* from the southeastern end of the enemy's line.

General Ushijima acted as quickly as his shattered communication system and the confusion of his front-line units would permit. With his artillery pieces shelled and bombed into near-silence, and his supplies and equipment diminishing even faster than his manpower, his only hope was to send more troops into the shell fire and flame with which the American forces were sweeping the front-line area. His order read:

The enemy in the 44th IMB sector has finally penetrated our main line of resistance. . . The plan of the 44th IMB is to annihilate, with its main strength, the enemy penetrating the Yaeju-Dake sector.

The Army will undertake to reoccupy and hold its Main Line of Resistance to the death. The 62d Division will place two picked infantry battalions under the command of the CG, 44th IMB.<sup>11</sup>

The *64th Brigade*—the part of the *62d Division* which had moved from Shuri to reserve positions near Makabe—did not issue this order until late on 13 June, fully thirty hours after its need arose. Moreover, piecemeal commitment of reserve troops was inadequate. By 13 June, the *44th Brigade* was so close to destruction that when the reinforcements arrived the remnants of the *44th* were absorbed by the reinforcing battalions and there were still not enough men to hold the line. The enemy then

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<sup>9</sup> 381st Inf Unit Jnl, Msg No. 45, 11 Jun 45.

<sup>10</sup> Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. IV, pp. 204-06.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 564-65.



committed the main strength of the *62d Division*, his last reserve and hope, with a plea for cooperation and orders to "reoccupy and secure the Main Line of Resistance."

By the time the *62d Division* could move onto the line, however, it ran squarely into LTG Hodge's men attacking south across the coral-studded plateau. The Americans were moving behind the fire of machine guns and tanks and over the bodies of the Japanese who had defended their last strong line "to the death."

#### *Yuza-Dake*

On the western side of the island troops of the *24th Division* fought to a standstill one regiment of the 96th Division and the 1st Marine Division from 12 until 17 June. This slugging battle of tanks and infantrymen, with heavy blows furnished by planes and by naval and ground artillery, was for the possession of Yuza Peak and Kunishi Ridge. Yuza Peak, approximately 300 feet higher than the surrounding ground, dominated this part of the fortified line and was the source of most of the enemy fire. Its capture was the responsibility of the 383d Infantry, 96th Division. The western side of Yuza Peak tapered off toward the sea and formed Kunishi Ridge, a 2,000-yard-long coral barrier lying athwart the 1st Marine Division sector. Movement toward the Peak was restricted by extensive mine fields.

On three successive days the 383d Infantry drove the enemy troops from the town of Yuza, but each time machine-gun fire plunging from the coral peak beyond forced the men to withdraw to defensive positions at night. The Japanese reoccupied the town each night. Real progress was first made on 15 June when the 2d Battalion, 382d Infantry, having relieved the center battalion of the 383d, gained the northern slope of the peak. The remainder of the 383d, weary from thirty-five days of continuous combat, passed into reserve on the following day, and COL Dill's 382d Infantry proceeded against the hard core of the Yuza line.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 552-57.

## End of Resistance and Surrender, 18-22 June

Excerpts from:

(1) CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 16.

(2) Leavenworth Papers No. 18, Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945, Chapter 5.

"We have passed the speculative phase of the campaign and are down to the final kill." This was LTG Buckner's appraisal of the battle for Okinawa on 15 June.<sup>1</sup> Infantrymen on the front lines also sensed the impending disintegration of LTG Ushijima's *32d Army*, not because of any noticeable weakening in the individual's will to fight but because, destitute of the supplies and tools of war, of the coordination, communications, and skill necessary to a fighting machine, the Japanese collectively lacked the power of adequate resistance.

### *Collapse of the 32d Army*

By the evening of 17 June Tenth Army troops held a solid front line along the crests of Kunishi Ridge, Hill 153, and Hill 115, and, for the first time, could look south over the entire enemy-held territory, covering about eight square miles. Forced from its last defensive terrain and obliged to realize that nothing could prevent its destruction, LTG Ushijima's army suddenly collapsed. Its discipline and morale, weakened by nearly eighty days of defeat, now broke completely and the *32d Army* degenerated into a mob.

As a unit, the *44th Brigade* was destroyed when its command post on Hill 115 fell to the 32d Infantry; only a few stragglers escaped. Enemy soldiers who had served in the *62d Division* fell back to defend the army headquarters at Hill 89. Approximately 400 members of the *24th Division*—all that remained of the Japanese *32d Regiment*—were scattered through the caves near Kunishi Ridge, where they remained in hiding as the battle passed on to the south. The rest of the *24th Division* retreated to its headquarters near Medeira, less than half a mile southwest of Hill 153.<sup>2</sup>

"Hill 153," said LTG Ushijima in an order written a few hours after that hill fell to the 17th Infantry, "is the essential point at which the final destiny of the entire army must be decided. It is very painful to the Commanding General of the Army that the orders sent out from time to time . . . concerning that hill have been disregarded." He ordered one battalion to recapture the hill before morning. A copy of this order was found the following morning on the body of one of the from 100 to 200 soldiers who tried to recapture Hill 153. On the back were notes written by the commander of the battalion:

The contents of the first paragraph of this Army Order were utterly unexpected by this battalion; it is, indeed extremely unfortunate.

The units which are to retake Hill 153 will carry out the Battalion orders without thought of losses, thereby bringing fame to the battalion.

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<sup>1</sup> This statement was made by General Buckner at a staff meeting at Tenth Army headquarters. See Colonel Stevens' Diary for 15 Jun 45.

<sup>2</sup> This information was obtained from Capt Howard Moss, Language Officer with the 7th Division. After the end of the fighting. Captain Moss and members of his team induced several hundred Japanese soldiers to surrender and from them he obtained information as to the disposition of enemy forces. On 29 August 1945, Col Kikuji Hongo, commander of the Japanese *32d Regiment*, surrendered between 400 and 450 men to Captain Moss. Hongo explained that these men, disorganized by the battle for Kunishi Ridge, had hidden in the caves on Kunishi until induced to surrender.

When the hill is retaken, report its seizure immediately.<sup>3</sup>

An hour after daylight, 18 June, the Japanese soldiers who were to report the capture of Hill 153 lay dead and scattered through the coral pinnacles. Their attack had not even alarmed infantrymen of the 184th Infantry, which had replaced the 17th on the previous evening. The Japanese massed on the south side of the hill and milled about until they were killed.

Although the ratio of Japanese killed to American casualties increased favorably, the latter remained relatively high as infantrymen combed the tip of the island for snipers or fought through the streets of Medeira and Makabe. Disorganization of the enemy force did not lessen the need for aggressive action, although the same effort by the troops usually resulted in a greater number of enemy casualties than in the Shuri area. From the fall of Shuri until front lines disappeared, Tenth Army lost 1,555 men killed in action and 6,602 wounded.<sup>4</sup>

Among those killed was LTG Buckner. Early in the afternoon of 18 June, LTG Buckner stopped at a forward observation post of the 8th Marine Regiment, 2d Marine Division, near the southwest tip of Okinawa. While LTG Buckner watched the progress of the fighting, at 1315, a shell from a Japanese dual purpose gun exploded directly above the observation post. A fragment of coral, broken off by the explosion, struck LTG Buckner in the chest. He collapsed immediately and died ten minutes later. Major General Roy S. Geiger, senior commander on Okinawa, assumed command of Tenth Army.<sup>5</sup> He was succeeded on 23 June by General Joseph W. Stilwell.

General Easley, assistant commander of the 96th Division, was killed the day after LTG Buckner's death. General Easley, known by all as a front-line soldier, was pointing out the location of a machine gun when two bullets from the gun struck him in the forehead. The lives of these two generals were added to more than 7,000 others of the Tenth Army as part of the cost of victory on Okinawa.<sup>6</sup>

On 18 June, in the last written official order of the *32d Army*, LTG Ushijima appointed an officer to lead the "Blood and Iron Youth Organization" and conduct guerilla warfare after the cessation of organized combat. At the same time he ordered remaining troops to make their way to the mountains in the northern end of Okinawa where a small band of guerillas was supposedly already operating. The migration was to extend over several days; soldiers were to travel in groups of from two to five and were urged to wear civilian clothes and avoid conflict if possible.

This infiltration of Japanese was detected during the night of 18-19 June and both the front lines and rear installations burst into activity. Illumination flares hung over the southern tip of Okinawa between darkness and dawn, and the sound of machine-gun fire was almost constant through the night. This nighttime movement reached a peak several nights later, when one division, the 7th, killed 502 enemy soldiers. The infiltrating Japanese were not aggressive and carried weapons only for their own protection, their chief concern being to escape to the north or, in some instances, to submerge their identity in the civilian population.<sup>7</sup>

While some Japanese chose to chance the hazards of moving north, a great many fought savagely and were determined to take as many Americans as possible to death with them. The two divisions on the flanks found spotty and unpredictable resistance. On 18 and 19 June, the 6th Marine Division leapfrogged attacking battalions forward and plunged across the southwestern tip of the island. This fast-moving assault, and the advance of the 7th Division on the east, were opposed by machine guns and mortars but there was no integrated scheme of defense; the mass of civilians encountered

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<sup>3</sup> Tama Opnl Ord A-91, G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 79, Hq 7th Inf Div, 18 Jun 45, Incl No. 4, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> See casualty reports in Tenth Army G-3 Jnl for period 22 May-21 Jun 45

<sup>5</sup> III Amph Corps G-3 Periodic Rpt No. 76, 16 Jun 45.

<sup>6</sup> Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, Pt. IV, p. 257.

<sup>7</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 587-90; Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 500-01.

delayed the troops almost as much as did enemy resistance. In the center, however, the 1st Marine and the 96th Infantry Divisions and the 305th Infantry, 77th Division, were opposed by the cornered remnants of the *24th Division*, which made its last desperate stand near its command post at Medeera. The 5th Marines attacked Hill 81 in this area on four successive days before it fell on 21 June, and Hill 85 in the XXIV Corps sector was defended with the same die-hard determination.<sup>8</sup> (See [CMH] Map No. XLIX.)

By 19 June, it was apparent to the *32d Army Staff* and its commander, Ushijima, that neither the west nor the east sectors of the army's line would hold. The staff therefore began doing some formal, but nevertheless important, things to prepare for the end of the army. On 10 June, a unit citation bearing Ushijima's signature had already been awarded to the *24th Division* for its achievements on the Shuri line and in the 4 May offensive. Now, on 19 June, Ushijima's last order to the army congratulated all units on their performance. But, he noted, the army's weapons were nearly expended, and communications between units had been severed. Therefore, wherever communications were broken, the senior officer of any unit was authorized to command it without waiting on orders from a superior. All members of the army were to "fight to the last." Ushijima's last order made no mention of surrender.<sup>9</sup>

The 19 June order tidied up matters with respect to the subordinate units, but formalities toward superiors also had to be observed. On the evening of 18 June, Ushijima sent his farewell message to the vice chief of staff of the *IJA*, Kawanabe Torashiro, and to the commander of the *10th Area Army* on Taiwan, Ando Rikichi. Ushijima ended his message with a poem: "May the island's green grass, which has withered waiting for autumn, be born again in the spring in our honored country."<sup>10</sup> This was reciprocated on 21 June when Army Minister Anami Korechika and Chief of the Army General Staff Umezu Yoshijiro sent their farewell messages back to the commander of *32d Army*. Their coded radio transmissions also revealed that Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner Jr., the U.S. Tenth Army commander, had been killed on 18 June. All of the *32d Army* headquarters cheered at this news, beside themselves with joy. Only Ushijima grieved over the enemy commander's death and was much perplexed to find that his whole young staff was virtually rejoicing. Also on 20 June, the *32d Army* received a dispatch from the *10th Area Army* that contained a citation for all *32d Army*.<sup>11</sup>

As Ushijima and Cho attended to these formal details, the two flanks of the U.S. forces continued to close southward like giant tongs around Medeera pocket as pivot. By 19 June, the U.S. Army XXIV Corps and U.S. III Amphibious Corps had pushed the *IJA 44th IMB* back to a line running from Medeera to Mabuni. On the west, the *IJA 24th Division's* line regiments had all been crushed or bypassed, so that the U.S. III Amphibious Corps was actually approaching Mabuni from the west. The American pincers were within two miles of closing, leaving only a narrow sliver of Okinawa in Japanese hands (see map 15). Outside this sliver, only a residual rear-area garrison force remained at the southernmost tip of the Kiyan Peninsula, which formed its perimeter north of Hill 72 and Uezato village.<sup>12</sup>

By 20 June, American forces closed the tongs, and only the Mabuni and Medeera strongpoints remained. The *32d Army Staff* officers at Mabuni could hear fierce tank and small-arms battles in the intervals between bombardments. The struggle could be heard in every direction, less than a mile distant. The last contact between the *32d Army* at Mabuni and the *24th Division* at Medeera came by

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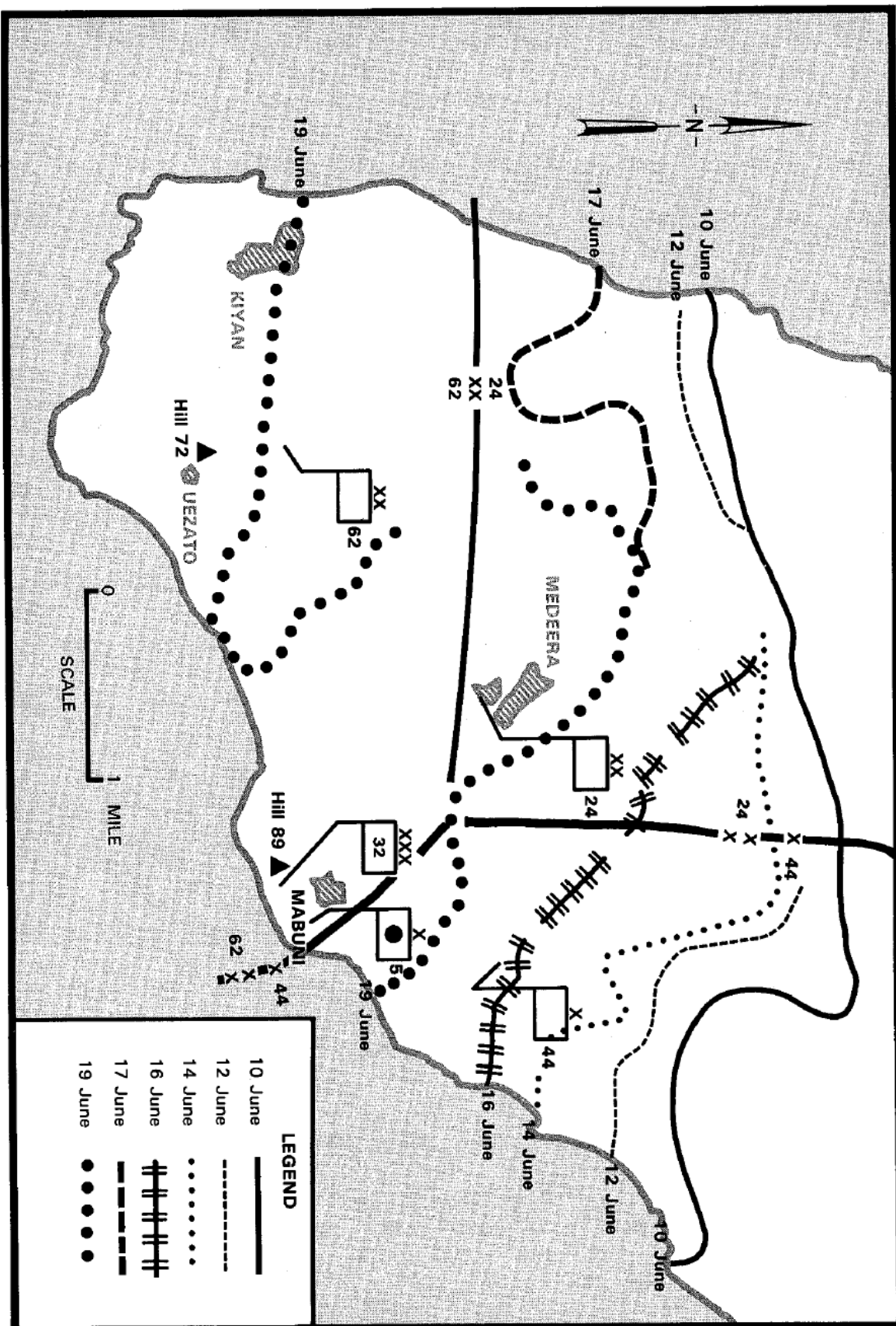
<sup>8</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 596-97; III Amph Corps G-3 Periodic Rpts Nos. 79-82, 18-21 Jun 45.

