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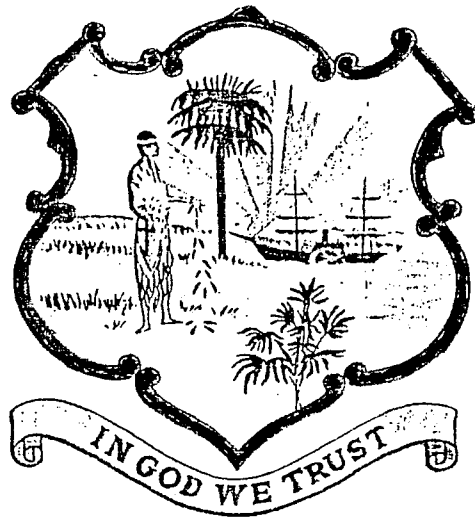
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# Florida Department of Military Affairs



## Special Archives Publication Number

45

124TH INFANTRY REGIMENT  
DRINIUMOR RIVER CAMPAIGN  
LOGAN NARRATIVE

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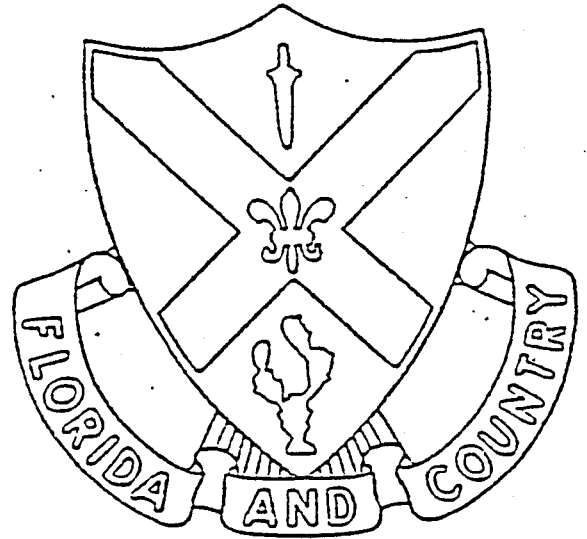
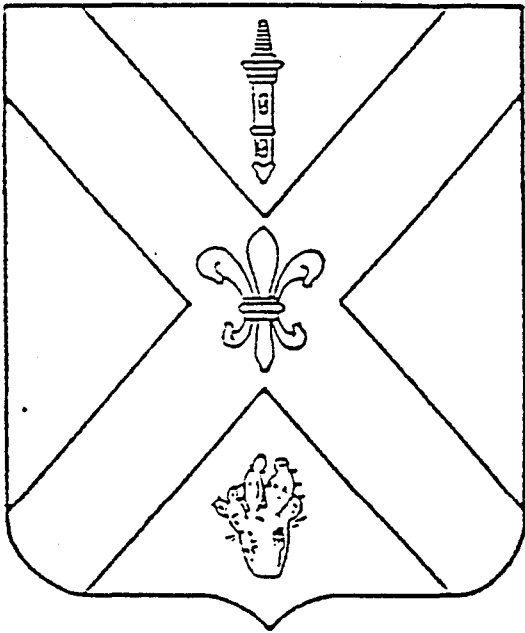
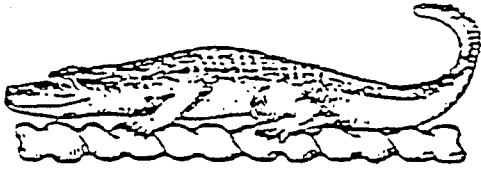
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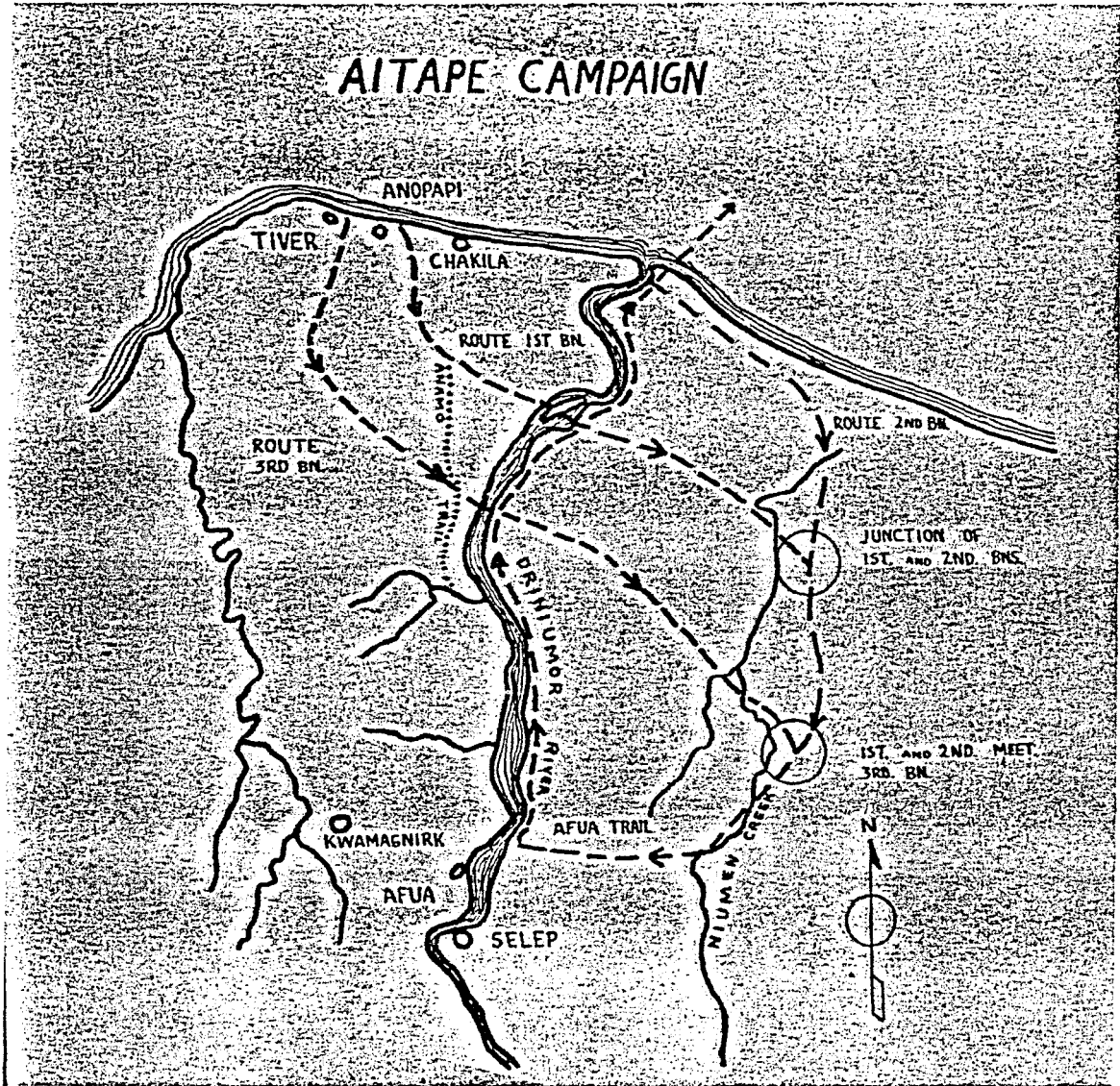
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Robert Hawk  
Director

# 124th INFANTRY



THE 124TH INFANTRY REGIMENT  
FLORIDA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



Map of the Aitape, New Guinea, campaign.

