

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 14TH MARINES



HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

COVER: From an emplacement in a canefield on Tinian, a pack howitzer gun crew stands ready, awaiting firing instructions. The lightweight, easily transported 75mm pack howitzer served Marines throughout the island-hopping campaigns of World War II. Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 127-N-90945

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by
Lieutenant Colonel Ronald J. Brown
U.S. Marine Corps Reserve



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Foreword

This historical monograph is one of a series of active duty and Reserve regimental histories. When completed, this series will cover each regiment in the Fleet Marine Force. The narrative highlights the significant activities of the 14th Marines and offers a general history of the Marine Corps activities in which it participated. This particular monograph was assigned to a member of Mobilization Training Unit (History) DC-7, an organization composed entirely of Reservists tasked with augmenting the activities of the History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. These Reservists provide skills as historians, artists, and curators as part of their MTU duties and stand ready to be called to active duty if needed.

Lieutenant Colonel Ronald J. Brown, USMCR, holds a bachelor of arts (with honors) degree in history from Western Michigan University, and a master of arts degree from Eastern Michigan University. Lieutenant Colonel Brown is currently a high school history teacher and football coach in Southfield, Michigan. While on active duty from 1967 to 1971 he served as an infantry officer in the Republic of Vietnam and was stationed at Quantico, Camp Pendleton, and Camp Lejeune. His Reserve activities have taken him to Korea, Japan, Okinawa, Camp Pendleton, Twentynine Palms, Washington, and Quantico. Lieutenant Colonel Brown is the author of many feature articles and is a regular book reviewer for several professional journals.

In the pursuit of accuracy and objectivity, the History and Museums Division welcomes comments on this monograph from key participants, Marine Corps activities, and interested individuals.



E. H. Simmons
Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums

Preface

The 14th Marines is the artillery regiment assigned to the 4th Marine Division, the ground combat arm of the select Marine Corps Reserve. As such the 14th Marines represents one-quarter of the direct support and almost all of the general support heavy artillery in the Marine Corps. *A Brief History of the 14th Marines* is a concise narrative of the regiment, including its brief service during the World War I era, its proud service in the Pacific during World War II, and its reactivation and reorganizations since 1962. Official records of the Marine Corps and appropriate historical works were used in compiling this short history. This monograph is published for the information of those interested in the 14th Marines and the events that shaped its history.

This monograph was produced under the general editorial guidance of Mr. Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Chief Historian of the History and Museums Division. Editorial contributions were made by Mr. Benis M. Frank, Dr. V. Keith Fleming, and Mr. Jack Shulimson. Final editing in preparation for publication was done by Mr. Charles R. Smith. Some of the research on Saipan and Tinian was provided by Major Jeremiah J. Ashcroft II, USMCR. Research assistance was provided by Miss Evelyn A. Englander and Mrs. Pat Morgan, Library Section; Mr. Danny J. Crawford of the Reference Section; and Mrs. Joyce E. Bonnett of the Archives Section. Photographic support was rendered by Mrs. Regina Strother of the Reference Section. The index was prepared by Mr. Benis M. Frank and Mrs. Meredith P. Hartley.

The various production phases this volume went through before publication were professionally handled by the head of the Publications Production Section, Mr. Robert E. Struder. The manuscript was typeset by Mrs. Catherine A. Kerns. The maps and charts were produced by Mr. W. Stephen Hill, who also designed the volume.

Special thanks are due to Lieutenant Colonel Cyril V. Moyher, USMCR, who offered patient advice, valuable guidance, and outstanding administrative support while attached to MTU(Hist) DC-7; and to Colonel Torrence W. Rogers and Sergeant Major Richard L. Butcher for their concern and support for this project. Finally, I wish to express my thanks to the current and former "cannoneers" of the 14th Marines who reviewed the comment draft.



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Table of Contents

Foreword	iii
Preface	v
Table of Contents	vii
Maps and Charts	ix
Introduction	xi
Chapter 1 World War I Era	1
Chapter 2 Reactivation, 1943	4
Chapter 3 Roi-Namur	11
Chapter 4 Maui, 1944	20
Chapter 5 Saipan, 1944	23
Chapter 6 Tinian, 1944	36
Chapter 7 Iwo Jima, 1945	46
Chapter 8 Deactivation, 1945	56
Chapter 9 The Marine Corps Reserve: 1945-61	60
Chapter 10 Rebuilding A Force In Readiness: 1962-69	65
Chapter 11 New Missions and Structure: The 1970s	71
Chapter 12 The Modern 14th Marines: The 1980s	77
NOTES	83
APPENDICES	
A. Commanding Officers, 14th Marines	87
B. Chronology	89
C. Lineage	91
D. Honors	93
E. Contributors	95

Maps and Charts

Organization of 14th Marines, Roi-Namur, February 1944	8
Pacific Ocean Areas of the 14th Marines	8
D-Day in the North	16
14th Marines at Saipan, 1944	24
Saipan 1944	25
Saipan D-Day, 15 June 1944	29
Task Organization at Tinian	37
Artillery Landings on Tinian, 1944	40
Iwo Jima, 1945 Fourth Marine Division Zone of Action	53
The Modern 14th Marines	78

Introduction

The ultimate goal of any military force has always been to ensure victory by concentrating the maximum amount of combat power at the decisive point during the crucial time of the battle. In the early ages of warfare, this most often meant simply massing more troops than the enemy could muster, and then overpowering them with sheer force of numbers. As time passed, technology advanced and dramatically increased the commander's firepower and mobility. Eventually, armies grouped together soldiers who had mastered certain skills to form specialized "arms" to support the maneuver elements. One of the oldest, best known, and most common of these separate arms is the one associated with the science of gunnery, called the artillery.

The primary mission of the artillery always has been close combat support for the maneuver elements of an armed force. This has been true ever since the first unknown warrior picked up a rock and flung it at his enemy. Despite vast tactical and technological innovations, the fundamental task has remained unchanged, even with the passing of centuries. Modern field artillery still provides timely, accurate, long-range fire in support of the units at the forward edge of the battle zone. While the mission of the artillery has remained constant, the war machines themselves have undergone revolutionary changes. It hardly seems possible that today's ultrasophisticated weaponry like the Cannon-Launched, Guided Projectile, capable of striking a moving target 30 kilometers away with deadly certain accuracy, is a distant relative of the simple sling of Biblical days. Yet, it is true. Artillery weapons have simply kept pace with the sweeping technological advances of mankind.

Most field artillery weapons are bulky, complex machines that are extremely vulnerable to direct fire by enemy weapons; therefore, in all but the most unusual circumstances, they operate outside the range of small arms fire. As a result, their contributions to victory have sometimes been overlooked by historians more interested in the heroic actions of units or individuals engaged in close combat with enemy forces. Too frequently the fact that successful military operations in conventional war were the result of close coordination of all combat arms was forgotten. This has been particularly true of Marine Corps operations. Once ashore, one-half the ground-based firepower of a Marine division is furnished by its organic artillery regiment. This is the story of one such regiment, the 14th Marines.¹

Currently, the 14th Marines is one of the regiments assigned to the 4th Marine Division. The 14th Marines differs from the other numbered regiments in the division because it is an artillery unit.² The 14th Marines is organized, equipped, and trained to provide close and continuous indirect fire support for the division's maneuver elements. The 4th Marine Division is the ground force of the selected Marine Corps Reserve. Its members must be ready to mobilize and augment regular units in times of national emergency or at the direction of the President of the United States. The guns of the 14th Marines have always provided outstanding support for the units of the 4th Marine Division day and night, in all types of terrain, weather, and climate. Today, the Reserve cannoners of the 14th Marines stand always at the ready, prepared to resume firing whenever and wherever they may be needed.

CHAPTER 1

World War I Era

The heritage of the 14th Marines began just after the end of World War I. Earlier, on 6 April 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. The climate of opinion in America strongly supported this act of Congress and a wave of patriotism swept across the country. Young men, attracted by slogans such as "Be First To Fight" or "Tell It To The Marines," rushed to enlist in the United States Marine Corps in unprecedented numbers.¹ Soon, recruit depots at Parris Island, South Carolina, and Mare Island, California, were overloaded. Space for training remained limited despite the establishment of several more facilities. To alleviate this congestion, the Marine Corps leased six thousand acres of land just south of Washington, D.C. near the little town of Quantico, Virginia.² This beautiful spot, along the Potomac River in the rolling hills of Virginia, remains a key Marine Corps training center today.³

At Quantico, the 14th Regiment was formed to fill the vacuum left when the 10th Regiment departed for the Naval Proving Grounds at Indian Head, Maryland, to receive further gunnery instruction with its new 7-inch naval guns. The newly activated regiment

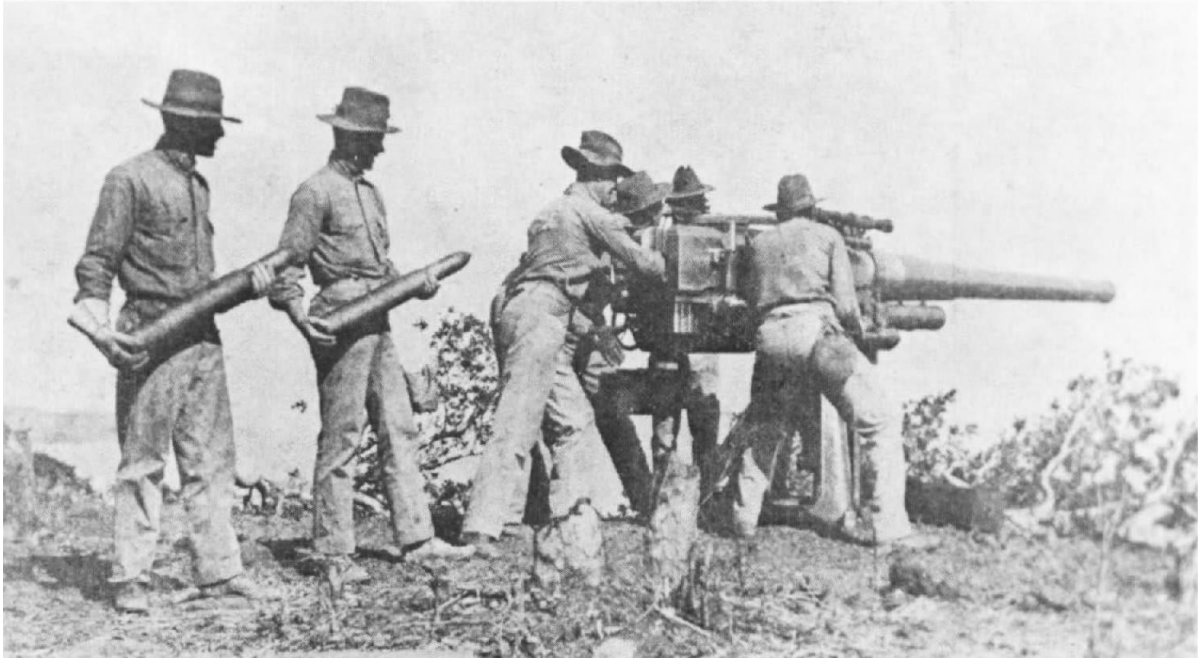
received its first colors on 26 November 1918.⁴ The officers and noncommissioned officers of the 14th Regiment were seasoned veterans. Some had seen service in Cuba in 1898, many had participated in one or more of the frequent American interventions in the Caribbean area, and a few were recently returned from France.⁵ The fledgling 14th Regiment took over much of the equipment left behind by the 10th Regiment. The 14th Regiment inherited many of its finest enlisted men from the 10th Regiment as well. They formed a tough and uncompromising cadre around which an outstanding new unit could be built. Colonel Richard M. Cutts, a preeminent Marine of the era, was selected to command the 14th Regiment.⁶ Colonel Cutts gained fame as the coinventor of the Cutts Compensator, a muzzle brake for the Thompson submachine gun. He also gained recognition for his outstanding performance as the commander of the *Policia Nacional Dominicana*, the national police force of the Dominican Republic.⁷

The new regiment mustered 28 officers and 1,027 enlisted men. It consisted of one headquarters detachment and three battalions. The headquarters detach-

Marine crew loads a 3-inch naval gun similar to those used by the regiment in training drills during the first six months of 1918 in preparation for possible duty in France.

Marine Corps Historical Collection





Marine Corps Historical Collection

Marine gun crew at field artillery drill at Quantico in 1918. These Marines were equipped with the 3-inch field gun rather than the French 75mm gun used by the Army in France.

ment was led by regimental adjutant Harry H. Courvette and contained nine officers and 53 enlisted Marines.⁸ This detachment was responsible for the regiment's administration, supply, signals, and operational planning. Captain Courvette wore many hats. In addition to his job as regimental administrative officer, he also functioned as the regimental executive officer, reconnaissance officer, and signal officer.

