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THE OPERATIONS OF THE FIRST BATTALION (REINFORCED),
184th INFANTRY, 7th INFANTRY DIVISION, IN THE
CAPTURE OF KWAJALEIN ATOLL, 31 JANUARY - 6 FEBRUARY 1944
(EASTERN MANDATES CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Battalion Operations Officer)

Type of operation described: Battalion in the Attack

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of the 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry, 7th U. S. Infantry Division in the capture of Kwajalein, Eastern Mandates Campaign, 31 January - 6 February 1944.

For purposes of orientation it will be well to briefly outline the status of the Pacific war in January 1944 and the series of events that led to the decision to attack Kwajalein.

At the Allied Conference in Washington in May 1943 it was agreed and decided upon to step up the war against Japan. At a later conference in Quebec in August 1943 the routes of advance to Japan were laid out. (1) As a result, the Pacific attack swept from the Bering Sea in the North to the Coral Sea in the South and during 1943 included the capture of Guadalcanal, the Aleutians, Solomon Islands, Gilbert Islands and other Japanese Island possessions. However, the Japanese still occupied and retained possession of a fortified perimeter of outposts in the Central Pacific that barred the way to Japan. The outer perimeter of this line extended generally from the Volcano Islands and successively to the Marianas Islands, the Caroline Islands, the Marshall Islands, and until its fall in November 1943 the Gilbert Islands. Inside this perimeter lay many Japanese strongholds including naval bases and air bases at Iwo Jima, Saipan, Tinian, Guam, Yap, Peleliu, Truk, Ponape, Kwajalein, Makin, Tarawa and others. (2) (Map A)

With the fall of Attu in the Aleutians in May 1943 and the slow but steady progress in the Southwest Pacific, the Japanese strongholds in the Central Pacific presented obstacles that

(1) A-1, p. 63; (2) A-2, p. 26

could very well become "stepping stones on the road to Japan". Accordingly, on 20 July 1943 the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed Admiral Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, to prepare for an operation against the Gilbert Islands. (3) Reconnaissance and intelligence measures showed Tarawa Atoll to be the strongpoint in the Gilberts. (4) Tarawa was invaded by the 2nd Marine Division on Sunday 21 November 1943. (5) Three days later, after one of the most costly battles in American lives had been fought, Tarawa was declared secure.

Thus the stage was set to start a westward sweep across the Pacific that was to culminate with General MacArthur's attack on the Phillipines.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

At the time that Admiral Nimitz was directed to undertake the Gilbert Operation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff also directed that he make plans and preparations for the seizure of the Marshall Islands. The target date was tentatively set as 1 January 1944. The primary purpose of seizing the Marshalls was to gain naval bases and airfields to be used as a springboard for an attack on the Caroline Islands. The Caroline group contained a mighty Japanese naval base on Truk and airfields on both Truk and Ponape. (6) (Map- A)

The final decision regarding the exact point of attack in the Marshalls was withheld for a number of reasons:

1. The high commanders wanted to take advantage of lessons to be learned in the Gilbert Operation. (7)
2. Observation showed that the troops selected for the Marshall Operation had not had enough training time and

(3) A-3, p. 3; (4) A-4, p. 138; (5) A-4, p. 141; (6, 7) A-3, pp. 3-5

the airfields in the Gilberts were not expected to be ready for the 1 January attack. Consequently, a postponement to 31 January 1944 was recommended by Admiral Nimitz. (8)

3. The eastern, or Ratak chain, of the Marshall Islands contained the heavily fortified Japanese atolls of Wotje, Maloelap and Mille. All had first class airfields, and in addition a submarine base was located at Wotje. (9) (Map-A)
4. 200 miles to the west of the Ratak chain, was the western, or Ralik chain. Here again the Japanese had heavily fortified positions at Jaluit and Kwajalein. Both atolls supported Naval bases and airfields. (10) (Map-A)
5. Many other Japanese bases, containing air and naval installations located at Wake Island, Eniwetok Atoll, Truk, Nauru Island and Ponape, posed a serious threat to an invasion of the Marshalls. (11) (Map-A)

After the seizure of the Gilberts, intelligence agencies reported the Japanese were rapidly reinforcing the defenses of Wotje, Maloelap and Mille in the Ratak chain of the Marshalls. (12) Admiral Nimitz was then faced with making a grave and highly important decision--where to strike in the Marshalls. Two choices were open:

1. To attack the outer bases of Wotje, Maloelap and Mille.
2. To bypass the outer bases and invade Kwajalein 200 miles to the west.