### **3RD BATTALION, 124TH INFANTRY REGIMENT**

31st Infantry Division, General Order Number 156  
20 September 1945

The 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action near Aitape, British New Guinea, during the period 12 July 1944 to 7 August 1944. On 12 July 1944, the 3rd Battalion, after a forced march of 12 miles, routed an enemy-held position east of the X-Ray River to secure a line of departure, to launch a counterattack to restore the line of the Driniumor River, which had been penetrated by a determined fanatical enemy force the previous day. The 3rd Battalion, with an exposed right flank, led the attack and by strong aggressive action reached its objective late in the afternoon of 13 July 1944. This battalion was subjected to intense automatic and small arms fire from three exposed flanks throughout the night, as other elements of the combat team had been delayed by a strong enemy force and could not close in on the objective. On 14 July 1944, the 3rd Battalion in an advance to close the left flank of the unit on their right, met sudden intensified enemy resistance from all directions. The 3rd Battalion fighting with sheer determination under the most adverse circumstances finally overpowered the enemy killing 168 enemy and severed and strongly secured the enemy's main supply route. This feat was accomplished so swiftly that an enemy supply train continued to advance down the trail directly into the strongest sector of the 3rd Battalion's perimeter, resulting in 131 enemy dead littering the trail and river bed. Shortly before daybreak on 16 July the 3rd Battalion was attacked by a well organized enemy force from the rear followed by a similar attack supported by mortar fire on the right flank by an enemy force occupying positions previously prepared by friendly troops. The opposition in that direction was quickly neutralized and one company of the Battalion counterattacked to the right and drove the enemy from their position where 416 enemy were killed. Early on the morning of 21 July 1944, the enemy launched a vicious coordinated attack on the front and rear defense of the 3rd Battalion. There followed the most fanatical fighting up to this time as the enemy attacked the well defended positions of the battalion time and time again, only to be repulsed by a superior force. On 31 July 1944, the entire regi-

ment, reinforced by an infantry battalion, launched a counter-attack, to the east toward Niumen Creek, to relieve the pressure on the extreme southern flank and to secure a position from which the enemy could be enveloped and cut off. The 3rd Battalion on the extreme right flank of three battalions abreast with the reinforcing battalion following reached its objective early in the afternoon of 1 August 1944. Turning south the 3rd Battalion encountered well prepared positions and the advance was halted due to the bitter opposition. Following the engagement 99 enemy dead were counted. The advance to the south continued through dense jungle, rough and swampy terrain, with the 3rd Battalion reaching the Afua Trail far in advance of the battalion on its right. On 5 August 1944, while attacking south on Niumen Creek, the 3rd Battalion contacted strong dug-in positions, but by aggressive action digging the enemy from caves and spider fox-holes in solid rock, continued to advance until 1500. Heavy mortar fire was received during the night and the enemy launched a vigorous counterattack which was quickly repulsed by the 3rd Battalion. Immediately afterwards, the 3rd Battalion launched an attack fixing the enemy in position, while another battalion flanked to the enemy's left; then a vicious coordinated attack was launched, destroying and routing an estimated reinforced battalion, accounting for 425 enemy dead. As a result of the strenuous action on 5 and 6 August the whole enemy force was practically annihilated and the disorganized remnants of the force trapped. The 3rd Battalion was in constant contact with the desperate enemy force during the period of 13 July to 7 August 1944. The aggressive action of the 3rd Battalion, relentlessly driving the enemy through mud, swamps, dense jungle growth and over rough mountainous terrain during heavy prevailing rains, never allowing the enemy to consolidate and reorganize, played a major role in the liberation of Aitape and established another "stepping stone" for Allied armies to advance to the other strategic islands to the north. During this period the 3rd Battalion accounted for approximately 1300 enemy dead. The conspicuous gallantry and the outstanding performance of duty from 13 July to 7 August 1944 by all personnel of the 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, reflects great credit upon themselves and the Battalion and upholds the highest traditions of the service.

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
GENERAL SECTION  
MILITARY HISTORY COMMITTEE  
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

ADVANCED OFFICERS COURSE  
1946-1947

THE ENVELOPING MANEUVER OF THE 124TH INFANTRY REGIMENT  
EAST OF THE DRINUMOR RIVER, AITAPE, NEW GUINEA  
31 JULY-10 AUGUST 1944  
(Personal experience of a Regimental S-2)

Type of operation described: REGIMENT IN THE ATTACK

Major Edward O. Logan, Infantry

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

This monograph was written from the personal knowledge of the writer. Little written references were available pertaining to the operation described. The writer, by virtue of being on duty with Sixth Army Hq., prior to the operation and assigned to the Headquarters after the action, had access to the background leading up to the operation and the after battle reports.

The sources used, mainly for verification only, were:

1. GHQ Daily Summary #871, dated 9/10 August, 1944.
2. Unit Journal, Third Battalion, 124th Infantry, 30 July-10 August, 1944.
3. History, 31st Infantry Division, Pages 45, 46, 47.
4. Conversation in December, 1946, with Lt. Col. George Dent Williams, Commanding Officer, Third Battalion, 124th Infantry.

THE ENVELOPING MANEUVER OF THE 124TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, EAST OF  
THE DRINUMOR RIVER, ATTAPE, NEW GUINEA, 1-10 AUGUST 1944  
(Personal experience of a Regimental S-2)

An extract from GHQ, (General Douglas MacArthur's Headquarters) Daily Summary #871, dated 9/10 August 1944, reads as follows: "The 124th Infantry's counter envelopment which by rapid expansion of its front driving east to AFUA . . . . . is possibly unparalleled in the history of military maneuver over this type of terrain."

In the following pages this attack will be described in detail, with appropriate maps to assist in understanding the maneuver. The attack will be described from a Regimental level; however, since the writer has personal knowledge of the 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry, which saw the most action, more mention will be made of this unit.

The writer was on temporary duty with the G-2 Section of Sixth Army for approximately two months prior to the Regiment's attack and rejoined the Regiment at ATTAPE for the operation. By virtue of duty with the Army staff, personal knowledge of the situation through the medium of reports, leading up to the operation was available.

This was August, 1944, and the Allies all over the world were on the move, meeting with success. In Western Europe, the U. S. First Army in the latter part of July had broken through the ST. LO defenses, and had followed the "Breakthrough" of the U. S. Third Army to the SEINE River. In the PACIFIC, as the Japs surveyed their farflung battlefield, nowhere could she claim even a small success. In the northern PACIFIC Islands, Marines and Army Troops were methodically picking off the outer ring of the ill-gotten Jap empire. In the southwest PACIFIC area a series of thrusts by our forces had gained control of the Bismarck Archipelago in

landings on NEW BRITAIN and the ADMIRALTIES; and in NEW GUINEA, the geographical setting of this monograph, the southern portions of the islands had been seized; climaxed by a bold double landing at AITAPE and HOLLANDIA.

A capitulation of the Japanese situation in southern NEW GUINEA follows.

#### GENERAL SITUATION (MAP A)

From the time of the Jap's defeat at BUNA they had been on the run, to the rear. They were slowly withdrawing, under pressure, toward their strongholds at WEWAK and MADANG. The Japs that reached the point just north of PORT MORESBY and survived the BUNA campaign, were still moving to the rear as late as January, 1944. They had been defeated at SALAMAUA, at LAE, at FINSCHHAFEN, on NEW BRITAIN, the ADMIRALTIES, and the last blow dealt in NEW GUINEA, was at SAIDOR. All of the NEW GUINEA landings by Allied Forces had been made to secure ports, airfields and other types of installations whereby future operations against the Jap could be staged and supported. The last landing at SAIDOR had cut off approximately 4,000 Japs to the south and had forced them to use an inland trail along the MARKHAM River Valley to reach friendly forces; a great number of these forces died on the trail from starvation.

In late January, plans were being completed for a landing at AITAPE and HOLLANDIA in April. This was a bold plan made with the idea of hitting the Japs at their weakest point and forcing them to use the jungle area as a route to reach our troops and, also, to cut off supplies reaching WEWAK and other enemy areas via the sea routes.

At this time the Japanese forces were under command of the Eighteenth Jap Army, with headquarters at WEWAK, consisting of the 20th, 41st, 51st Infantry Divisions and their artillery, plus a large number of naval troops, marines and supply personnel. This force was roughly estimated at between 50,000 and 60,000; GHQ estimates were 51,000 and Sixth Army estimates were 60,000 to 65,000.

The Japanese had the bulk of this force disposed around the MADANG - WEWAK area in early 1944. They were reinforcing this area under the assumption that our next landing would be made at WEWAK, if we followed our previous leap-frogging tactics. To assist the Japs in this assumption, the Allies did as much deception work as possible in the WEWAK area, even to the point of landing rubber boats fully equipped on the shore to simulate a scout landing. Another large Japanese force was at HOLLANDIA and AITAPE was used as a small staging area between WEWAK and HOLLANDIA for the movements of reinforcements, it being about 100 miles each way.

At AITAPE proper there were only a few air base personnel servicing the TADJI airdrome; however, prior to D-Day, GHQ estimates suggested an infantry regiment disposed in this area.