The requirements for entering the detachment's technical staff were stiff. Before being posted to it, each enlisted man had to pass a competency test administered by the regiment's officers. These few Marines performed all of the functions of a modern regimental staff, as well as the additional duty of caring for the horses and mules needed for headquarters transportation.⁹

Most of the regiment's manpower was in its three battalions, which were divided into companies. While actual manning levels fluctuated, each company was authorized 4 officers, 24 non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and 75 privates. Most companies mustered two or three officers and about 100 enlisted men during this period.¹⁰ Major, later Major General, Emile P. Moses commanded the 1st Battalion. The 1st Battalion had four companies: the 170th, 171st, 172d, and the 173d. Major Victor I. Morrison's 2d Battalion controlled the 174th, 175th, 176th, and 177th Companies. The 3d Battalion was a light battalion of only two companies, the 178th and 179th.¹¹

The new 14th Regiment had three primary tasks to accomplish during its rigorous training program. One major task involved basic military training. A second objective was to familiarize the neophyte Marines with the regiment's 3-inch naval guns. The last task was preparation for possible duty overseas.* The skills required to operate the complex artillery pieces were vastly different from the skills used by infantrymen; therefore, the men of the 14th Regiment faced a dual commitment.

To accomplish the first two goals, the companies conducted infantry drill with rifles during the morning, and artillery gun drill in the afternoon. The command considered infantry drill necessary for two reasons. First, rifle drill helped the gunners of the 14th Marines maintain a high state of discipline. It also trained them to act as an infantry force should their battery positions be threatened by an enemy assault.

Training with their artillery weapons involved learning the "mechanism of fire" for the unfamiliar guns. Instruction began in the classroom, followed by hands-on experience gained through the seemingly endless gun drills on the parade ground where men responded by the numbers, loading imaginary ammunition and

*After the armistice, the 4th Marine Brigade was sent to Germany for occupation duty. Other AEF units were posted to Russia to protect American lives and property. A small detachment of Marines landed at the Russian port of Vladivostok in 1919.



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 525409
Col Richard M. Cutts assumed command of the 14th Regiment, activated at Quantico, Virginia, in 1918.

“firing” at imaginary targets. Then came live-fire exercises in the field. Once each gunner was an expert at his own craft, he was cross-trained to perform the duties of a technical NCO. This training allowed the unit to function smoothly should an NCO be transferred, absent, or disabled in combat. The men spent the evening hours with the care and feeding of the animals that made up the bulk of the regiment's transportation.¹²

During field firing, an officer commanded each platoon. The senior lieutenant supervised the advance to action, the establishment of a proper firing position, and the correct delivery of fire on targets designated by the company commander. Sergeants commanded specific guns. Corporals were in charge of gun crews, caissons, and limbers, or motor tractor operations. The gunnery sergeant and his technical NCOs functioned similarly to a modern fire direction center (FDC). They located targets, computed and relayed proper firing data to the guns, and helped supervise the conduct of fire. Each company had four guns, eight caissons, and sufficient mounts or motor tractors to transport its equipment.¹³ Then, as now, artillery support required the smooth incorporation of all hands into a well-knit team. The long hours and hard work put in by the Marines of the 14th Regiment ensured this degree of cooperation.

In early 1919 the expeditionary troops began returning to the United States from Europe, and America no longer needed its extensive wartime military establishment. Demobilization was the order of the day. In 18 months the total strength of the Marine Corps dropped from 75,101 in 1918 to only 17,047 in 1920.¹⁴ The 14th Regiment was not immune from these cutbacks and soon received orders to stand down and prepare for deactivation. Colonel Cutts departed in April to take command of the 10th Regiment. His replacement was Colonel Philip M. Bannon. The 14th Regiment officially deactivated on 19 June 1919.¹⁵ During the entire time of its initial activation, the 14th Regiment was at Marine Barracks, Quantico, Virginia. Although never called on for actual combat, the 14th Regiment of 1918-1919, like the modern 14th Marines, stood as a force in readiness, prepared to fight wherever and whenever needed.

CHAPTER 2

Reactivation, 1943

American dreams of peace and any lingering illusions of isolationism vanished 7 December 1941 with the surprise Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor. Huge numbers of infuriated Americans flocked to Armed Forces recruiting stations for the second time in the 20th century. Once again the ranks of the Marine Corps began to swell as they had in 1917. The Marine Corps instituted crash training programs and quickly formed new units to accommodate the growing number of volunteers. The 1st Marine Division and elements of the 2d Marine Division landed on Guadalcanal in 1942. The 3d Marine Division formed in September of that same year, and went to the South Pacific in mid-February of 1943. The 23d Marines, under the command of Colonel Louis R. Jones, detached from the latter division and remained behind to become the nucleus of the new 4th Marine Division. By 1 June 1943 the 14th Marines again was operational as a regiment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel, later Major General, Randall M. Victory.¹ Once again, after a quarter-century lapse, the 14th Marines joined the proud ranks of the Marine artillery and began preparing for the business at hand, the total defeat of the Japanese Empire in the Pacific Theatre.

The 14th Marines, like its parent organization, the 4th Marine Division, was formed in two echelons. One, on the east coast, trained at Camp Lejeune, New River, North Carolina. The other, on the west coast, served at Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California. The 1st and 3d Battalions made up the East Coast Echelon. The 2d Battalion was the West Coast Echelon. The 4th Battalion was later activated at Camp Pendleton after the East and West Coast Echelons were united.²

The 1st Battalion, with firing batteries A, B, and C, was activated on 1 May 1943 at Camp Lejeune. The 2d Battalion did the same on 26 March at Camp Pendleton, with three firing batteries and a Headquarters and Service Battery. Battery D originally formed on 3 December 1942 at Training Camp (later Camp Lejeune), New River, North Carolina. Its initial designation was the Pack Howitzer Battery, 1st Separate Battalion (Reinforced). On 9 March this battery departed North Carolina for Camp Pendleton. Upon its arrival, the battery was attached to the 24th Marines for train-

ing. Battery E had been the Pack Howitzer Battery of the 2d Separate Battalion (Reinforced), also located at New River. It moved to Camp Pendleton on 16 March. It also was attached to the 24th Marines for training. Battery A, 3d Separate Battalion (Reinforced) entrained on 17 March for Camp Pendleton. It became Battery F, 14th Marines after it arrived in California. Although the 2d Battalion officially joined the 14th Marines on 26 March 1943, its firing batteries did not physically link up with the rest of the regiment until they returned from field exercises on 19 August 1943. The senior battalion of the 14th Marines was the 3d Battalion. It became operational on 22 July 1942 as the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines, 3d Marine Division. Its designation changed on 20 February, and it became a cadre for the 14th Marines. This battalion officially joined the 14th Marines on 1 June 1943. The 4th Battalion received its colors on 29 July 1943. From 9 August through 19 August the battalion reached its authorized strength when all its firing batteries joined their parent organization. The 4th Battalion entered the 14th Marines' muster book on 19 August 1943. The official reactivation of the 14th Marines was complete on 1 June 1943 with the activation of the Headquarters and Service Battery.³

The 1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions were the direct support battalions of the regiment. In combat, each of these battalions devoted its fire to a single rifle regiment, hence, the term "direct support." A direct support artillery battalion provided liaison officers to infantry regimental headquarters and assigned forward observation teams to different combat teams. A forward observation team consisted of the forward observer or "FO," an artillery officer who spotted and adjusted artillery fire, and a communications section charged with maintaining either radio or land-line telephone communications links with the artillery battalion. The purpose of direct support was to provide maneuver units with immediate fire support and required the artillery battalion to give its highest priority of fire to the supported regiment.⁴ This tactic allowed a close working relationship to develop between the infantry and artillery units. The direct support mission was one of the most effective, most



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A352190
Pictured as a brigadier general, LtCol Randall M. Victory, a former "Horse Marine" in China, assumed command of the reactivated 14th Marines in 1943.

demanding, and most decentralized of all artillery missions. A major liability of this tactic was that it prohibited the assignment of an artillery battalion's fire to more than one maneuver unit at a time, however, if all three infantry regiments were not actively involved in the scheme of maneuver (a common occurrence, as one of the three regiments was often in reserve) it was possible to use one of the direct support battalions to reinforce the fire of another unit. The direct support battalions were originally armed with the 75mm pack howitzer, M1 or M1A1.*

The pack howitzer concept originated from the requirement for a mobile cannon suitable for operations in rugged mountain terrain. The feature which made pack howitzers unique was that they could be easily broken down into their major components for transport. Although originally designed for mountain operations, its inherent mobility, its light weight, and its tough design made the pack howitzer a perfect weapon for amphibious operations as well. During the 1930s the United States did not have a landing craft with a front ramp, so all equipment had to be manhandled

*The difference in the two weapons was in the breechblock and breechblock rings, which were not interchangeable.

over the side, or offloaded at a docking facility. The M1 pack howitzer, which could be broken down into six components, fitted the bill perfectly. The weapon was compact. Its tube was extremely short, barely longer than its recoil mechanism. The major recognition factors of the cannon were the carrying handle welded to the front of the barrel and the holes drilled into the box trail to decrease its weight. The 75mm howitzer weighed only 1,379 pounds. It could fire a 14.7-pound high explosive (HE) projectile 9,600 yards with a muzzle velocity of 1,250 feet per second. There was no protective shield for the gunners. This fine cannon was nicknamed "Little Dynamite." It offered three advantages over the 105mm howitzer. It was much more accurate at short and medium ranges. The pack howitzer was easier to set up and camouflage because of its small size. In fact, the entire cannon was only 37 inches high when the barrel was at zero degrees elevation. Ammunition handling was much easier as well.⁵

The 4th Battalion was the regiment's general support battalion. This battalion was the only one originally armed with the 105mm howitzer. The 105mm howitzer (in 1943 designated the M2, but later redesignated the M101A1) was one of the finest artillery pieces ever made. From 1940 to 1953, 10,202 were produced and sent to 46 different armies in the world.**

The 105mm howitzer offered several advantages over the 75mm pack howitzer: it had a longer range, 11,000 meters as opposed to 8,800 meters with the 75mm; a heavier shell, 33 pounds as opposed to 14.7 pounds; and a larger explosive burst radius, 20 by 30 meters as opposed to 10 by 20 meters. The "105" featured a relatively short barrel over a conventional carriage with a box section, split trail legs, and built-in spades. It weighed 4,250 pounds and fired a high explosive projectile 12,250 yards with a muzzle velocity of 1,550 feet per second. A crew of eight manned the 105mm howitzer. It could fire a maximum of eight rounds per minute and keep up a sustained rate of four rounds per minute. The 105mm howitzer was able to shoot a more powerful shell much further than the 75mm pack howitzer, but at the cost of decreased mobility and increased complexity. The executive officer of the 4th Battalion, Major (later Colonel) Roland J. Spritzen, believed there were several reasons the 75mm pack

**The 105mm howitzer was the mainstay of the Marine Corps artillery direct support batteries in Korea and Vietnam, finally being replaced by the M198 in the mid-1980s. Marine Corps artillery battalions still retain the 105 to answer sticky tactical problems that require an airlift using CH-46 Sea Knight or CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopters. *Brassey's Artillery of the World* (London: Brassey's, 1977), pp. 44-45.



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 57209

A 75mm pack howitzer crew sets up and readies the gun for action. The regiment's direct support battalions were armed with this lightweight, easily transportable artillery piece.

howitzer was first used as the direct support artillery weapon instead of the 105mm howitzer:

At this time . . . there weren't enough 105mm howitzers available and . . . there wasn't the know-how and means to land the 105mm howitzers, except from LCM's (Landing Craft, Mechanized—a large landing boat with a bow ramp designed to land trucks, tanks, and artillery prime movers directly onto the beach) and those were in short supply When the means to transport and land the . . . (105's) were available the direct support units would be 105mm and the general support would be 155mm.⁶

As the war progressed four of the five battalions assigned to the 14th Marines used the 105mm howitzer in combat.

The 14th Marines received a new commanding officer on 7 June 1943 when Colonel Louis G. DeHaven assumed command, and Lieutenant Colonel Victory became the regimental executive officer. A veteran artillery officer, Colonel DeHaven served in combat in World War I and later in the Dominican Republic prior to joining the 14th Marines. He received his promotion to colonel in 1942, and commanded the 14th Marines in all of its combat actions in World War II.⁷

On 1 June 1943 the 14th Marines became part of the East Coast Echelon, 4th Marine Division, under the command of Brigadier General, later Lieutenant General, James L. Underhill. On 5 August 1943 the 1st Battalion, the 3d Battalion, and Headquarters and

Service Battery left North Carolina by train. They arrived at Camp Pendleton on 14 August. On 16 August the 4th Marine Division, including the 14th Marines, became operational. The acting division commander was Brigadier General Underhill. Two days later, 18 August 1943, Major General Harry Schmidt assumed command, and Brigadier General Underhill became the assistant division commander. By 10 September, the last of the East Coast Echelon had arrived. At the end of September, the division was at full combat strength with 17,831 officers and men.⁸ Time was short, and training intensified as the division prepared for combat.

The 14th Marines did not have much time to sharpen its combat skills after arriving in California. The tentative date for deployment to the Pacific was 1 December 1943. With this in mind, the 14th Marines devoted the month of September to individual training and gun crew familiarization.

In 1943 Camp Pendleton was still a new base and suffered many growing pains. The largest problems facing the 14th Marines were the lack of suitable live-fire impact areas and a limited road network. Whenever a live-fire problem was conducted, a good part of the training time was spent putting out fires started by the shell bursts. While the batteries and battalions were able to conduct some combat train-



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A19541

Arming the regiment's general support battalion was the 105mm howitzer, which was to become the mainstay of Marine direct support artillery batteries in later years.

Col Louis G. DeHaven, pictured here as a lieutenant colonel, assumed command of the regiment in 1943 and continued in command throughout World War II.