<sup>9</sup> JM 135, Book II, "Okinawa Operations Record of the 24th Division," 35-36, and JM 135, 144.

<sup>10</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 217.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 218; and JM 135, 145-47.

<sup>12</sup> OHRS, map 63, 596; and Appleman, Okinawa, Enclosed map 49.





foot messenger on 20 June. At 1200 on 21 June, the small-arms firing in Mabuni village, 400 yards north of the headquarters cave, suddenly died away, which meant that the headquarters guard unit, sent forward to hold the village, had been wiped out. Within two hours, headquarters guards on Hill 89 overlooking one of the entrances of the headquarters cave were attacked by elements of the U.S. 7th Infantry Division and overrun. The Americans easily located the cave entrance shaft and dropped in explosives that killed ten officers and men of the staff. Despite all the casualties it had supervised since 1 April, these deaths on 21 June were the first battle injuries the *32d Army Staff* had sustained in the whole campaign.<sup>13</sup>

Except for the Medeira pocket, front lines had almost disappeared by the evening of 21 June. Enemy troops, numbering between 15,000 and 18,000, were hiding in crevices in the great cliffs that walled the southern coast, in caves and ruined buildings, or in the brush, ditches, or coral. Some were waiting for an opportunity to surrender or were simply trying to evade American troops and prolong their own existence. Others, surrounded near Medeira, were fighting desperately with mortars and machine guns. Many of the Okinawa conscripts hoped to rejoin their families.

### *The Death of Generals Ushijima and Cho*

Since the *32d Army* had ceased to be, planning its operations was a dead letter. Instead the *32d Army Staff*, all that remained of the original 100,000-man organization, now had to attend to the orderly dissolution of itself. This process had begun on 18 June with the round of farewell orders and messages. A banquet was also held on that day for the *32d Army Staff*, marking the beginning of the end, even as shells concussed the ground overhead. The banquet was a farewell dinner, featuring canned goods and sake, like that preceding the 4 May offensive. Ushijima and his entire staff were there. It was not a gala, however. The best Scotch had not survived the retreat, and the headquarters itself was only a natural cave little improved, where officers bumped their heads on stalactites and water dripped constantly.<sup>14</sup>

With farewell orders and the obligatory banquet out of the way, head-quarters staffs themselves began to think about honorable death attacks. The various headquarters at the Mabuni command cave resolved on 21 June to "stand to die in order." In other words, brigade staffs, division staffs, then staffs of army headquarters units would conduct honorable death attacks in sequence, followed finally by suicide of the *32d Army* commanders.<sup>15</sup>

Formally exempted from this expectation were the young officers of the *32d Army Staff*, however. From the beginning, Cho had maintained that the *IJA* had been disadvantaged by the wanton self-destruction of staffs in the Pacific. Therefore, Cho decided, and ordered, that all of the staff officers of the *32d Army* would avoid honorable death and ritual suicide. He specified that Yahara. . . and others would report to *IGHQ* on the battle. . . others would escape from the Kiyan Peninsula to north Okinawa and wage guerrilla warfare. Each staff member was therefore ordered to make his escape on the night of 19 June, and about twenty officers and escort troops did. Even so, some remained out of a sense of loyalty to their commanders.<sup>16</sup>

An effort was also made to exfiltrate ordinary soldiers to carry on guerrilla warfare in the north. Troops sent north through the American lines traveled in groups of two or three, wore civilian clothes, and carried small arms only. A group usually carried only one firearm and some grenades. They moved on the night of 18-19 June and on several subsequent nights. The Americans, by this time accustomed to

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 145-47.

<sup>14</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 217.

<sup>15</sup> JM 135, 146.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 144; and Inagaki, Okinawa, 217.

small-scale infiltration, put up illumination flares to detect these soldiers and killed most of them in the open.<sup>17</sup>

However, most of the troops at Mabuni and Medeera were told by their officers to continue to resist where they were. The *32d Army Staff* heard on 21 June that the *5th Artillery Command* headquarters had made an honorable death attack the preceding night. The headquarters staff of the *24th Division* near Medeera still held out, but the *32d Army Staff* had no way to know this, and the Americans would soon control all the entrances to the *32d Army* command cave at Mabuni.<sup>18</sup>

It was resolved therefore that the officers and men still present at the headquarters on 22 June would attack the Americans that night and drive them off the crest of Hill 89, which overlooked the headquarters cave, about 400 yards away. On the night of 21-22 June, by moonlight, the headquarters guard unit did charge up the steep slopes toward the Americans, their last act. At this same time, in the respite thus guaranteed, Ushijima and Cho were to commit ritual suicide.<sup>19</sup>

Ushijima's cook described what happened: At about 2200 on the night of 21-22 June, he was ordered to prepare an especially large dinner. He made it as sumptuous as he could, with rice, canned meats, potatoes, fried fish cakes, salmon, fresh cabbage, pineapples, tea, and sake. While the generals ate this feast, the cook immediately began making breakfast, as was customary, since no cooking smoke could be exposed after daylight. This saved his life since the sentry at the cave entrance (whom the cook could see) and almost everyone else had been sent away to attack Hill 89 at 2330.<sup>20</sup>

From his kitchen near the cave mouth, the cook was able to witness the generals' ritual suicides later that night. At about 0340, as the moon was just setting into the ocean, Ushijima and Cho went out of the cave onto the narrow ledges overlooking the sea. The ledges were too narrow for the generals to face north toward the imperial palace. Both Ushijima and Cho then committed seppuku, with their aides severing their heads instantly to minimize their suffering. Three orderlies secretly buried the bodies. Then, the remaining staff members obligingly went back into the cave to eat the breakfast the cook had prepared. That was the end of it. When night fell on 22 June, the cook fled, and the remaining staff sortied in their final "penetration attack" against the Americans who were, by now, in foxholes less than 100 feet away.<sup>21</sup>

The death of LTG Ushijima and his Chief of Staff, LTG Cho, marked the end of the Okinawa campaign and the *32d Army*. Organized fighting on Okinawa had lasted eighty-three days, for it was not until 22 June that Hill 85 between Medeera and Makabe fell to the 305th Infantry. That the Japanese defense had been longer and stronger than could reasonably have been expected was not, it appeared, sufficient for the Japanese commander. Following the ancient code and ritual of the Samurai, he made the only acceptable atonement to his emperor for his failure to defend Okinawa successfully.

At Tenth Army headquarters on the same morning, 22 June, representatives of the Tenth Army, the two corps, and the divisions stood in formation, the band played "The Star Spangled Banner," and the color guard raised the American flag over Okinawa.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Appleman, Okinawa, 458-59; and 77th ID, "G-2 Periodic Report," 22 June 1945, 4, and 25 June 1945, 1.

<sup>18</sup> JM 135, 147.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 147-48.

<sup>20</sup> 77th ID, "G-2 Periodic Report," 25 June 1945, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>22</sup> Okinawa Diary kept by Stevens and Burns, 22 Jun 45.

## Additional Readings

### Psychological Operations

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 1.

Despite general skepticism as to the effectiveness of psychological warfare against the Japanese,<sup>1</sup> an attitude which resulted from its failure in many previous operations, the American plan called for an intensive effort to weaken the enemy's will to resist. Intelligence agencies prepared 5,700,000 leaflets to be dropped over Okinawa from carrier planes. More millions of leaflets were to be printed at the target and scattered over specific areas by bombs and shells. Tanks with amplifiers, an airplane with an ultra-loud speaker, and remotely controlled radios dropped behind enemy lines would also tell the enemy why and how he should surrender.<sup>2</sup>

The plans for psychological warfare were also directed toward influencing the Okinawans, and in this connection there was greater optimism. Because the Okinawans were of a different stock and culture from the Japanese, and had been treated by their rulers as inferiors rather than as elements to be assimilated to Japanese nationalism and militarism, it was hoped that the civilians would not be as hostile, or at any rate as fanatical, as the Japanese.

#### *Deterioration of Enemy Discipline and Morale*

Until American troops occupied the last of its defensive terrain, the Japanese Army, in spite of adversities and broken fortunes, had maintained discipline and organization astonishingly well. When the process of dissolution began, however, it spread like an epidemic. Most Japanese soldiers lost hope of eventual victory when they abandoned Shuri. As early as 12 June the sound of their artillery had faded from its April rumble to a faint whisper, and small weapons were scarcer than men. "If hand grenades, explosives, etc., are dropped on the battlefield," a Japanese general ordered, "every single item will be picked up; the man doing the salvaging will arm himself with them."<sup>3</sup>

There was dissension among troops and officers. One prisoner said it was common for men to join other units without knowing the names of the unit and of its officers. Others reported that medical supplies were so low that treatment was limited to bandaging, and many of the wounded were left to die or to commit suicide. About half the troops were fighting in a daze, and rape was common since the soldiers felt that they had only a short time to live.<sup>4</sup> After they fell the Japanese soldiers realized that no action in which they participated could have even momentary success.

Faced with these wretched conditions, Japanese officers had maintained discipline by assuring their soldiers that there was no alternative to death since the Americans would kill them if captured. On the other hand, Japanese officers promised their troops a counter-landing, an airborne invasion, and a general all-out attack toward the latter part of June. According to prisoners of war who told of this persistent rumor, the *9th Division* was to come from Formosa, and 500 planes and the remains of the

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<sup>1</sup> Interv with Gen Buckner, CG, Tenth Army, 21 Mar 45, Command Ship El Dorado, off Leyte, and with Gen Hodge, CG, XXIV Corps, 12 Mar 45, Leyte; interv with 2d Lt Alfred S. Yudkoff, Combat Propaganda Team en route to Okinawa,—Mar 45.

<sup>2</sup> Tentative Opn Plan, ICEBERG, Annex 5, "Intelligence Plan," pp. 1-15.

<sup>3</sup> Transl No. 47, Incl No. 4 to G-2 Periodic Rpt No. 79, Hq 7th Inf Div, 18 Jun 45.

<sup>4</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 572-74.

Imperial Fleet were to participate in the great attack. One proviso of this grandiose plan, however, was that, if the Japanese Army on Okinawa were destroyed by 20 June, the counter-landings would be canceled and the remaining troops would launch an all-out attack.<sup>5</sup> The reports incidentally made Tenth Army troops wary and watchful for a banzai charge which many believed would come at the end of the battle.<sup>6</sup>

Decline of enemy morale may have resulted in part from a campaign of psychological warfare which LTG Buckner started before the April landing and intensified as the assault against the Yaeju-Dake began. From 25 March until the end of organized fighting, planes dropped about 8,000,000 propaganda leaflets on the island. Until mid-June these leaflets were aimed at winning the confidence of the civilians and soldiers and at spreading defeatism. Through a letter addressed to LTG Ushijima and dropped behind enemy lines on the morning of 10 June, LTG Buckner hoped to initiate mass surrender by the Japanese:

The forces under your command have fought bravely and well, and your infantry tactics have merited the respect of your opponents. . . . Like myself, you are an infantry general long schooled and practiced in infantry warfare. ... I believe, therefore, that you understand as clearly as I, that the destruction of all Japanese resistance on the island is merely a matter of days. . . .<sup>7</sup>

General Buckner then invited Ushijima to enter negotiations for surrender.

No one seriously expected Ushijima to respond to this bid for surrender. Two days later planes scattered another 30,000 leaflets over enemy ground, this time emphasizing Ushijima's refusal to negotiate for surrender and his selfish determination to commit his entire army to destruction, and calling upon his subordinate officers and men to quit of their own accord. Another appeal was made on 14 June.

Actually, it was later learned, LTG Ushijima did not receive the original message until 17 June, the delay resulting from the lack of communications and the general confusion existing among his troops. Both he and his chief of staff, LTG Cho, considered the message hilariously funny and said that it would not be consonant with their honor as Samurai to entertain such a proposal.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Surrender and Suicide at the Water's Edge*

Mass surrender of Japanese soldiers did not begin until the Tenth Army crowded them almost to the water's edge. There was a noticeable increase, however, after the intensification of the psychological warfare program. During the first seventy days of battle, prisoners captured by Tenth Army averaged less than four a day. This average increased to more than fifty a day between 12 and 18 June; and on 19 June, as the 6th Marine and 7th Infantry Divisions rolled forward near the east and west coasts, 343 enemy soldiers voluntarily surrendered. On the afternoon of 20 June the 32d Infantry seized the east end of Hill 89, a coral bulge next to the sea which housed LTG Ushijima's staff and headquarters. On the same day 977 prisoners were taken—an unprecedented accomplishment in the Pacific war.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 526-27.

<sup>6</sup> G-2 Periodic Rpts, Tenth Army and Its Units, 10-20 Jun 45.

<sup>7</sup> Joint Intelligence Center, POA Commandant Navy 128, Report on Psychological Warfare Activities Okinawa Operation, 15 Sep 45.

<sup>8</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, p. 558.

<sup>9</sup> See Tenth Army G-2 Periodic Rpts for the period.

Even among these destitute and disorganized soldiers, less than a third chose to surrender rather than die, although prisoners claimed that others wanted to surrender but could find no opportunity. Casualties among the Japanese averaged about a thousand a day during the first half of June, jumped to nearly 2,000 on 19 June, to 3,000 the next day, and reached more than 4,000 on 21 June.<sup>10</sup> This tremendous rise in enemy deaths resulted from the sudden and complete unbalance of power between the opposing forces and from the resignation of many Japanese to death. When cornered or injured, many of them would hold grenades against their stomachs and blow themselves to pieces—a kind of poor man's hara-kiri. During the last days of the battle many bodies were found with the abdomen and right hand blown away—the telltale evidence of self-destruction.