A study of the potentials of this Jap force is interesting. Supplies in the WEWAK area were sufficient to last for an indefinite period-- arms and ammunition were plentiful--food was augmented by local native farming--resupplies were few and far between. Land transportation for this force was virtually nil. A few large cargo ships succeeded in unloading at coastal points but the preponderance of supplies was infiltrated in by barges hugging the coastline and moving at night. Even these were sometime

caught by our roving PT boats. The bulk of this Japanese force was in good physical condition, experienced in combat and still imbued with the idea that they would shortly be in AUSTRALIA. This latter idea was the direct result of the Japanese leaders who constantly deceived the soldiers as to what the plans were and never permitting them to know of any reverses suffered by the Japanese forces. Jap diaries captured as late as June, 1944 had notations of the expected arrival in AUSTRALIA of their soldiers.

This was the situation prior to our landing at AITAPE.

On 22 April, a Task Force of approximately 11,000 men consisting of the 163rd Regimental Combat Team (41st Division), the 62nd Works Wing (Australian Army) with five Engineer Aviation Bns., four battalions of AA, and two extra battalions of Field Artillery under command of Brigadier General Jens Doe landed at AITAPE. This landing was practically unopposed, and on the first day a perimeter was established around TADJI airdrome and work begun on the strip. Patrols sent both east and west for a distance of 10 miles made no major contact. For the first month resistance consisted of scattered sniper fire from the estimated 400 service troops that were servicing the airdrome prior to the change of hands.

It was during this period that an American patrol captured documents from a Jap officer. This officer with a patrol had the mission of reconnoitering routes toward AITAPE with a view toward a large scale attack overland from WEWAK. This reconnaissance was to locate the best routes from WEWAK and the location of supply points to be later stocked with food from the WEWAK supply dumps. Documents captured later and statements of prisoners further verified that an attack between 1-10 July was imminent,

and when this fact was established the 124th INFANTRY REGIMENT was alerted for movement into the AITAPE area to reinforce the 32nd Division who had taken over from the original task force.

#### THE 124TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

In September, 1942, the 154th Infantry Regiment was formed as the third Regiment of the 31st Infantry Division, and began its training in Camp Shelby, Miss. (The Regiment on arrival in NEW GUINEA was redesignated as the 124th Infantry to replace the old Florida Regiment, the 124th Infantry, which had been deactivated.) Following the basic training at Camp Shelby the regiment participated in the '43 Louisiana maneuvers.

Near the end of this maneuver period the Division was alerted for overseas shipment and received orders to proceed to Camp Pickett, Virginia, for final intensive training and staging. During this period there followed in rapid succession mountain training at Elkins, West Virginia, intensive combat training at Camp A. P. Hill, and finally, basic amphibious training and advanced problems in a joint Army-Navy operation at Camp Bradford, Virginia, and Solomon Island, Maryland.

On 1 January, 1944, the 31st Division had already received overseas movement orders--the 124th Infantry was to be the first unit to ship. On 16 January the first elements sailed and arrived in NEW GUINEA, 20 February; the remainder of the Regiment did not close at DOBODURA, NEW GUINEA, until 17 April.

Prior to departure from the states this regiment had never had the

first thought of jungle training or fighting and therefore knew nothing of the peculiarities of bush combat. While on the water, for approximately 35 days, all troops were brought up to date on the fight in the PACIFIC—were given lectures on the numerous pitfalls in the form of jungle disease that one might encounter in the jungle, and uppermost in the shipboard training the troops received information on the Jap as a soldier. By the time NEW GUINEA was reached this training had succeeded in building up the Japanese soldier as a "superman" and instilling an inborn fear of anything known as the jungles through the medium of the hundreds of items that were listed in the medical pamphlet as dangerous. This feeling of considering the jungle as an enemy and the Jap a superman was later found to be one of the greatest difficulties to overcome in future training and was not wholly overcome until after the first operation.

The period between 17 April and 23 June was spent in additional intensive training in such subjects as sanitation in the field, malaria prevention and control, care and cleaning of weapons, first aid, water discipline, jungle fruits and jungle diseases, refresher courses in all pertinent subjects, as well as road marches and field problems to acclimate the personnel to life in the tropics. Tactical principles were adapted to the jungle terrain with emphasis on the jungle perimeter.

On 23 June the Regiment with its Combat Team attachments received orders to move, combat loaded, to AITAPE, NEW GUINEA. The Regiment closed at AITAPE on 6 July and was attached to the 32nd Division. At this time the 32nd Division plus the 112th Cavalry Combat Team was manning a perimeter around TADJI airdrome and had a forward defense line called the MARTIN line

along the DRINUMOR River. The Japs had started applying pressure against this line in late June and raids were increasing daily.

The Regiment had an initial mission of landing at NYAPARAKE, approximately 25 miles east of AITAPE. This mission was cancelled due to a breakthrough on the DRINUMOR River on 10 July. On 12 July, the Combat Team was ordered to move to the most advanced position along the beach and prepare to launch a counterattack without delay to restore the line breached by the Japs. This attack was launched, along with units of the 32nd Division, on the morning of 13 July and by 15 July the River line was once more intact. The Regiment, minus one Bn. in Task Force Reserve, remained on this line against numerous counterattacks until 30 July. During this period the Regiment lost a number of men to enemy action, but the experience and confidence acquired by the troops was to pay dividends in lives saved and enemy killed in the near future. The Regiment, while on the DRINUMOR River, had troops of the 32nd Division on both flanks. Men of these units who had participated in two major actions in NEW GUINEA against the Japs were contacted daily by the 124th personnel and "shot the bull" on patrolling across the river, on fighting the Japs in general and other subjects relating to jungle combat. These daily contacts could almost be considered as a training program. It was during this first action and through these daily "bull sessions" that the "superman" theory of the Japs and fear of the jungle was broken in our troops.

On 18 July the RCT, plus the 2nd Bn., 169th Infantry Regiment (43rd Division) was designated as the TED FORCE, continuing to operate under the 32nd Division.



During the period of stabilization on the defensive, the staff of TED'S FORCE drew up complete plans for resuming the offensive when ordered. The plan was approved when submitted and was to be executed early on the morning of 31 July. On request from the CO of TED FORCE, the 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry was released from Task Force Reserve and joined the remainder of the Regiment in a position ready for the attack on 31 July.

The TED FORCE for the attack phase consisted of the following:

UNIT	COMMANDING OFFICER	CODE NAME
124th Inf. Regiment	Col. Edward M. Starr	TED
1st Bn, 124th Inf. Regiment	Major Ralph D. Burns	BUTCH
2nd Bn, 124th Inf. Regiment	Lt. Col. Robert M. Fowler	FOWLER
3rd Bn, 124th Inf. Regiment	Lt. Col. George D. Williams	PAPPY
2nd Bn, 169th Inf. Regiment	Major Bill Lewis	LEWIS
149th Field Artillery Bn.	Lt. Col. Eugene Jones	
Co. A, 106th Engineer Bn. (Combat Team Engineers)		
Co. A, 106th Medical Bn. (Combat Team Collecting Company)		

One light artillery battalion from the 32nd Division Artillery was to reinforce the fires of the 149th FA. (Note: The code names listed above will be used throughout this narrative to designate the units, i.e., instead of 3rd Bn., 124th Infantry the word PAPPY will be used.)

On 30 July, this force was disposed as follows: The 1st and 3rd Bns of the 124th Infantry, and the 2nd Bn, 169th Infantry occupied positions along the DRINUMOR River--the 2nd Bn, 124th Infantry was in an assembly area on the beach in rear of a battalion of the 128th Infantry, 32nd Division, which was occupying the left flank of the River Line. The 149th Field

Artillery was supporting the Regiment echeloned along the beach in batteries.

The orders for the attack were to advance to NIUMEN CREEK on a front of approximately 4,000 yards with the left flank on the ocean and the right flank open--the line of departure to be the DRINUMOR River. The mission was to develop the enemy situation to our front and be prepared to move south and southeast on orders.

#### TERRAIN (MAP B)

Of the three major obstacles; terrain, Japanese, and lines of communication militating against the successful accomplishment of this mission, the terrain plays one of the most important roles, almost on par with the enemy forces. "The terrain is undescrivable", are the words used by Major Bill Lewis, Commanding Officer of the 2nd Bn, 169th Infantry Regiment, and a veteran of the NEW GEORGIA operation.