At a final conference to decide this matter Admiral Nimitz made

(8, 9, 10, 11, 12) A-3, pp. 3-5

his decision: "We will go to Kwajalein." (13)

THE PREPARATION PHASE

The 7th Division set sail in convoy from the frigid Aleutians in August 1943, destination unknown to the troops. Much speculation and wishful thinking gave rise to the rumor that the states would be the next stop. However, day after day the compass needle continued to point south and very little east. Finally, in the early morning hours of 9 September 1943 land was sighted and a few hours later the troops were debarking to the strains of Aloha Oe at the city wharves in Honolulu, Hawaii. Little time was lost transferring the troops to a tent area in Schofield Barracks by means of truck transportation and a narrow guage railroad. (14)

About one week was utilized in which to settle down and begin what seemed a new way of living. The changeover was made to tropical clothing and the second week training began in earnest. One important change had been made in the authorized allowance of BAR's. Each squad was armed with two BAR's instead of one as formerly. This not only increased the fire power of the unit as a whole, but in effect allowed the tactical employment of half squads, each armed with an automatic weapon. The soundness and worth of this minor change was soon to be realized in the coming campaign. Basic training started all over again, but soon the graduation was made to unit training and unit problems. However, something new was being added-- jungle warfare and all its complexities. The now famous Jungle Warfare School was attended by every man and officer in the Infantry regiments and by many others as well. No doubt now existed

(13) A-3, pp. 3-5; (14) Personal knowledge

in anyone's mind that the next move would be West, and not East. And always the same burning question, "where and when"?

The jungle training was supplemented by amphibious training and the shores of Oahu were "attacked" many times until the final departure.

The target of the next operation, Kwajalein, was released to the Regimental and Battalion commanders and staffs in the early part of December 1943. War rooms were established and the never ceasing work of preparing plans and orders went on at top speed. Plan A (the preferred plan) ordered the invasion of Kwajalein Island with two Regiments abreast, RCT-32 on the right and RCT-184 on the left.

A shakedown cruise and a dress rehearsal was executed on the island of Maui about 15 January 1944. The Division sailed in convoy from Pearl Harbor at 1100, 22 January 1944, and this was not a "dry run". (15)

THE BATTALION SITUATION

During the training phase on Hawaii the 1st Battalion had been transformed into a BLT (Battalion Landing Team), as had all other Infantry Battalions in the Division.

BLT-1, in addition to the 1st Battalion, was composed of the following attachments:

- 1 Platoon, 13th Engineers
- 1 Platoon, Co D, 767th Tank Battalion
- Air-Ground Liason Party, 75th Signal Company
- Field Artillery Liason Party
- Naval Liason Party
- Tank Liason Party

(15) A-5, p. 1

The Engineer Platoon, tank platoon and Field Artillery Liason Party had been attached to the Battalion for approximately one month prior to the operation, and considerable team training had been undertaken during the training phase. Close liason was maintained with all other attachments for purposes of planning and coordination. Prior to embarkation two or three problems were conducted with the assembled BLT, including the shakedown cruise to Maui.

BLT-1 boarded the U.S.S. Monrovia on 21 January 1944 and the following morning the convoy put out to sea. At 1415 Lt. Col. Roy A. Green, BLT-1 commander, ordered all officers to assemble in the ward room. Brigadier General Ready, Assistant Division Commander, 7th Infantry Division, presented an orientation lecture on the entire Kwajalein invasion, which had been named the Flintlock Operation. Immediately following, all officers were oriented on the Regimental Field Order and issued the Battalion Field Order for Phase II, Plan A. Maps of all islands pertaining to the operation, aerial photos, and final drafts of the boat assignment tables were also issued. The Regimental plan of execution was to land and attack in it's zone of action with Battalions in column. BLT-3 leading, followed in order by BLT-2 and BLT-1. The conference, conducted by the Battalion commander and staff members, was continued the balance of the afternoon. Pertinent instructions issued by the Battalion commander included an order that during the operation all men would be fully informed at all times of the situation, orders and instructions. (16)

The S-3 coordinated troop training, orientation and instruction with the unit commanders. The S-2 issued mock-ups, maps and (16) A-5, p. 1

aerial photos of the operation areas.

It would be well to insert here the source and scope of the aerial photo and map coverage for the operation. As late as 1 December 1943 there were few photos and little information available regarding the enemy situation on Kwajalein. Commencing soon after, several thousands of aerial and submarine photos were made until the day of the attack. (17) Exceptionally accurate and rapid interpretation and evaluation was accomplished. Gridded maps and aerial photos were distributed to all officers and down to squad leaders where applicable. (18)

Each day aboard ship a battalion officers conference was held in the morning and troop orientation was conducted in the afternoon. In addition, at least one boat team drill and one abandon ship drill was held daily. (19) Two alternate plans and operation orders pertaining thereto had also been prepared before departure and during the conferences aboard ship the orders were distributed and the plans discussed in detail.