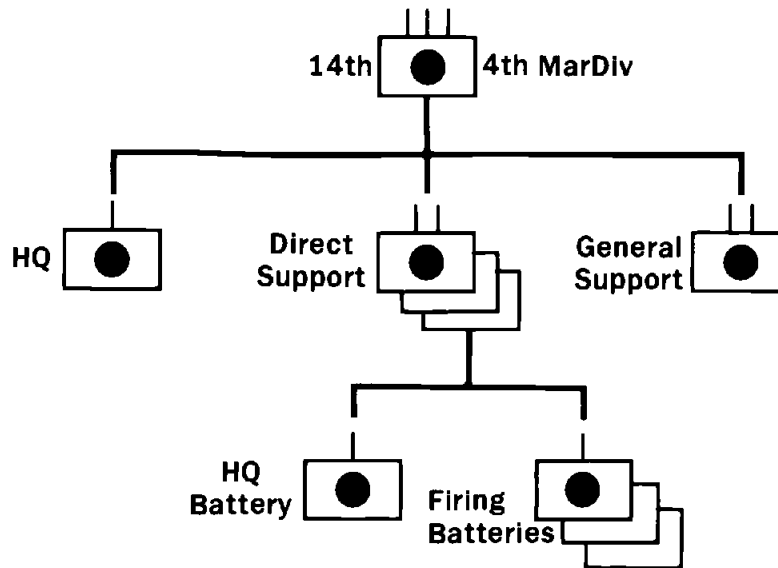
Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A401391



ing, the regiment had no opportunity to train, test, or communicate as a unit while at Camp Pendleton. Therefore, in November 1943 the 14th Marines moved to Camp Dunlap, Niland, California, for extensive practice at the regimental level. At Camp Dunlap, the 14th Marines became the smooth team that would operate so well at Roi-Namur, Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima. The forward observer teams manned their observation posts (OPs) at the edge of the impact area. The communications technicians worked out the bugs in their radio and telephone procedures. The fire direction centers (FDC) practiced solving difficult gunnery problems under simulated combat conditions. Along the firing line, gun captains supervised their sections. Marines practiced giving and repeating fire commands and setting chart data on the howitzers. Ammunition handlers set fuzes and tore off charge increments. Shells were slammed into their breeches, breechblocks locked in place, and lanyards pulled. Time and time again the shells of the 14th Marines whistled overhead and exploded in the target area. After a live-fire problem ended, Marines cleaned each gun with care, and then lubricated it for its next firing. The 14th Marines was well prepared when it returned from Camp Dunlap and rejoined the 4th Marine Division.⁹

While the 14th Marines were at Camp Dunlap, the

Organization of 14th Marines, Roi-Namur, February 1944

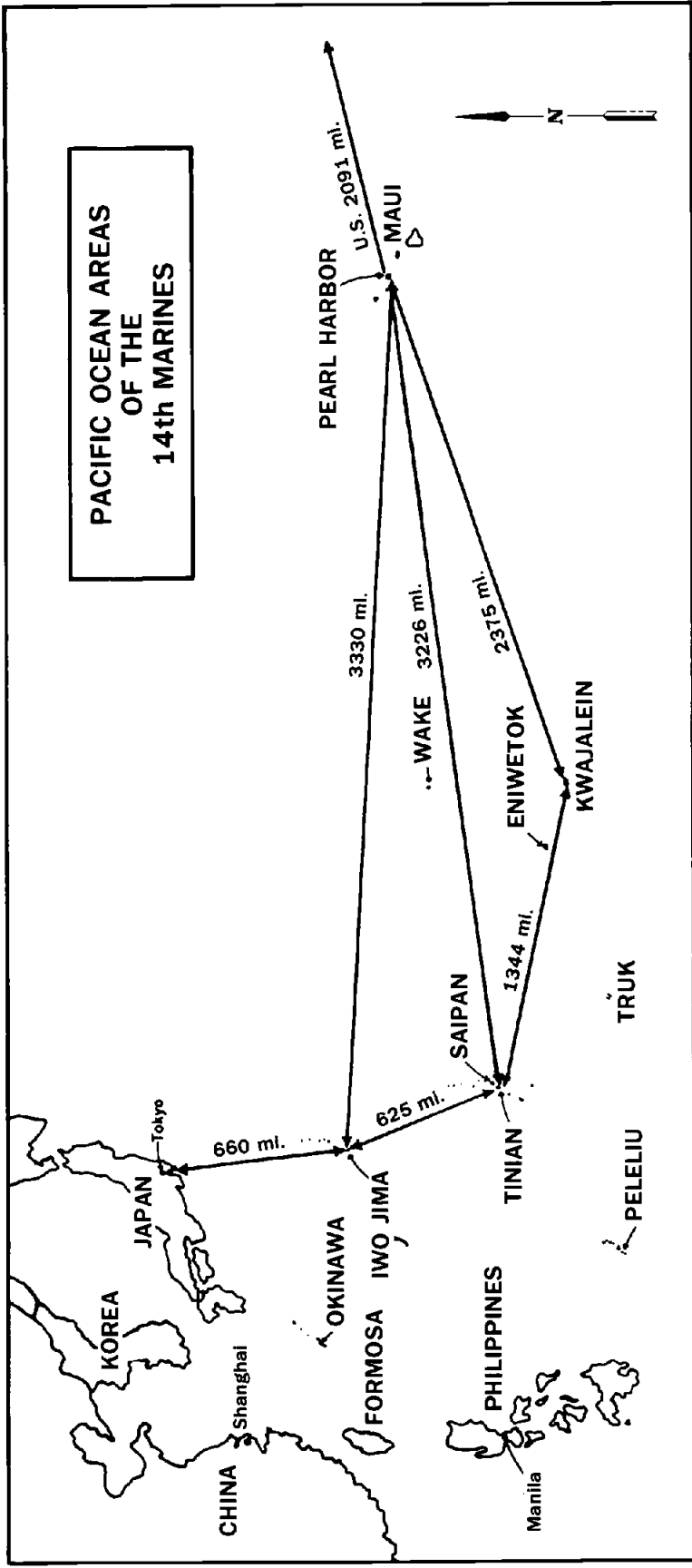


The 1st, 2d, and 3d (Direct Support) Battalions were armed with 75mm Pack Howitzers. The 4th (General Support) Battalion was armed with 105mm Howitzers.

rest of the division conducted a field problem at Aliso Canyon on 14-15 December 1943. At this same time, the division staff was finishing up work on Operation Plan 3-43, the plan for the upcoming assault on the Marshall Islands. Operation Plan 3-43 went out to all units on 31 December. The division's training carried over into an actual rehearsal for combat. The 14th Marines boarded assigned shipping on 1 January 1944, and participated in the final practice landing at San Clemente Island on 2-3 January. The 14th Marines reembarked on 6 January and left on the longest shore-to-shore operation in Marine Corps history.¹⁰

The voyage to Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshalls was the first extended sea voyage for most of the men of

the 14th Marines. It was quite an initiation. The convoy traveled more than 4,400 miles from embarkation point to landing, and the 14th Marines was on board its transports for 25 days. The conditions on board ship were not what some of the Marines expected. Soon after the hazy coast of California slipped over the horizon, many Marines discovered that the rolling and pitching deck of a troop ship did little to improve an upset stomach. The holds were sweltering, and the salt water showers offered little refreshment. The Marines lay in racks stacked eight tiers high. Each man had so little space that he could not turn over without disturbing all the others. The Marines' days were filled with abandon ship and debarkation drills plus lectures



on various military skills. After the convoy left its rendezvous point at Hawaii, the men of the 14th Marines learned their destination. Officers briefed the men on planned unit locations, missions, phase lines, call signs, and other necessary details. Slowly, the convoy plowed through the Pacific waters. On the fringes of

the convoy, destroyers raced to and fro, ever vigilant for the enemy. Finally, on the night of 30 January 1944, the convoy arrived at its destination, Kwajalein Atoll in the center of the Marshall Island chain. The 14th Marines was about to earn its first streamer for combat action.¹¹

CHAPTER 3

Roi-Namur

While the 4th Marine Division trained in the United States, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet/Commander in Chief Pacific Ocean Areas, directed Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, Commander, Fifth Fleet and Central Pacific Force, to assault the Marshall Islands on 1 April 1944. The V Amphibious Corps (VAC) would provide the expeditionary troops for this operation, with the 4th Marine Division slated to land at Roi-Namur.¹ The Marshalls offensive was initially codenamed "Bank-rate," but this was later changed to "Flintlock." Operation Flintlock initially involved an amphibious assault on the large islands located along the southern and eastern approaches to the Marshalls.*

As the 14th Marines trained at Camp Pendleton and Camp Dunlap, their comrades-in-arms of the 2d Marine Division were storming the beaches of Betio, Tarawa Atoll, in the Gilbert Islands. Tarawa was one of the most viciously concentrated battles in the history of the Marine Corps. It marked the beginning of a new type of warfare in the Pacific. The previous Marine campaigns at Guadalcanal, Bougainville, and Cape Gloucester were all prolonged struggles of endurance and maneuver to seize large islands covered by dense tropical rain forest. In this jungle-covered terrain, stealth, surprise, and swiftness of movement characterized the fierce fighting. In the Central Pacific, however, the islands were coral atolls, small islets ringed by sharp coral reefs. Their small size and almost total lack of cover and concealment offered tactical planners very few options. Every island large enough to hold an airfield was a Japanese fortress protected by underwater obstacles to break up a landing, a series of mutually supporting machine gun positions, and heavy coastal artillery in reinforced concrete pillboxes. There was no room to maneuver, and little opportunity to surprise the vigilant defenders. Therefore, the tactical keys to conquering the Japanese holdings in the Central Pacific became the proper use of mass and effective use of supporting arms.** The guns of

*These included the heavily fortified islands of Wotje, Maloe-lap, and Mille.

**Tarawa's 3,000-plus casualties in 76 hours shocked the military planners of Flintlock. Among the casualties were two of the

14th Marines would play an important role in the upcoming operation.

The lessons learned at Tarawa influenced the planning for Operation Flintlock in all areas. At the strategic level, Admiral Nimitz made the sweeping decision to bypass the outer islands of the Marshalls and to strike directly at their heart, Kwajalein Atoll. Major General Holland M. Smith, commanding general of the VAC, changed his operational plans to include more amphibian tractors, known as LVTs, and significantly increased the use of all supporting arms.*** The staff planners of the 4th Marine Division and the 14th Marines arrived at a tactical concept of artillery support that ensured the maximum effectiveness of the howitzers. They decided to land the guns on four small adjacent islands prior to the main assault on Roi-Namur proper. This tactic, a direct legacy of Tarawa, reduced the casualty rate of Operation Flintlock, and was instrumental in the successful amphibious operations at Kwajalein Atoll.²

With the lessons of Tarawa fresh in their minds, a new plan for Operation Flintlock quickly took shape.³ The basic elements of the plan were for the invasion forces to mount out from the United States and Hawaii, bypass and neutralize the outer islands of the Marshalls, and strike directly at Kwajalein with simultaneous assaults miles apart. The attacking force consisted of a major naval fleet and the 53,000 troops of the VAC. The U.S. Army's 7th Infantry Division was to land at Kwajalein Island in the south, while the 4th Marine Division was to strike at the twin islets of Roi and Namur in the north. Two separate rifle regiments, the 22d Marines and the 106th Infantry Regiment (U.S. Army), were the VAC reserve forces.

The Marshall Islands offered an excellent stepping stone from the Gilberts to the Marianas, the next target on the road to Japan. Kwajalein was the largest

four 4th Marine Division observers, one of whom died of wounds. For further information see Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Bernard C. Nalty, and Edwin T. Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive - History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II* (Washington: HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, 1966).

***The amphibian tractor's official designation was Landing Vehicle, Tracked, hence "LVT."

atoll in the world. It was approximately 65 miles long and about 18 miles across. Kwajalein Lagoon, an outstanding potential fleet anchorage, was ringed by 240 miles of coral reef with at least 88 islands which varied in size from Kwajalein Island to pinpoint coral dots. Most of the Japanese facilities and both airfields were located on the two major land masses, Roi-Namur and Kwajalein Island.

The major objectives of the 4th Marine Division's assault were the twin islands of Roi and Namur. Viewed from above, they resembled a pair of water wings joined by a sand spit about 400 yards long on the lagoon side, and further linked by a 500-yard, man-made causeway. Roi was the larger of the two islands, and was the site of the largest Japanese airfield on the atoll. It was roughly three-quarters of a mile square. There was little vegetation as its airfield had three runways that formed a large figure "4," two service aprons, two hangars, assorted service buildings, a control tower, and 30 aircraft revetments. This barren island was codenamed "Burlesque."

Namur, located to the east of Roi, was about one-half square mile. Unlike Roi, it was covered by heavy vegetation and dotted with many palm trees. Numerous buildings lined its crushed coral streets. The heavy surf which pounded its oceanside coral reef discouraged landing operations and dictated a lagoon approach by small craft.⁴ Namur was codenamed "Camouflage."