For the purpose of analyzing the terrain only the area of the regimental operation will be considered--from the DRINUMOR River on the west to NIUMEN Creek on the east and from the ocean on the north to the TORRICELLI Mountain foothills on the south. This is an area approximately two and one-half miles wide and six miles deep. It lies approximately 13 miles east of AITAPE and approximately 85 miles west of WEWAK.

This is typical NEW GUINEA jungle terrain and of all the desirable features that one would like to have in his favor in an attack, none are present in this terrain. There is no vantage point; no observation except that cut into the bush; no areas where fields of fire more than three to

five yards can be obtained without using the jungle soldiers friend, the machete. With the exception of the Afua Trail there are no natural routes of communication. Each yard advanced means cutting of jungle undergrowth so thick in places that the sun cannot penetrate. Compasses must be used constantly to prevent a loss of direction; there are no "twin pines", "dead trees" or other oft used military landmarks.

Within this area there are only four terrain features that can be located both on a map and on the ground; these are the DRINUMOR River, NIUMEN Creek, AFUA Trail and the TORRICELLI Mountain foothills. All locations on the ground were made using one of these features as a reference point.

The DRINUMOR River is the typical jungle type, never constant in depth, width or rate of flow. It has its origin in the mountains and is affected by the rainfall in the hills. During a dry spell, which is very seldom, the river usually averages approximately 40 yards in width and two to five feet in depth. During this period small islands are formed in the center of the river. The entire stream bed averages approximately 75 yards in width with banks of three to five feet on either side. During a sudden shower or continuous rain either near the ocean or in the mountains the river reaches tremendous proportions. Occasionally, in only a matter of minutes, it changes from a slow-moving stream to a roaring torrent overflowing the banks on both sides and capable of sweeping large trucks along in its path.

NIUMEN Creek on the east is a small jungle stream with its origin in the TORRICELLI Mountains. It has no definite line on the ground but follows

the terrain of least resistance. For approximately two miles inland, almost to the foothills its tributaries cover the entire flat jungle area adding further difficulties to the otherwise soggy footing. Further inland this stream cuts through the foothills and offers one of the best and most rapid routes of movement in these jungles. The stream never reaches a depth of over two feet, except in heavy rains, and during the Regiment's action it was the only source of water supply.

The AFUA Trail on the south is a small trail made by the natives and used for inland travel to and from the coast. It was being used by the Japs as a route of advance and a supply line for its operations in the vicinity of the DRINUMOR River. This trail skirts the foothills and generally follows stream beds and ravines. It is not visible from an observer flying at 200 feet in an artillery cub plane, and is so narrow that it is not easily picked up on the ground.

The TORRICELLI Mountain foothills, in the area of operation, are from 500 to 800 feet in height, covered with heavy jungle growth. Until the outbreak of the war, few white men had ventured beyond the AFUA Trail and the greatest portion of the TORRICELLI Range is unexplored.

On the north just off the beach a coastal track connects the DRINUMOR River and NIUMEN Creek. This track parallels the ocean and is usually located two or three feet from the beach. A trail of this type can be found along the entire coast of NEW GUINEA and is the major route of travel between villages. The Japs used this trail in moving from WEWAK to the DRINUMOR River area--all movement by foot, since motor transportation was lacking. It is possible for jeeps to use this trail.

Between these four major terrain features is the jungle. After leaving the beach and crossing the coastal track the thick jungle undergrowth closes in on all sides. The ground is soggy with rotted vegetation offering little firm footing; small vines impossible to pass through without cutting are prevalent. NIUMEN Creek at its mouth forms an almost impassable swamp for about 500 yards inland. Hinterland towards the mountains the footing becomes a little better and the jungle a little less thick; trees replace some of the thick short scrub vines and the jungle fern begins to disappear.

The climate in this area is hot, humid and suffocating; troops stay wet 24 hours a day, either from rains or from perspiration. The dank wet air makes breathing hard after an hour's march and troops tire quickly as the water is pulled from the body, sapping their strength. It was not uncommon to have five and ten minute halts for every 20 minutes of moving.

There are almost no man-made features in this vicinity; however, a discussion of this terrain would not be complete without a brief description of a native village. Although the names of these villages were forgotten by the cartographer, they were the military objectives of squads, platoons, and battalions and were the topic of conversation of the soldiers in this part of the world. When one of the villages was wrested from the Japs, the conquering troops were greeted with a small cleared area, usually situated near a stream or river, consisting of a number of small huts built on stilts and made of bamboo and palm fronds. These huts housed, in addition to the primitive occupants, most of the animals, pigs etc., plus most of the dreaded disease bearing insects. They were usually burned to prevent the spread of typhus fever.

There were very few maps of this area and what maps were available were of no value in picking out locations on the terrain. Photo maps were the most common form of maps used in this action and unless the strip covering the ocean was available it was impossible to orient the photo map or strip mosaic to the ground.

#### A TYPICAL DAILY ITINERARY

So as to better understand the narration of the action, a description of a typical day spent during the attack follows.

The day usually began around 0600. The men began to get out of their foxholes and by 0615 a skeleton force was maintaining the positions and the remainder was preparing breakfast which consisted of a "K" ration and hot coffee, if brewed. By 0700 the men had finished their breakfast and were ready to resume the attack. The advance and fighting continued during the day until approximately 1600. At this time the unit Commanders were looking for a good perimeter position, if there was any choice. In clearing the perimeter enough men were taken from the front lines or the units in contact to dig foxholes and gun positions for the entire unit.

The rapidity in which a jungle area consisting of heavy, thick undergrowth, vines and large trees could be transformed into a completely cleared area in a matter of one or two hours using only machetes and bayonets, never failed to amaze even the soldier himself. It was not unusual to find trees two feet in diameter fall in only a matter of minutes.

The size of the perimeters varied, depending upon how much time there

was to clear the area--how close the contact with the enemy and the shape of the ground--there were battalion perimeters less than 100 yards across. When the situation permitted, which was very seldom, battalions tied in their perimeters--normally there were separate battalion areas. Even companies within battalions sometime did not tie in their perimeters.

The type of foxholes varied also. During the first phase of the operation as many as five men dug holes together. Instead of foxholes, occasionally the trunks of trees were cut to form log barriers approximately two feet off the ground and these sufficed as foxholes. During the latter stages of the operation, due to an abnormal loss of lives in the spraying of a perimeter, orders were issued that no more than three men to a foxhole.

A battalion perimeter was constructed whereby the automatic weapons could cover the entire 30 to 40 feet of cleared area in front of the positions. It will be recalled that the Regiment had been issued extra BARs and light machine guns for the operation. All machine guns were with the outer perimeter and a large portion of the BARs and "tommy" guns were with the inner perimeter. Companies occupied the perimeter with two-thirds on the outer, support platoon on the inner with the Battalion Hq in the center of the circle. Mortars were usually the first weapons set in position and while the clearing was completed they were registering in. Meantime the artillery FOs were having rounds registered and marked around the entire perimeter.

Just as dark closed in, the entire covering shell left on the line dropped back into the perimeter and took their positions. When complete

darkness fell there were no patrols or any type of warning posts anywhere outside the perimeter. Neither was there any movement anywhere within the perimeter. During the hours of darkness anything that moved was considered enemy and was fired on. This ruling was made due to the Jap propensity for attacking and infiltrating at night. No matter how small the perimeter or how close the men were on the positions, Japs invariably got through.

Wire lines were used from key positions to the mortars and to the Battalion CP so that knowledge of an enemy attack could be passed on to all concerned. Since the Japs sometime preceded any sizable attack by a series of whoops, yells and confusion it was usually easy to determine in advance where their attacks were coming from.

The individual Japs and the two or three-man patrols that got inside the perimeter were the groups that caused the most confusion. These Japs loaded with grenades, and T.N.T., though not causing much damage, succeeded in keeping the soldiers awake, keeping nerves on edge and impairing the fighting efficiency for the following day.

This daily itinerary was usually followed, changed only by the enemy situation and the time of a supply drop. If supplies were to be dropped, the advance units had to stop around noon and the next four hours spent in clearing an area for the air drop, collecting the supplies, and in some cases, fighting with the Japs for the drop.