Sometimes the conditions under which the Japanese met defeat were less tragic. A small landing craft idled along the southern coast one or two hundred yards from shore and, through a loudspeaker mounted on its deck, a "converted" prisoner of war shouted appeals for surrender to other Japanese soldiers who had retreated to the water's edge and now lurked among the boulders at the foot of the cliff or in caves in its face. The prisoner, a sergeant in the Japanese Army, was a persuasive speaker who was convinced of good treatment in the hands of Americans and tried to save his comrades from needless death. Sometimes he would order the soldiers to leave their hiding places, strip to their loin cloths, and follow the coast north to the American lines; as a sergeant, he was often obeyed.<sup>11</sup>

Interpreters or prisoners broadcast pleas of "cease resistance" over other portable loudspeakers set up in the southern tip of the island. The Japanese surrendered by twos or threes, apprehensive and hesitant and with curious expressions of hope and fear. Many prisoners offered to return to induce their comrades to surrender. Usually they were given cigarettes to take back to the caves as proof of American promises. Two such "bait-boys," known as "Murrymoto" and "Goto," brought back several hundred prisoners and were so faithful that their captors allowed them to carry weapons and live in the company perimeter during the night. In this manner 7,401 Japanese soldiers, including more than 200 commissioned officers and 3,339 unarmed laborers, surrendered to Tenth Army troops.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Tenth Army G-2 Periodic Rpts for the period.

<sup>11</sup> Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 501-02.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 503; Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-II-22.



## Military Government and Civil Affairs

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 1 and 3.

The Okinawans also presented the American planners with the problem of military government. The problem was twofold—that of removing the Okinawans from the front lines and that of caring for them; it was necessary to handle the problem in such a way as to facilitate military operations and to make available to the occupying forces the labor and economic resources of the areas. Approximately 300,000 natives lived in southern Okinawa; thousands of others were in the north and on near-by islands. Never before in the Pacific had Americans faced the task of controlling so many enemy civilians.

Basic responsibility for military government in the conquered Japanese islands devolved on the Navy, and Admiral Nimitz was to assume the position of Military Governor of the Ryukyus. However, in view of the fact that most of the garrison forces were Army troops, Admiral Nimitz delegated the responsibility to LTG Buckner. The latter planned to control military government operations during the assault phase through his tactical commanders; corps and division commanders were made responsible for military government in the areas under their control and were assigned military government detachments whose mission was to plan and organize civilian activities behind the fighting fronts. As the campaign progressed and increasing numbers of civilians were encountered, teams attached to military government headquarters of Tenth Army would assume charge, organize camps, and administer the program on an island-wide basis.<sup>1</sup> The organization provided for four types of detachments, each consisting of a number of teams. The first type accompanied assault divisions and conducted preliminary reconnaissance; the second organized Military Government activities behind the fighting front; the third administered the refugee civilian camps; and the fourth administered the Military Government districts.

The major problem of Military Government was to feed and provide emergency medical care for the approximately 300,000 civilians who were expected to be within the American lines by L plus 40. Each of the combat divisions mounted out with 70,000 civilian rations of such native staples as rice, soy beans, and canned fish and also with medical supplies. Military Government personnel would land in the wake of assault units to handle a huge "disaster relief" program. Additional supplies of all kinds were to be included in the general maintenance shipments.<sup>2</sup>

Thousands of destitute Okinawans, dazed by the pre-invasion bombardment of their island and the swift advance of the Americans, entered the custody of the Military Government authorities almost at once. Initially placed in stockades to keep them out of the way, they were quickly moved to selected villages which had escaped destruction. Thus by 5 April 1,500 civilians held in a barbed wire enclosure just south of Kadena were being moved by truck to Shimabuku, where they would have freedom of movement within boundaries established by the military police. Other collection points were similarly emptied and closed.<sup>3</sup>

It was very soon apparent that the behavior of the Okinawans would pose no problems. In the first place, only the less aggressive elements of the populace remained, for the Japanese Army had conscripted almost all males between the ages of fifteen and forty-five. Many of those who came into the lines were in the category of displaced persons before the invasion began, having moved northward from Naha and Shuri some time before. Others had been made homeless as the fighting passed through

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<sup>1</sup> CINCPAC Opn Plan 14-44, Annex G; Tenth Army Tent Opn Plan 1-45, Annex 15: Military Government; Tenth Army Opnl Directive No. 7, 6 Jan 45; Tenth Army Tech Bull Mil Govt, 25 Feb 45, p. 5; Tenth Army Mil Govt Opn Rpt, 2 Aug 45.

<sup>2</sup> Tentative Opn Plan, ICEBERG, "Military Government Plan," Annex 15, pp. 1-5. Cf. App. I, Table of Population.

<sup>3</sup> Stevens-Burns, Okinawa Diary, 5 Apr 45.

their villages. Casualties among civilians had been surprisingly light, most of them having sought the protection of the caves, and some, including whole families, having taken refuge in deep wells.

A frugal and industrious people, with a low standard of living and little education, the Okinawans docilely made the best of the disaster which had overtaken them. With resignation they allowed themselves to be removed from their homes and their belongings to the special camp areas which soon supplanted the initial stockades as places of detention. The principal areas chosen initially for civilian occupation were Ishikawa and the Katchin Peninsula in the north, and Koza, Shimabuku, and Awase in the south. Military Government supplied the minimum necessities of existence—food, water, clothing, shelter, medical care, and sanitation. Food stores sufficient to take care of civilian needs for from two to four weeks were discovered; additional quantities were available in the fields. Growing crops were harvested on a communal basis under American direction. Horses, cows, pigs, goats, and poultry, running wild after eluding the invading troops, were rounded up and turned over to the civilian camps.

It proved difficult to secure adequate numbers of certain types of personnel for Military Government, especially interpreters who were sufficiently skilled in the Japanese language. Before the invasion seventy-five men were assigned for this duty; when it became apparent that this number was insufficient, an additional allotment of ninety-five interpreters was secured. As the campaign progressed, minor shortages of cooks, military police, and medical corpsmen developed in the camps for displaced civilians. In spite of these shortages, detachments that were originally designed to operate camps containing 10,000 civilians often found it necessary to care for as many as 20,000.

Civilians became a nuisance to combat units after the assault on the final enemy lines began, and remained a burden until front lines no longer existed. More than 10,000 civilians stayed on Chinen Peninsula and were relatively unharmed by the battle. A much larger number, forced south by the advancing lines, hid in caves or stone huts until they were overtaken. Then they tried to pass through the machine-gun and shell fire to enter American lines or attempted the even more hazardous feat of slipping through the front lines during darkness. Infantrymen helped these unfortunate civilians as much as possible and often interrupted the fighting to collect and guide them through the front lines. During the last days of the fighting there were always groups of civilians sitting just behind the front lines, waiting for help, instructions, or, as many of them believed, death.<sup>4</sup>

Eighty thousand Okinawa civilians, between a third and a half of whom were wounded, crawled from caves at the south tip of the island during the last two weeks of June. These were either children, the very old, or women; there were few able-bodied men among them. In long columns they walked toward the rear. Most of the women carried babies on their backs and bundles of clothing, food, dishes, and kettles on their heads—all they owned. They chewed stalks of sugar cane when they could find them. The bodies of many thousands of other civilians lay scattered in the ditches, in the cane fields, and in the rubble of the villages, or were sealed in caves.<sup>5</sup>

The number of Okinawans under control of Military Government rose rapidly in the first month of the invasion until by the end of April it amounted to 126,876. Because of the stalemate at the Shuri lines the increase during May was gradual, the total number of civilians at the beginning of June being 144,331. But during the first three weeks of June, after the break-through on the Shuri line, the number

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<sup>4</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps History, pp. 595-96; Mulford and Rogers, 96th Div History, pp. 251, 259, 265, 269; Gugeler, 7th Div History, pp. 482-86.

<sup>5</sup> Tenth Army Mil Govt Opns Rpt Ryukyus Area, 1 Aug 45, App. V, Pt. IV: Table of Population Changes. The estimate of the number of civilians wounded during the last few days of the campaign is that of Capt. Russell Gugeler, 7th Div Hist Off. See also XXIV Corps Actn Rpt, pp. 97-99.

again rose sharply until, at the conclusion of the fighting, the Okinawans under Military Government totaled approximately 196,000.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Tenth Army, G-4 Periodic Reports, Ryukyus Campaign, for the following dates: 4 and 10 May 45, 4 and 25 Jun 45.

## Logistics

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 1, 3, and 16.

The planning and execution of ICEBERG presented logistical problems of a magnitude greater than any previously encountered in the Pacific. For the assault echelon alone, about 183,000 troops and 747,000 measurement tons of cargo were loaded into over 430 assault transports and landing ships at 11 different ports, from Seattle to Leyte, a distance of 6,000 miles. After the landings, maintenance had to be provided for the combat troops and a continuously increasing garrison force that eventually numbered 270,000. Concurrently, the development of Okinawa as an advanced air and fleet base and mounting area for future operations involved supply and construction programs extending over a period of many months subsequent to the initial assault. Close integration of assault, maintenance, and garrison shipping and supply was necessary at all times.<sup>1</sup>

### *Organizing the Supply Line*

Factors of distance dominated the logistical picture. Cargo and troops were lifted on the West Coast, Oahu, Espiritu Santo, New Caledonia, Guadalcanal, the Russell Islands, Saipan, and Leyte, and were assembled at Eniwetok, Ulithi, Saipan, and Leyte. The closest Pacific Ocean Area bases were at Ulithi and the Marianas, 5 days' sailing time to Okinawa (at 10 knots). The West Coast, which furnished the bulk of resupply, was 6,250 nautical miles away, or 26 days' sailing time. Allowing 30 days to prepare and forward the requisitions, 60 days for procurement and loading on the West Coast, and 30 days for sailing to the target, the planners were faced with a 120-day interval between the initiation of their calculations and the arrival of supplies. Distance, moreover, used up ships and compelled the adoption of a schedule of staggered supply shipments, or "echelons," as well as a number of other improvisations.<sup>2</sup>

Admiral Turner, as commander of the Amphibious Forces Pacific Fleet, furnished the shipping for the assault troops and their supplies, determined the loading schedules, and was responsible for the delivery of men and cargo to the beaches. General Buckner allocated assault shipping space to the elements of his command and was responsible for landing the supplies and transporting them to the dumps. The control of maintenance and garrison shipping, which was largely loaded on the West Coast, was retained by CINCPAC.

The first phase of supply planning involved the preparation of special lists of equipment required for the operation, which included excess Tables of Equipment items, equipment peculiar to amphibious operations, and base development materials. Such lists, or operational projects as they were known, had been prepared for the projected Formosa operation; when this was canceled the projects were screened and reduced to meet the needs of ICEBERG.<sup>3</sup>

Providing the assault troops with their initial supplies was not a difficult problem as generally there were sufficient stocks on hand at each of the mounting areas. When the assault units embarked, they took with them a 30-day supply of rations, essential clothing and equipment, fuel, and medical and construction supplies. Initial ammunition quotas consisted of five CINCPAC units of fire.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CTF 51 Actn Rpt, I-5, 6, 7, and V-I-12; Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-IV-1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> CINCPAC Joint Staff Study, p. 29; Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-IV-1-12; Com Phibs Pac Op Ord A1-45.

<sup>3</sup> Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-IV-3, 4.

<sup>4</sup> A CINCPAC U/F was a balanced assortment of ammunition based on Central Pacific experience. It included, among other types, 100 rounds for the M1 Rifle, 1,500 for the .30-caliber machine gun, 600 for the .50-caliber machine gun, 275 for the 60-mm. and 81-mm. mortars, 250 for the 105-mm. howitzer M2, and 150 for the 155-

Supplies to maintain the troops at the target were scheduled to arrive in twenty-one shipments from the West Coast. Loaded ships were to sail from Pacific ports at 10-day intervals, beginning on L minus 40 (20 February 1945), and to arrive at the regulating stations at Ulithi and Eniwetok beginning on L minus 5, there to await the call of LTG Buckner. These maintenance shipments, planned to provide automatic resupply until L plus 210 (31 October 1945), were based on the estimated population build-up at the scheduled time of arrival. The principal emergency reserves were kept at Saipan and Guam.<sup>5</sup>

The first waves of the troops were no sooner across the beaches and moving up the slopes than the complex machinery of supplying them, planned in intricate detail over long months, went into action. The problem was to move food, ammunition, and equipment for more than 100,000 men across beaches with a fringing reef from 200 to 400 yards wide<sup>6</sup> to dumps in rear areas, and then to the troops; to widen the native roads; to repair the captured airfields; and to alleviate the inevitable distress of the civilian population while rendering it incapable of interference.

While the beaches varied widely in serviceability, they were in general well adapted to unloading purposes. Various expedients were used to hasten the unloading. Night unloading under floodlights began on 2 April, and the work proceeded without interruption except when enemy aircraft was in the vicinity. Ponton causeways accommodating LST's were established at predetermined sites. By 4 April, a T-pier, with a 300-foot single-lane approach and a 30- by 170-foot head, and a U-pier, with two 500-foot approaches and a 60- by 175-foot wharf section, had been set up on the beaches. The piers were soon supplanted by six single-lane causeways. By the same day, an L-shaped pier, with a 1,400-foot single-lane approach and a 45- by 175-foot head, had been completed. Several sand piers were also constructed. Ponton barges carried to Okinawa on cargo ships were assigned varying jobs from day to day. By 11 April, 25 had been equipped with cranes and were operating as transfer barges, 53 were operating as lighters, and 6 as petroleum barges, while 8 were being used for evacuating casualties. A crane barge was capable of handling 400 tons in a 20-hour day when enough amphibian vehicles were available to make the runs ashore.<sup>7</sup>

General unloading began on 3 April. It was soon apparent that the limiting factor was the availability of transport from the beaches to the dumps. The shortage of service units and equipment due to space limitations was immediately felt, especially in the Army zone; the problem was eased for the Marines by the use of 5,000 replacements landed with the Marine divisions. The rapidity of the advance and the immediate uncovering of Yontan and Kadena airfields required a rearrangement of supply priorities. The difficulties in initiating so intricate an undertaking near the enemy's homeland were prodigious, and it required time and the process of trial and error to overcome them. Suicide planes and suicide boats were a constant menace, and on the afternoon of 4 April the weather came to the aid of the enemy. A storm, bringing with it from 6- to 10-foot surf on the Hagushi beaches, lasted through the night and the following day. All unloading ceased, and some landing craft hit against the reef and were damaged. Again on 10 April surf backed by a high wind brought work to a standstill, and on 11 April conditions were but slightly improved. Rain accompanying these storms made quagmires of the roads and further complicated the supply problems. Despite these handicaps, the assault shipping was 80 percent unloaded by 16 April, and 577,000 measurement tons had crossed the Hagushi beaches, a larger amount than had been anticipated in the plans.<sup>8</sup>

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mm. howitzer. See Tenth Army Tent Opn Plan 1-45, Annex 13, App. B, Incl 1, for the complete description of CINCPAC U/F, 6 Dec 44.

<sup>5</sup> CINCPAC Opn Plan 14-44, Annex D, pp. 8-12; Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-IV-5.

<sup>6</sup> III Amph Corps Actn Rpt, p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., CTF 51 Actn Rpt, V-I-23-26 and V-J-14-16; Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-IV-14.

<sup>8</sup> CTF 51 Actn Rpt, V-I-22-26; Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-IV-12, 14, 17; personal observation of road conditions by Lt Col John Stevens.