The defenses of Roi-Namur were typical of those found in the Central Pacific area. There were two strong points, Wendy Point on Roi and Sally Point on Namur, each equipped with Japan's most modern dual-purpose guns. A series of 19 concrete pillboxes containing 28 heavy machine guns protected the strong points. Antitank ditches zigzagged across Roi and Namur just behind the beachline to halt the inland progress of American amphibian tractors and tanks. Four major reinforced concrete structures served as command posts and ammunition storage areas. The Japanese defenders planned to launch a counterattack with all available forces if these defensive preparations failed to stop the landing forces (Americans called such efforts "*Banzai* attacks" because of the patriotic slogans chanted by the Japanese during the attack).⁵

The defenders of Roi-Namur were under the titular command of Vice Admiral Mashi Kobayashi, commander in chief of the *Fourth Fleet* at Truk Island. The Japanese garrison forces were members of special naval guard units attached to the *6th Base Force* under Rear Admiral Monzo Ajiyama whose headquarters was on Kwajalein Island. The actual forces on Roi-Namur totaled about 3,000 men. Most of these belonged to

the *24th Naval Air Flotilla*. There was also a *Provisional Defense Battalion*, *Soyonama Unit*, *61st Naval Guard Force*, with about 500 men. In addition, there were about 1,000 or so workers from the *Naval Air Construction and Service Corps*. All of these men were under the immediate command of Vice Admiral Michiyuki Yamada's headquarters on Namur. American intelligence estimated a like number of Japanese troops on Kwajalein Island, with about 2,000 more scattered throughout the smaller islets of Kwajalein Atoll.⁶

The 14th Marines, along with the rest of the 4th Marine Division, was assigned to the Northern Landing Force by VAC. The ground elements of the Northern Landing Force were commanded by Major General Schmidt, and the Northern Attack Force was commanded by Rear Admiral Richard L. Conolly, commander of Task Force 53.* The general plan called for a three-part operation. Phase I was the seizure of several off-shore islands which controlled the lagoon passages and dominated the area around Roi-Namur. Marine artillery would use these islands for providing fire support for the main landings. Phase II was the actual assault on Roi-Namur, the tactical and logistical center of air activity at Kwajalein Atoll. The final phase was the capture of 11 other small islands in the general proximity of Roi-Namur. Because of the complexity and importance of Phase I, a special landing force, Group Ivan, was formed to accomplish this task. This group included the entire 14th Marines, along with infantry battalion landing teams in assault and supporting units, such as the 4th Special Weapons Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Alexander A. Vandegrift, Jr.) armed with 37mm towed antitank guns and half-tracks mounting 75mm howitzers.⁷

While the infantry assault was a traditional "two up and one back" attack, the artillery played a unique role in the capture of Roi-Namur. The tactical planners of Operation Flintlock quickly recognized the value of placing artillery on the small islets which had to be seized to ensure a safe entrance into the lagoon. One of the greatest limiting factors of Marine Corps artillery was its inability to fire during the initial stage of most amphibious landings. Unless Marines captured off-shore islands or convenient promontories before the main landings, the artillery had to circle in "on call" waves of landing craft until the assault force moved far enough inland to secure adequate areas to serve as firing positions. Since this sometimes happened late

*After Roi-Namur he became known as "Close-in Conolly" because of his orders to his naval gunfire ships to close in to the beach until their bottoms scraped sand.



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 70547

MajGen Harry Schmidt, right, commanding the 4th Marine Division, and RAdm Richard L. Conolly, commander of the Northern Task Force, review a map of Roi-Namur prior to attacking the heavily-fortified Japanese-held island in the northern part of Kwajalein Atoll.

in the day, Marine artillerymen occasionally had to conduct difficult night landings. Another disadvantage was that selection of available firing positions was limited to those in the beachhead area, thus, the artillery often had to use less than desirable positions due to the combat situation. The artillery also was most vulnerable during this period. Any extensive damage to the landing craft during the transportation phase usually resulted in the loss of the artillery piece as well.⁸ Colonel DeHaven and his operations officer, Major Frederick J. Karch, realized that the use of these neighboring islands would offer the 14th Marines many advantages and minimize the factors which hampered the proper use of their guns.*

Naval gunfire, close air support, and armored amphibian tractors usually took up the slack for artillery fire during the opening stages of an amphibious assault, but sometimes lost their effectiveness as time passed and the landing force moved inland. Artillery offered several very real advantages over the other supporting arms available to the VAC. The guns of the 14th Marines would be mounted on a stationary land

*Major Karch, a brigadier general in 1965, led the first Marine air-ground team to be committed to South Vietnam, the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade.

platform, not on a rolling or pitching deck, ensuring much greater accuracy. The location of the guns, close to the using units, ensured good communications and quicker reaction time to calls for fire. The shore-based howitzers were not subject to limited time on station, as was aviation, nor were they forced to alter course to avoid navigational hazards. Once Marines captured the small, outlying islands on D-Day, the field pieces of the 14th Marines could be brought ashore to support the landing and exploitation phases of the operation. These guns would provide round-the-clock, close fire support for Regimental Combat Team (RCT) 23 and RCT 24 when they stormed Roi-Namur's beaches.**

Four islets were large enough to accommodate artillery emplacements, and became key targets of the D-Day assault by Group Ivan. Mello and Ennuebing, codenamed "Ivan" and "Jacob" respectively, were southwest of Roi, and dominated the passages through the coral reef. After they secured these two islands, Marines would capture more islands southeast of Namur.

**A similar plan calling for the capture of Bairiki Island at Tarawa was rejected due to time limitations and the anticipated loss of surprise. For Operation Flintlock, fire superiority was deemed more important than the element of surprise.

These were Ennument (Albert), Ennubirr (Allen), and several others. Each was small in size, within artillery range of the landing zones, and lightly defended. The planning staff anticipated a quick capture of each. This allowed sufficient time to land, set up, and register the howitzers of the 14th Marines so they could provide proper fire support for the main landings the next morning.⁹

The dawn which broke over Kwajalein Atoll on D-Day (31 January 1944) revealed a colorful panorama. The plush green of the island vegetation outlined the bright white sand which ringed every islet, and provided a sharp contrast with the blue-green colors of the surrounding waters. Shortly, bright orange flashes from the guns of the fire support ships of Admiral "Close-in" Conolly's Task Force 53 engulfed those islands. A dull grey overcast covered the sky, and choppy swells broke over the reefs. The choppy water caused some problems for the landing force. A strong Force 7 wind (19 knots) blew in from the east, and weather forecasters predicted intermittent rain squalls throughout the day. At 0530 the Marines of Group Ivan went over the side of their ships, and scrambled down the cargo nets into the landing craft below. Among the members of the 2d Battalion's Battery E were brothers Clayton B. and Auden B. Ponder, both of whom would participate in all of the combat operations of the 14th Marines.¹⁰

Brigadier General James L. Underhill, the assistant division commander and a veteran artilleryman, commanded the Ivan group.* It consisted of landing teams from the 25th Marines, the firing batteries of the 14th Marines, some of the new LVT(A)s assigned to the 1st Armored Amphibian Tractor Battalion, and the amtracs of the 10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion.**¹¹ This was the first time in history that a landing operation relied on large-scale use of LVTs as the primary transport ashore.*** The LVTs were not selected because they were swift or graceful on either land or water, but because they could operate in both environments.**** The planners of Operation Flintlock did

*Brigadier General Underhill commanded the 10th Marines from 19 December 1928 to 13 November 1930.

**These tractors mounted a 37mm gun and several machine guns. Their purpose was to provide close support for the landing forces as they crossed the beach.

***LVTs were used as supplementary transportation at Tarawa. After the assault waves landed, they were pressed into heavy usage when the regular landing craft could not cross the coral reef around the atoll.

****LVTs, originally nicknamed "amphtracs" and then "amtracs," were bulky, poorly armored vehicles with very high silhouettes. They had poor cross-country performance, a maximum speed of 14 miles per hour on land, and they could waddle through the water no faster than 7.5 miles per hour.



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A556710
Maj Frederick J. Karch, here shown as a brigadier general, served with the regiment throughout World War II, first as battery commander, then as battalion commander, and finally as the operations officer.

not realize that the principles and standards used for landing boats were not applicable to amtracs. The LVTs used far more fuel, had very little freeboard space above the water, and depended upon their moving tracks for propulsion. Because of the high winds, heavy surf, hidden coral reefs, and their slow speed, many amtracs floundered in the pounding surf, lost power, and sank. These unfortunate circumstances affected all elements of the Flintlock landing plans, and were particularly troublesome to the 14th Marines' landings later in the day.***** H-Hour, scheduled for 0900, had to be postponed due to the high winds and heavy surf. Group Ivan's landing operation took much longer than expected, which interrupted the entire landing schedule.

The initial objectives of the Ivan landing group were Mellu and Ennuebing Islands. The seizure of these two islands gained a passage into Kwajalein Lagoon

*****This poor performance stemmed from inherent design flaws in the LVTs, the inexperienced crews operating them, and poor coordination among Marine LVT crews and the Navy crews on board ship. Only one practice landing took place at San Clemente and showed many of these problems; however, the transports embarked before a critique was held and the problems worked out.



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 70364

Marines of the 4th Division hug the beach soon after their assault on Roi-Namur.

for the follow-up forces and allowed two battalions of the 14th Marines to land and support the rest of the operation. Despite problems in transferring from LCVPs to LVTs, Marines quickly secured both islands.* Ennuebing fell to Company B, 25th Marines in less than one hour. The Marines killed 13 enemy soldiers and captured three prisoners of war. Mellu took a little longer, but showed similar results: 17 enemy dead and two captured. Immediately after Brigadier General Underhill received word of the successful landings at about 1145, he flashed the order to land the artillery. The 14th Marines' first combat action was underway.¹²

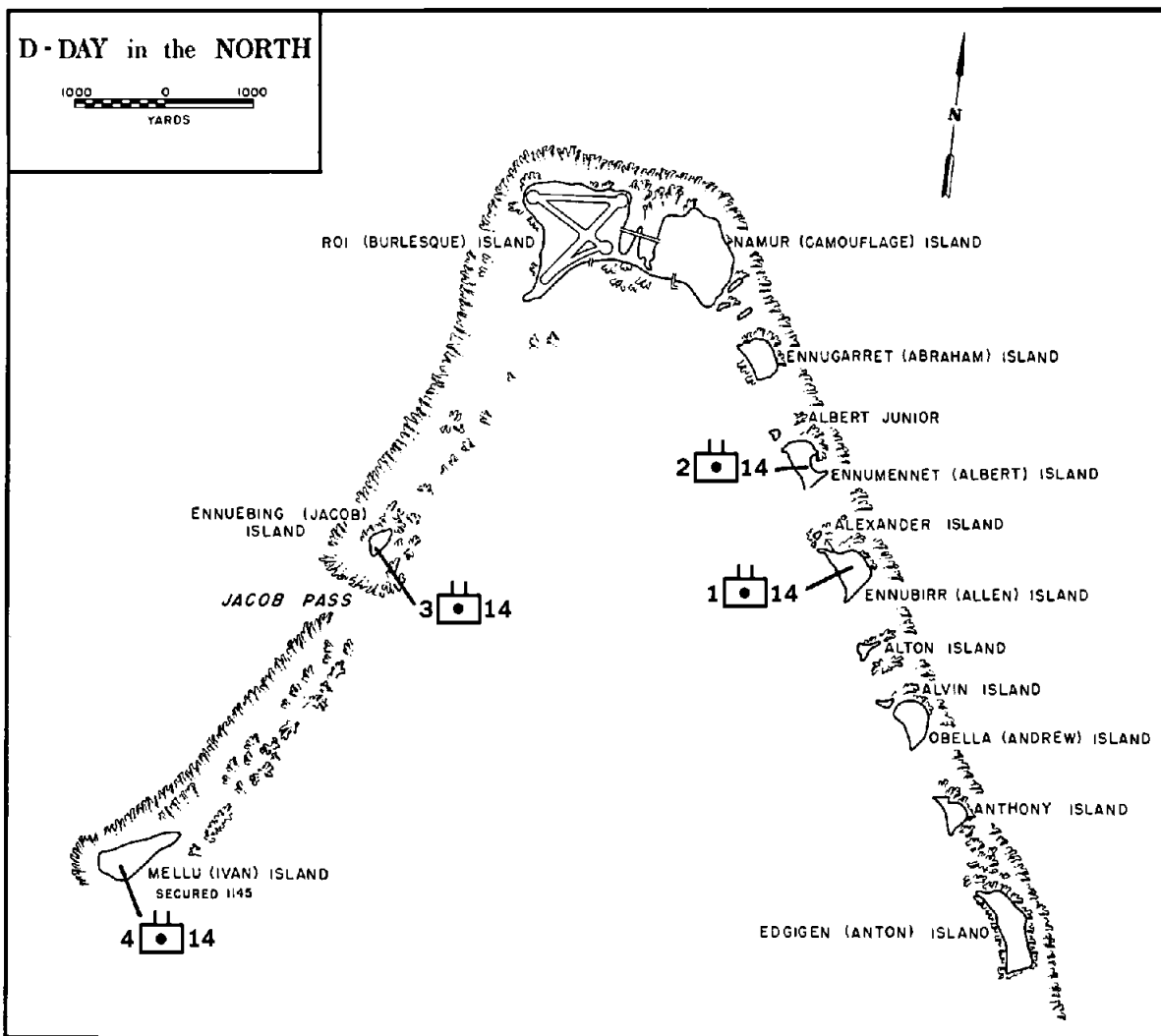
The structure of the 14th Marines landing groups at Roi-Namur was the same as that used in all subsequent campaigns. Due to the limited space on board the assault transports, only skeleton firing crews were landed at first. A firing battery's first days and nights ashore were busy times for these individuals, as they had to fire missions and stand watch in addition to the burden of unloading the weapons, supplies, and ammunition until the rest of the battery was able to come ashore. The headquarters section was to maintain command and control of the firing sections. This group was usually made up of the commanding officer, the executive officer, the first sergeant, a clerk, a runner, and a survey team. Each of the four guns

*The LCVP, or "landing craft, vehicle, personnel," was a small, shallow draft vessel with a bow ramp. It could carry approximately 36 persons.

was assigned a skeleton firing section to operate the howitzers. A motor transport section was charged with pulling the howitzers and hauling ammunition and supplies. These men were expected to fill in as necessary when not transporting guns, ammunition, or supplies. A communications section was needed to maintain open lines of communication, string telephone wire, and keep radio contact. The ammunition section was responsible for handling and distributing ammunition and supplies. Forward observation teams were attached to the maneuver battalions before the landings. A machine gun section, armed with two .50-caliber heavy machine guns, was responsible for ground and air defense of the battery. These Marines were often required to haul supplies, unload ammunition, or act as gun crewmen when first ashore. As the battle progressed and more ship-to-shore transport became available the batteries were fleshed out with the arrival of more cannoners. The first days ashore were tiring and hectic for the members of these skeleton crews.