D-Day had been set for 31 January 1944. On 30 January 1944 rations and ammunition were distributed. Last minute details and instructions were completed in preparation for D-Day. (20)

PRE-INVASION TACTICS

Kwajalein Island is a flat boomerang shaped piece of land formed by coral and a few feet of top soil. It measures 700 yards at the widest point with an axis length of approximately 4400 yards (2½ miles). In all, not more than nine-tenths square miles of surface. (Map-C) Maximum elevation is only 20 feet above sea level. (21)

(16) A-5, p. 1; (17) A-6, pp. 1-7, 1-8; (18) Personal knowledge
(19) A-5, pp. 1-8 incl.; (20) A-5, p. 9; (21) A-5, p. 21

The pre-invasion softening up process began in the early part of December 1943. Land based planes of the Seventh Air Force, operating from bases in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, flew more than 1800 sorties against the Marshalls from 7 December 1943 to 31 January 1944. (22) (Map-A) The aerial bombing was gradually intensified until it reached its climax from 30 January 1944 to 2 February 1944. Naval gunfire added its might until a total of 2500 tons of bombs and shells were poured upon Kwajalein alone during this period. (23), (24), (25) On D plus 1, invasion day for Kwajalein Island, four battle-ships, three cruisers, five destroyers and five Battalions of 7th Division Artillery commenced pounding landing beaches Red 1 and Red 2 at 0618 with shells ranging from 5-inch to 16-inch until fire was masked by the first wave. (26), (27) (Map-C)

D-DAY - 31 JANUARY 1944

Phase I consisted of two missions to be accomplished on D-Day:

1. Secure the pass into the lagoon between the islands of Gea and Ninni.
2. Secure the islands of Ennylabegan and Enubuj and land the 7th Division Artillery on Enubuj.

Accordingly, the 2nd Platoons of the 7th Division Reconnaissance Troop and Company B, 111th Infantry, were boated during the night and landed on Gea Island prior to dawn. Light opposition was encountered and the island was declared secure at 1100. (28) (Map-B)

The 1st Platoons of the same units were also boated during

(22) A-7, p. 73; (23) A-6, pp. 2-3 and 2-4; (24) A-8, p. 228; (25) A-4, p. 167; (26) A-5, p. 11; (27) A-6, p. 3-10; (28) A-3 p. 10

the night and landed before dawn on what they thought was Ninni Island. At daylight they found they had landed on another island northwest of Ninni. The two platoons were reboated and landed on Ninni Island at 1130. No resistance was encountered and the island was declared secure soon thereafter. (29) (Map-B)

Elements of the 17th Infantry (part of the 7th Division) landed with very light opposition on Enubuj at 0910 and the island was declared secure at 1130. (30) (Map-B)

During this period the 7th Division Artillery was boated and commenced landing on Enubuj about 1200. By nightfall four Battalions of 105mm Howitzers and one Battalion 155 guns had registered on Kwajalein, approximately 5000 yards to the south-east, and were ready and waiting to support the invasion of the assault troops the following morning. (31)

BLT-1 stood by in complete readiness to act upon orders from higher authority. Troop schools were conducted aboard ship during the day to insure that every man received all information, both tactical and administrative. At 1825 a message was received from RCT-184 commander ordering that Phase II, Plan A, would be executed 1 February 1944. W-hour-0930. (32)

D plus 1 - 1 FEBRUARY 1944

Supporting air, artillery and naval fires began bombardment of Kwajalein Island at 0618, concentrating on Beaches Red 1 and Red 2. BLT-1 formed boat teams at 0715. Debarkation commenced at 0745 in LCVP's and was completed at 0845. The BLT moved out and arrived at the line of departure at 1005, remaining in the rendezvous area near the control boat awaiting orders. (33)

About 1430 the S-2 went ashore with the RCT Command Group (29, 30, 31) A-3, p. 10; (32) A-5, p. 10; (33) A-5, p. 11

as BLT liaison officer. At 1545 Col. Green, BLT-1 commander, received orders from the RCT commander to tranship the BLT into LVT's as they became available and for him to report at once to RCT headquarters ashore. (34)

The first wave of BLT-3 hit the beach at exactly 0930. The opposition was light, but a foothold on the beach had to be fought for, as a few Japs were sniping from shell holes and craters. The positions were soon cleaned out and the beach was secure within an hour of the landing. (35) The advance continued steadily inland and when ordered at 1635 to take up a defensive position for the night at 1700, BLT-3 had gone forward from the beach about 1300 yards. When the assault companies stopped they learned that the RCT-32 unit on their right was several hundred yards to the rear. In order to gain contact and have no gaps in the line, BLT-3 was forced to extend its line and cover its entire front with one rifle company. By the time the shift was made darkness had fallen and practically no reconnaissance had been made to the front. (36) (Map-C) BLT-2 landed on schedule following close behind BLT-3. (37)