Thus, in an amazingly short time the beachhead had been won and the supply lines established. By 4 April Tenth Army held a slice of Okinawa 15 miles long and from 3 to 10 miles wide. The beachhead included two airfields of great potentialities, beaches that could take immense tonnage from the cargo ships, and sufficient space for the dumps and installations that were rapidly being built. The months of planning and preparation had borne their first fruit.

Further progress was satisfactory through 6 May. Thereafter, however, the discharge of supplies failed to keep pace with unloading plans. Between 7 May and 15 June tonnage unloaded was more than 200,000 measurement tons behind schedule. However, this was largely offset by the earlier achievements, and the cumulative effect was not evident until 5 June. The chief difficulty was the failure to capture the port of Naha with its harbor and dock facilities as early as planned. Unloading continued for the most part over the reef and beaches in the Hagushi area long after it was expected that they would have been abandoned in favor of rehabilitated port facilities. High winds, heavy rains, frequent air raids, and equipment shortages all contributed to the delays and the cumulative deficiencies. Particularly onerous was the necessity of selective discharge of cargo to bring ashore critical items of supply. Sometimes dock gangs had to be pulled off ships prior to unloading and placed on "hot" ships as emergencies developed. In the face of all these difficulties, more than 2,000,000 measurement tons of cargo were unloaded on Okinawa from 1 April to 30 June, an average of some 22,200 tons a day.

To supplement the tonnage unloaded at the Hagushi beaches, Tenth Army developed a number of unloading points at other places along the coasts of Okinawa. Unloading on the east coast of Okinawa began in the middle of April, and use was successively made of beaches at Chimu Bay, Ishikawa, Katchin Peninsula, Awase, and Kuba. Yonabaru was captured on 22 May and supplies were unloaded there on 1 June. A ponton pier was started there for LST's and smaller craft a week later and was completed on 12 June. In the last stages of the campaign an emergency unloading point was opened at Minatoga on the southeast coast on 9 June and was operated for two weeks.

By 30 June 1945 about 20 percent of all tonnage unloaded on Okinawa had been brought ashore at points other than the Hagushi beaches, amounting to nearly 400,000 measurement tons of cargo. In one respect, however, the use of unscheduled supply points contributed to the delays of unloading: as each new beach was opened in immediate support of the assault, available lighterage, trucks, and personnel were dispersed over a number of places, thereby materially slowing operations at the original unloading points. In addition, much of the cargo handled over the new beaches was not discharged directly from ships but from landing craft that had loaded at previously established dumps at Hagushi, Awase, and Kuba and had sailed down the coast.

#### *Delivery of Supplies to the Front*

Responsibility for supplying the assault troops passed smoothly, during the initial stages, from division to corps and then to the Island Command, the Army logistic agency, on 9 April. Depot and dump operations for the Island Command were handled by the 1st Engineer Special Brigade until 24 May, when Island Command took over direct operational control of supply installations. All units normally drew supplies in their organic transportation from the Island Command supply points. These were first established in the area behind the Hagushi beaches, but forward supply points were opened farther south as the action moved toward that end of the island. Initially an ammunition supply point was established for each division, and, as operations progressed, these points were consolidated and new ones set up farther forward.

No unusual difficulties were encountered in moving up supplies to the troops until the latter part of May. When the heavy rains started on 20 May and continued day and night for two weeks, the main supply roads linking the forward and rear areas were washed out and movement of vehicles became impossible. The rainy period, moreover, coincided with the break-through at Shuri that started the troops moving rapidly south away from all established supply points. It became necessary to resort

to water transportation to bring supplies to the forward dumps. In the interim the 7th Division, which was making the main effort in the sector at the time, was supplied by LVT along the coast. XXIV Corps established a supply point at Yonabaru on 31 May, and lighterage was made available by the Island Command and the Navy for the delivery of the necessary supplies. The first supplies arrived at Yonabaru on LCT's on 1 June. Several LCT's also ferried service troops and artillery forward and evacuated casualties.

As the pursuit of the retreating Japanese continued, the Corps turned the Yonabaru supply point over to Island Command and concentrated on a new forward unloading point at Minatoga, on the southern coast. To ensure the steady flow of ammunition to XXIV Corps units, a cargo ship and three LST's loaded entirely with that class of supply were anchored off Yonabaru and Minatoga and used as floating ammunition supply points. The 7th Division received some supplies by LVT at Minatoga on 6 June. The initial shipment of four LCT's loaded with rations and fuel and an LST with ammunition arrived on 8 June. Forty-four LVT's loaded with ammunition and bridging material were sent to Minatoga aboard an LST on 9 June. Shipments to the new supply point were continued from both east and west coasts of Okinawa by LST and LCT, with the LVT's being used as lighterage from ship to shore. During much of this time, supply of the assault elements on the line was almost entirely by hand carry.

Maintenance and construction of supply roads were impeded by the lack of good road-building material and by rapid deterioration from rainy weather and heavy traffic. In the XXIV Corps zone the limestone coral used for road building in the early stages of the campaign proved to be unsuitable, and extensive use had to be made of rubble from destroyed buildings and stone walls. A rock crusher was not available. As the Corps drove southward, the lack of adequate sources of coral limestone became acute and the use of building rubble had to be continued. When a rock crusher was made available at the end of the first week in June, it was set up and operated in a limestone quarry and then moved to a site where the excellent stone from the razed Shuri Castle could be used. It was at this time, moreover, that the problem of road maintenance became overwhelming. A 12-inch rainfall between 22 May and 5 June forced the abandonment of the two main supply roads serving the Corps. One of these, Route 13 along the east coast, was not reconstructed during the battle; the engineers concentrated on keeping Route 5, down the center of the island, in operation, as well as the roads running south from Yonabaru and Minatoga, to which supplies were moved by water. By the end of June main supply roads had been developed from Chuda to Naha on the west coast (Route 1), from Chibana to Shuri in the center (Route 5), from Kin to Yonabaru on the east coast (Route 13), and at six intermediate points across the island. Approximately 164 miles of native roads had been reconstructed and widened for two-lane traffic, 37 miles of two-, three-, and four-lane roads had been newly constructed, and a total of 339 miles of road was under maintenance.

### *Supply Shortages*

Providing an adequate supply of ammunition to support the sustained attacks on the Shuri defenses constituted the most critical logistical problem of the campaign. The resupply of ammunition beyond the initial five CINCPAC units of fire had been planned for a 40-day operation; the island was not officially declared secure until L plus 82 (22 June).<sup>9</sup> The sinking of three ammunition ships by enemy action on 6 and 27 April and damage to other ships resulted in a total loss of 21,000 short tons of ammunition. The unloading of ammunition was, moreover, never rapid enough to keep pace with expenditures, particularly by the artillery, and at the same time to build up ample reserves in the ammunition supply points. Further, it was found that the shiploads of all calibers balanced according to the CINCPAC unit of fire prescription did not fit the needs of a protracted campaign; the requirements

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<sup>9</sup> Interv 1st I & H Off with Brig Gen David H. Blakelock, 6-4, Tenth Army, 22 and 27 May 45.

for artillery ammunition far exceeded those for small-arms ammunition and resulted in hasty, wasteful unloading and constant shortages.

The ammunition situation first became critical when XXIV Corps developed the Naha-Shuri-Yonabaru defense line during the second week of April. The ammunition expenditures in the large-scale artillery attacks mounted rapidly. As the rate of discharge from the ships failed to keep pace, the supplies on hand dwindled. The plans for the Corps attack designed to penetrate the Japanese positions called for an expenditure of 14,800 tons of artillery ammunition plus supply maintenance of some 1,000 tons a day. To conserve supplies, command restrictions on artillery ammunition expenditures were imposed on 9 April. The Corps attack was delayed until 19 April, partly in order to accumulate sufficient stocks and reserves. This was accomplished in time by means of greater unloading efforts, making available all resupply ammunition, and diverting III Amphibious Corps' stocks to XXIV Corps.

After the attack of 19 April ammunition expenditures continued to mount. By the end of the campaign a total of 97,800 tons of ammunition had been expended. XXIV Corps alone consumed about 64,000 tons between 4 April and 21 June, and restrictions on daily expenditures were continuously in force in its zone until L plus 61 (1 June). In spite of restrictions an average of more than 800 tons of ammunition was expended daily by Corps units.

About the middle of April a critical shortage of 155-mm. ammunition developed, and on 17 April Tenth Army had to call up four LST's loaded only with ammunition for 155-mm. guns and howitzers from the reserves in the Marianas. Subsequently, additional emergency requisitions on the reserves were necessary. CINCPAC was also requested to divert ammunition resupply shipments from canceled operations, as well as some originally intended for the European Theater of Operations, to Okinawa in order to alleviate the shortages. On 21 May Tenth Army had to request an emergency air shipment of 50,000 rounds of 81-mm. mortar ammunition, of which more than 26,000 rounds were received between 28 May and 9 June.

The loss of light and medium tanks during the campaign, much heavier than had been expected, caused another critical shortage and replacements could not be secured in time. Tenth Army reported the complete loss of 147 medium tanks and 4 light tanks by 30 June; replacements were requested from Oahu on 28 April but these had not arrived by the end of the campaign. As an emergency measure, all the medium tanks of the 193d Tank Battalion, attached to the 27th Division, were distributed to the other tank battalions on the island. XXIV Corps tank units received fifty of these tanks which contributed materially to combat effectiveness. The 193d, however, could not be reequipped and returned to combat.

## Base Development

Excerpts from CMH 5-11-1, Okinawa: The Last Battle, Chapter 1 and 3.

The main logistical task of the operation, in Admiral Nimitz's opinion, was the rapid development of air and naval bases in the Ryukyus to support further operations against Japan. The Base Development Plan for Okinawa, published by CINCPAC, provided for the construction of eight airfields on Okinawa, two of which were to be operational by L plus 5, a seaplane base, an advanced fleet base at Nakagusuku Bay, and the rehabilitation of the port of Naha to accommodate support shipping. Base development responsibilities also included immediate support of the assault by the early construction of tank farms for the bulk storage of fuel and for the improvement of waterfront unloading facilities and of roads. Later a large construction program was planned that included roads, dumps, hospitals, communications facilities, water supply systems, and housing and recreational facilities. A plan for the development of Ie Shima as an advanced air base was also prepared.<sup>1</sup>

General Buckner was charged with the responsibility for base development in the Ryukyus. Assigned to Tenth Army for the execution of the Base Development Plan was the Island Command Okinawa, or Army Garrison Force, with Major General Fred C. Wallace in command. Some of the Island Command troops were to land in the assault echelon and to provide logistic support for the assault troops during and immediately after the landings. At the conclusion of the amphibious phase, the Island Command was to act as Tenth Army's administrative and logistical agency, operating in effect as an Army service command and an advanced section of the communications zone. As such, it was to be in charge of the base development program as well as of the garrisoning and defense of the captured positions. Garrison troops and base development materials were scheduled to arrive at Okinawa in seventeen echelons. These were based primarily on the unloading capacity of the Hagushi beaches; the tonnage in each echelon was kept within the estimated discharge capacity between the arrivals of the echelons. Most of this garrison shipping was loaded on the West Coast and Oahu, but some originated in the South Pacific and the Marianas.<sup>2</sup>

... base facilities necessary for the immediate success of the operation had to be developed quickly. Existing roads had to be improved and new roads built; the two airfields [Yontan and Kadena] required repairs and expansion; and facilities for bulk storage of petroleum products, especially aviation gas, with connections to tankers off shore, were urgently needed. It was not long before the road down the west coast of Okinawa blossomed with markers which proclaimed it "US 1," and route numbers were similarly assigned to all main roads as they were taken, in accordance with the Engineers' plans. Okinawa's roads were, for the most part, unsurfaced and only one or one and one-half lanes in width. On L Day beach-exit and shore-party dump roads were improved; next, the main supply routes to the troops and roads to permanent and semi-permanent supply installations. During the rains of 4-5 and 10-11 April the spinning wheels of endless lines of trucks soon tore through the crusts of the more traveled highways and became mired. In dry weather the surface became pulverized, and the heavy military traffic raised clouds of dust that sometimes cut visibility to the length of the hood. Engineers widened and resurfaced the main thoroughfares, using coral from existing and newly opened pits, coral sand, rubble from destroyed villages, and limestone. Bridges that were too narrow or too weak to carry American trucks and tanks were soon replaced by Bailey bridges, which could be set up and taken down

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<sup>1</sup> CINCPAC-CINCPAC Opns in the POA during May 45, p. 46; CINCPAC Joint Staff Study, App. E; CINCPAC Base Development Plan LEGUMINOUS, Serial 000221, 10 Feb 45 (LEGUMINOUS was the code name for the base development of Okinawa); Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-IV-7.

<sup>2</sup> CINCPAC Opn Plan 14-44, Annex D, p. 36, and Annex F, pp. 1, 2; Tenth Army Tent Opn Plan 1-45, Annex 12: Island Command Plan; Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 5-0-8, 9; 11-IV-6, 9, 10; 11-XXVI-1.

much in the fashion of an Erector span. It was late in April before equipment was available for the construction of gasoline tank farms.<sup>3</sup>

An area 30 feet by 3,000 feet on the Yontan runway was cleared and the bomb craters filled on L Day; by the evening Kadena was also ready for emergency landings.<sup>4</sup> Nineteen artillery spotting planes were flown in from CVE's and LST's on 2 April and began operations on 3 April.<sup>5</sup> The work of conditioning the two fields began in earnest the following day.<sup>6</sup> Land-based fighter groups arrived at Yontan on 7 April and at Kadena two days later, improving local control of the air and making more aircraft available for support. Air evacuation of the wounded to the Marianas by specially equipped C-54's began on 8 April.<sup>7</sup>

The 69th Field Hospital landed on 3 April and received its first casualties two days later. Until it was established, the divisions had evacuated their casualties immediately by LCVP's and DUKW's to one of eight LST(H)'s lying off the Hagushi beaches. Each hospital ship could take care of 200 patients and perform emergency surgery. By 16 April Army and Marine hospitals ashore had a capacity of 1,800 beds.<sup>8</sup>

In the original plans many more islands in the Ryukyus chain had been selected for capture and development as American bases, particularly for aircraft. No less than five additional islands—Okino Daito, Kume, Miyako, Kikai, and Tokuno—had been scheduled for invasion in Phase III of ICEBERG and were to be developed as fighter and B-29 bases and radar stations. In the course of time, as reconnaissance revealed that some of the islands were unsuitable for the purposes intended, plans for their capture were canceled. Of the five, only Kume was taken, on 26 June, and not for use as an air base but in order to enlarge the air warning net for the Okinawa island group.

The cancellation of the Phase III projects greatly affected the plans for base development on Okinawa and Ie Shima. In some cases most of the resources and troops intended for the abandoned operations were made available for the work on Okinawa. At the same time, however, some of the airfield construction projects were also transferred, thereby sizably increasing the task of the Okinawa construction troops. In one case favorable estimates of construction possibilities on Okinawa and Ie Shima were responsible in large part for the decision to abandon one of the most important operations planned for Phase III—the Miyako operation. On 9 April Tenth Army reported to Admiral Nimitz that a detailed reconnaissance of the terrain of Okinawa revealed excellent airfield sites for Very Long Range bombers (VLR) on the island. As a result, Admiral Nimitz recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the seizure of Miyako Island for development as a VLR bomber base be abandoned in favor of a more intensive construction program for Okinawa and Ie Shima. The Joint Chiefs approved and the Miyako operation was canceled on 26 April. Accordingly, base development plans were changed to provide for 18 air strips on Okinawa and 4 on Ie Shima, instead of the 8 and 2 originally planned respectively for the two islands. Construction of fields on Okinawa was to center on the provision of facilities for B-29 operations, while Ie Shima was to be developed primarily as a base for VLR fighter escorts.

