

The Northern part of the Division Zone was covered by the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop which patrolled the TARLAC - CAPAS - O'DONNELL - MORIONES areas, protecting signal installations at SAN MIGUEL, and maintaining contact with I Corps elements on the North flank.

2. Another New Assignment:

On 28 May, plans were initiated for the movement of the Division (less the 1st Infantry) to the Northern Sector of LUZON for a new mission under I Corps. The 1st Infantry was to take over the entire Division Zone and remain under XI Corps control. On 1 June, the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry moved from FORT STOTSSENBERG to the vicinity of SAN ISIDRO. By the 12th of June, the bulk of the Division (less 1st Infantry) had completed the movement North. In the meantime, the 20th Infantry, having closed into the I Corps Zone on the 5th of June, was placed under operational control of the 37th Division.

3. Summary:

With the exception of minor harassing raids against our lines of communication in BATAAN during the early part of the period, the enemy remained passive and showed no signs of aggressiveness.

Japanese troops encountered included infantry which had withdrawn into the ZAMBALES MOUNTAINS from the LINGAYEN GULF area and into BATAAN from ZIGZAG PASS, Air Corps personnel from CLARK FIELD and FORT STOTSSENBERG, and remnants of a strong force of Naval personnel which had gone into the hills West of STOTSSENBERG on 6 January. Prisoners captured included a Naval Lieutenant Commander. (Later, the 1st Infantry captured a Commander of the Jap Navy, the highest ranking officer taken to date in the LUZON Campaign.) Occasional groups contacted had adequate food supplies and arms, and were in good physical condition, but for the most part, Japs captured and killed were poorly armed, disorganized, and suffering from lack of food and medical supplies.

During the period 1 May to 12 June, the Division accounted for 1,320 dead Japs, and took 269 PW's. Of these totals, 803 dead and 124 prisoners were credited to the 1st Infantry. The 63d Infantry was given credit for 196 killed and 37 prisoners; the remainder were attributed to the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop and guerrillas operating under Division control. Prisoners taken included 60 Formosans.

Our casualties for this period were 16 killed and 35 injured.

Chapter IX

OPERATIONS IN NORTHERN LUZON

1. Introduction to operations in the CAGAYAN VALLEY area: (See Fig. 22)

Climaxing a several weeks' battle for the approaches to the CAGAYAN VALLEY, the 25th Division fought its way up Highway 5 and through BALETE PASS during the closing days of May, to be joined near SANTA FE by elements of the 32d Division pushing Northeast from BAGUIO over the VILLA VERDE TRAIL. Once BALETE PASS was in our hands, the enemy committed his reserves piecemeal along both Highway 5 and the VILLA VERDE TRAIL, to delay our advance and cover his withdrawal to the North. Documents captured at that time revealed that major defenses were under construction near ARITAO, PINGKIAN and KAYAPA. The ARITAO position was to have been completed by the end of May, but advancing rapidly up the highway North of SANTA FE on 5 June, the 37th Division moved through the town without hitting any organized resistance.

Although the enemy was believed to have several thousand troops between ARITAO and BAGABAG, the great majority of these were reported to be ground service troops, which as late as mid-May had not been reorganized for combat, and Air Corps troops but recently converted to Infantry. The enemy had apparently counted on the BALETE PASS - KAPINTALAN positions holding out until at least mid-June. Their precipitous collapse and the 37th Division's race up the valley resulted in a complete disorganization of Japanese forces along Highway 5. As our troops pushed on to capture BAMBANG on June 6th, artillery fires repeatedly dispersed enemy delaying forces before foot elements made contact.

The enemy's communications system disintegrated. His trucks and motor fuel were largely destroyed and his mobility was measured by the speed of carabao carts. At no point was he able to mass enough troops and supplies to make a stand; nor, apparently, could he pass information back to higher headquarters in time to be of any value. What hasty defenses he could muster lacked artillery support. To these handicaps was added poor leadership and untrained troops. The 37th Division, driving on to seize BAGABAG on 9 June, turned the Jap retreat into a complete rout. Huge stores of supplies and equipment were captured.