ENEMY SITUATION, DRINUMOR RIVER, AITAPE, NEW GUINEA, 30 JULY, 1944 (MAP C)

During the latter part of June the Japanese XVIII Army commander had moved the bulk of his forces toward AITAPE and by the end of the month he had succeeded in consolidating a large force approximately eight miles east of the DRINUMOR River. During the first days of July, intensive raids and patrol action characterized enemy action. On 10 July, these raids and patrols were culminated by a large push through the center of the MARTIN line on the DRINUMOR River. The Japs picked a most opportune time to attack this line. At the time of the Jap attack our forces had started a reconnaissance in force on both flanks to develop the Jap situation. In moving the two units from the flanks the remainder of the forces manning the defense line had to spread over the entire area leaving the line very thin. The Japs hit the weakest part, succeeded in breaching the line and forcing a temporary retirement of our forces. In this breakthrough the Japs pushed elements of two Infantry Regiments through and on 30 July, between 500 to 700 of these troops were still operating to our rear, harrassing the TADJI perimeter nightly and causing supply routes, dumps and lines of communication to be protected day and night. Small roving bands were dispatched with the sole mission of destroying artillery pieces and tanks. Documents were taken from enemy dead that indicated daily foot messengers from the force east of the DRINUMOR contacted the breakthrough force, and that further reinforcements could be expected.

Between 14 July and 24 July, the Japs lost approximately 600 men in trying to cross the river. In one night 22-23 July, 349 Japs were killed in the DRINUMOR River. This attempted crossing was coordinated with another

attack the same night from the rear; 250 of this force was killed. This abortive attack in an effort to reopen the gap which had been closed by elements of the 124th Infantry Regiment was the last large push made by the Japs on the DRINUMOR River.

Meantime, prisoners of war statements and documents, verified by patrols, indicated that the Japanese 41st Division, formerly located in the MADANG area had moved into close proximity of the DRINUMOR River and that other troops were moving southwest from the beach with the mission of bypassing our right flank at AFUA. On 29 July, a platoon patrol from Company I, 124th Infantry was ordered to reach NIUMEN Creek approximately three miles northeast of AFUA and capture a prisoner, if possible. At 1450 this patrol radioed to an artillery plane that they were surrounded and were fighting their way out. The patrol returned that night and reported an estimated enemy Regiment was located just east of NIUMEN Creek and that a large headquarters was also located in this area. This information checked with another long range patrol on 24 July, which had counted approximately 3,000 Japs moving southwest from YAKAMUL, a village on the coast six miles east of the DRINUMOR River.

This information was interpreted to mean that the Japs were either preparing to continue the attack against the River Line or were bent on bypassing the right flank. This was the situation known to the Regiment for the attack phase.

### SPECIAL PLANS AND DETAILS FOR THE ATTACK

This attack, due to the type of terrain to be traversed and the re-supply difficulties, called for some rather unorthodox plans and details.

No vehicles had been able to reach the battalions on the River Line and the ammunition, food, radios and other supplies needed for the attack were dropped by air or brought in by native trains.

The Regiment had been equipped with Caliber 45 sub-machine guns, extra light machine guns and extra BARs. Each squad had one "tommy" gun and each battalion had 12 extra BARs.

In a meeting with the Battalion Commanders and the Regimental Staff, it was decided that only two of the 81mm mortars and two of the heavy machine guns, Calibre 30, would be carried. The machine guns would be replaced by the new light machine gun and the extra personnel from both sections would carry ammunition for the mortars. One unit of fire for all individual weapons would be carried; one and a half units of fire for BARs and machine guns, and two units of fire for the mortars. It was also planned to eat two meals a day and carry "K" rations for consumption the first two days. An extra radio for each of the SCR 284s would be taken; all radio equipment was to be water-proofed against the jungle dampness; two reels of number 110 wire for each battalion would be carried by the battalion personnel and two reels by the regimental headquarters group.

The troops at this time were equipped with the jungle type pack which included water-proof bags. It was suggested that each man carry four or five clean pairs of socks and a change of clothes in these water proofed bags. Only the poncho would be carried--no jungle hammocks; only one

canteen and the troops had their choice as to what type of shoes or boots they might wear. Steel helmets were to be worn. Extra halazone and atibrine tablets were to be carried.

The cannon company was attached to the 149th Field Artillery and was in position to fire indirect fire. The Anti-Tank company with no anti-tank guns was equipped as a rifle company and was to accompany the regimental headquarters.

All medical personnel would go with the Regiment and the surgeon directed that as much reserve equipment, such as bandages, blood plasma, and litters, be carried as possible. Even the individual soldiers were to carry extra medical supplies.

To insure communications with higher headquarters an SCR 284 relay station was to be established at AFUA and another on the beach at the mouth of the DRINUMOR River. This would make a maximum of three miles that any radio message would have to carry.

The Regimental Staff minus the supply personnel would accompany the Regiment in the attack. The Regimental S-4 and the Bn S-4s would remain in the rear and supervise the hauling and loading of supplies on the cargo planes---this being the only method of resupply contemplated.

The artillery planes were to fly from dawn to dusk each day. This was done to have an alternate means of communication; to assist the ground units in locating themselves on the ground and for the intended purpose of artillery observation.

### THE ATTACK (MAPS D and E)

July 30 was spent in the preparations for the attack and final details were completed. The Plan called for an advance of three battalions abreast-- from left to right--FOWLER, 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry; BUTCH, 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry; PAPPY, 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry. Each battalion was to advance in two columns. The right flank being open, LEWIS, 2nd Battalion, 169th Infantry, was to follow PAPPY in a single column, thereby giving considerable depth to the exposed flank. Upon reaching the objective, LEWIS, maintaining contact with PAPPY was to refuse the south flank in a manner similar to a fish-hook. Elements of the 32nd Division were to occupy the vacated positions on the river and make daily patrol contact with the TED Force. Since patrols had located no Japs immediately across the river, there was to be no artillery preparation.

The attack jumped off at 0800 on the morning of 31 July. By 1300 FOWLER, on the left flank, had reached his objective; PAPPY and LEWIS arrived at 1400. Only light opposition was encountered by these battalions who were able to use trails that had been made by the Japs in their advance to the river. BUTCH, moving in the middle of the sector through swamps, no trails, but comparatively level terrain, was strongly opposed. The leading platoon of Company C was decimated by an estimated platoon of Japs with machine guns when the leading battalion elements were ambushed. This battalion did not reach its objective until the next day, 1 August. By not reaching the objective on 31 July, wide gaps were created on both flanks of the battalion and the establishment of a line over such a wide front in the dense jungle was practically impossible. The only solution was to send

strong combat patrols to cover this area. Company L of the 3rd Battalion was used for this purpose on BUTCH'S right and the I & R Platoon on the left. These patrols encountered only light enemy action.

During this first day's action the communication problem arose—a difficult problem that was to be with the Regiment during the entire attack. The SCR 284s with BUTCH could not reach the regimental set even though a distance of less than two miles separated the two sets. BUTCH had no hills or cleared areas for transmission and the jungle dampness had closed in on the sets—water-proofing was almost useless.

On 1 August, all battalions were on their objectives and were consolidating their positions. Patrols sent along the beach to the village of YAKAMUL had contacted a small Jap unit—other patrols through the center and on the right flank found evidence of where the Japs had bivouaced within the past three days but made no positive contacts.

On 2 August, TED (Col. Edward M. Starr, Ted Force Commander) reported to the Task Force Commander, General Gill, who directed that this force be moved to the southwest and then west, back to the DRINUMOR River. The mission was to envelop the enemy, cut off his supply lines and close him in a pincer between the attacking force and those holding the river line. Permission was granted to cut the AFUA trail east of NIUMEN Creek and move south and west so as to complete an encirclement of the enemy forces.

It was decided to close FOWLER and BUTCH on PAPPY and LEWIS and start this new attack from the south positions. By nightfall of 2 August, this had been accomplished and the two battalions were placed in the south flank perimeter.

The next morning, 3 August, the advance began with PAPPY on the left and LEWIS on the right, each operating independently of the other. Within an hour both battalions were heavily engaged. The enemy resistance consisted of numerous snipers with the "Nambu" one man light machine gun located in trees and other concealed places. Due to the smokeless powder used by the Japs it was difficult to locate these snipers. We were suffering heavy casualties and in answer to a query as to what was holding up his advance, PAPPY answered, "I'll be damned if I know; we haven't seen over five Japs, but the bullets are coming from every direction". The last entry for 2 August in the 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry's journal reads as follows: "Snipers all day. Can't see them. Gained 300 yards all day". It was later found through a captured document and statement of a prisoner that approximately 300 enemy troops had spent the night, 2-3 August, approximately 300 yards from the regimental assembly area; this was the group that PAPPY and LEWIS hit. It will be recalled that patrols from PAPPY'S battalion on the evening of 2 August reported no contact to their front and flanks.