There was concern over interruptions to the progress of the greatly expanded Okinawa program. The extremely heavy rains at the end of May practically stopped all construction work until about 15 June, as troops working on the airfields had to be diverted to maintenance of the main supply roads to the assault troops. Although the cancellation of the Miyako project made available more men for the base program on Okinawa, only 31,400 of the 80,000 construction troops needed had reached

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<sup>3</sup> Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-IV-24-29 and 11-XI-7; personal observation of traffic conditions by Lt Col John Stevens.

<sup>4</sup> Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-VII-3; CTF 55 Actn Rpt, III-7.

<sup>5</sup> CINCPAC-CINCPOA Opns in POA, Apr 45, pp. 47, 48.

<sup>6</sup> III Amph Corps Actn Rpt, p. 114; personal observation at Kadena airfield by Lt Col John Stevens.

<sup>7</sup> Appleman, XXIV Corps Hist, p. 136.

<sup>8</sup> Tenth Army Actn Rpt, 11-XV-8.

the island by 22 June 1945. It was impossible to keep abreast of scheduled dates of completion. The delays in unloading and failure to uncover airfields and ports on schedule also contributed to the delay in the base development program.

Work on fighter airfields was initially given the highest priority in order to provide land-based air cover during the assault. By 10 April Kadena and Yontan airfields had been reconditioned for successful operations. American engineers found that the Japanese airfields were poorly constructed, being surfaced with only a thin layer of coral rock and lacking adequate drainage. The runways had to be completely rebuilt, with a foot of coral surfacing added. By the end of May construction was in progress on ten different bomber and fighter strips on Okinawa and Ie Shima. Of these only the fields at Yontan and Kadena and one of the fighter strips on Ie Shima were near completion. The first American air strip built on Okinawa was the 7,000-foot medium bomber runway at Yontan, completed on 17 June. By the end of June a 7,500-foot VLR strip at Kadena was 25 percent complete, two 5,000-foot fighter strips at Awase and Chimu were ready for operation, an 8,500-foot VLR strip at Zampa Point was 15 percent complete, and construction was under way for VLR and medium-bomber strips at Futema and Machinate.

Harbor development began at the end of April with the construction of a 500-foot ponton barge pier on the Katchin Peninsula at Buckner [Nakagusuku] Bay. Temporary ponton barge piers were built at other sites on the bay—at Kin on Chimu Bay, at Machinato, and at the mouth of the Bishi River. By the end of June an 800-foot ponton barge pier was under construction at Yonabaru. Preparations for building permanent ship piers and cargo berths were also under way. At Naha troops had begun clearing the harbor of wrecks and debris at the beginning of June; several months would be required before this work would be completed and Naha could serve as a major port.

By the end of the Okinawa campaign the full realization of the plans for the development of major air and naval bases in the Ryukyus still lay in the future. Most of the airfields would not be completed for two or three months, although fighters were flying from some to attack Kyushu. The naval base in Buckner [Nakagusuku] Bay was far from complete when the war ended. It was not until the last night of the war that Okinawa-based B-29s carried out their first and last offensive mission against the Japanese homeland.



## Annexes

### A. Cave Design and Tactics

Excerpts from Leavenworth Papers No. 18, Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945, Chapter 3.

The fighting on Okinawa had features that were all its own, but even so its dynamics bore a startling resemblance to the fierce no-man's-land fighting of World War I. The conditions of warfare for both sides, but especially for the Japanese, were governed by the reality of the caves. The Okinawa caves were in some ways a unique response to the lethal mass of enemy artillery the *IJA 32d Army* faced, and given what they were intended to do, the caves were extremely successful.

#### *The Command Cave*

The most elaborate of the caves was the headquarters structure for the *IJA 32d Army*, far below Shuri Castle (see figure 4). The headquarters tunnel ran 1,280 feet north to south, with side chambers and a side shaft angling to the left at the north end. The *5th Artillery Command* had its tunnel, about 200 yards long, just to the west. The *62d Division* headquarters cave lay 300 yards to the east.<sup>1</sup>

The *32d Army's* command cave lay under sloping terrain, beneath 160 feet of earth at its deepest point, and beneath 50 to 100 feet for most of its length. The *32d's* command functions were all placed in sixty yards of the northwestern extremity of the tunnel's side shaft. The commanders were fortunate to be below Shuri Castle rather than in it because as the battle progressed its handsome buildings and parks were reduced to a rubbled moonscape.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the smaller frontline caves, the headquarters cave had all walls faced with sawed planks and supported with squared beams. Access shafts were provided with wooden ladders and landings every four yards or so. Climbing straight up 50 to 100 feet in these shafts was arduous. The furnishings were simple but useful, rather like an *IJA* barracks. Offices were set up with desks and chairs and had electricity. The commander's pantry was notoriously well stocked, and seventy-two feet of tunnel at the south end served as the headquarters kitchen. Elaborate measures were taken to lead the smoke outlets to points where they would be screened from the Americans' view. In the soldiers' areas, bunks ran lengthwise along the side of the tunnel. The functions and spaces of the tunnels took on the quality of a warship.<sup>3</sup>

As far as enemy fire was concerned, the Shuri command tunnel was completely safe. Life there, however, was not without its hardships. According to Yahara, the atmosphere was hot and humid-over 90 degrees Fahrenheit with 100 percent humidity. Walls sweated and desks and chairs were sticky with moisture. The inhabitants developed skin rashes because their skin never dried. A large ventilator fan placed in one of the access shafts to bring in fresh air had a limited effect. Moreover, rice stored in the tunnels began to ferment in the sack, giving it a sour taste when served. Besides that, given the command staff, the sentries, the numerous messengers, and the headquarters company, there were over 1,000 troops in the tunnel. This made the air not only stuffy but also filled with human aromas. The press of people itself was a kind of hardship.<sup>4</sup>

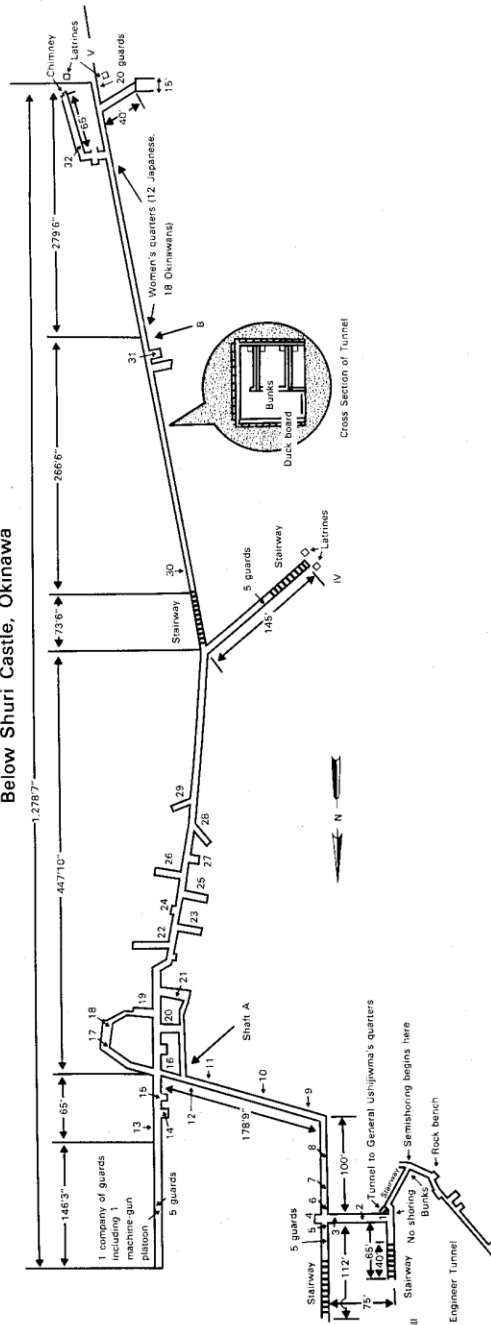
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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Army, 10th Army, G-2, Intelligence Monograph, Ryukyus Campaign (Okinawa, 1945), pt. II, sect. D, 1, hereafter cited as 10th Army, Monograph.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 3-5.

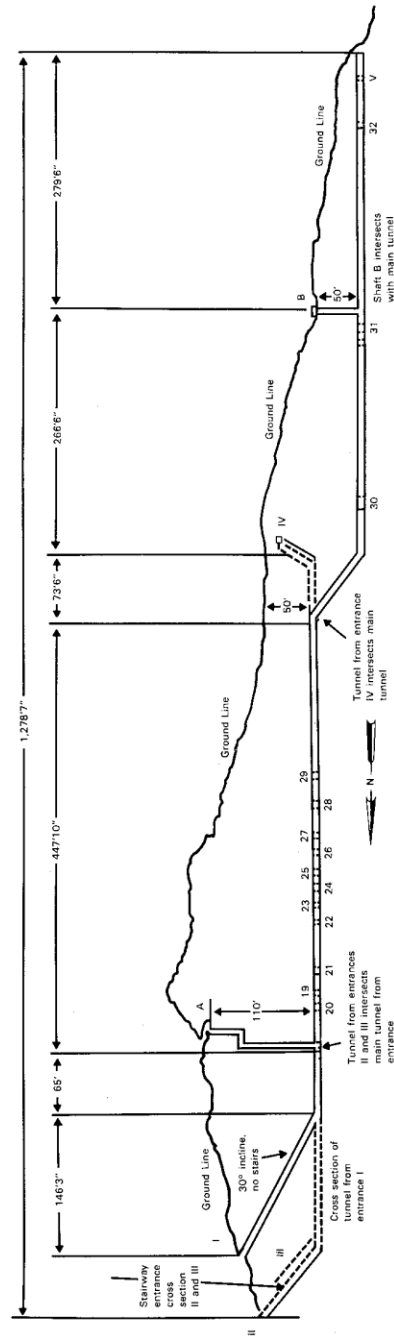
<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 4, 6-12.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 4, 8, 10; and Inagaki, Okinawa, 180.



No.	Area/Room	Designation	No.	Area/Room	Designation	No.	Area/Room	Designation
1	Commanding general's office and quarters		13	Signal section		25	Air intelligence section, 32d Army	
2	Chief of staff's office and quarters		14	Telephone and switchboard		26	Dispensary	
3	Staff officers		15	Officers' quarters		27	Staff officers' quarters	
4	Senior adjutant's office and quarters		16	Order distributing center		28	Construction section	
5	Clerks and messengers		17	32d Army intelligence section		29	Medical officers' office	
6	Operations office		18	Operations section, 24th Division		30	Staff office, 44th IMB	
7	Formerly commanding general's office and quarters, 44th IMB, later quarters for 10 women typists		19	Operations section, 24th Division		31	Commanding officer (Rear Admiral Ota) and officers' quarters, Okinawa Naval Base Force, 10-17 May 1945	
8	Commanding general's pantry		20	Commanding general's office and quarters, 24th Division				
9	Telegraph section		21	Staff office, 24th Division		32	Kitchen	
10	Weather section		22	Telegraph section supply room, 32d Army		A	Secondary entrances and ventilation shafts	
11	Material and personnel section		23	Intelligence section, 44th IMB		I-V	Primary entrances	
12	Reconnaissance section		24	First-aid station				

Cross Section of the Japanese 32d Army Headquarters  
Below Shuri Castle, Okinawa



No.	Area/Room Designation	No.	Area/Room Designation
19	Operations section, 24th Division	27	Staff officers' quarters
20	Commanding general's office and quarters, 24th Division	28	Construction section
21	Staff office, 24th Division	29	Medical officers' office
22	Telegraph section, supply room	30	Staff office, 44th IMB
23	Intelligence section 44th IMB	31	Commanding officer (Rear Admiral Ota) and officers' quarters, Okinawa Naval Base Force, 10-17 May 1945
24	First-aid station	32	Kitchen
25	Air intelligence section, 32d Army	I-V	Primary entrances
26	Dispensary	A B	Secondary entrances and ventilation shafts

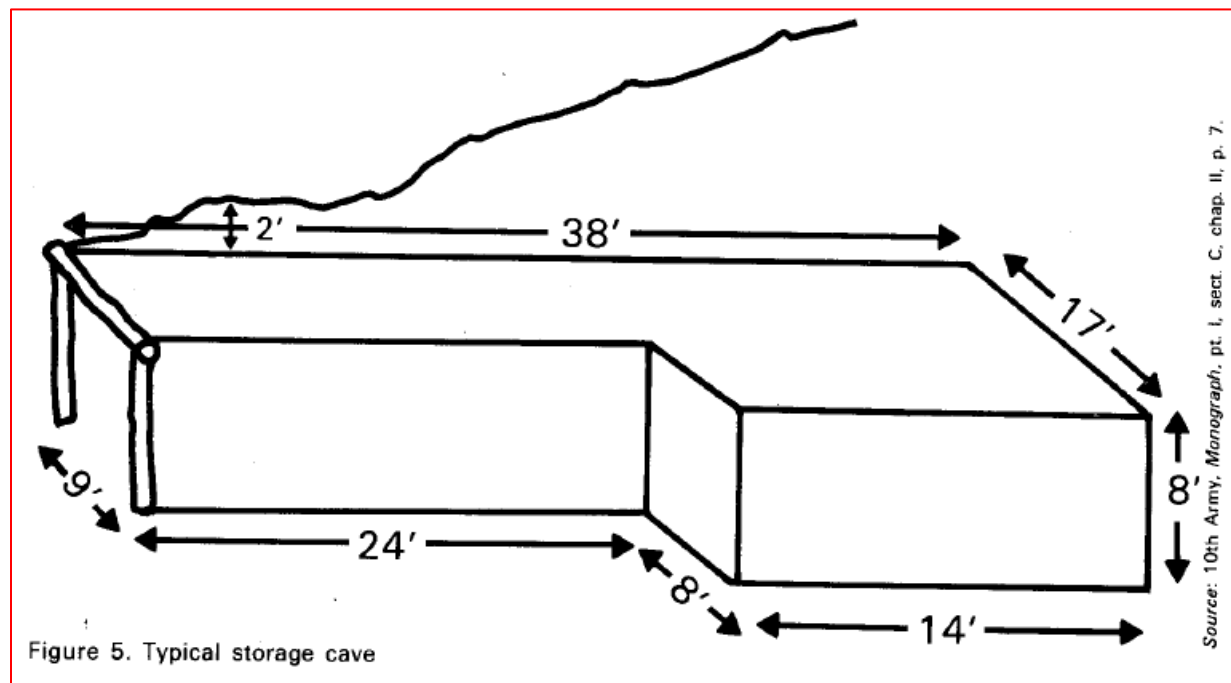
Source: U.S. Army, 10th Army, G-2 Section, Intelligence Monograph, *Ryukyus Campaign* (Okinawa, 1945), pt. II, sect. D, pp. 4-5.