The early morning hours of D-Day found the 14th Marines on board the *Epping Forest* (LSD 4) and several LSTs in the transport area about 3,000 yards from shore.** The 75mm pack howitzers had been prepacked at San Diego, one per LVT, with a small amount

**An LSD (landing ship dock) was a large attack transport with a stern ramp and a well deck which could be flooded for use by boats and LVTs. An LST (landing ship, tank) had two bow doors and a ramp for discharging LVTs at sea, or vehicles directly on the beach.



of ammunition and some necessary tools and equipment. Unfortunately, the small LVTs could not carry a full howitzer crew nor a complete unit of fire. The shortage of LVTs required the gun crews and ammunition stocks to land in separate supply waves. The bulky 105mm howitzers of the 4th Battalion had to be loaded in 14 larger LCMs (landing craft, mechanized).

On order, Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. MacFarlane's 3d Battalion, 14th Marines began moving toward Ennuebing's sandy shores. The pounding surf and heavy loads proved too much for two of the LVTs. They floundered and sank, causing the loss of two 75mm howitzers and four lives. These were the first combat casualties suffered by the 14th Marines. Several Marines were saved by the heroic efforts of the 3d Battalion's surgeon, Lieutenant Ira D. Hardy, MC, USN, a former football star at Harvard University. Doctor Hardy repeatedly swam out to assist swimmers in trou-

ble. He later received a Bronze Star Medal for his actions.¹³

Major, later Major General, Carl A. Youngdale's 4th Battalion made it ashore without losing any guns, but arrived too late to support Lieutenant Colonel Justice M. Chambers' 3d Battalion, 25th Marines' landing on the far side of the lagoon as originally planned. The Marines of Battery K (First Lieutenant Russell F. Schoenbeck), Battery L (Captain Martin R. Burdett), and Battery M (First Lieutenant, later Lieutenant General, Joseph C. Fegan, Jr.) struggled to move their heavy field pieces across the island and into selected positions along the northern shore. As the Marines hauled the guns of the six batteries of the 3d and 4th Battalions into position, the command group under Lieutenant Colonel Randall M. Victory moved ashore. The regimental command post quickly took steps to establish centralized control over the widely spread firing batteries. The major task of both battalions was

to fire registration rounds before dark and then to stockpile ammunition needed to support the main landings the next morning.¹⁴

The landings on Ennubirr, Ennumennet, and Ennugarret did not go well. Unexpected high waves, insufficient numbers of LVTs, and poor communications delayed H-Hour for the members of Landing Team 2 who had to capture the islands southeast of Namur. Luckily, they encountered little opposition, and the islands fell quickly. Once these were secured, landing the remaining artillery units before dark became the highest priority. The 1st Battalion, 14th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Harry J. Zimmer, landed across Blue Beach 4 on Ennubirr just before 1700 that evening. Lieutenant Colonel George B. Wilson's 2d Battalion crossed at Blue Beach 3 on Ennumennet at about the same time. Amtracs carried the pack howitzers of both battalions directly to their firing positions. This procedure saved precious time in getting the guns ready to fire. The major problem was getting the gunners ashore and unloading sufficient ammunition. The cannoneers and ammunition of the 14th Marines were scheduled to be brought ashore by LVTs and LCVPs making supply runs after they had landed the first wave. However, the leaders of the assault waves commandeered all of the LVTs and many of the LCVPs to replace transportation lost during the initial phase of the landing. Anxious Marines on board the *Epping Forest* waited as the situation became more confused. One skeptic named the landing procedure "Operation Fubar" and the irreverent title stuck.*

The resulting delays forced many of the gun crews to land well after dark. In fact, it was not possible to land some of the howitzers until the afternoon of D plus 1.¹⁵ Most of the guns were set up by 2000 but darkness prevented their registration until after dawn on D plus 1.¹⁶ The 14th Marines' first day of combat ended in a flurry of activity, as most of its men spent the entire night unloading ammunition.

The howitzers of the 14th Marines joined the massive air and naval bombardment of Roi-Namur at 0658 on 1 February 1944 (D plus 1). At 0700 Group Ivan was dissolved, and the 14th Marines again became the Division Artillery Group with Colonel DeHaven in command. The barren Roi received the concentrated fire of the cannoneers of Captain Alfred T. Brown's Battery G, Captain Guido A. Morengo's Battery H, and Captain Earl F. Ziegler's Battery I. Their targets were located along Red Beach 3, east of Tokyo Pier. The 105mm howitzers of the 4th Battalion focused

their attention on Red Beach 2, west of Tokyo Pier. For more than three hours the two battalions peppered Roi's beaches, stopping only to allow close air strikes. At about 1010 the artillery's fires shifted inland to make room for the first assault waves of Colonel Louis R. Jones' RCT 23.

The 23d Marines struck Roi with two battalions abreast. They moved across an antitank ditch toward their first objective, Phase Line O-1. The guns of the 3d Battalion were in direct support of Lieutenant Colonel Edward J. Dillon's 2d Battalion, 23d Marines on the right flank. Although usually designated the general support battalion of the 14th Marines, the 4th Battalion assigned its highest priority of fire to the 1st Battalion, 23d Marines during the landings because its 105mm howitzers were the only artillery pieces in the regiment with sufficient range to reach the eastern portion of Roi Island.

In spite of some initial confusion, the attack went well. The 23d Marines encountered little organized resistance, a tribute to the effectiveness of all supporting arms. At 1158 Colonel Jones radioed: "This is a pip . . . no opposition." The 14th Marines, working in concert with air strikes, naval gunfire, and the weapons of the new LVT(A)s, did their job with deadly efficiency. In Company F's sector, not a single Japanese pillbox was still manned when the Marines' supporting fires lifted. After action reports estimated that supporting arms killed 60 percent of the enemy. The remaining Japanese on Roi were too shell-shocked to put up any effective resistance.¹⁷ The island was declared secure at 1802, with mop-up operations scheduled for the following morning. The swiftness of the battle allowed the 3d and 4th Battalions to stand down on the morning of 2 February 1944.¹⁸

Namur was the tougher nut to crack. The 1st and 2d Battalions began registration fires at about 0650 on D plus 1. Once registered, they fired for effect until ordered to shift their fires at mid-morning. Sally Point on Namur's east side was the target of Batteries A, B, and C. The area around Yokohama Pier shook under the fires of the gunners of D, E, and F Batteries of the 2d Battalion. As the landing progressed inland, the guns of the 1st Battalion fired missions requested by the forward observers attached to Landing Team 2 (2d Battalion, 24th Marines [Reinforced]). The 2d Battalion fired in direct support of Landing Team 3 (3d Battalion, 24th Marines).

Again, as at Roi, the landings were very confused. Supporting fires were so intense that they obliterated the streets designated as phase lines to control RCT 24's advance. The debris created by the heavy bombardment and the dense vegetation slowed movement

*Bowdlerized as "Fouled Up Beyond All Redress."



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 70694

LVTs with rocket launchers support the 14th Marines' landings and occupation of the four smaller islands flanking the main objective, Roi-Namur in the Marshall Islands.

and provided excellent cover for numerous Japanese snipers. Reports to Colonel Franklin A. Hart, commanding officer of RCT 24, indicated no organized resistance in the area of Green Beach 2, and only "punch drunk" enemy soldiers were present at Green Beach 1.

A spectacular explosion at about 1305 halted the Marine advance inland. Satchel charges tossed into a concrete blockhouse detonated the torpedo warheads stored inside. The resulting explosion shook the entire island and awed everyone involved in the attack. A column of black smoke rose about 1,000 feet over Namur as debris showered the entire island and much of the lagoon. This tragic event took the lives of 20 Marines and wounded over 100 others. The force of the blast was such that a spotter aircraft carrying an aerial observer from the 4th Battalion, 14th Marines was caught in the explosion and knocked from the sky. The shock of the explosion and its aftermath severely disorganized Colonel Hart's attack plans.¹⁹

Before dark the 14th Marines fired a series of registration rounds all along the frontline to protect the Marines on Namur in case of a Japanese night counter-attack, but the evening hours passed with very little enemy action. The next morning, however, found the cannoners of the 14th Marines shooting defensive fires to support Companies I and L, 24th Marines. The Japanese mounted an attack which the Marine infantrymen repelled by hand-to-hand combat. Later that day, the 24th Marines overran the rest of Namur, and

the island was declared secure at 1418 on 2 February 1944. The members of the 14th Marines, except for the 1st Battalion which would serve as a garrison unit, stood down and prepared to reembark for their new home at Maui, Territory of Hawaii.²⁰

The third and final phase of Operation Flintlock began on D plus 2 when Major General Schmidt ordered Colonel Samuel C. Cumming's RCT 25 to complete the capture of all the islands near Roi-Namur. Landing Team 2, Lieutenant Colonel Lewis C. Hudson's 2d Battalion, 25th Marines (Reinforced), moved out under the cover of an artillery barrage provided by the 1st Battalion, 14th Marines. The infantrymen soon discovered that the islands were unoccupied. The 1st Battalion's 75mm howitzers remained silent the rest of the day. On D plus 4, First Lieutenant Curtis P. Irwin, Jr.'s Battery C accompanied Lieutenant Colonel Chambers' Landing Team 3 on the last leg of Operation Flintlock. By the afternoon of D plus 7 the force had captured 39 islets, made friends with 250 natives, and found no Japanese. The next day, 8 February 1944, was declared the last day of the Roi-Namur campaign.²¹

When the battle of Roi-Namur ended, most of the men of the 14th Marines were busy crating, packing, and loading gear on board the ships which would carry them to their new base camp. The 4th Battalion, loaded on board the *Bolivar* (APA 34), the *Alcyone* (AKA 7), and the *Calvert* (APA 32) on 5 February, departed on 8 February, and arrived at Maui on the evening of

16 February 1944.* The 3d Battalion boarded the *LaSalle* (APA 102), the *Sheridan* (APA 151), and the *Calvert*, and travelled in the same convoy as the 4th Battalion. Most members of the 2d Battalion also boarded the *LaSalle*, but some elements of Battery D embarked on board the *Santa Monica* and the *Calvert*. The 1st Battalion remained on Ennubirr Island as part of the garrison force until 29 February, when it departed for Hawaii on board the *Neville* (APA 9) and the *Electra* (AKA 4).²² Before their departure the men of the 1st Battalion saw another spectacular explosion on 13 February when Japanese incendiary bombs struck an ammunition dump on Roi. The ensuing fire destroyed an estimated one million dollars worth of ammunition and other supplies being stored there.²³

The departure from Kwajalein Atoll marked the end of the 14th Marines' first combat action. The regiment performed its duties well, and helped the 4th Marine Division inflict 3,376 casualties on the enemy, while incurring only minimal losses.** The 14th Marines

*APA was the hull designation for attack transports; AKA indicated attack cargo ships. The current designations are LPA and LKA, respectively.

**The 14th Marines' losses were six killed and 11 wounded. MRoll, 14th Marines, February 1944.

proved the validity of the tactics and techniques of off-shore artillery support which would be used successfully in later Pacific campaigns. After-action reports credited the use of artillery against Roi-Namur as a major factor in the success of the landing operations. These fires kept the enemy groggy throughout the night of 31 January - 1 February. The ability of the 14th Marines' howitzers to lift their observed fires just ahead of the actual assault waves, instead of at some arbitrary point, gave the landing force constant supporting arms fire.²⁴

The battle for Roi-Naumur was a well planned operation where naval gunfire, artillery, and aerial bombing played a major role in neutralizing Japanese positions. It involved the longest distance ever covered in one shore-to-shore operation. It was the only major combat operation staged from a stateside training base directly into a combat zone. The capture of Kwajalein Atoll marked the first American penetration of prewar Japanese mandated territory. It provided an excellent fleet anchorage and staging base for naval operations. Its airfields extended the range of American land-based airpower enormously. Finally, it virtually eliminated the threat of any Japanese operation toward Pearl Harbor, the United States, or the Panama Canal.²⁵

CHAPTER 4

Maui, 1944

The first ships carrying the 14th Marines back from Roi-Namur arrived at Maui, Territory of Hawaii, on 17 February 1944. Actually, some members of the 14th Marines had their first glimpse of Maui just over a month earlier when the Kwajalein-bound convoy stopped at Lahaiana Roads to take on fuel and provisions. Maui looked just as beautiful in February as it had before. The Marines were struck by the colorful contrasts of the gleaming white sands, the light green of the sugar cane fields, the darker green of the background vegetation, and the majestic dark purple of Mount Haleakala, the world's largest extinct volcano. The regiment boarded trucks near the Kahului docks and began the slow trek to Camp Maui, the home base for the 4th Marine Division for the rest of World War II. The convoy passed through the towns of Paia and Makawao. It snaked along narrow roads lined with elegant palm trees and dotted with colorful flowering plants, flame trees, hibiscus, and wild roses. Gradually the trucks worked their way up about 1,500 of Haleakala's 10,000 feet above sea level. When the convoy arrived at Camp Maui the island seemed to lose much of its beauty.