Col. Green, with the S-3, messengers and radiomen went ashore and was met on the beach by the S-2, who guided the party to the RCT CP. Col. Green received orders from the RCT commander, Col. O'Sullivan, to bring BLT-1 ashore and go into an assembly area. Shortly thereafter the S-3 went forward and selected an assembly area about 250 yards east of Red Beach 1 between Will Road and the lagoon shore. The S-3 then went back to the beach to direct the units to the assembly area. The first wave landed on Red Beach 1 at 1800. The following waves

(34) A-5, p. 11; (35) A-9, p. 20; (36) A-9, p. 24 and 26
(37) Personal knowledge

landed at three minute intervals until the last wave was ashore.

(38) The assembly area was organized and a perimeter defense anchored on the lagoon shore was set up for the night. (Map-C) Physical contact was gained with BLT-2 to the front and with an element of RCT-32 to the right. (39)

Col. Green reported to RCT CP at 1800 to receive the Regimental order. At 2000 all unit commanders, liaison officers and BLT staff were assembled at the BLT CP. Col. Green issued the following order for the next day:

"BLT-1 to be ready to move at 0630, two companies abreast, one in reserve. Company "A" on the right, Company "B" on the left. Company "C" in reserve to follow Company "B". Company "D" to follow Company "A". BLT-1 to closely follow BLT-2 and pass through BLT-3. BLT-1 to mop up rear areas." (40)

About 2245 a heavy rain began to fall that lasted for an hour. Shortly after the rain stopped the Japs started to shell the BLT-3 front lines near the lagoon shore with a concentration of mortar fire. They followed up with a near semblance of an organized attack. (41)

D plus 2 - 2 FEBRUARY 1944

The RCT S-3 telephoned at 0140 that BLT-3 had reported a Jap break through and to be on the alert. RCT also ordered one platoon heavy machine guns (Company "D") to report to commanding officer, BLT-3. RCT S-3 called again at 0155 and ordered one rifle company be sent forward to reinforce BLT-3. Company "C" was selected and the company commander was notified to prepare his company to move. A BLT-3 guide was to be posted at the junction of Will Road and Wilma Road to guide the units in. A

(38) A-5, p. 12; (39) A-5, p. 12; (40) A-5, p. 13; (41) A-9, p. 28

third call was received from RCT-3 to send an additional rifle platoon to BLT-3. Company "A" was ordered to send the platoon. (42)

BLT-3's left flank bore the brunt of the attack. That portion of the line received several casualties and the walking wounded started moving to the rear. A light machine gun near the center of the line went silent from a stoppage. The crew could not get it in operation again, so they too moved to the rear taking the gun with them. Unfortunately, at about this same time the radio of a forward observation party had gone bad. After receiving permission from the company commander to return to the company CP the party started back at a run. Some men who saw the party run by thought the line was falling back and they too followed at a run. In only a matter of moments the entire left flank of the front line was in a panic and most of the men started walking or running to the rear. A few of the cooler headed officers and men stopped the rout and reestablished the line. Apparently the Japs didn't realize what had happened and failed to press their advantage. (43)

At 0700 the assault companies of BLT-1 passed through BLT-3 and the units that had been detached during the night reverted back to BLT-1. (44)

The advance was maintained behind BLT-2 and the rear areas thoroughly mopped up. At about 1600 the forward elements of BLT-1 reached a line 200 yards forward of Center Pier. BLT-2 had stopped its advance, preventing any further advance by BLT-1. (Map-C)

At 1500 Col. Green was notified to be at the RCT CP at

(42) A-5, pp. 15, 16; (43) A-9, pp. 29-31; (44) A-5, pp. 16-17

1800 to receive the attack order for the following day. The defense was set up for the night and at 1730 the BLT commander and the S-3 went to Regiment to receive the order. At 1915 all unit commanders, liaison officers and Battalion staff were assembled at the Battalion CP. Col. Green issued the following order:

"Nob Pier is being held by an estimated Jap force of one platoon plus one squad. Air raid shelters are reported on the northern end of the island that may be used as a strong point. There are an estimated 1000 Japs left on the Island.

There will be a ten minute artillery preparation commencing at 0705.

This Battalion will pass through the Second Battalion and cross the line held by the Second Battalion at 0715. It will attack and destroy all enemy installations in its zone of action. Formation--two companies abreast, one in reserve.

"A" Company, with one platoon heavy machine guns in support, will attack on the right of the Battalion zone of action.