Figure 4. The Shuri command cave

Besides the physical rigors, there were psychological pressures that accompanied cave life. The headquarters cave was a "nightless palace" where electric lights burned day and night, which was disorienting. Since messengers could move only at night,<sup>5</sup> the battle situation could not begin to be pieced together until well after dark. The situation then had to be analyzed, a response determined, and orders drafted. The result was to reverse night and day for the staff, which could not complete its work until just before dawn. Yahara wrote afterwards that he would fall asleep at dawn just as the American bombardment was beginning, with "the feeling he was being dragged to the bottom of hell." The strange life of the caves, even though shielded from battle, took its toll. Even the formidable Cho began mumbling in his sleep, "Mother, it hurts."<sup>6</sup>

#### *Line and Artillery Caves*

Although the 32d Army headquarters tunnel was the most imposing of the caves, there were many other underground structures, enough to house all 100,000 men of 32d Army underground, 60 miles of tunnels in all. These caves were all located at the south end of Okinawa in an area three to twelve miles wide and sixteen miles long: the whole battle area was honeycombed with defensive fortifications. Each unit at company and battalion level was responsible for building its own tunnels. This seemed to guarantee that the job was done thoroughly but also meant that there was considerable variety in the tunnel patterns. It meant further that fire nets were not well integrated for units larger than battalion.<sup>7</sup>



The headquarters caves were the most elaborate. At the other extreme were the supply caves designed to hold ammunition and food. These differed from other tunnels in that they had wide mouths, wide shafts, and large chambers and did not have multiple openings. They were just modest

<sup>5</sup> Communication below battalion level was by messenger. Communication at battalion level and above was by field telephone, but artillery bombardment often cut the telephone lines. Thus communication even at battalion level and above was often by messenger. See 10th Army, Monograph, pt. I, sect. D, chap. IV, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 180.

<sup>7</sup> 10th Army, Monograph, pt. I, sect. A, 5.

underground storage rooms. One example of this type was found by Americans near the north end of the Okinawa isthmus (see figure 5).<sup>8</sup> Somewhat akin to this style was the underground barracks room. This type featured long underground shafts with one or several entrances, a vertical air duct, a chamber fifteen feet by fifteen feet by six feet for dining, and another chamber for sleeping. Like the storerooms, these underground barracks were not fortifications.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the honeycomb of tunnels the Japanese companies and battalions built for themselves, however, were underground fighting positions. Although these forts were made in a great variety of sizes and patterns, the principles they followed were all remarkably the same: they were pill-boxes (see figure 6). The cave pillbox positions were in a sense not underground. Because of the undulating terrain and because the Japanese used only reverse-slope tactics, their technique was to dig horizontal shafts into the hill or ridge opposite the one they intended to cover with fire. Therefore, when they looked out their fire ports, their perspective was one of a person at ground level or above. The caves' entrances were made by extending the cave shaft to the rear of the same hill whose front slope had the fire port. One entered the tunnel from the rear, without descending. These so-called caves might also be described as hilltop fortresses since they offered complete protection while also commanding the terrain.

There was variety in the pillbox patterns due both to how many men were available in an area to labor on a cave (and then dwell in it) and to what terrain features were available. Sometimes a whole round hilltop would be taken over with fire ports pierced out of every side and multiple concealed entrances on the side the enemy was least likely to approach. The air ventilation shaft would be extended vertically.<sup>10</sup>

More often defenders found themselves on a continuous ridge that, unlike the round-topped hills, did not offer the possibility of side shafts, so shafts were cut straight back from the fire position. In the most elementary and most common of these, a shaft four and a half feet high and three and a half feet wide (as opposed to five feet by six feet in the deluxe Shuri headquarters cave) was pushed far back into the hillside, with a vertical entry shaft only if the back side of the hill was too far away. If there was a vertical entry shaft, it would have a simple rope and bamboo ladder, and its mouth would be covered by a wooden lid crafted like part of a traditional camouflage Japanese barrel and camouflaged with sod. The firing room was widened to perhaps five and a half feet, then tapered to the fire port. The port itself might be as small as eight inches wide, with earth splayed outward from that opening to a width of three feet. This made it easy to fire out and hard to fire in. Just inside the port was a dais, a foot or so above the floor, on which was placed a machine gun or other fire weapon.<sup>11</sup> All the construction in such a position consisted of shaped earth, with hand-cut logs to shore up the walls and the external splaying. The few men who manned the position usually lived inside in a slightly widened chamber or side shaft.<sup>12</sup>

While the whole Japanese infantry was installed in pillbox caves, so was its artillery-large guns and small. Although the size of the cave varied according to the size of the gun, the configuration and function of the artillery caves were essentially the same as those of the infantry machine-gun caves. One of the two 150-mm naval guns overlooking Nakagusuku (Buckner) Bay, for example, was set in a concrete-walled room twenty-five feet by fifteen feet, with a reinforced concrete fire port eight feet wide. The gun crew lived in a long shaft behind the firing room. In short the big-gun forts, like the machine-gun forts, were just fire slots with tunnel shelters behind them.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Appleman, *Okinawa*, 250; and 10th Army, *Monograph*, pt. I, sect. C, chap. II, 7, and pt. I, sect. D, chap. III, 23.

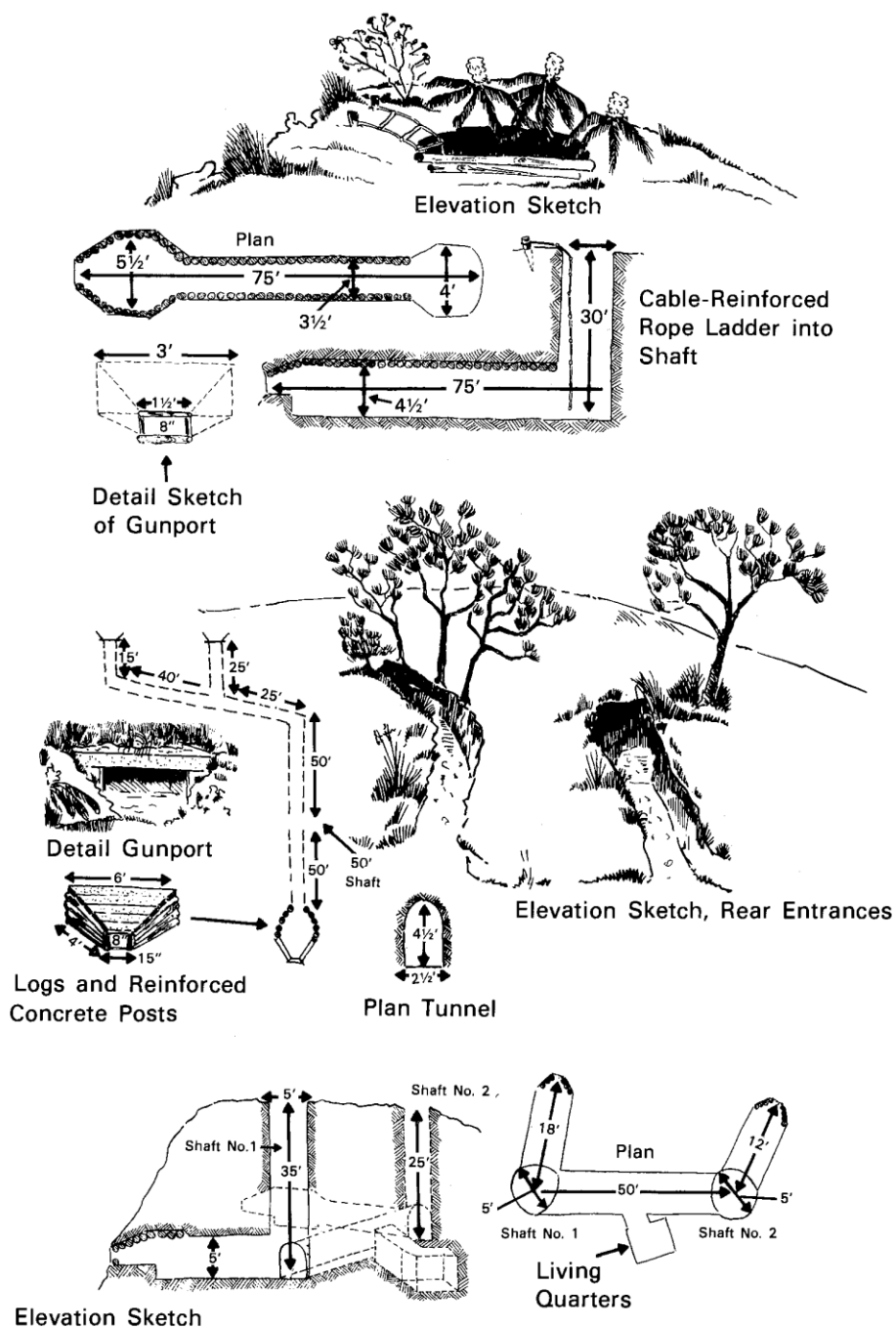
<sup>9</sup> 10th Army, *Monograph*, pt. I, sect. D, chap. III, 24, and pt. II, sect. A, 35.

<sup>10</sup> Inagaki, *Okinawa*, 141.

<sup>11</sup> 10th Army, *Monograph*, pt. II, sect. B, 4-5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> 10th Army, *Monograph*, pt. II, sect. C, 2-3, and pt. I, sect. D, chap I, 8.



Source: 10th Army, *Monograph*, pt. II, sect. B, pp. 4, 6.

Figure 6. Typical pillbox caves



### *Cave War Tactics*

The *32d Army* placed itself where it knew the U.S. Army must come, Okinawa, and it shrewdly chose terrain (1) that was strategically crucial for the Americans to capture for control of Nakagusuku Bay and Naha harbor, yet which also (2) was extremely favorable for the defender. Having identified such terrain, the *32d Army* thoroughly prepared it. Creating the cave environment was itself the *32d Army's* greatest operational success.

The Japanese countertactic to American ground infiltration was to leave more men on the surface during bombardment and to put still more men back on the surface instantly when the bombardment stopped. These troops would attack the few Americans who had seeped through the holes in the line and try, often successfully, to drive them back. The result was fierce small-arms fights between small units of men in isolated valleys not readily visible to either main force. These fights could be fairly equal because the Americans had only the light arms they could carry and could not use artillery because at close quarters they risked destroying their own precarious positions. Whenever the Americans could, however, they had tanks with them, which the Japanese did not. Losses in these all-important small-arms fights were high. The Americans often had to infiltrate men forward several times before they could gain a foothold that was proof against the aggressive Japanese counterattacks.<sup>14</sup>

Rather than attacking, the Japanese limited their efforts to counterattacking and struck only against those advanced enemy elements precariously established on the wrong side of the defense line. While the American attackers were still few and not dug in, a small *IJA* unit had to rush them boldly with small arms and quickly drive them out of their isolated strongpoint before they consolidated.

The fierce Japanese counterattacks were notoriously effective, and in-deed it was here that the *IJA's* orthodox doctrine emphasizing bold and hasty attack served *32d Army* well. The quick death-defying attacks by a platoon or a company, armed only with bolt-action rifles and knee mortars, was something *IJA* training had prepared *32d Army* for well, even though that same training was inappropriate for all the rest of the Okinawa experience.

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Appleman, *Okinawa*, 250-54.

## B. Anti-Cave Tactics

Excerpts from Leavenworth Papers No. 18, Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945, Chapter 3.

The cave positions on Okinawa were a defensive masterpiece, impervious to all fire (except a direct hit on the gun port). This gave the *IJA* soldiers a false sense of security, however, and in the early days of battle, false tactics. Defenders found that despite the caves' strength against fire, they could easily be breached if surrounded by infantry. The caves had a limited field of vision, like tanks, so their occupants did not even know where attackers were.

The Americans' method for reducing the caves, what they called Blow-torch and Corkscrew and the Japanese called "cavalry charge," was to bombard the cave, killing surface infantry or forcing them inside. This alone did not subdue the cave-protected infantry, so the Americans then approached with tanks and infantry teams. These together drove the remaining *IJA* infantry away from the cave entrances. Fire from the tanks' machine guns, main guns, or flamethrowers was used to push *IJA* gunners away from the cave fire ports long enough for U.S. infantry to get past their angles of fire into what the Japanese called the "dead angle." Actually, to increase firepower, the *IJA* often had riflemen fire at angles off the machine gun or cannon in the fire port. They called this "sleeve" tactics. In order to get into the dead spaces, the Americans had to first break through the Japanese infantry defense line. Once they had done that, though, the cave positions were completely helpless. The Japanese called this a "straddle" attack since American riflemen straddled the exits with their fire instead of standing directly in front of the exit openings where *IJA* soldiers could fire on them. The Americans could not fire in from these positions either, but they could shoot any Japanese trying to exit.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the caves were situated under the dome of a hill, with exits on the sides and the rear of the dome, and a fire port facing the front. The Japanese especially dreaded the Americans' advance to the top of the dome. The summit was outside the fire port's fire angle and often covered every exit, so that one American standing there with a machine gun could prevent all egress from the cave, despite its multiple exits. Even if no dome existed, the American infantry would sweep to the far side of the hill where the cave was and cover the rear slope exits so that inmates had no choice but to surrender. Usually the Americans tried to find the air shaft above a cave and throw in a phosphorus grenade, a smoke bomb, or other explosives. Sometimes, they would pump in large amounts of gasoline, which Position they then ignited. These methods either killed the soldiers inside or forced them out. Having done this, the Americans either sealed the cave by blowing up the exits or occasionally entered it to take possession. With this, the caves were considered secure, and the Americans moved forward.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> AGF, "Japanese Defensive Installations," section titled "Japanese Combat Methods on Okinawa," 2; Appleman, Okinawa, 255-56; Inagaki, Okinawa, 188; and 77th ID, "G-2 Periodic Report," 25 May 1945, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; and U.S. Commander in Chief, Pacific, and Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas, "Searching Caves: A Summary of Techniques Developed at Okinawa, CINCPAC-CINCPAC Bulletin No. 189-45" (Guam, August 1945).

## C. Japanese Weapons on Okinawa

Images and information taken from TM-E 30-480: Handbook on Japanese Military Forces, 15 SEP 1944

### *Infantry Weapons*

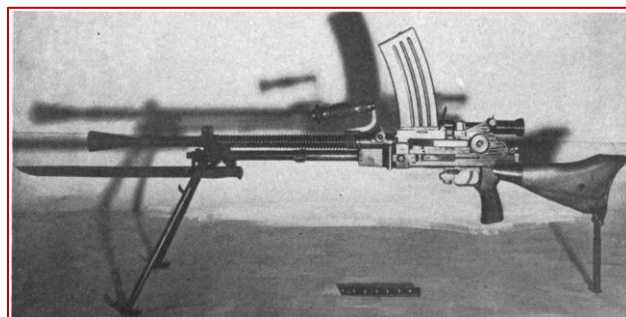
The weapons listed here were found in Japanese infantry regiments and independent infantry battalions according to their respective tables of equipment.

*Model 99 (1939) 7.7mm Rifle.* This is an improved version of the earlier 6.5mm Arisaka rifle that was standard issue for all Japanese infantry. A shorter 38-inch model was issued to service troops. Snipers were issued the same rifle (but with higher-quality manufacturing) and a 2.5X power telescopic sight.