The seizure of the junction of Highway 4 and 5 at BAGABAG isolated the Jap 14th Army Headquarters at KLANGAN from enemy troops

in the CAGAYAN VALLEY. The only bonafide combat troops in the latter group were the 80th Infantry Brigade and supporting troops of the 103d Infantry Division.

By 10 June the situation looked bright for our forces. Although the enemy was believed to have heavy concentrations of troops in the CAGAYAN VALLEY, any effective defense was considered unlikely, since the greater part of these troops were converted ground service and Air Corps units scattered over a wide area. Little help could be expected from the malaria-ridden 19th Division in the CERVANTES - BONTOC area, largely committed against Philippine Army forces and suffering from a lack of food, ammunition and medical supplies. It was expected that a medium to strong defense would be encountered along Highway 4, North of BAGABAG and South of the reported 14th Army Headquarters at KIANGAN, from ground highly advantageous to the defense.

It was impossible at this time to determine how many retreating Japs had scurried North of BAGABAG to positions in the hills along Highway 4 or the number who had scattered into the mountains flanking Highway 5.

In the 37th Division's rapid advance up the narrow corridor of the CAGAYAN VALLEY ROAD, enemy units were known to have been bypassed and cut off on both flanks. Particularly was this true of the PINGKIAN - KATAPA area. On 8 June, the 20th Infantry, under operational control of the 37th Division, was given the mission of securing Highway 5 and mopping up bypassed enemy pockets in the ARITAO - BAMBANG area.

Establishing a road block about 2500 yards Northwest of BAGABAG on Highway 4, the 37th Division continued its attack up Highway 5. On 11 June, two large enemy truck convoys were caught on Highway 4, just Northwest of BAGABAG and destroyed by our fighter planes.

2. Commitment in the CAGAYAN VALLEY:

The Division began its operations in the CAGAYAN VALLEY area under I Corps on 12 June, with the return of the 20th Infantry to Division control. Together with the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, the 20th Infantry patrolled extensively in the ARITAO - BAMBANG area and secured Highway 5 up to include BAYOMBONG. The 63d Infantry initiated the relief of the 37th Division in the SOLANO - BAGABAG area, assembling the 3d Battalion at BAGABAG and the 2d Battalion at SOLANO.

On 13 June, elements of the 3d Battalion, 63d Infantry crossed the IAMUT RIVER, North of BAGABAG and conducted a reconnaissance in force up Highway 4, advancing some 3000 yards with no enemy contact. Meanwhile, the 2d Battalion, 20th Infantry, pushed West along the BAMBANG - PINGKIAN road and encountered a strong Jap road block 5000 yards West of BAMBANG.

By 1800, 14 June, the 6th Division (less 1st Infantry and attachments) had relieved all elements of the 37th Division West of the MAGAT RIVER. The 20th Infantry was ordered to secure the BAMBANG - PINGKIAN road and push patrols from PINGKIAN Northwest to KAYAPA, and from SALINAS Northwest to PINAYAG. The 63d Infantry was ordered to secure Highway 4 from BAGABAG Northwest to PAYAWAN and push reconnaissance along the Highway toward BOLOG. The 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop was ordered to reconnoiter to the North towards KIANGAN and West from BAMBANG along the BAMBANG - PINGKIAN road.

3. 20th Infantry operations, 14-30 June: (See Fig. 23)

The 2d Battalion, 20th Infantry, pushing West from BAMBANG on 14 June encountered a sizeable force of Japs well dug-in on the high ground 6000 yards West of town. The enemy was well armed with machine guns, mortars and small arms. The 1st Platoon of the 6th Reconnaissance Troop, returning to BAMBANG from BARAT, was ambushed by an estimated platoon of Japs with rifles, light machine guns and hand grenades.

Continuing the attack the next day, supported by the direct fires of self-propelled cannon, the battalion advanced some 500 yards against stiffening resistance and developed a line held by an estimated 200 to 300 Japs. These positions extended North and South astride the road some 1500 yards West of BARAT. Over 100 dead Japs were counted as a result of the battalion's attack.