"B" Company, with one platoon heavy machine guns in support, will attack on the left of the Battalion zone of action.

"D" Company will support Companies "A" and "B" with one platoon heavy machine guns each. 81mm mortars to fire along lagoon side 200 yards forward of front lines for ten minutes commencing at 0705.

Four medium tanks and two light tanks will support Company "A" as leading tanks. Four medium tanks and one light tank will support Company "B" as leading tanks. All tanks will be on Carl Road at 0700.

One 37mm anti-tank gun each in Companies "A" and "B" area will support the attack and one gun will remain in the vicinity

of the Battalion CP.

The 13th Engineers will be prepared to support the attack with demolitions.

"C" Company, in Battalion reserve, will thoroughly mop up the rear areas.

The aid station will follow the Battalion by bounds." (45)

At 2300 Regiment telephoned that H-hour had been changed to 0715. All units were notified. (46)

D plus 3 - 3 FEBRUARY 1944

This was the day the battle plan called for the "grand finale". This was the day the Division Commander expected the two Regiments to reach the end of the island. Both Regimental Commanders were confident they could report "mission complete" by nightfall. The outcome was much different. (47)

By 0700 all units of BLT-1 had notified the CP they were in position ready to attack. Company "A", on the right of the Battalion zone of action, moved out at 0705, passed through Company "E" and crossed the line of departure at 0715. A guide had been sent to Carl Road at 0650 to meet the tanks that were to have supported the attack. The tanks failed to show up and the attack was launched without them. After an advance of 150 yards the company was confronted with the Admiralty Area, so called because it had been the headquarters of the island commander, Rear Admiral Monzo Akiyama. (48) The Admiralty Area consisted of a maze of buildings, pill boxes, air raid shelters and jumbled heaps of twisted and torn debris caused by the shelling and bombing. The company cleaned out this initial resistance and advanced another 150 yards by 1200. The company

(46) A-5, p. 23; (47) A-4, p. 172; (48) A-4, p. 173

commander then received an order from Battalion to advance slowly to allow Company "B" to come abreast. (49) (Map-C)

Company "B", on the left of the Battalion zone of action, moved forward at 0705, passed through Company "E" and crossed the line of departure at 0715. A guide from Company "B" was also on Carl Road to contact the tanks, but the tanks failed to appear. The company advanced with the 1st and 2nd platoons abreast, 1st platoon on the right. No opposition was encountered for about 150 yards. The two assault platoons then began to encounter sniper and machine gun fire from scattered pill boxes, rubble piles and trenches. They advanced another 75 yards against increasing resistance and ran head on into a series of pillboxes and heavy blockhouses distributed in depth and extending across the entire company front. (50) (Map-C)

Up to this point pre-invasion reconnaissance and intelligence had accurately located and identified almost every Jap fortification and position, but the maps of this area showed only a few scattered pillboxes and houses. It was then believed, and later proven, that here lay the main defensive works on the island. (51)

"B" Company's advance was halted as the enemy fire became more intense. The 1st platoon veered off to the right and contact was lost between the two platoons. Before long the front line lost all semblance of unity and the action became one of squads or small groups of men attempting to reduce the Jap position that was threatening them most. Satchel charges were found to be the only weapon that could dent the fortified positions and the supply was running low with no more immediately

(49) A-5, pp. 24-25; (50) A-5, pp. 25-26; (51) Personal knowledge

available. Permission was received from higher authority to use gas mask containers and the engineer details with the assault units worked feverishly to improvise satchel charges made from "Composition C" and the containers. The engineer details had worked tirelessly side by side with the men of the front line units and had taken care of the demolition assignments. Their job required that they crawl to the entrances and embrasures of pillboxes under cover of Infantry fire and plant their charges. Now, however, there was need for demolitions in more places than the engineer details could handle. The infantrymen had been taught to blow charges, but their lack of training in the technique of proper use produced less effective results and the wastage of a critical item.

The Company "B" commander soon realized his advance had stopped. He could gain no radio contact over the SCR-536's with his platoon leaders, so he went up to the front lines with the 1st Platoon and stayed there most of the day. In the gap between the two platoons lay the largest blockhouse of the island. The 1st Platoon tried to flank it three times and each time was driven back. The Company commander managed to get the two platoons reorganized and start the advance again. At about 1000 four M-10 tanks arrived. Under instructions from the company commander they fanned out ahead and used all guns to fire at every target in sight. The advance continued a short distance until the tanks ran out of ammunition and turned around to go to the rear for a resupply. The phones on the outside of the tanks failed to work and as a result there was practically no coordination between the tanks and the Infantrymen.

"B" Company was stopped cold and "A" Company had slowly continued its advance into the Admiralty Area, creating an ever

widening gap. "A" Company was ordered to hold its position and "C" Company was committed to fill the gap.