*Model 91 (1931) Hand Grenade.* This fragmentation grenade comes with a propellant charge and was thrown by hand or fired from a rifle grenade adapter and the Model 89 grenade discharger. Older "potato masher" grenades were also in use on Okinawa.

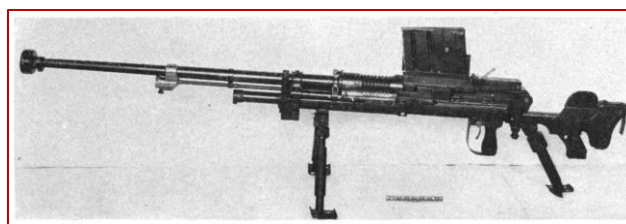
*Model 99 (1939) 7.7mm Light Machine Gun.* Employed similarly to the US Browning Automatic Rifle, it was issued with a 2.5X power telescopic sight. Cyclic rate of fire was 800 rounds per minute. Like the Model 99 rifle, this weapon replaced the earlier 6.5mm light machine gun.



*Model 92 (1932) 7.7mm Heavy Machine Gun.* This weapon was in use from the beginning of the war. Cyclic rate of fire was somewhat slow at 450 rounds per minute, which gave it distinct noise signature. Ammunition was fed in 30 round strips, and it could also use the rimless ammunition from the Model 99 LMG. There are 36 per infantry regiment and 4-8 per independent infantry battalion.



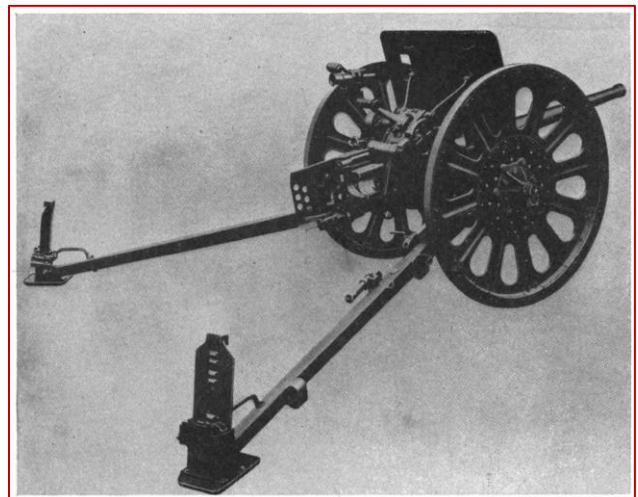
*Model 97 (1937) 20mm Anti-Tank Rifle.* Two men can carry this weapon on any terrain, but this shoulder-fired weapon has a violent recoil and short effective range. Its 16.5" silhouette makes it incredibly easy to conceal. Rate of fire is 12 rounds per minute. Not found in the infantry regiments, there are usually 8 in independent infantry battalions.



*Model 89 (1929) 50mm Grenade Discharger.* Erroneously referred to by the US as a “knee mortar”, this grenade discharger is found in every Japanese infantry company. It could launch the Model 91 Hand Grenade to a range of 170 meters or fired its standard ammunition to a range of 670 meters.



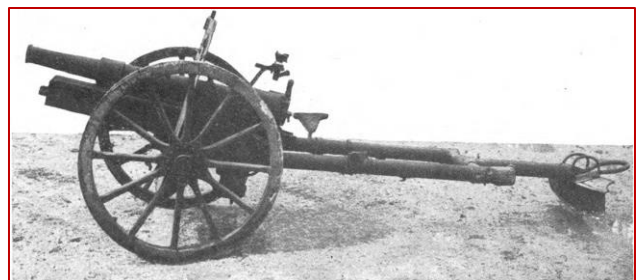
*Model 94 (1934) 37mm Gun.* Most often employed as an anti-tank weapon, it was designed as a general support weapon firing a wide range of ammunition types. There are 6 of these in regimental anti-tank companies, though late-war reorganization sometimes assigns 2 in a regimental gun company in place of two 75mm guns. Up to 4 are found in some independent infantry battalions.



*Model 92 (1932) 70mm Howitzer.* A small weapon known as the “infantry battalion gun”, it was an effective infantry support weapon with a 110-3000-yard range. Small, lightweight, and easy to conceal. There are 2-4 of these weapons in an independent infantry battalion’s gun company.

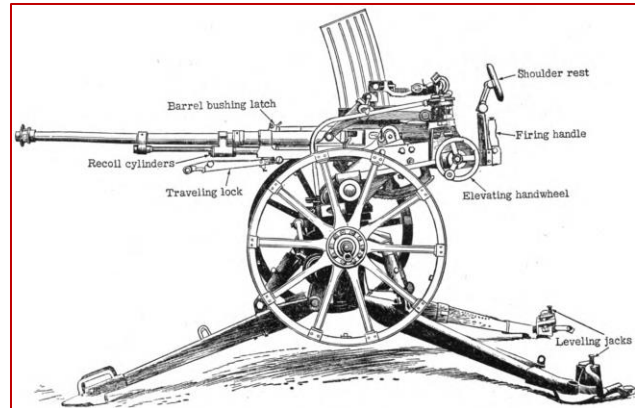


*Model 41 (1908) 75mm Gun.* Known as the “regimental infantry gun”. Originally a pack artillery weapon, it was introduced into Japanese infantry formations around 1934. Easily disassembled and transported in six 200-lb loads. Maximum effective range is 7800 yards. There are 4 of these weapons in regimental infantry gun companies

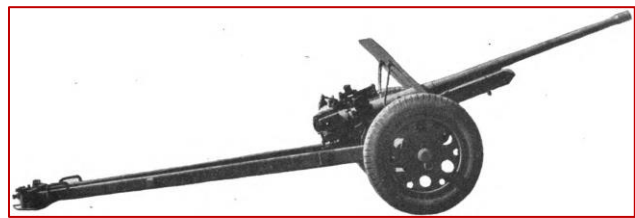


### *Anti-Tank and Dual-Purpose Weapons*

Model 98 (1938) 20mm Anti-Aircraft/Anti-Tank Automatic Cannon. A semi- or full-automatic weapon similar, but heavier than the Model 97 anti-tank rifle. The carriage permits firing from the wheels, but the outriggers facilitate a rapid 360° traverse. Rate of fire is 120 rounds per minute. Maximum horizontal range was 5450 yards, and maximum vertical range was 12,000 feet.



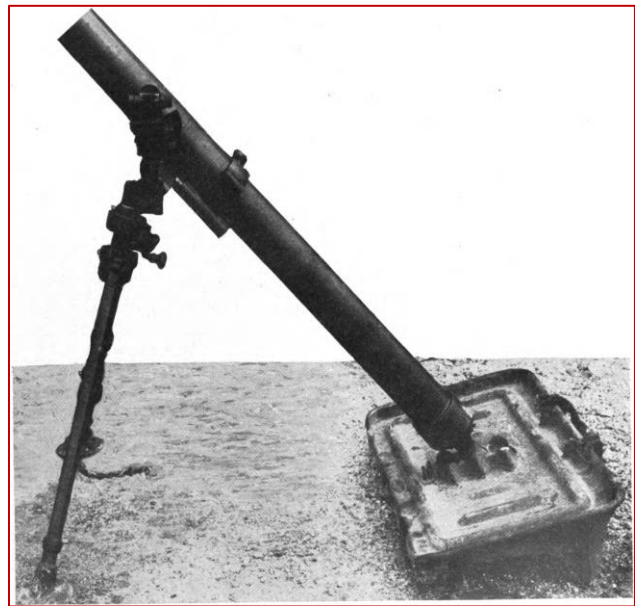
Model 1 (1941) 47mm Gun. Principle weapon of anti-tank battalions and companies, but the older 37mm gun may still have been in use. In 1944, US intelligence knew little about this weapon other than muzzle velocity and ammunition types. There are 18 in an anti-tank battalion and 6 in an independent anti-tank company.



### *Mortars and Artillery*

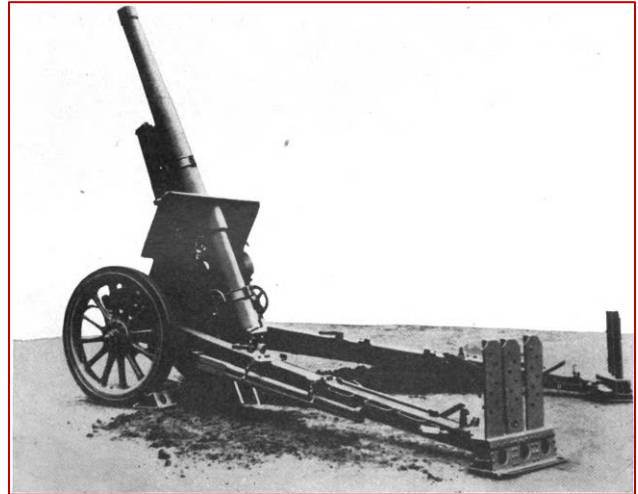
The 5th Artillery Command, the first centralized fires organization in the Japanese military, consisted of mortar battalions and artillery regiments and battalions. Their principle weapons are described below.

*Model 97 (1937) 81mm Mortar.* Principle weapon of light mortar battalions in the 5th Artillery Command. Remarkably like the US M1 81mm mortar and could fire the American ammunition. Maximum range was 3100 yards. HE, smoke, and chemical munitions are used with point detonating or delay fuzes. Independent mortar battalions fielded 36 of these mortars.

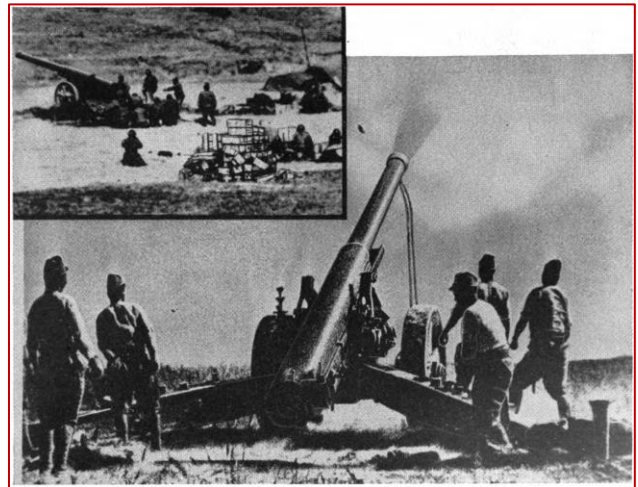




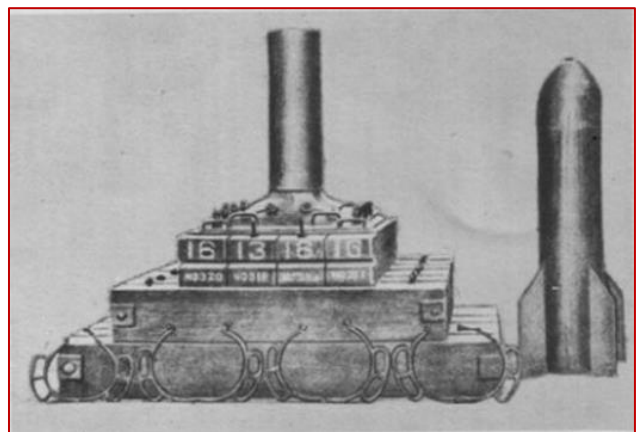
*Model 96 (1936) 150mm Howitzer.* The most prevalent piece in 5th Artillery Command. Capable of high angle fire, but only if a pit is excavated beneath the breech as shown in the image. Maximum range was estimated between 11,000 and 15,000 yards; rate of fire was 6-8 rounds per minute.



*Model 89 (1929) 150mm Gun.* An older weapon found in heavy artillery units. It was used specifically for long-range fires estimated at 22,000-27,000 yards. Rate of fire was only 1-2 rounds per minute.



*Model 98 (1938) 320mm Mortar.* First encountered on Iwo Jima and employed extensively on Okinawa. Largely immobile and impractical, the range was adjusted for its 660lb fin-stabilized projectile by adding or subtracting propellant increments. Launch tubes were only good for five or six shots before they became unusable. Poor fragmentation caused fewer injuries than its concussive detonation, which produced craters 15 feet wide and 8 feet deep. Projectiles were slow enough and large enough to be visible through their entire trajectory.





## *Tanks*

**Model 95 (1935) Light Tank.** Equipped with a 37mm gun with 130 rounds, and two 7.7mm machine guns with 2970 rounds. Three-man crew protected by 6-12mm of armor.

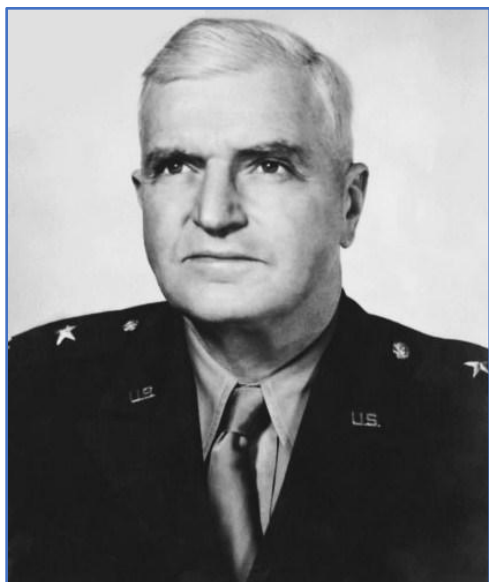


**Model 97 (1937) Medium Tank.** Equipped with a 57mm gun with 80 rounds, and two 7.7mm machine guns with 3700 rounds. Four-man crew protected by 8-25mm of armor.



## D. US Key Leaders

### *Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr.*



Buckner was the son of Confederate General Simon S. Buckner Sr., who is remembered in history as the officer to whom U.S. Grant issued his first famous "unconditional surrender" demand. Like George C. Marshall, Buckner was a graduate of Virginia Military Institute, but had attended West Point, receiving his commission in 1908. He saw service in the Philippines and on the Mexican border.

Buckner spent most of World War I as a flight instructor, though he was not a member of the Army Air Corps in 1941. He also twice served as a professor of tactics at West Point, where he acquired a reputation for being hard on the cadets. Buckner claims he confiscated aftershave from cadets with the aphorism, "If you're going to be a man, you've got to smell like a man."

In July of 1940, Buckner became the commander of the Alaska Defense Command, a post to which he had personally been assigned by Marshall while still a "very senior" colonel. Concerned with the almost nonexistent defenses of the territory, Buckner worked diligently with very limited resources to build air bases and train 4th Regiment, the only combat infantry unit in the theater. When war broke out, he had just a handful of obsolescent bombers and fighters under his command, but he had functioning air bases at Fairbanks and Anchorage, and work was well under way on airfields at Cold Bay and Umnak.

Following the Japanese raid on Dutch Harbor and seizure of Attu and Kiska, Buckner's command suddenly became more important. He oversaw the landings on Amchitka and Adak, which were unopposed except by the weather, and the assaults that recovered Attu and Kiska and poised his forces to attack Japan from the north in the event the Russians joined the war.

Perret describes him as "a scholar and a staff officer, yet he had the physique of a fullback and voice that threatened glass." He was also an avid hunter. He was known for his quick and acid wit.