By noon of 3 August, it was realized that it would be impossible to destroy the enemy forces that day. BUTCH was then directed to move his battalion south on an azimuth of 195 degrees and under no circumstances become involved in LEWIS'S fight. The battalion met no opposition and by nightfall had advanced approximately 1,000 yards, which placed him 400 yards west and practically abreast of LEWIS. The situation as then existed was from left to right: PAPPY, LEWIS then BUTCH. FOWLER had not moved during the day and was still with the Regimental CP.

Both LEWIS and PAPPY had casualties during the day's fighting--these were brought into the regimental aid station where the 3rd Battalion's aid station was also located and were kept there during the night--each litter case was placed into a foxhole with an aid man assigned to each one. During the night these aid men protected the patients and administered first aid including the giving of blood plasma. The next day these litter cases were escorted to the DRINUMOR River by a platoon from FOWLER'S Battalion. This was the last litter train to leave the Regiment until the DRINUMOR River was reached seven days later.

In addition to the casualties inflicted by enemy fire there were a number of psycho-nurotic cases, among the first that any of the troops had seen. These cases by far were the most pathetic of all the patients. These men broke in many different ways; most of them broke during the morning of 3 August when the direction of fire could not be determined and the enemy could not be seen. These men saw some of their buddies fall which was the finishing touch to their complete disintegration. Their rifles were just dropped on the ground--their equipment was discarded--helmets thrown away and with utter disregard for their own safety, these men, most of them sobbing with big tears in their eyes, started moving back to the rear past the advancing column of soldiers--questioned all the way back as to, "what's the trouble, Joe?", but never a sideward glance did they give. These incidents had a very sobering effect on the troops.

Just before dark on 3 August, both PAPPY and LEWIS dropped back from their most advanced positions, approximately 100 yards, and the artillery was registered in. During the night four battalions of artillery fired



constantly on the entire front and did an excellent job as the next day was to prove.

On 4 August, after a ration and ammunition drop to our units, the advance continued. BUTCH, moving on the right met no opposition. The order issued to BUTCH was to advance to the AFUA Trail, by-passing opposition if necessary, set up a perimeter astride the trail and await orders. The terrain was such that it took BUTCH two and one-half days to advance two miles, regardless of the fact that there was no enemy opposition. The rate of advance was figured to be not more than 100 yards per hour. Each yard had to be cut--lead platoons were changed every hour--squads every 15 minutes and lead companies were changed every three hours.

PAPPY moved out at 0900 with LEWIS following. LEWIS had shifted to PAPPY'S left rear since most of the previous day's opposition had come from PAPPY'S left. Only scattered enemy fire was encountered throughout the day's advance, a fact attesting to the efficiency of the artillery fire of the night before. Snipers were seen along the route hanging from trees, dead. They had been tied in the tree and when killed remained there. By 1400 the point of PAPPY'S battalion reached the AFUA Trail. Here a small column of Japs were killed. This group proved to be a signal unit from the XVIII Army Headquarters and they carried four radios and a large number of code books. The latter was sent back by a three man patrol, together with documents taken from the dead indicating the overall plan of maneuver for the XVIII Army. The AFUA Trail at this point was well traveled, with communication wire following the trail. By nightfall both PAPPY and LEWIS were on the trail with LEWIS still behind and to the left.

FOWLER and the headquarters group bivouaced just west of the trail.

While preparing the perimeter for the night a patrol from FOWLER'S battalion crossed a small stream near the perimeter and about 100 yards inland located a recently built group of huts and jumped five Japanese soldiers; two were killed and the other three captured. On interrogation, by two Japanese-American interpreters who were attached to the Regiment, the prisoners revealed that they were from the 26th Field Artillery and the entire unit had been surprised by our push. They never expected to see any American soldiers this deep in the jungles. The next day twelve 75mm artillery pieces belonging to this unit were destroyed.

On 5 August, BUTCH had reached the AFUA Trail and established the trail block perimeter in accordance with orders; this gave the remainder of the force some security on the right flank. This trail block proved invaluable for it served as an ambush for innumerable Japs who were scurrying to the hills in mad confusion, from both directions. BUTCH stayed on this trail block until joined by FOWLER on 7 August.

PAPPY moved out at 0800 along the AFUA Trail. The trail followed a creek bed which had towering banks on either side. This battalion made only light contacts until 1000. At this time PAPPY informed TED that he had hit what he thought was the rear guard of a Jap column. By noon PAPPY was engaged in a terrific firefight with an enemy force well equipped with automatic weapons and in excellent natural defensive positions. The comparatively flat terrain had now given away to the TORRICELLI foothills and the Japs occupied a hill approximately 1000 feet at its peak with a series of small hills and ravines leading to the top. PAPPY'S battalion

had moved up the creek bed and now occupied the base of this hill. In addition to the hill to his front, PAPPY'S battalion had a towering hill mass on both flanks--they were in a terrain pocket. Artillery fire was placed on the enemy forces and in addition to this artillery fire, mortars from PAPPY'S battalion fired approximately 300 rounds of mortar ammunition. This figure on the rounds fired by the mortars is not great but it must be remembered that all this ammunition was soldier, pack carried.

By 1300 PAPPY had not been able to advance, so LEWIS, who had been following PAPPY, was ordered due south on PAPPY'S left flank with specific orders not to get engaged in PAPPY'S fight. LEWIS was to try and relieve the pressure by hitting to the rear and flank of the enemy forces located on the hill to PAPPY'S left front. The battalion was able to advance very slowly without any opposition over terrain that was described only as a "bitch". No trails were found and the mountain began to get a little steeper and the rain which had been pouring for three days straight made footing almost impossible. FOWLER, with the command group, closed up on PAPPY'S rear and at 1500 began establishing a perimeter for the night. PAPPY withdrew approximately 75 yards and very heavy concentrations of artillery were placed on the front throughout the night.

The plan for 6 August was to have PAPPY hold his present position, pass FOWLER to the right, and outflank the strong enemy positions from the west. On the morning of 6 August, although heavy artillery fire had been falling all night on PAPPY'S front, an estimated 400 Japs attacked his battalion at 0300. A large number of Japs had broken through and at first light sprayed the entire battalion area with machine gun fire.

They climbed trees in and around the perimeter and had the personnel of the Battalion CP pinned down for approximately 30 minutes. Jap 75mm mountain guns had moved into a position to place direct fire on the front line companies.

FOWLER attempted to pass through PAPPY up the stream bed and was stopped by the same enemy fire. The Japs by this time had moved in on the two battalions from the front and both flanks--snipers were in the rear and left flank commanding the creek bed, making any movement along the creek almost impossible. Small enemy groups were attempting to cut PAPPY'S companies from his Command Post--the Japs now controlled the commanding terrain and had complete freedom of maneuver.

PAPPY was directed to use his artillery liaison officer to adjust fire for both he and FOWLER. All available artillery fire was requested, and was brought in as close as 50 yards by the artillery forward observers, and on direct orders from PAPPY this 50 yards was split in half. The firing of this artillery so close to our own troops was necessary because the Japs, when the artillery barrage started, would run in close to our troops in an effort to miss the fire. Two battalions of artillery were firing these missions and on one occasion caught two companies of Japs in a ravine preparing for an attack. The screams of the Japs could be heard over the sound of gunfire--they ran in every direction and in some cases charged directly into the fire of our forces. Meantime mortars from both battalions were placed in positions along the creek, however, snipers and enemy ambushes prevented all but one of the 81mm mortars from firing. This one mortar fired approximately 300 rounds, ammunition being supplied

from both battalions. In some instances the mortar was firing almost vertical. Six Jap knee mortars with their crews were destroyed by an almost miraculous 81mm mortar round. The Japs were dug-in at the base of a tremendous mangrove tree with the opening to the position on the side of the tree fartherst from the mortar--the round landed square in the middle of the opening, indicating that the round fell almost straight down.

FOWLER finally succeeded in breaking contact and was moved around the right flank. This maneuver, coupled with the terrific mortar and artillery barrage broke the main enemy attack and the Japs withdrew to the south leaving 425 counted dead, numerous mortars, machine guns and mountain artillery pieces.