Two days of sharp but profitable fighting in this area on 16-17 June netted the Division 727 dead Japs and 42 Japanese and Formosan PW's. The 2d Battalion, 20th Infantry, continued to push slowly along the BAMBANG - PINGKIAN road, driving through strong Jap defenses located in bamboo thickets and caves along the road, to reach a position just East of SALINAS. Companies "E" and "F" knocked out 15 pillboxes and destroyed 13 machine guns. Two large groups of 100-200 Japs were observed farther West and were brought under artillery fire by the 51st Field Artillery Battalion.

The 2d Battalion's attacks were supported by artillery and 4.2 mortars, as well as the direct fire of self-propelled 105's and 37mm guns of M-8 armored cars. A mine field consisting of picric

acid and dynamite charges, buried along the road, was discovered by Company "E". These mines were covered with boards and could be detonated by the weight of a man. Elements of the BUENA VISTA Regiment (Philippine Army), attached to the 20th Infantry, engaged an estimated 250 Japs Northwest of BARAT and killed 95.

An enemy PW captured by the 20th Infantry stated that his unit, still opposing our advance along the BAMBANG - PINGKIAN road, numbered approximately 600, armed with 10 machine guns, 4 automatic rifles and 400 rifles. Their ammunition supply was reported as being "critical". According to the PW, this group were remnants of the GEKI or 2d Armored Division, commanded by Lieutenant General IWAKURA, whom the prisoner had last seen inspecting positions near SALINAS on 14 June. The PW's unit was formerly the 1st Company, 25th Independent Anti-Tank Battalion, which was annihilated with the garrison at MUNOZ by the 6th Division -- except for the PW and 35 companions who had escaped and managed to reach the CAGAYAN VALLEY.

The 20th Infantry continued their attack on 18-19 June to eliminate resistance in the SALINAS - PINGKIAN area at the earliest possible date, while a similar drive on PINGKIAN was initiated by the 126th Infantry, 32d Division, (attached to the 25th Division) from the Southeast. Company "E" repulsed an early morning counter-attack by a probable company of Japs and later counted 45 enemy dead. The 3d Battalion entered the fight, moving around the left flank of the 2d Battalion to cut the SALINAS - PINGKIAN road in two places. Company "F", supported by three medium tanks from Company "B", 775th Tank Battalion, attacked West along the BAMBANG - PINGKIAN road, meeting the "L" Company road-block West of SALINAS and gaining contact with "K" Company 1500 yards farther West. Company "K" pushed patrols on towards PINGKIAN. In these two days of fighting, the regiment killed an additional 174 Japs and knocked out numerous caves, several machine guns and destroyed two ammunition dumps.

In the next two days, the 3d Battalion, attacking West along the SALINAS - PINGKIAN road, gained 4000 yards against light resistance and captured SANTA ROSA. On the 21st, elements of the 3d Battalion, supported by tanks, occupied PINGKIAN and established contact with the 126th Infantry coming up from ARITAO to the South-east. The 2d Battalion, patrolling in the SALINAS area, counted 54 dead Japs, most of whom had been killed previously by artillery, mortars and air strikes.

By 23 June, Company "L", 20th Infantry, had occupied KAYAPA against only light enemy opposition. On 26 June, contact was made West of KAYAPA with a combat patrol of the 33d Division from the BOKOD area, thus sealing off all Jap escape routes to the North between Highways 5 and 11.

In the SALINAS area, the 2d Battalion counted 249 additional dead Japs killed by artillery and mortar fire and pushed patrols North towards PINAYAG. By 27 June, a platoon combat patrol had reached OPIAS against scattered resistance.

On the 25th of June, the 1st Infantry, which was being relieved in its zone to the South by elements of the 38th Division, began its move North to rejoin the Division. By the 29th of June, the 1st Infantry had relieved the 20th Infantry in its zone, the latter regiment assembling in preparation for a further move North.