The overall situation was not going according to plan. At 1230 a conference was held by the Assistant Division Commander with the two Regimental Commanders. It was decided that RCT-184 was to clean out the blockhouse area by a general envelopment. RCT-32 was to move toward the lagoon shore, pinch out RCT-184 at Nob Pier, and continue to the end of the island. (52) The new plan was relayed to Col. Green and BLT-1 was ordered to make the envelopment.

BLT-2 was ordered to swing around BLT-1 and attack toward the lagoon until pinched out by elements of RCT-32. (53)

At about 1300 Col. Green gave the S-3 the following plan:

"Company "C" with one platoon Company "B" attached, to go into position in the vicinity of the Jap shrine in the Admiralty Area with two platoons abreast on a 150 yard front. Place its left flank on Nora Road and be prepared to attack toward the lagoon on order.

"A" Company to go into position on the right of "C" Company with two platoons abreast on a 150 yard front and be prepared to attack toward the lagoon on order.

"B" Company to reorganize, hold their position, and cover the attack by fire until fire was masked by "C" Company.

"D" Company to support "A" and "C" with one platoon heavy machine guns each. The heavy machine gun platoon initially with "B" Company to revert to "C" Company. 81mm mortars be prepared to fire on call.

Medium tanks to be used if available." (54)

(52) A-4, p. 172; (53) A-9, p. 49; (54) A-5, p. 30

At 1330 the S-3 contacted Commanding Officer Company "A" by SCR-300 radio and told him BLT-2 would be passing through his area and to move his company to a position 200 yards forward of the Jap shrine. Also, to meet the S-3 at the Jap shrine for further orders.

The S-3 and Company "C" commander then left the CP and moved forward to contact Commanding Officer Company "B". The "B" Company Commander was located at the intersection of Will and Nora Roads, at which time the S-3 gave him the plan as ordered by the BLT commander. Company "C" commander picked up the 1st Platoon, Company "B", and guided them to "C" Company's assembly area near the Jap shrine.

About 1515 the S-3 gave the plan to "A" and "C" Company commanders and told them to report to the CP by radio when in position and ready to attack.

At 1545 two medium tanks reported to "A" Company and two M-10 tanks and two medium tanks reported to "C" Company.

"A" and "C" Companies reported by 1605 they were in position and they were ordered to attack at 1615.

"A" Company, with tanks leading, met scattered opposition initially from buildings, snipers and two or three pillboxes. They advanced steadily, destroying all opposition until they reached Will Road. At this point they met extremely heavy opposition from pillboxes and blockhouses between Will Road and the lagoon shore. With the support of Engineers and two medium tanks all opposition was destroyed and the Company reached the Lagoon at 1800. At this time about twenty Japs made a wild, yelling charge on their right flank, scattering rifle fire as they came running straight up. The charge was easily repulsed, and the company settled down to reorganize. The Company

Commander went to the BLT CP for further orders. (55)

"C" Company launched their attack at 1615 with two M-10 tanks and two medium tanks supporting the attack as leading tanks. The first opposition consisted of air raid shelters and the huge blockhouse that had played such a large part in stopping "B" Company. All ports, entrances and exits of the blockhouse were covered by tanks and infantrymen while the engineers sealed them up with demolitions. Only scattered opposition was met the remaining 150 yards to the lagoon and the company reached the beach at 1800 abreast of "A" Company. (56)

"B" Company's fire was masked by "C" Company about 1630, at which time "B" Company moved to a position on "C" Company's left flank in the vicinity of Will and Nora Roads. (57)

All 81mm mortars of RCT-184 had reverted to control of Commanding Officer, Company "D", at 1830 the day before (D plus 2). The mortars were employed in battery and fired a heavy concentration prior to "A" and "C" Company's attack. Troop safety prohibited their being fired the rest of the day, but their heavy volume of support fire undoubtedly served to further disorganize the Jap positions in the blockhouse area. (58)

All companies were ordered at 1815 to dig in, set up a perimeter defense for the night and gain contact with units on the right and left. "A" Company reported it was not possible to gain contact with any unit of BLT-2 on their right.

The rest of the night was comparatively quiet, except for many attempts by the Japs to infiltrate into the company areas singly or in groups of two or three. Most of the infiltration attempts were made from the lagoon shore into "A" Company's area.