Camp Maui was primitive, to say the least. There was no electricity. The mud was ankle deep everywhere. Tents provided the only shelter from the elements. Only open-air showers were available. To make matters worse, it was raining. Immediately after leaving the trucks, the men of the 14th Marines learned there would be no liberty for at least one week; the entire division was quarantined because of the possibility of exposure to communicable diseases during Operation Flintlock. About this time the Marines also discovered a freak meteorological phenomenon. The lovely clouds that moved over the crest of Haleakala turned into threatening rain clouds as they descended on Camp Maui's side of the mountain, and it did not take them long to release their pent-up moisture. The result was daily rain. At this point, many of the regiment's cynics considered the title "rest camp" a misnomer.¹

Gradually Camp Maui took on the appearance of a Marine base, in spite of the incessant rain, sticky mud, and gusting winds. Marines plowed roads through the mud, constructed some wooden frame office build-

ings and messhalls, then strung electric wires across the camp. A post exchange offered candy, tobacco, and soft drinks. Public address systems blared announcements and popular music. The Marines took advantage of entertainment provided by nightly movies, touring USO shows, hula girls, and Sergeant Lee Cohen's "Fubar Follies," a popular amateur night organized by the outgoing Special Services NCO.²

On 1 April 1944, Major General Harry Schmidt presented Purple Heart Medals to members of the 14th Marines wounded during Operation Flintlock. A more extensive awards ceremony occurred on 26 April when Admiral Nimitz presented personal decorations to deserving Marines. Among the recipients was Lieutenant Colonel Harry J. Zimmer, commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, who received a Legion of Merit medal. Additionally, the regiment affixed its first battle star to the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign streamer on its colors.³

Several organizational changes took place at Camp Maui. First, the regiment absorbed newly-arrived Marines to replace those transferred or lost during Operation Flintlock. It activated a new battalion, armed with 105mm howitzers and carrying the designation 5th Battalion, 14th Marines. This unit was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Douglas E. Reeve who had served as the naval gunfire officer of the D-3 Section, 4th Marine Division at Roi-Namur. The 5th Battalion, however, soon shifted to Corps Artillery, but remained attached to the 14th Marines during the next combat action, Operation Forager. On 30 April 1944 Marine Observation Squadron 4 (VMO-4) opened its own airstrip and joined the 4th Marine Division. The 4th Battalion provided two aerial observers who continually spotted for all types of fire (artillery, naval gunfire, close air support) missions while flying in the light planes of VMO-4. The aviators of VMO-4 operated closely with the 14th Marines throughout the rest of World War II.⁴

Implementing the lessons learned at Roi-Namur, the 14th Marines spent most of its time training to improve its combat efficiency. The regiment spent many of its long training days on the far side of Maui, away from the few comforts of the base camp, firing



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 146368



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 146359

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 146360

Upon its return from Roi-Namur, the 14th Marines, along with the division, took up residence at Camp Maui, Hawaii. Despite the incessant rain, ankle-deep mud, and little initial liberty, the camp gradually took on the appearance of a more permanent base with all the amenities of a stateside post. When not engaged in softball playoffs, boxing matches, or watching USO shows, the men of the 14th were either servicing their howitzers or training at one of the division's 47 training areas near the camp. Command post exercises, overnight problems, and hikes became a weekly routine. Implementing the lessons learned at Roi-Namur, the regiment's artillerymen also took part in several field problems at the division's artillery range near Maalaea Bay. These problems involved transporting the gun, in this case a 75mm pack howitzer, swinging it into position, correctly sighting the weapon, and then firing at specific targets. This training prepared the regiment for its next objectives, Saipan and Tinian.



various types of gunnery problems and making sure its communications was letter perfect. The 3d Battalion was rearmed with 105mm howitzers and required additional training to be able to load efficiently, unload, fire, and service its new weapons. The cannoneers of the 14th Marines could only infrequently enjoy the cold beer and hot showers of local liberty towns like Haiko, Makawao, Kahului, and Wailuku. While on liberty, they enjoyed traditional American dishes of steak, hamburgers, and banana splits. Many also became accustomed to typical Hawaiian dishes such as fresh pineapple and poi. Marines danced to the beat of native drums and the twang of steel guitars with

carnation leis around their necks. Despite their homesickness, the men of the 14th Marines became very fond of Maui and its friendly population.⁵

Late April and early May brought the final preparations for further combat. The 14th Marines moved down the slopes of Haleakala to the tent camp bivouac near Maalaea Bay. Once there, the 14th Marines participated in live-firing exercises. It fired in support of the 4th Marine Division's regimental combat teams as they rehearsed for the next assault. Finally, the 14th Marines embarked on board the *Leonard Wood* (AP 25), and departed on 12 May 1944 for Pearl Harbor, a stop on the way to Saipan.⁶

CHAPTER 5

Saipan, 1944

On 12 March 1944, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed Admiral Nimitz to continue the Central Pacific drive. Buoyed by the swift and easy conquest of the Marshall Islands, they decided to bypass the Japanese fortress island of Truk and strike at the Mariana Islands. One of the major deciding factors was the proximity of the Marianas to Japan, well within the 1,500 mile range necessary for successful operations by the U.S. Army Air Force's new Boeing B-29 Superfortress long range, heavy bombers.¹ The attack plan, Operation Forager, was divided into three phases: the capture of Saipan, the seizure of Tinian, and the recapture of Guam. The 14th Marines, fresh from its successful operations at Roi-Namur, prepared to participate in two of the three upcoming combat actions.

Saipan was located about 1,250 nautical miles from Tokyo. The island resembled an inverted pipe wrench, with Marpi Point the tip of its northern handle and Magicienne Bay as the gap between the jaws formed by the Kagman Peninsula and Nafutan Point. Saipan was much larger than the miniscule coral islets of Roi and Namur; hence, its capture presented many different problems for the planners of Operation Forager. Saipan covered about 72 square miles; it was over 14 miles long on its north-south axis, and about 6.5 miles across at its widest point. Its terrain was very rugged and heavily vegetated. Mount Tapotchau rose 1,554 feet above the numerous cliffs, ravines, ridges, and valleys which crisscrossed the island's waist. Lake Susupe and its surrounding swamps formed a barrier to inland movement near the beaches selected for landings by the assault forces. Unlike the previous objectives in the Central Pacific, Saipan had a relatively large civilian population. These civilians, Japanese and Chamorros, primarily lived in Garapan and Charan Kanoa, the urban centers on the west coast. The major military centers on the island were Aslito Airfield in the south and Marpi Point Airfield in the north. Saipan was a formidable target which required the proper balance of fire and maneuver in an extended campaign.²

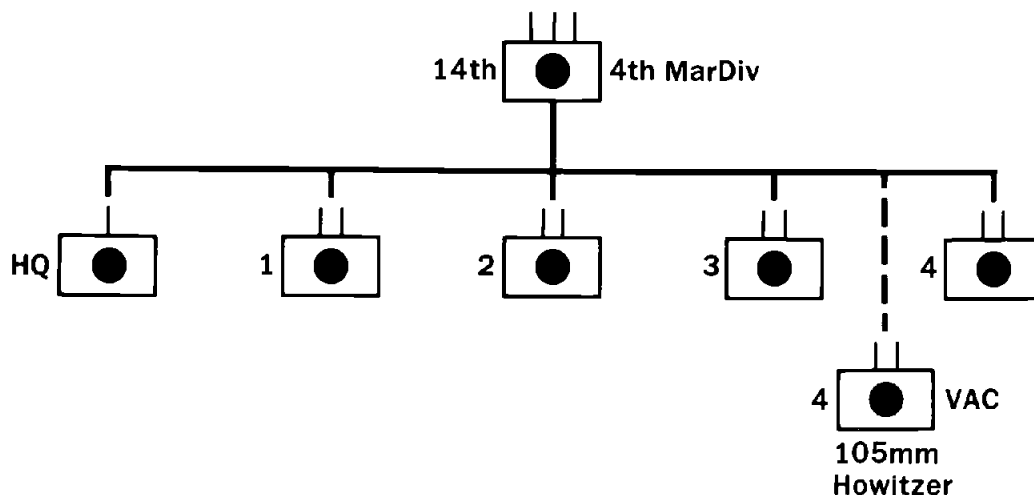
Saipan was the home of the headquarters of Japan's *Thirty-First Army* and of the Imperial Navy's *Central Pacific Fleet*. The commander of the *Central Pacific Fleet* was Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, the leader

of the carrier task force which smashed the American fleet at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. More than 31,000 Japanese defenders were located on Saipan. Many were members of organized units such as the crack *43d Division*, the *47th Independent Mixed Brigade*, the *3d Mountain Artillery Regiment*, the *9th Tank Regiment*, and the *55th Naval Guard Force*, or the elite *1st Yokosuka Special Naval Landing Force*; the remainder were survivors of American submarine and air attacks which had isolated the Marianas. Lieutenant General Yoshitsugu Saito planned his defenses with great care. He sited his artillery to cover all potential landing areas. Range flags and off-shore markers aided fire direction. Mechanized reserves had positions near Magicienne Bay, and stood ready to mount a counterattack. Each of the resolute defenders of Saipan took a vow to take seven enemy lives for his country. Both the Japanese and the Americans realized the vital importance of Saipan, and the upcoming battle promised to be a desperate struggle for supremacy in the Central Pacific.³

Holland M. Smith was Commanding General, Northern Troops and Landing Force (NTLF) as part of his duties in Operation Forager.* The NTLF consisted of the 4th Marine Division and the 2d Marine Division (Major General Thomas E. Watson). The NTLF reserve was the U.S. Army's 27th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Ralph C. Smith. A special unit, XXIV Corps Artillery, commanded by Brigadier General Arthur M. Harper, USA, was attached to the NTLF to provide additional fire support. Major General Schmidt commanded the 4th Marine Division. Colonel DeHaven retained command of the 14th Marines, with Lieutenant Colonel Victory as executive officer. The regimental staff officers were: First Lieutenant Cecil D. Snyder, R-1; Captain Harrison L. Rogers, R-2; Major Frederick J. Karch, R-3; and Major Richard J. Winsborough, R-4.⁴ On Maui, the 3d Battalion rearmed with 105mm howitzers to replace the 75mm pack howitzers which served it so well at Roi-Namur. These cannon added range and explosive power to the punch of the 14th Marines. Lieutenant

*General Smith actually had three jobs at Saipan: CG NTLF; CG, Expeditionary Troops; and CG, VAC.

14th Marines at Saipan, 1944



The 4th 105mm Howitzer Battalion was designated from the 5th Battalion, 14th Marines just prior to the Marianas assault, but was still referred to as 5/14 in 14th Marines action reports until after the Tinian operation. Officially, the 4th 105mm Battalion was part of V Amphibious Corps Artillery, but was attached to the 14th Marines for the entire Marianas Campaign.

Colonel Douglas E. Reeve led the separate 4th 105mm Howitzer Battalion, which VAC created by redesignating the 5th Battalion, 14th Marines on 16 April 1944. The new battalion, however, was attached to the 14th Marines for Operation Forager, so its title was an official name change only, and it did not affect the tactical direction of the unit.* In all, the 14th Marines mustered two battalions of 75mm pack howitzers, three battalions of 105mm, and could call on the support of the 155mm guns and howitzers of XXIV Corps Artillery for reinforcement or deep support.