Buckner later commanded 10 Army on Okinawa in what some of his Army and Marine subordinates criticized as an unimaginative campaign. Nimitz had overruled Spruance and Turner, who wanted Holland Smith to lead the invasion, because Smith's decision to relieve the commander of 27 Division on Saipan had made him highly unpopular with the Army. Oliver Smith, assistant commander of 1 Marine Division, was particularly critical of Buckner's lack of combat experience and use of artillery. Both Stilwell and MacArthur were critical of Buckner, and it is likely MacArthur would have tried to replace him as commander of 10 Army had he survived the battle of Okinawa.

Buckner was killed by artillery fire while observing the final operations of that battle, becoming the second-highest-ranking American officer killed in the line of duty during World War II (and the highest-ranking in the Pacific.)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Budge, Kent G. "Buckner, Simon Bolivar, Jr. (1886-1945)", The Pacific War Online Encyclopedia, [http://pwencycl.kgbudge.com/B/u/Buckner\\_Simon\\_Bolivar\\_Jr.htm](http://pwencycl.kgbudge.com/B/u/Buckner_Simon_Bolivar_Jr.htm) (accessed 19 JUN 2020).

*Lieutenant General John R. Hodge*



Hodge was born in Illinois and attended the Southern Illinois Teachers College and the University of Illinois. In 1917 he entered a reserve officer training program at Fort Sheridan, receiving his commission in 1917 and serving in France and Luxembourg during the First World War. Remaining in the Army following the end of the war, he taught military science at Mississippi State University from 1921-1925 and graduated from the Infantry School in 1926. After a posting to Hawaii, he graduated from the Command and General Staff School, the Army War College, and the Air Corps Tactical School.

Hodge was part of the staff of VII Corps when war broke out. Immediately thereafter he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and made chief of staff of VII Corps. In June 1942 he was promoted to brigadier general and made deputy commander of 25th Division, and he fought with his division at Guadalcanal. In April 1943 he was promoted to major general and command of Americal Division. When the offensive on New Georgia bogged down, he was briefly sent in to relieve the exhausted Hester as commander of 43d Division. Harmon described him at this time as the "best Div Comdr I have in area for this particular job" (Miller 1959). Hodge commanded Americal Division at Bougainville, then (in April 1944) took command of XXIV Corps. His unit went ashore at Leyte on 20 October 1944 and fought at Okinawa in April-June 1945. He was appointed lieutenant general at the end of the Okinawa campaign.

Postwar, Hodge commanded U.S. forces in Korea. He was named commander of V Corps in November 1948, 3 Army in June 1950, and Army Field Forces in 1952. In July of that year he was promoted to full general. He retired in 1953.

Hodge was a tough soldier, a strict disciplinarian, and an excellent trainer of troops. However, he lacked diplomatic skills and was unprepared for the nonmilitary aspects of commanding the occupation forces in postwar Korea.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Budge, Kent G. "Hodge, John Reed (1893-1963)", The Pacific War Online Encyclopedia, [http://pwencycl.kgbudge.com/H/o/Hodge\\_John\\_R.htm](http://pwencycl.kgbudge.com/H/o/Hodge_John_R.htm) (accessed 19 JUN 2020).

*Major General Archibald V. Arnold, Commanding General, 7th Infantry Division*



Arnold was born in Connecticut, and was an All-American football player at West Point. Commissioned an infantry officer, he may have later changed to field artillery because many of his future assignments were in artillery units. They include the Director of Gunnery at the Field Artillery School and commander of the 17th Field Artillery Regiment.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Arnold was a Colonel in the Regular Army and commander of the 69th Field Artillery Brigade, soon thereafter reorganized and redesignated 44th Infantry Division Artillery (DIVARTY). In early 1943 he was transferred to command 7th DIVARTY but was designated Assistant Commander, Landing Force 51 for the 7th in the Aleutians Campaign. For three months after the invasion he was CG for Island Command Attu before returning to his duties as DIVARTY commander.

He still held that position in the Marshall Islands Campaign of 1943-44, but was named to command 7th Infantry Division in the Philippines and Okinawa with the temporary rank of Major General.

After the war he was formally promoted to Brigadier General in 1946 and served in various capacities on the Korean peninsula. His last assignment was Chief of Plans Section, Army Field Forces. Arnold was formally promoted to Major General in 1948 just a few months before his retirement. He died in 1973.<sup>3</sup>

*Major General George W. Griner, Jr., Commanding General, 27th Infantry Division*



In 1942 Griner was a Colonel assigned first to the War Department General Staff, and then transferred to the European Theater where he served in the same capacity for about a year. Temporary promotion to Brigadier General followed and half a year's time as Assistant Division Commander for the 77th Infantry Division under Major General Bruce.

Temporary promotion to Major General followed. Griner commanded the 13th Airborne Division while it was organizing in the United States before being transferred to command of the 98th Infantry Division (earmarked for the Pacific theater). In mid-1944 he was given command of the 27th Infantry Division near the end of fighting on Saipan.<sup>4</sup>

Griner inherited command of an army division with a dubious reputation. Senior Marine Corps leaders had been critical of its performance in two previous battles. Ultimately,

<sup>3</sup> Ammentorp, Steen "Arnold, Archibald Vincent", Generals.dk, [http://www.generals.dk/general/Arnold/Archibald\\_Vincent/USA.html](http://www.generals.dk/general/Arnold/Archibald_Vincent/USA.html) (accessed 22 JUN 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Ammentorp, Steen "Griner, George Wesley Jr.", Generals.dk, [http://www.generals.dk/general/Griner/George\\_Wesley\\_Jr./USA.html](http://www.generals.dk/general/Griner/George_Wesley_Jr./USA.html) (accessed 22 JUN 2020).

the V Amphibious Corps Commander, a Marine, relieved the 27th's commanding general and sparked a heated debate over authority to relieve sister-service commanders in joint operations. It is ironic, then, that the 27th was removed after only about one month of front-line combat on Okinawa before it was replaced in the line by the 1st Marine Division.

After the war, Griner reverted back to his permanent rank of Colonel and retired. He died in 1975 and was buried in Mobile, Alabama.

*Major General Andrew D. Bruce, Commanding General, 77th Infantry Division*



Bruce was born in Missouri, and graduated with a Doctorate of Laws from Texas A&M in 1916. He served in France during World War I with the 2d Infantry Division during Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne, earning a Distinguished Service Cross and temporary promotion to lieutenant colonel.

Between the wars his background as an academic garnered assignments as a Professor of Military Science, historical work at the Army War College, and revising doctrine manuals for the War Department. He attended both the US Army War College and the Naval War College as both a student and a professor.

When the US entered World War II, he was promoted to Brigadier General and organized the Tank Destroyer Center at what later became Fort Hood. Later that same year he was promoted to Major General and assumed command of the 77th Infantry Division in 1943. He remained with the 77th for the rest of the war and its battles on Guam, Leyte, and Okinawa.

After the war he was Military Governor of Hokkaido and briefly commanded the 7th Infantry Division in Korea before returning to the US in 1947. As Deputy Commander of Fourth Army he oversaw training activities of ROTC, National Guard, and Army Reserve units. He became Commandant of the Armed Forces Service College in 1951 and was promoted to lieutenant general. He retired in 1954.

General Hodge was suspicious of Bruce's personal ambitions, but General Buckner admired his abilities, saying "I much prefer a bird dog that you have to whistle in to one that you have to urge out. He is of the former variety".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Budge, Kent G. "Bruce, Andrew Davis (1894-1969)", The Pacific War Online Encyclopedia, [http://pwencycl.kgbudge.com/B/r/Bruce\\_Andrew\\_D.htm](http://pwencycl.kgbudge.com/B/r/Bruce_Andrew_D.htm) (accessed 22 JUN 2020).

*Major General James L. Bradley, Commanding General, 96th Infantry Division*



James L. Bradley was born in Doniphan, Missouri and graduated from West Point in 1914. But, like his classmate and friend Dwight D. Eisenhower, he spent World War I in stateside training assignments. Between the wars he advanced in rank and attended the Command and General Staff School, Army War College, and later instructed at the former. He was a Colonel in 1940 and Chief of Staff, Fourth Army.

He was a brigadier general when World War II began, was soon promoted to major general and named to command the 96th Infantry Division in late 1942. Bradley commanded it through the entire war, starting with raw recruits in Oregon and ending with orders to land on mainland Japan.

Bradley retired in 1947 to California, but drowned in his daughter's swimming pool after suffering a massive heart attack in 1957.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Major General James Lester Bradley", Remember the Deadeyes, <http://www.rememberthedeadeyes.com/GeneralBradley.html> (accessed 22 JUN 2020).



## E. Japanese Key Leaders

### *Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima, Commander, 32d Army*

Excerpt from Leavenworth Papers No. 18, Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945, Chapter 1.



The 32d Army commander was Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima, who was appointed on 8 August 1944 and arrived at his post two days later.<sup>1</sup> By a routine command rotation, he replaced Lieutenant General Army Masao Watanabe, who had been commander since 32d Army's inception on 22 March 1944. Ushijima graduated from the Japanese Military Academy (JMA) at Zama in 1908, was a former vice minister in the Ministry of the Army, and had been an infantry commander in Burma early in the war. In 1944 he was serving as commandant of the Japanese Military Academy. He was a quiet commander who ordinarily approved whatever policy his staff presented to him. His chosen role was to provide moral support to subordinates and if need be to help them reach agreement and resolve differences. In sum he was a transcendent leader in the mainstream of the Japanese tradition. He would not become embroiled in the disputes that divided the 32d Army Staff but would at times help to mend them.<sup>2</sup>

Born 31 JUL 1887 in Kagoshima Prefecture; committed ritual suicide under Hill 89 on Okinawa 22 JUN 1945.

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<sup>1</sup> OHRS, Enclosed chart 1.

<sup>2</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 94; OHRS, 635; and James Belote and William Belote, *Typhoon of Steel: The Battle for Okinawa* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 18.

*Lieutenant General Isamu Cho, Chief of Staff, 32d Army*

Excerpt from Leavenworth Papers No. 18, Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945, Chapter 1.



The man with overall responsibility for 32d Army's day-to-day operations was its chief of staff, Lieutenant General Isamu Cho (JMA, 1916). Cho had had an extraordinary career. As a captain in 1930, he had belonged to the right-wing extremist Cherry Society. He was involved in several attempted military coups d'état, including one in October 1931 in which he agreed to become chief of the Tokyo police if the coup succeeded. For his involvement in this episode, he was sent to Manchuria, and later in 1938, he took part in the clash with Soviet forces at Lake Khasan, near the northeast Korean border, and did some of the negotiating with the Russians. He won fame throughout the IJA by dozing on a hillside with great snores in plain view of the Soviet enemy.

In early 1944 Cho was brought from the general headquarters of the Kwantung Army to Tokyo to participate in the projected recapture of Saipan. When IGHQ abandoned that idea on 27 June, it sent him to Okinawa on 1 July to analyze the strategic situation. . . Cho was appointed chief of staff of the 32d Army on 8

July 1944.<sup>3</sup>

Cho drank generously and when intoxicated would perform a dance with his samurai sword. He liked having fine cuisine and good scotch in his headquarters. He was enthusiastic and communicated that enthusiasm to those around him. He harbored strong resentments against those who crossed him, but only briefly. In short he was a man of strong feeling and aggressive personality who believed infinitely in his cause and in the capabilities of the IJA. He also tended to base strategic judgments on his enthusiasms rather than on a cool appreciation of reality.<sup>4</sup>

Born 19 JAN 1895 in Fukuoka Prefecture; committed ritual suicide under Hill 89 on Okinawa 22 JUN 1945.

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<sup>3</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 91; Belote, Typhoon, 18; and OHRS, 52, 635, and Enclosed chart 1.

<sup>4</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 91-92; Belote, Typhoon, 18; and OHRS, 52, 635, and Enclosed chart 1.

*Colonel Hiromichi Yahara, Operations Officer, 32d Army*

Excerpt from Leavenworth Papers No. 18, Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945, Chapter 1.



Yahara had been with the 32d Army since its inception on 22 March 1944 and prior to that had attended the Japanese War College; served ten months at Fort Moultrie in the United States; served as a staff officer in China, Malaya, and Burma; and taught at the JMA. By personality and inclination he was the opposite of Cho. He was seen by colleagues as introspective and aloof but good at his business, which was crafting operations. For him war was a science whose practice demanded cool rationality. When Cho was made Yahara's superior on 8 July, there was some soul-searching among the IGHQ staff as to whether that was a good idea, but the staff at last decided it was.<sup>5</sup>

Born 12 OCT 1902 in Tottori Prefecture; ordered not to commit ritual suicide by LTG Ushijima; evaded capture by the US until 15 JUL 1945. After the war, he farmed and worked as a textile salesman. Later in life he wrote a first-hand account of the Battle of Okinawa, later translated into English and published in the US by

his former interrogator. Died 7 MAY 1981 in Yonago, Japan.

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<sup>5</sup> Inagaki, Okinawa, 92.

Less is known or published about other key Japanese leaders on Okinawa other than official records detailing their careers.

*Lieutenant General Takeo Fujioka, Commander, 62d Division*



Promoted Colonel in 1938, he commanded the 7th Regiment and later the Kanazawa Regimental District in 1941. Promoted to Major General in the same year. In 1942 he was the Chief, Military Affairs Sections, Taiwan Army. He was named to command the 9th Independent Mixed Brigade in 1944. Took command of the 62d Division 1 March 1945, just one month before the invasion of Okinawa.<sup>6</sup> Not a war college graduate, Fujioka owed his promotion to field commands and was, in Yahara's opinion, "quiet and conservative", the "embodiment of the samurai type."<sup>7</sup>

Born 3 MAR 1891, Committed ritual suicide on Okinawa 22 JUN 1945.

*Lieutenant General Tatsumi Amamiya, Commander, 24th Division*



In 1937 he was assigned to the War Ministry, later transferred the same year to become Chief, Planning Section, Information Bureau, IGHQ. A year later he was posted to China as Chief, Section 2, North China Area Army. He returned to the War Ministry the following year. In 1941 he was Head of the Tientsin Special Ministry. Promoted to Major General in 1943, he commanded the 9th Independent Mixed Brigade prior to LTG Fujioka's tenure over the same unit. Promoted to Lieutenant General and assigned command of the 24th Division in February 1944.<sup>8</sup> "Hard working and competent," noted Yahara, "he was regarded as an excellent leader." He shared Fujioka's conservative outlook, but was "more inclined to exert his personal authority."<sup>9</sup>

Born 15 DEC 1892; reportedly killed in action on Okinawa 30 JUN 1945 (eight days after declared Okinawa secured).

<sup>6</sup> Budge, Kent G. "Fujioka Takeo (1891-1945)", The Pacific War Online Encyclopedia, [http://pwencycl.kgbudge.com/F/u/Fujioka\\_Takeo.htm](http://pwencycl.kgbudge.com/F/u/Fujioka_Takeo.htm) (accessed 19 JUN 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Saul David, *Crucible of Hell: The Heroism and Tragedy of Okinawa, 1945*, Hachette Books 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Budge, "Amamiya Tatsumi (1892-1945)", The Pacific War Online Encyclopedia, [http://pwencycl.kgbudge.com/A/m/Amamiya\\_Tatsumi.htm](http://pwencycl.kgbudge.com/A/m/Amamiya_Tatsumi.htm) (accessed 19 JUN 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Saul David, *Crucible of Hell: The Heroism and Tragedy of Okinawa, 1945*, Hachette Books 2020.