4. Terrain along Highway 4:

Highway 4 running Northwest from BAGABAG is a very winding and narrow, one-way road which crosses extremely rugged and thickly-covered terrain with elevations up to 6000 feet. From PAYAWAN it climbs North through a narrow defile with steep, heavily-wooded sides to BOLOG, just South of which the road splits. The West road, known as "Old Highway 4", continues North and Northwest over MT SANTA DOMINGO and then turns West to descend to the rice terraces of KIANGAN. The East road, known as "New Highway 4", continues North to the IBULAO RIVER where it plunges precipitously into the river gorge. The old suspension bridge at this point over the river had been destroyed. Air reconnaissance revealed numerous landslides and obstructions along both these two mountain roads. Connecting the two roads South of HUCAB was a Jap-constructed trail.

5. 63d Infantry operations, 14-22 June: (See Fig 24)

During this period, the 63d Infantry engaged in sharp fighting. On the 14th, leading elements of the 3d Battalion, continuing their advance along Highway 4, had a meeting engagement with an estimated company of Japs moving South along the road at a point 5000 yards Northwest of the LAMUT RIVER. Quickly seizing the initiative, Company "I" occupied the commanding ground in the area just at dusk. Between 0400 and daylight the next day, the Jap counter-attacked. Japs killed by artillery, mortar and automatic weapons fire numbered 38, while our casualties were negligible. Continuing the advance on the 15th, the battalion entered PAYAWAN against only slight opposition.

At this time the mission of the Division North of BAGABAG was changed from one of blocking Highway 4 to that of exerting maximum pressure along that Highway in the direction of KIANGAN. The 63d Infantry was therefore given the mission to secure BOLOG, some 7 miles Southeast of KIANGAN.

The 3d Battalion continued their attack on 16-17 June, objective BOLOG. Company "K", closely following an artillery and mortar

preparation, overran enemy delaying positions, captured PAYAWAN REST HOUSE, and advanced some 1000 yards beyond. The following morning, Company "L" passed through Company "K" and gained 2000 yards against stiffening resistance from numerous road blocks which were supported in most instances by machine guns. A large motor pool and supply area were captured, containing 35-40 Jap trucks, maintenance and signal equipment and medical supplies. The 3d Battalion and 6th Reconnaissance Troop together killed 58 Japs, while 75 more were found dead in a hospital area near PAYAWAN REST HOUSE, killed by artillery and mortar fire.

On 18 June, the 3d Battalion, with Company "A", 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion and the 26th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon attached, advanced to the limits of the existing Division boundary about half way between PAYAWAN and BOLOG, and patrolled extensively to mop up bypassed enemy. Jap ambushes along the road destroyed one of our armored cars and 3 trucks. During the night, Company "I" repulsed an attack by an estimated company of Japs and killed 16.

Only minor advances were undertaken on the 19th. Company "I" advanced through dense bamboo thickets and heavy undergrowth against scattered rifle fire to take up a position on the right flank of Company "L", North of the highway. Elements of the 1st Battalion, with attached guerrillas, patrolled both sides of the 3d Battalion's supply road. Even so, the Japs managed to ambush another supply convoy returning from forward positions. One truck was knocked out by machine gun fire and satchel charges. Artillery fire was received for the first time in this sector when the enemy fired approximately 50 rounds of 105mm near the gun positions of the 53d Field Artillery Battalion. Japs killed on 18-19 June totalled 183.

On 19 June, the Division's boundaries were changed to include KLANGAN and LAGWE, and the 63d Infantry was given the mission of attacking along Highway 4 to seize KLANGAN. Attachments to the regiment included Company "A", 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion (less 1 platoon), the 2d Provisional Battalion, 3d PANGASINAN Regiment and MAPANDAN Company, a platoon of Battery "B", 209th AAA (AW) Battalion, and the 26th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon.

The 3d Battalion, 63d Infantry, launched new attacks on 20 June, and in 3 days of sharp fighting advanced some 1000 yards closer to KLANGAN. Gains of 500 yards were made on the first day against strong Jap positions on thickly-wooded hills commanding the gorge through which Highway 4 runs. Company "L" knocked out or silenced 5 machine guns. Continuing their push on the 21st, "K" and "L" Companies, despite harassing machine gun and mortar fire, occupied the high ground North of Highway 4 some 2000 yards short

of BOLOG. Flanking movements were slow due to extremely thick underbrush. Forward elements uncovered a strong defensive line reinforced by an estimated 8 machine guns, while numerous caves and dug-in positions were observed in cliffs overlooking the road.