At 1400 PAPPY was ordered to abandon the hill that he was holding and follow FOWLER around the hill to the west. With the exception of one rifle company PAPPY'S entire battalion and the Anti-Tank Company was immobilized in this move carrying litter cases. The route to be followed was along a razor back ridge; the ground was soggy and slippery from the rain that had been falling throughout the past four days--small ravines along the ridge were so water soaked that the men sank up to their waist--each litter required ten men to manipulate it over this terrain. The job was made more difficult by the improvised litters made from ponchos and saplings. The entry in the unit journal of the 3rd Battalion amply describes this move. "1400K, Many litter cases to evacuate. Men are tiring and fatigued with heavy loads and short rations. 1800K, Litters were miraculously taken up the last steep grade at dusk on a most slippery clay trail. CP on steep razor-like hill top." Part of these litter

patients died along the route and were buried or covered with a poncho-- their positions marked on a map.

At 1800, it was reported that a Jap patrol was following the tail of the column, however, no attempt was made by the Japs to push into our positions during the night. As soon as all men had cleared the area, and a check made with LEWIS, the day's battleground was plastered with artillery fire.

By nightfall, 6 August, FOWLER was in a perimeter on a hill mass approximately 300 yards in front of PAPPY--the CP group was with PAPPY. LEWIS during the day continued his slow advance to the south, meeting only small enemy patrols. He had not been in a position at any time to assist PAPPY in his fight. BUTCH, meantime, had begun to contact columns of Japs moving both east and west and was still maintaining the road block established 5 August.

At 0700, 7 August, FOWLER moved off to the southwest with PAPPY and the Regimental CP following, echeloned to the right rear. FOWLER advanced very slowly over very rough terrain, meeting opposition from a detachment of well equipped Jap Marines. There was no organized resistance encountered anywhere along this advance and by late afternoon FOWLER contacted BUTCH who had been ordered to move south and west until he contacted FOWLER'S battalion. These two units then moved southwest in parallel columns against decreasing resistance.

PAPPY following FOWLER was still having to move at a snail's pace due to the litter cases. The journal of the 3rd Battalion reads as follows for this move: "Column moving very slowly. Litter bearers are

worn out. Rough trail, no food today. Whole battalion helping with litter cases.

By mid-morning of 7 August, LEWIS reached a position whereby he could turn west. Upon turning west this battalion met heavy opposition which is believed to be the remainder of the force which had withdrawn from PAPPY'S front the day before. This opposition stubbornly held out all day and the advance was painfully slow and difficult--added to this was the necessity of carrying a large number of litter cases.

The end of this day found the units as follows: BUTCH on the left flank, FOWLER in the center, PAPPY and the Regimental CP on the right flank and LEWIS bringing up the rear approximately one day's march back.

Orders were issued on 8 August for the four battalions to proceed due west with the left flank battalion hitting the DRINUMOR River 1500 yards south of AFUA. By having two battalions moving west 1500 yards south of the AFUA Trail it was considered that very few, if any, of the enemy would be by-passed in the advance.

In BUTCH'S area at dawn of 8 August, as his men began getting out of their foxholes, artillery barrage killed and wounded approximately 35 men--it was fired from a 155mm battalion from the 32nd Division Artillery--a unit that was not in support of the regiment or supporting the fires of our own artillery. It was a mistake on the part of an artillery pilot flying over the area, and knowing nothing of the situation registered in his battalion on what he thought was a Jap unit. All he could see was a little smoke.

All litter cases and walking wounded from both FOWLER and BUTCH'S

battalions were ordered to the CP area on the morning of 8 August to await a native litter train from the DRINUMOR River and to facilitate the movement of these two units to the river. By this time the jungle diseases, dysentery, malaria and dengue fever, had added tremendously to the litter load.

The force moved out at 0700 with FOWLER now on the left, having taken over the mission of the greatest distance from BUTCH, due to the number of men BUTCH had to send with his litter cases. BUTCH was on the right of FOWLER, then PAPPY astride the AFUA Trail followed by LEWIS. LEWIS was still having some difficulty but stated that he could handle the situation. A patrol was sent back to make contact with his battalion and lead him to the AFUA Trail where travel would be a little easier.

At 1300 on 8 August, PAPPY and the Regimental CP had reached the area of the trail block previously held by BUTCH. This was one of the highest hills in the area reaching a height of approximately 1500 feet. By this time the litter bearers were so fatigued, and hungry, that it was decided to halt the unit and await the native train. Meantime a patrol from the 112th Cavalry had arrived and stated that by following the AFUA Trail the DRINUMOR could be reached in an hour.

At 1600 a native train led in by one of our patrols, brought rations and relieved the Regiment of their heaviest loads, the litter patients. This was a relief for all concerned--the men knew that a portable surgical hospital had been established in the AFUA area and the men would finally get medical care. At this stage of the operation some of the wounded were in great pain--bullet wounds in the leg, normally requiring little



hospitalization had become infected--in one case a Lt. SAUSVILLE, shot through the upper part of his leg on 5 August, by a 25 calibre bullet had to have the entire back portion of his leg cut off due to gangrene infection. This was typical of the bulk of the patients.

By 1700 of this day all three battalions of the 124th Infantry had reached the DRINUMOR River. BUTCH and FOWLER had a field day in their advance. Numerous Jap parties were contacted and destroyed--three Jap hospitals with the wounded left in litters were overrun--the wounded Japs were left with a rifle or a grenade and on arrival of our troops, committed "honorable death" by killing themselves. By approximately 1800 both battalions had reached the River and established contact with the 112th Cavalry across the river.

LEWIS, meantime, was still advancing slowly west on the trail about 1,000 yards in the rear of PAPPY. Opposition had diminished and was comparatively light by this time, but movement was slow due to the extremely difficult terrain and the additional burden of 16 litter cases and walking wounded. During the previous night a number of patients had died and were buried on the trail.

On 9 August, LEWIS had overcome all enemy resistance along the AFUA Trail and spent the night on the high ground last occupied by PAPPY.

On 10 August, the entire force assembled on the DRINUMOR River and moved out for the beach. Their mission had been successfully accomplished against many difficulties--morale was very high and the next three weeks were to be spent in resting and preparing for another operation almost 1100 miles away.

### COMMUNICATIONS DURING THE ATTACK

It was planned to use the SCR 284s for inter-regiment communication and for communicating with the Task Force Commander. To accomplish this a relay station was established at AFUA. The maximum distance that the radio had to carry, throughout the operation, to contact higher headquarters or the relay station was approximately three miles. After the third day the SCR 284s were out of operation--they could neither receive from higher headquarters nor transmit. The jungle had cut down the otherwise normal operation efficiency of this radio. Since the time element was so great and the distance between battalions so small the 284s were not used for inter-battalion communication.

This left the SCR 300 of the Infantry Regiment and the SCR 610 of the Artillery Liaison Officers and FOs as the only means of radio communication for the Regiment. To use this communication with higher headquarters it was necessary to use the medium of artillery planes.

To maintain radio contact with Regiment between PAPPY and FOWLER, the 300 radio was used since the CP remained in close proximity of these two battalions. Even this radio would not work over 400 yards at times. To contact BUTCH and LEWIS after they were out on their missions the artillery SCR 610 radio was used relaying through the artillery pilots. In addition to the 610 mounted in the planes the pilots had available the 300 radio to use in event that batteries of the ground 610s went out. Supplies of batteries were maintained necessary by daily cub plane supply drops.

#### WIRE:

On wire communications plans were for inter-regiment communication

only. No attempt by higher headquarters would be made to maintain communications with the Regiment. Within the Regiment it was anticipated that enough 110 wire would be carried to maintain contact with Battalions and the Regimental CP. No switchboards would be carried as the EES telephones would be sufficient with the small number of lines coming into a unit.

On the initial advance from the DRINUMOR River, PAPPY was to lay two miles of wire as he advanced and splice in with the units on the DRINUMOR River defense line; FOWLER was to do likewise. This would place a wire on either flank, connected by the wire on the river and BUTCH could tie in with both PAPPY and FOWLER on reaching the objective. This plan worked except that BUTCH never reached the objective in the center until the next day and no means of wire communication was available with him.