(55) A-5, p. 31; (56) A-5, p. 32; (57) A-5, p. 32; (58) Personal knowledge

At 0625 Company "A" requested more small arms ammunition and reported that several Japs were still attempting to get into their area from the lagoon. Daylight revealed that "A" Company had killed 27 Japs during the night on the lagoon shore. (59)

At 0830 RCT S-3 ordered one company from BLT-1 to support the attack of BLT-2. Company "B", by virtue of being the rear-most company at the time, became the reserve company. The BLT commander ^{which was} ordered Company "B" to send an officer to BLT-2 and receive the order. The executive officer, Company "B", reported to the executive officer, BLT-2, and received the order for "B" Company to attack northward along the lagoon shore from "A" Company's right flank. "B" Company moved north on Will Road, passed through "A" and "C" Companies, and arrived at the line of departure in a column of platoons. The leading platoon had advanced about 75 yards when they met scattered small arms fire coming from a series of six pillboxes. The pillboxes were methodically reduced and the advance continued rather slowly. At 1030 three medium tanks and two light tanks arrived and were employed as leading tanks to support the advance. At 1045 the RCT S-2 arrived with a public address system and a Japanese interpreter. An offer to surrender was broadcast over the public address system which resulted in 35 to 40 Japs surrendering. (60)

BLT-2 had become widely dispersed the preceding night and had suffered many casualties, both officers and enlisted men. They had lost much of their tactical unity and the Battalion Commander found it difficult to organize a coordinated attack.

(59) A-5, pp. 35-36; (60) A-5, p. 37

He ordered Company "B" to pass through elements of the Battalion and continue the attack. Company "B" swept on through, gained contact with the left element of RCT-32, and continued to the objective, Nob Pier. "B" Company succeeded in capturing more prisoners than the rest of the Division combined. (61)

At 1300 BLT-2 moved up behind "B" Company and took over their positions. RCT-184 could now announce its mission had been accomplished. RCT-32 went on to the tip of the island and Kwajalein was secured by nightfall. (62)

Company "B" reorganized and maintained its position until 1400. The commanding officer, Company "B", reported to the Battalion CP and received an order from Col. Green to assemble his company and move back to the vicinity of the Battalion CP. All other BLT-1 units were ordered at this time to assemble and move to an area near Central Pier. The move was completed and the new position consolidated at 1500. (63)

The night was quiet except for a few stray Jap snipers who were roaming in the rear areas. Elements of the Battalion killed several during the night. (64)

D plus 5 - 5 FEBRUARY 1944

At 0915 Col. Green left for RCT headquarters to receive orders.

The remainder of the day passed without incident. The area was outposted and one half of each company was permitted to go swimming at two hour intervals.

All unit commanders, liaison officers and BLT staff assembled at the CP at 1800. Col. Green issued a warning order that

(61) A-9, p. 85; (62) A-9, p. 103; (63) A-5, p. 38; (64) A-5, p. 39

BLT-1 would commence loading and boarding ship the following day at 1330.

The area was outposted for the night and no incidents were reported.

D plus 6 - 6 FEBRUARY 1944

Regiment called at 0332 to notify Col. Green to be at the RCT CP at 0445. Col. Green returned at 0615 and issued the following order:

"BLT-1 to move from assembly area at 0730 and load in LCVP's at Beach Green 3. Order of march - Headquarters Company, D, C, A and B Muster of all men by company as soon as aboard ship." (65) (Map-C)

BLT-1 left the assembly area at 0730 and arrived at Beach Green 3 at 0745. Loading into LCVP's commenced at 0830. (66)

Another "stepping stone on the road to Japan" had been won.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The first consideration in analyzing this battle must be given to the high level planning phase, as it affected every unit from the highest to the lowest echelon and down to the individual soldier. It was that of pre-invasion naval and aerial bombardment. Amphibious operations prior to Kwajalein had hammered home the fact that most casualties occurred in trying to win a beachhead and reorganizing after a toe hold had been gained on the beach. The "softening up" process on Kwajalein left little to be desired, evidenced by the unopposed landing and the rapid expansion of the beachhead.

Flanking artillery fire from an adjacent island was certainly an "Artilleryman's dream" and was, of course, only

(65) A-5, p. 41; (66) A-5, p. 42

possible because of the formation of the Atoll. However, its possibilities were exploited to the utmost. In addition, naval gunfire of all calibers from 5-inch to 16-inch was made available on call from two battleships, two cruisers and sixteen destroyers, and was liberally employed by combat commanders. These two factors, coupled with the pre-invasion bombardment, were the principal factors in producing a casualty ratio of twenty eight Japanese to one American. Aviation bombardment was also available on call, but was seldom used by front line commanders because of ground space limitations.

The employment of regiments abreast permitted a crushing frontal attack and provided an abundance of reserves. However, this plan of attack multiplied the problems of the lower echelons, particularly the Battalions. Companies attacked in column on Battalion frontages that averaged not over 300 yards in width. Consequently the Battalion depth was abnormally extended and resulted in supply and communication difficulties within the Battalion.