In a late afternoon counter-attack, an estimated company of Japs supported by machine guns and mortars struck at the 3d Battalion's forward CP area, North of Highway 4. Elements of Company "C" and Company "I" drove the Japs back and then repulsed a second Jap counter-attack, killing 16 Japs.

At daybreak next morning, a 3d Battalion supply convoy was ambushed in the vicinity of PAYAWAN REST HOUSE, enemy machine gun and small arms fire causing several casualties among both personnel and vehicles. Extensive combat and reconnaissance patrols operated to the front and flanks to develop enemy positions in preparation for further attacks.

Throughout this three-day period, the 1st Battalion patrolled along Highway 4 to the rear of the 3d Battalion, making scattered contacts. The 2d Provisional Battalion, 3d PANGASINAN Regiment (guerrillas) and MAPANDAN Company helped secure the supply line and the 6th Reconnaissance Troop convoyed supply trains. The 2d Battalion remained in Division reserve.

During the period 14-22 June, the 3d Battalion advanced over several thousand yards of tortuous jungle-surrounded terrain, most of it contested. The regiment killed some 400 Japs and took 81 PW's, bringing the Division total for the period to nearly 1800 dead Japs and 135 prisoners. The Division's casualties for this period were 28 killed and 123 wounded and injured.

6. Estimate of the Situation, 22 June:

G-2 estimated at this time that some 12,000-15,000 enemy troops were assembled in the PAYAWAN - KIANGAN - BONTOC area, including some 2000 civilians. The bulk of this group was believed to be naval, Air Corps and ground service personnel, plus remnants of many units met and destroyed in the battle for BALETE PASS. Artillery, Engineer, Transport and Signal units, plus a few Infantry remnants, of the 105th Division, were reported to be in the KIANGAN - PAYAWAN FARM area. A PW taken on the 22d stated that troops defending the Southern approaches to KIANGAN also included part of three infantry battalions, a tank company and a special anti-tank platoon, to swell the total of experienced troops believed defending the Southern approaches to KIANGAN to 2,150. In overall command was Lieutenant General TZUOA of the 105th Division.

So far it appeared that General TZUOA committed provisional infantry units to delay our advance, while saving his best combat troops for a final stand. The scarcity of enemy artillery up to this time suggested an ammunition shortage, and that the Jap was conserving his meager supply.

7. 63d Infantry operations, 23-30 June: (See Fig. 24)

On 23 June, the 3d Battalion, 63d Infantry, conducted extensive combat reconnaissance patrolling to their front and flanks to feel out the enemy's defenses, and developed a strong position across Highway 4 about 2000 yards Southwest of BOLOG. In several small contacts, our patrols killed 17 Japs. The next day the 1st Battalion moved through the 3d Battalion, following a 30-minute artillery preparation, in an attack to drive the enemy from commanding ground to the Northwest. Gains of 800 yards were made against heavy Jap rifle and machine gun fire from positions looking down steep, narrow ridges. The rough terrain afforded little cover for our attacking troops. 2d Battalion patrols worked around to the West of Highway 4, seeking routes of approach to the Northwest. During the night, the 1st Battalion CP and Companies "C" and "D" were attacked by an estimated company of Japs. In repulsing these attacks, 25 Japs were killed. The 3d Battalion CP also drove off a night counter-attack, killing 11 Nips.

Companies "A" and "B" continued their advance next morning, but made only small gains in the face of intense machine gun fire from their front and flanks. 2d Battalion elements attacked to the Northwest on the South side of the highway. Delayed temporarily by a mine field, which the 6th Engineers removed, Company "E" then pushed up on a line roughly paralleling the 1st Battalion positions, but several hundred yards to the South and West. A sprinkling of enemy artillery fire fell along the highway.