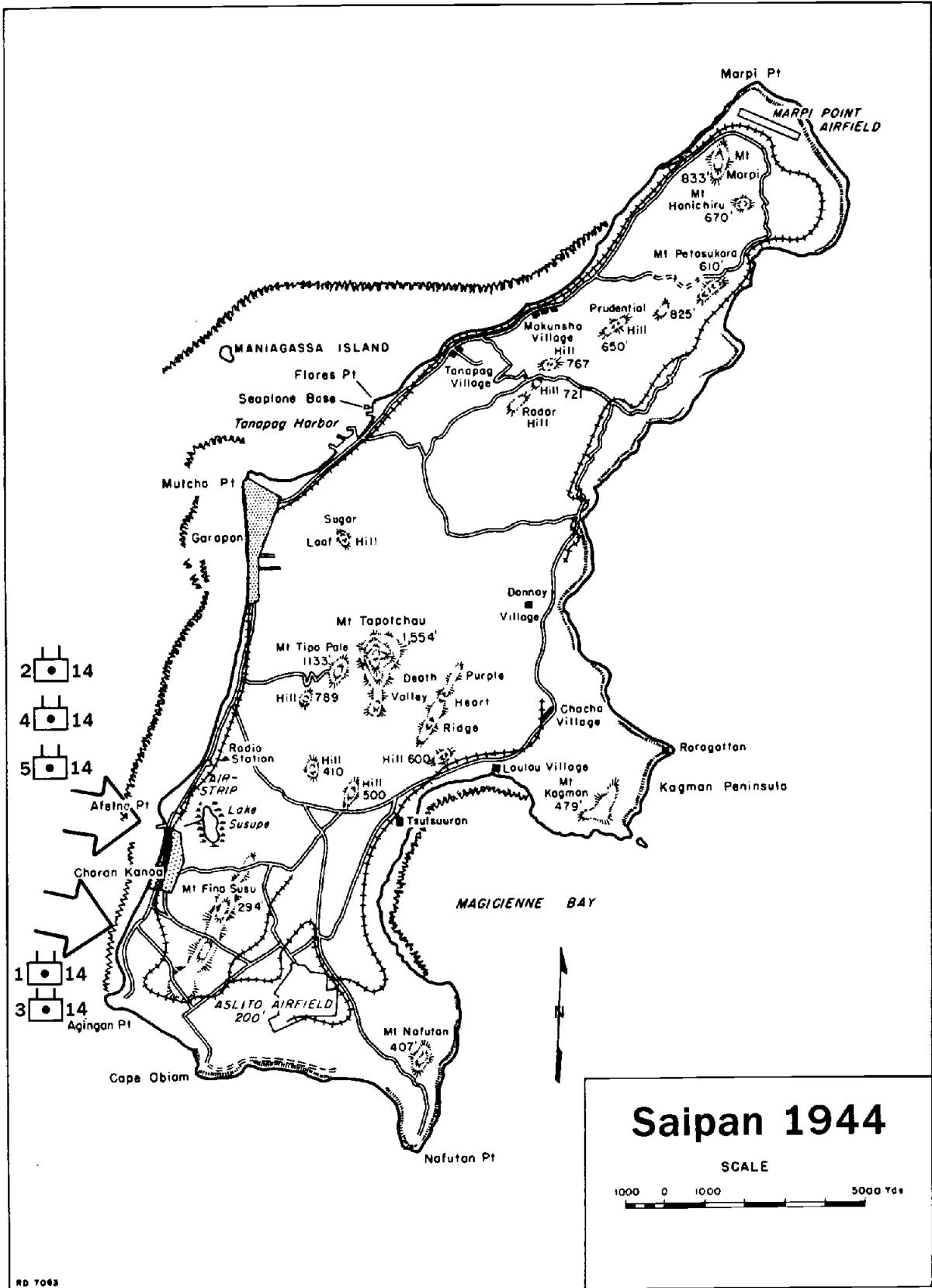
At Saipan, unlike Roi-Namur, there were no convenient off-shore islands, thus forcing the planners to develop other tactics. Instead of landing first and supporting the combat teams during their ship-to-shore movement as at Roi-Namur, the 14th Marines would wait in the transport area during this part of the landing operation. Rather than coming ashore as part of a regularly scheduled assault wave, the 14th Marines was to land "on order"; that is, it would send its guns ashore when the situation on the beach dictated, not at a specific time. This plan was the most flexible; it was also the most complex. The gunners had to stand at their debarkation stations for long hours, nervously waiting for the order to move ashore. Because of the demands of this mission, the regiment instituted special landing procedures. The 105mm howitzers were

*In fact the 14th Marines After Action Reports referred to the 4th 105mm Howitzer Battalion as "5/14."

preloaded on board specially modified two and one-half ton amphibian cargo trucks, officially labeled DUKWs but tabbed "ducks" by the troops using them. The DUKWs used for this purpose required structural reinforcement of the cargo compartment and some mounted an "A" frame lift on the back. Each howitzer's wheels needed modification to reduce its width. The 105mm howitzers were too large to be loaded in LVTs, and the LCP landing craft were unable to carry the unwieldy howitzers across the beach. The use of DUKWs allowed the howitzers to be carried directly to their firing positions, and simplified the unloading by using the "A" frame. The loading and unloading procedures required hours of practice before the crew became proficient at this operation.** To facilitate this technique, the three 105mm howitzer battalions embarked on board tank landing ships (LST 340, LST 354, and LST 40) at Eniwetok. A fourth, LST 23, carried ammunition. The 1st and 2d Battalions embarked on attack transports *James O'Hara* (APA 90) and *Leon* (APA 48). The landing plans called for those two battalions to disembark in LCPs, then change to the same DUKWs used by the 3d and 4th Battalion for the final leg of the movement to shore.***

**The DUKWs and these unloading techniques were developed by the U.S. Army, particularly the 7th Infantry Division, during Operation Flintlock.

***This was possible because the pack howitzer was small enough to be manhandled over the side.





National Archives Photo 127-N-84353

A 105mm howitzer section from the 3d Battalion, 14th Marines pauses while in support of the embattled 25th Marines, shortly after landing on Saipan on 15 June 1944.

The American armada assembled off Saipan's coast on the night of 14-15 June 1944. The naval support group and carrier aircraft began pounding Saipan at dawn. At 0542 Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, Commander Expeditionary Forces, gave the order to "Land the Landing Force." The LSTs and APAs carrying the 14th Marines moved into position about 1,200 yards from the beaches designated Yellow and Blue by the VAC staff. At 0843 the first Marine infantry units crossed the beach into a steel curtain of Japanese fire. Following waves suffered under the mortar and artillery fire as well. The progress of the landing force was spotty and uneven. In places the attack moved across the beach and penetrated to the O-1 line; at other places the assault mired in the sand along the beach. In the center, units of RCT 23 moved as far as the base of the cliff which overlooked the beachhead, while other elements around Charan Kanoa could not maneuver. The combat teams of the 25th Marines suffered a similar fate. In the center they moved inland quickly. On the extreme right flank, the attack gained only a few yards as frontal, enfilade, and indirect fires poured into that area of the beachhead. The situation on shore was desperate. Casualties were high and many units lost leaders. Enemy fire swept the entire landing area. The attack plan broke down in the face of devastating fire

from the *3d Mountain Artillery Regiment* located near Hill 500. The American attack slowed to a crawl as more and more Marines fell on Saipan's sandy beach. At about noon, Colonel Louis R. Jones, Commanding Officer of the 23d Marines, radioed General Schmidt's command post and requested that the artillery be sent ashore. The division relayed this request to Colonel DeHaven, and he ordered the 14th Marines to begin landing at about 1315 that afternoon.⁵

The first unit to head for the beach was Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. MacFarlane's 3d Battalion. Its DUKWs churned into the water as soon as the LST opened its doors and lowered the ramp. As the DUKWs paddled toward the shore, one suffered a mechanical failure and sank, taking a 105mm howitzer with it. The rest of the small flotilla made the beach with the remaining 11 howitzers on board. They crossed Yellow Beach 2 and followed guides from the reconnaissance party to the firing positions about 50 yards east of Yellow 2. The 3d Battalion began firing in support of RCT 25 around 1445.

The next unit ashore was the 4th 105mm Howitzer Battalion, VAC (commonly called the 5th Battalion, 14th Marines). Lieutenant Colonel Reeve's battalion made it to the firing positions on Yellow Beach 2 at about 1600 without losing a gun. Unfortunately, this

luck didn't hold, and the battalion suffered heavy losses the next morning. The unloading process slowed considerably after a Japanese dual-purpose gun destroyed one of the "A" frame DUKWs with a direct hit. The battalion gained a measure of revenge when it knocked out that particular gun immediately after firing its registration rounds just after 1800.⁶

The order to land sent Lieutenant Colonel Carl A. Youngdale's battalion in over Blue 2 at about 1700. Earlier in the day, the reconnaissance party of the 4th Battalion was assigned to a "free boat" (an LVT not placed in a specific wave) and landed between the 3d and 4th waves on Blue Beach 1. The beach, like all the others on Saipan that June day, was under very heavy fire. Colonel Youngdale split up the reconnaissance party, and led a small group inland. This scout group moved forward through a Japanese fuel dump, over the sugar mill railway tracks, and into a cleared area located near a vacated Japanese store on the outskirts of Charan Kanoa. The group occupied a number of Japanese dugouts and established the 4th Battalion command post. Colonel Youngdale moved about 200 yards further and established contact with an infantry battalion dug in along Lake Susepe (actually a semi-dry marsh). After his return to the artillery command post, Colonel Youngdale ordered the rest of the reconnaissance party forward and asked that the battalion be sent ashore. Unfortunately, some of the members of the reconnaissance party left on the beach had been wounded by artillery and mortar fire that rained down on the landing area. The order to go ashore was given at about 1700. The battalion lost one howitzer when the DUKW carrying it ran out of fuel and sank while attempting to reenter the ship. Hard luck continued to dog the 4th Battalion when enemy fire damaged four more howitzers at the beachhead. The battalion finally set up about 350 yards inland from Blue Beach, just east of the coastal road. Although not completely dug in, the determined cannoners of the 4th Battalion began shooting that evening. The hard working ordnance men were able to put all four damaged guns back on the firing line the next day.⁷

D-Day on Saipan was tough for everyone, but the experiences of one member of the 14th Marines typified what the forward observers went through during an amphibious assault. First Lieutenant Daniel M. Manfull, a former football and basketball coach at an Ohio high school, was a forward observer assigned to land with the fifth wave. His mission was to lead a five-man forward observation team inland about 1,500 yards, and establish communications with the 1st Bat-



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 05454
LtCol Carl A. Youngdale served as commanding officer of the 4th Battalion during all combat actions the battalion was involved in during World War II.

talion, 14th Marines. Despite massive preparatory bombardment the Japanese defenses were still effective as the landing waves went ashore. Because of the confusion on the beach due to intense Japanese shelling, Manfull's team had to jump out of their LVT into chest-deep water and wade ashore. While moving inland, a shell exploded about 25 feet from Manfull, wounding all the other members of the team and destroying both radios. Manfull evacuated his team, then continued to move forward where he was able to link up with another forward observation team. Using borrowed radios, he was able to adjust preplanned defensive fires. Finally, at about midnight, all the protective fires were properly registered in front of the Marine lines. This was an important task because preplanned fires allowed the artillery to shift its concentrations quickly. A forward observer could call for accurate artillery fire by giving a simple command such as "Fire concentration 110," rather than having to rely on a lengthy period of adjustment by bracket or creeping fire. At about 0400 on 16 June 1944 the Japanese launched a fierce counterattack. Manfull, stationed at the infantry command post, called for fire. The Japanese were repulsed with heavy losses, primarily the result of artillery fire. When a second attack began, Manfull skillfully shifted the artillery and once

again inflicted heavy casualties on the attackers. For his action Lieutenant Daniel M. Manfull was awarded the Bronze Star Medal.⁹

A major weakness in the landing plan became evident when the 1st and 2d Battalions tried to land. The DUKWs which were supposed to carry these two battalions to shore never showed up; they were either lost at the beach or sent on other missions. Lieutenant Colonel Harry J. Zimmer's 1st Battalion circled in LCVPs until told to move to the assembly area where they would link up with LVTs. At this point, just short of the line of departure, Marines heaved the pack howitzers over the rails and into the bobbing tractors without the loss of a single one. The amtracs carried the guns across Yellow 1 at about 1700. The 1st Battalion set up about 100 yards inland of the 3d Battalion. This congestion was neither desirable nor according to tactical doctrine, but the situation left no choice. The beach conditions prohibited proper dispersal.