The overall destruction of the island limited visible contact between adjacent units. Battalions abreast not organic to the same Regiment had great difficulty in maintaining contact and knowing the location of the adjacent front lines. The rate of advance was very erratic and by the time the exchange of information flowed through two Regimental CP's the front line situation very often presented an entirely different picture. This situation was somewhat relieved by exchange of liaison officers and adjustment of an SCR-300 radio to the frequency of the adjacent Battalion's net, but neither method was an entirely satisfactory solution. Calls for needed artillery and naval gunfire had to be suspended on many occasions for

fear the fire would fall amidst friendly troops to the flank.

Maneuver was also restricted because of the narrowness of the island and the mass employment of troops. Initially this was not a serious limitation. Japanese organization and tactical unity had been shattered to a great extent by the pre-invasion bombardment and scattered troops clung tenaciously to fortified installations, foxholes and any cover available above or below ground. The mere fact that a position was being flanked or enveloped meant nothing to the Jap soldier. His psychology and fanaticism dictated only that he kill as many Americans as possible before dying a "glorious" death. Therefore, it became necessary to destroy each and every individual as he was encountered.

On D plus 3, when "B" Company was confronted with a wall of pill boxes and blockhouses that couldn't be cracked by frontal assault, maneuver became a vital consideration. The Division plan stipulated that the two Regiments would continue abreast to the end of the island. Here was a situation that called for maneuver and a change of plan. The Division Commander and planning staff proved themselves equal to the occasion as evidenced by the decision to change the direction of attack of BLT-1 and the seizure of the remainder of the island by RCT-32. The plan was sound, but the execution was difficult, in that lack of space to maneuver caused an intermingling of troops and considerable confusion. This action was not detrimental to BLT-1 as a whole, but was responsible for the commitment of Company "B" the following day.

Control of their units was sometimes lost by Battalion and Company commanders, due principally to the ebb and flow of battle conditions and partly by lack of coordination between

higher echelons. Many times the assault units were permitted to attack until almost dark or troop dispositions were changed with little daylight remaining. Time for reconnaissance was very limited and defensive positions were hurriedly established. Enemy troops were thus enabled to infiltrate through our lines, disrupt communications, cause confusion and sometimes inflict casualties.

The tank-infantry team was a new tactical combination at the time of this operation. When properly employed it proved to be very effective, but those instances were more by chance than design. Lack of communications and coordination precluded deriving the maximum benefits of this powerful team.

The full worth of the combat engineers was realized when bazookas, 37mm anti-tank guns and medium tank fire failed to dent the heavier fortifications. The superb team work and the spirit of mutual confidence between the infantry and engineers permitted the accurate placement of demolitions and assured the advance of the assault elements. The effectiveness of the engineers was limited only by the shortage of prepared charges and the failure to attach the needed strength during some phases of the operation.

Detail in prior planning was shown by adding one BAR to each rifle squad. It provided a greater volume of fire to be placed on embrasures of pill boxes and formed more bases of fire from which demolition and flame thrower teams could maneuver to inflict the finishing blow. In addition the BAR proved very effective when used to spray the tree tops in front of assault elements. This simple procedure eliminated many Jap snipers who had tied themselves to the palm fronds and were entirely hidden from ground observation.

To summarize, the operation was successful and the results justified the means. This may best be exemplified by Admiral Turner's remarks upon completion of the operation:

"Maybe we had too many men and too many ships for this job. I prefer to do things that way. It was many lives saved for us.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons emphasized by this operation are:

1. Heavy and prolonged pre-invasion bombardment in depth against hostile installations is necessary to gain a beachhead with minimum casualties.
2. Increased supply and communication facilities must be provided to support an attack in column.
3. Extended periods of infantry-tank team training are necessary to produce a well coordinated and smooth working team.
4. A small reserve, in addition to the three organic platoons, should be created or provided in a combat engineer company when attached to an RCT.
5. Extensive training in the use of demolitions should be given to combat infantrymen prior to an anticipated attack against fortified positions.
6. Mopping up operations must be thoroughly planned and executed in order to protect communications, supply lines and rear installations.
7. Whenever possible allow ample hours of daylight to prepare defensive positions for the night.
8. Staff planning must anticipate and provide for the supply of sufficient quantities of items vital to the success of a particular operation. The shortage of

prepared demolitions furnish an example in this instance.

9. Reorganization must be effected as often as possible when conditions of battle tend to break down the action into fighting by small groups.
10. Air, naval and artillery bombardment, no matter how heavy and prolonged, is not enough in itself to win battles. These supporting fires only serve to assist the foot soldier to defeat the enemy in detail and actually occupy the seized terrain.