On the 26th, the 2d Battalion resumed its attack, supported by artillery, tanks and half-tracks mounting quadruple cal .50 machine guns. Companies "E" and "F" seized the junction of Old and New Highways 4, just Southwest of BOLOG. 25 enemy trucks containing ammunition, ordnance and hospital supplies were captured. In the 1st Battalion sector on the North side of the road, Company "C" worked around on the battalion's right flank and received rifle and machine gun fire from several caves, pillboxes and spider-holes. A captured 37mm anti-tank gun (U.S. make--model 1939) was used to knock out some of these positions. Company "A" continued this flanking movement in a night attack, and scaled steep cliffs to gain 800 yards and seize dominating ground on the battalion's right front. Company "C" exploited these gains the next day, while Company "B" mopped up behind the two assault companies and secured the battalion's supply lines. The 2d Battalion made a rapid advance

to the Northwest, gaining some 1000 yards along New Highway 4 and capturing numerous supply dumps. Company "E", advancing between the two forks of the highway, encountered several pillboxes which supporting tanks blasted out by direct fire.

Additional gains were made on the 28th. Company "C" advanced to a point East of BOLOG and just short of the IBULAO RIVER. The remainder of the battalion held ground gained and mopped up in their zones. The 2d Battalion continued Northwest along Highway 4, made swift gains of 1500 yards against only scattered opposition, and Company "G" neared the battalion objective at BOLOG. BOLOG was captured on the 29th, against light resistance. The 1st Battalion, mopping up their zone, came upon numerous caves and strongpoints which the enemy had abandoned.

On 30 June, the 1st Battalion, 63d Infantry pushed North to seize the high ground 300 yards South of HUCAB, encountering only scattered opposition. In the 2d Battalion sector, Company "G" advanced from BOLOG along Old Highway 4, thence Northwest to the junction with a Jap cut-off which runs to the Southeast to meet New Highway 4 South of BOLOG. 88 Japs were found dead as a result of artillery and air strafing and bombing.

During this period, the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, moving into the vicinity of BAGABAG in Division reserve on 26 June, made a reconnaissance in force up the LAMUT RIVER VALLEY, finding 30 dead Japs in the area Northwest of PANUPNUPAN. Civilians in this area reported that from 500-1000 Japs had moved North through the valley about four days previously. On the 27th and 28th of June, this battalion moved North to secure Highway 4 behind the 63d Infantry South of BOLOG.

The BUENA VISTA Regiment (Philippine Army) attached to the 63d Infantry on the 22d of June, did excellent work in securing the line of communications and protecting the East flank of that regiment in its advance.

The 6th Engineer Battalion rendered yeoman service in keeping the 63d Infantry supply roads open despite landslides and enemy harassing parties. The 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop armored cars proved invaluable as escorts for supply trains. The half-track mounted quadruple 50's of the 209th AAA (AW) Battalion proved very useful for sweeping draws and ravines along the road.

In support of the 63d Infantry operations during the period 23-30 June, over 500 P-51's, A-20's, P-38's and B-25's dropped some 100,000 gallons of Napalm (fire bombs) and 1600 tons of explosives on enemy positions and installations in the BOLOG - KIANGAN area. All along Highway 4 during the advance were found

large numbers of trucks and Japs destroyed by our air attacks.

8. Summary:

In two weeks of operations under I Corps, the Division killed a total of 2,450 Japs and captured 239 PW's, bringing the total number of Japs killed to date in the LUZON CAMPAIGN to 15,272 and the number of prisoners taken to 691. Our casualties for this period were 47 killed or died of wounds and 199 wounded and injured. The cost to the Division during the campaign from 9 January to 30 June 1945 totalled 808 dead and 3013 wounded and injured.

On 1 July, the Division passed from the control of the I Corps under Sixth Army to the XIV Corps under Eighth Army. For the Sixth Army the bitter and bloody campaign of LUZON was over, but there was still heavy fighting ahead for the 6th Division in the rugged heights of the Mountain Province, the last great stronghold on LUZON of General YAMASHITA.