On the push southwest 3 August, both PAPPY and LEWIS were given assistance from the Regimental Wire team and laid a 110 wire as they advanced, and maintained communication with the Regimental CP the first day. The following days, as PAPPY advanced, a wire was laid with him, and since the Regimental CP, FOWLER, and initially LEWIS were following in column, this one wire was used as the main wire communications net. On the hour the units would tap this wire and receive the situation from PAPPY who had done likewise at the prearranged time. The wire was also tapped in case of a halt or firing to the front. This system worked until the 110 wire gave out, as did most of the men carrying the wire—all wire laying had to be done by hand on narrow trails and the communication personnel were

pushed to keep up.

At night only combat wire was used in the perimeter and from the battalion to the front line companies during the day.

#### SUPPLY DURING THE ATTACK

It is evident from the narration that the resupply of the Regiment was a major problem. There were no supply routes and from the time the Regiment left the DRINUMOR River until it returned to the beach, no supplies were delivered overland. Air was the one and only means of supply for the Regiment.

It will be recalled that the supply personnel of the Regiment was left in the rear area to supervise the procurement and the loading of supplies in the C-47 cargo planes.

Whenever an air drop was desired by the Regiment, the Task Force Headquarters was notified by radio as to what was wanted, where it was to be dropped, when the drop was to be made and signals and/or markings that would be used to designate the drop area. Since it took from three to five hours for the planes to drop sufficient rations and other items, it was necessary to stop advancing around noon of the day a drop was to be made.

The bulk of the air drops consisted of rations since after the second day the men never had any reserve rations--usually one-third ration per man was the limit at any one time. The Japs who had been existing on short rations for two months were getting rather desperate, and twice

during the operation attacked in an attempt to recover the drop. Another stunt pulled by the Japs was to mark an area at the same time that we marked our drop ground so as to confuse the pilots and also to get the rations. Our signals were white smoke with white panels placed either on the ground or in the tops of trees. When the Japs saw our smoke go up they would also put up a smoke signal, sometime only two hundred yards from our own. This trick paid dividends to the Japs as they received the drops twice, both times at very critical periods for our troops. This stunt coupled with the fact that the weather was bad 75 percent of the time contributed to the Regiment going without rations three days.

Dropped also by the cargo planes were radios, batteries, litters, shoes and mortar ammunition. These were dropped by parachutes and did not usually require such a large area to be cleared. The rations were stacked in cases of five in the cargo door and merely pushed out of the plane. A very interesting incident was the fact that no resupply of small arms ammunition was required. When the operation was completed the 3rd Battalion of the 124th Infantry, the unit that had done the most fighting, had a half unit of small arms ammunition left. The CO of this battalion, Lt. Col. WILLIAMS stated, "The men fired more ammunition the first night of combat when they were scared and trigger happy than they fired during the entire attack phase".

The C-47s had a very difficult job of dropping rations in this jungle area. To drop the rations they had to fly at approximately 300 feet and most of the time before they could see the cleared area or before word could be passed back to the cargo detail the plane was over the drop

grounds. Bad weather prevented them from flying at high altitudes to locate the area and they had to orbit around the general locality until the panels or smoke were seen. Also, there were only two or three planes available to make the drops and this necessitated making a number of trips. This fact caused the troops to be careless about watching for the drop planes and without warning the planes would drop a load of rations into a crowded perimeter--this accounted for seven men killed during the operation due to air drops. During the latter phase of the operation it was necessary to have a separate drop ground for LEWIS, one for BUTCH and one for the other units.

The artillery liaison planes came in for their share of cargo carrying. In addition to leading the C-47s into the area they supplied the troops with much needed blood plasma, orders from higher headquarters, tobacco, large cans of coffee and radio batteries.

#### THE ARTILLERY

The 149th Field Artillery, the supporting battalion of the Regimental Combat Team played the normal role of supporting the advance of the Infantry, but in this action the artillery firing areas and some of the unusual details that the battalion had to go through with, is worthy of mention.

Prior to the jump-off from the DRINUMOR River the battalion was in position echeloned in batteries along the beach. High tide later forced them to clear a position approximately four miles west of the River.

On 30 July, the battalion displaced to the village of CHAKILA, 1000

yards west of the River, and began clearing away the jungles and digging their perimeter for the night. It will be recalled that the Japs who had broken through the lines were still present in large numbers and carried on constant patrol action during the day, located areas for their night foray and paid a visit to most of the rear installations nightly. No infantry could be spared to protect even the supplies along the beach, therefore, it was the job of the artillery to provide their own close in support for their firing positions. To this end all of the machine guns, which were supplemented, were taken from their prime movers and placed in the perimeter.

It was apparent that the Japs were bent on "blowing up the guns" as was evidenced by numerous maps and orders captured which had the battalion areas marked and arrows leading to the area for the attacks. Twice during the operation small enemy attacks were repelled and patrols organized from the battalion the following morning to chase down the attacking groups and destroy them.

During the attack phase the battalion fired between 4500 and 5500 rounds of ammunition in direct support, harrassing and defensive fires. An excellent job of support is indicated by the request of a captured Jap officer to, "Let me see that automatic artillery".

This battalion strived constantly to build up confidence in the infantry of the artillery and immediately after the 155mm battalion fired into our forces the battalion commander radioed the troops that it was not the 149th FA who fired, but an outside unit.

### ANALYSIS

In ten days this force of four infantry battalions had traversed only ten miles of terrain; had killed approximately 1800 enemy troops, counted dead, and added their part to the defeat of the Jap XVIII Army in New Guinea. This was done at a loss of approximately 325 men and officers, killed and wounded. The enveloping maneuver covered a frontal attack and two full 90 degree turns to complete the envelopment of the enemy force.

The operation was conducted over terrain that required the maximum of efficiency from small unit leaders, and was a success for many reasons, but foremost are the following:

1. The surprise element of the attack. Meeting the enemy in his own habitat was a factor the the Japs had never planned on, and it caught them unprepared.
2. The use of units to cut the most traveled routes, forcing the enemy to cut his way through the jungle and away from his supply lines.
3. The aggressiveness of inexperienced but eager individual soldiers and officers in carrying out a well planned maneuver, surmounting the daily obstacles that arose. These individuals in their small teams won the fight.
4. The individual leadership of Lt. Col. George Dent Williams, commanding officer of the 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry, which was one of the greatest single demonstrations of true troop leadership ever witnessed by the writer. The attack by the Japs on the morning of 7 August, was repulsed due to the leadership and command shown by this officer. For this he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.



5. The Jap propensity for considering the jungles as a form of security; the reduced fighting potential of the Japanese forces and the dissipation of this potential in mass "Banzi" attacks against our perimeter.

6. The excellent use of the double envelopment by sending LEWIS and FOWLER around each flank on 6 August. This caught the Japs on all sides and closed their only natural escape route.

7. A certain amount of "Soldier's Luck" that seemingly was with the troops throughout the operation.

The remainder of the GHQ extract, mentioned in the introduction, is some indication of the effect and the results of this operation.

"Headquarters US Forces  
APO 705

Extract from GHQ, Daily Summary #871, dated 9/10 August. Part IV, Par. 2.  
(Collapse of the XVIII Army)

"The 124th Infantry's counter-envelopment which, by rapid expansion of its front driving from the east to AFUA, joined with simultaneous extension and exploitation of the DRINUMOR Line to trisect and annihilate the XVIII Army is possibly unparalleled in the history of military maneuver over this type of terrain. It resulted, within 29 days (10 July-8 August) in the virtual elimination of 7 Infantry Regiments. The actual attrition of the 20th and 41st Divisions inflicted with negligible losses to our own units, is probably not fully reflected by the reported enemy casualties. Even on 27 July enemy prisoners from the 80th Infantry estimated their unit's strength to be 300-350, and that of the 78th and 79th as 600-700 each; on 9 August, a later prisoner from the 78th Infantry gave its strength as 150.

Some prisoners have indicated that from 40-60 percent of the troops leaving WEWAK for AITAPE fell from the march through disease and starvation. The 237th Infantry, which probably spearheaded the 41st Division's original attack, possibly has lost all effective fighting strength and the 238th has reportedly been annihilated.

Remnants of the 20th Division and other scattered stragglers may, in this tortuous and covered terrain, continue to present isolated pockets of resistance. Others may possibly infiltrate inland or eastward through our encircling forces, and either win the doubtful refuge of their gutted coastal line of communication area between BUT and WEWAK, or attempt the exhausting inland TORRICELLI routes in the hope of possible junction with II Army escapes to the west. However, the XVIII Army is probably now deprived of any significant future operational capabilities."