The 2d Battalion made the most difficult landing. Transportation for Lieutenant Colonel George B. Wilson's guns became available only one vehicle at a time. The result was chaos. Equipment had to be hand lowered over the side of the transport ships into the bobbing LCVPs below. This required the pack howitzers to be broken down into six separate loads. Once the equipment was on board, the cannoneers scampered over the rail and made their descent into the waiting LCVPs. The LCVPs then made their way to the reef, where plans called for the men and equipment to be transferred to LVTs for the final leg of the

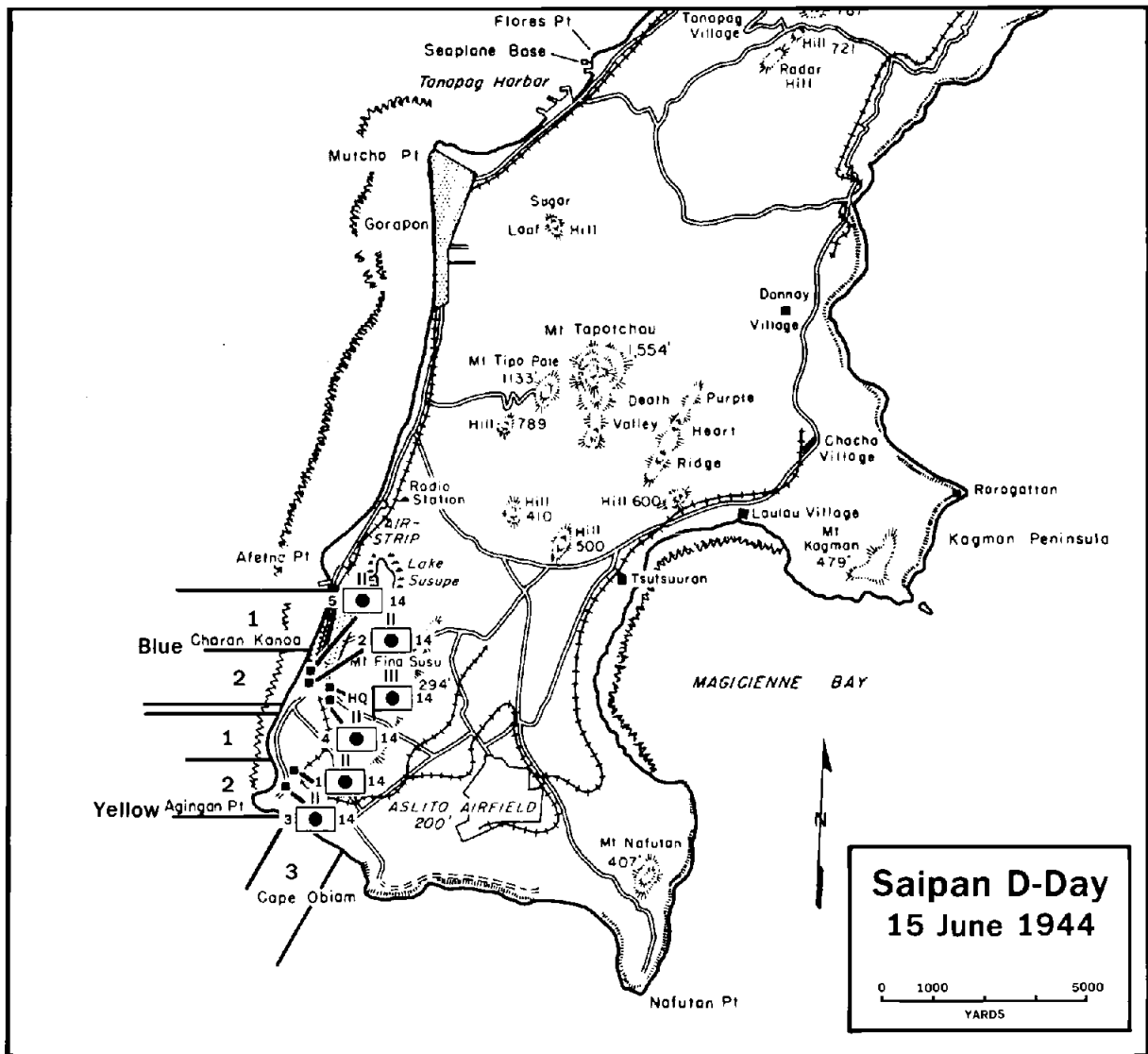
journey to shore. The guns and their skeleton crews landed all over the beaches. Once ashore they had difficulty finding guides to lead them to the proper firing positions. One group attempted to land from their LCVPs but were turned away by heavy fire when it reached the channel entrance. This group went back to the assembly area and circled until it was able to return later in the day. The battalion lost two pack howitzers when the LVTs carrying them broached at the reef and dumped their cargo into the sea. The Marines later recovered the pieces and reassembled the howitzers. Enemy fire knocked out two more howitzers; however, by using parts from both, the gunners created a single new one. Hardest hit was Battery E, which lost two howitzers on the way to shore and then lost another to a direct hit by Japanese artillery during the first night ashore. Losses of personnel and equipment forced Colonel Wilson to reorganize and form two batteries out of the remnants of the three that started for Saipan earlier in the day. Battery E was split between Batteries D and F for the rest of the battle, but was reconstituted during the lull before the Tinian landing.⁹

The regimental command group, under Lieutenant Colonel Victory, landed at Blue Beach 2 at about 1300. It established a command post in an abandoned trenchline located in a small grove of trees about 500 yards inland. While the position offered relative safety, the Marines killed two snipers within 40 yards of the command post. In spite of the hardships and confusion at the beach, the 14th Marines had all of its bat-

Despite problems getting ashore, a 75mm pack howitzer from LtCol Harry J. Zimmer's 1st Battalion prepares to fire from a camouflaged position, 100 yards from Yellow Beach.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 84792





teries ashore and firing before dark. The harried front-line Marines were happy to know their own “big stuff” was on hand and ready to reply to the Japanese “incoming,” round for round.¹⁰

The tactical situation dictated that the combat teams along the forward edge of the battle area readjust their lines before darkness covered Saipan. While this was going on, the artillery battalions registered their night defensive fires on likely assembly areas and avenues of approach. At the same time, the infantry registered its mortars to cover the dead spots between the fire lanes of the heavy machine guns along the main line of resistance. Individual riflemen dug foxholes in anticipation of a Japanese counterattack. Forward observers checked telephone lines to the batteries, and arranged for radio backups, as the heavy enemy shelling and numerous tracked vehicles in the area constantly severed wire lines. At the guns, men readied

ammunition and dug gun pits. All this hard work paid big dividends later that night. The 14th Marines assisted RCT 23 in repelling an estimated 200 Japanese near Lake Susupe. At 0330, RCT 25 stopped one attack with the support of the 1st Battalion, 14th Marines. Later, First Lieutenant James V. Walker, a forward observer from the 1st Battalion, spied a group of “civilians” approaching the lines of Company C, 1st Battalion, 25th Marines. These “civilians” soon turned out to be Japanese soldiers. The alert young officer immediately called for fire. The 1st Battalion ran out of ammunition before the enemy attack halted, and the regiment shifted the fire mission to the 3d Battalion. Aware of the critical situation, the 3d Battalion had been tracking every adjustment even though its batteries were not engaged. This foresight allowed the 3d Battalion to commence firing without hesitation and destroy the attackers. The Japanese at-



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 84815

A Marine 105mm section from the 3d Battalion readies for action. Marine 105mm howitzers played a major role in the duel with the Japanese 3d Mountain Artillery Regiment.

tack failed because of a cooperative effort by two battalions of the 14th Marines. Lieutenant Walker was later awarded the Silver Star Medal for his actions that night.¹¹

On the morning of 16 June the artillery duel between the 14th Marines and the *3d Mountain Artillery* (reinforced by the *3d Battalion, 10th Field Artillery*) heated up. The attached 4th 105mm Howitzer Battalion was the hardest hit, taking an estimated 300 incoming rounds in less than 24 hours. Enemy fire knocked out every gun in Battery B by 0500, and then did the same to Battery A by 0730. Battery C lost two guns. At 0800 Lieutenant Colonel Reeve notified Colonel DeHaven that he had only two guns still operable. This forced Colonel DeHaven to relieve the battalion of any further fire missions until it could reorganize.

The unsung heroes of the battle for Saipan were the Marines of the division Ordnance Company. They worked miracles with the battered weapons they received. Howitzers came in with trails blown off, recoil mechanisms damaged, hydraulic cylinders punctured, sights damaged or missing, and cracked barrels. The mechanics spotwelded ruptured seams, jury-rigged firing mechanisms, cannibalized damaged guns for spare parts, and devised field expedients to keep the maximum number of guns at the firing line throughout Operation Forager. On D plus 1, enemy fire knocked out 4 of the 15 batteries of the 14th Marines; the ordnance mechanics later repaired and returned all of these cannons to the fight. One howitzer, named "*Belching Beauty*," survived a direct hit on its gun pit which killed or wounded all its crew but one; mechan-

ics repaired the 105mm howitzer and returned it to action on the same day. All 10 of the howitzers lost by the attached 4th Battalion had received repairs and were firing by 1000 the same day. Through this outstanding effort, the ordnance repairmen kept the 14th Marines in the thick of the fight for Saipan.¹²

An unusual opportunity presented itself to the 4th Battalion. First Lieutenant Russell F. Schoenbeck, the former commanding officer of Battery K, and at that time the assistant operations officer, responded to a call for help to stop a column of about 30 Japanese advancing along the coast. Without moving from his perch atop the FDC, Schoenbeck directed a fire mission on the enemy positions by shouting his fire adjustments to Major Spritzen's fire direction section in a dugout below. After observing the impact area, he would make the proper corrections and yell the new fire command. Soon the rounds had bracketed the enemy and Schoenbeck called "fire for effect." Shell after shell whistled overhead on its way to the enemy position until the fire mission had destroyed the Japanese force. The Japanese retaliated later that afternoon when they scored a direct hit on one gun section of Battery M.¹³

On this same day, 16 June 1944, the U.S. Navy reaped one of the dividends of the decision to attack the Marianas. Admiral Spruance, Commander Fifth Fleet, reported that the Japanese *First Mobile Fleet* was sailing to assist Saipan's defenders. Admiral Turner ordered the 27th Infantry Division and XXIV Corps Artillery to land at once so all naval forces would be free to meet the enemy at sea. To make room for these new units on the crowded beachhead, General Smith

ordered the 4th Marine Division to press its attack with all three regiments abreast. The decision to hurry the landings was a wise one, in spite of the confusion and frustration caused when equipment was lost, landed on the wrong beach, or left in the hold of a departing transport ship. On 19 June, Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's carrier forces inflicted such heavy damage on the Japanese Fleet in the Philippine Sea that this engagement became known as the "Marianas Turkey Shoot."*

Once the 27th Infantry Division and XXIV Corps Artillery were safely on shore, the tactical plans called for the Marines to drive toward Mount Tapotchau and Magicienne—called "Magazine"—Bay to cut the island in half. Aslito Airfield and Nafutan Point were objectives assigned to a regiment of the 27th Infantry Division. The 14th Marines divided its attention between supporting the drive to Magicienne Bay and counterbattery fire to silence the Japanese artillery which still hampered the landing force. One night, while firing a harassment mission far to the Japanese rear near Magicienne Bay, the howitzers of the 4th Battalion struck an unknown target which caused a gigantic explosion and a huge fireball lit up the evening sky for miles around.

The 14th Marines direct support mission changed so often during the battle that each of the five artillery battalions fired in support of each of the rifle regiments at some time in the 25-day campaign for Saipan. At times, the cannoners of the 10th Marines (2d Marine Division) fired in support of 4th Marine Division; at other times, the 14th Marines fired for the 2d Marine Division. After the Army division's initial landings, the 14th Marines fired in support of the 27th Division's RCT 165 during its attachment to the 4th Marine Division. These complex operations called for great flexibility, good communications, excellent liaison work, and a unique spirit of teamwork which transcended unit or service loyalty. This cooperative effort was obvious in mission assignments, fire direction, communications relays, and logistical support. At times early in the campaign, the 14th Marines borrowed 105mm ammunition from U.S. Army dumps, then returned the favor when Army artillery units depleted theirs during the drive to Marpi Point.**

The drive to Magicienne Bay progressed well. The 165th Infantry Regiment captured Aslito Airfield and

*The Japanese lost more than 400 aircraft and many pilots; the U.S. Navy suffered minimal losses. This action virtually destroyed Japanese carrier aviation for the rest of the war.

**Colonel DeHaven stated in a letter to the Commandant on 9 January 1950 that the logistical situation might have gotten out of hand if it were not for this cooperation. (Hoffman, *Saipan*, p. 121.)

continued its push to pinch off Nafutan Point and isolate the defenders. At about the same time that Admiral Mitscher's forces began the Battle of the Philippine Sea, the 14th Marines had a "turkey shoot" of its own, albeit on a much smaller scale. At about 0700 on the morning of 19 June, Marines spotted a large group of Japanese, reinforced by tanks, in an assembly area. The 14th Marines opened up with all it had. Every battery executed a "fire for effect" on the Japanese position. There was no attack by this enemy force. General Saito's plans failed because of the accuracy of the 14th Marines' howitzers. Immediately after finishing this mission, the 2d and 4th Battalions began preparatory fires on Hill 500 to soften it for a future assault.

Hill 500 was the dominant terrain feature in the 4th Marine Division's zone of action. The 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, nicknamed "Chambers' Raiders" after its commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Justice M. "Jumping Joe" Chambers, received the mission of capturing Hill 500. Colonel Chambers—a former Raider, Guadalcanal veteran, and future Medal of Honor recipient—decided to make maximum use of supporting arms for this attack. The 1st and 2d Battalions, 14th Marines, alternately fired white phosphorus and high explosive shells to neutralize the defenders. Smoke rounds hid the movement of the attacking Marines when they crossed an open valley. Joining the 14th Marines on this mission were the mobile rocket artillery and 81mm mortars. When the assault force reached the road marking the line of departure, all the supporting arms shifted their fires to box in the objective area and prevent the attackers from escaping or reinforcements from coming to their aid. The defenders, blinded by the smoke, were huddled deep in their bunkers when the rifle battalion began its assault. The battalion surged to the top of Hill 500. The attack was a success. An excellent scheme of maneuver and masterful use of supporting arms made this a textbook-perfect attack.¹⁴

Operation Forager was notable for the cooperation and smooth coordination of all artillery units—the 14th Marines, the 10th Marines, 27th Division Artillery, and XXIV Corps Artillery—during the entire campaign. After landing on D plus 1, Army Brigadier General Harper began holding daily conferences attended by the operation officers of each artillery unit. They discussed plans, problems, solutions, and techniques. Major Karch credited General Harper with instilling a feeling of confidence, cooperation, and unity in these meetings.¹⁵ After the campaign General Holland M. Smith spoke of General Harper in the most laudatory terms.¹⁶ One incident, symbolic of the ar-



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 82549

A typical Marine 105mm position which not only supported the drive to Magicienne Bay, but fired continuous counter-battery missions in an effort to silence Japanese artillery.

tillery cooperation, happened on 19 June. A forward observer from 1st Battalion, 14th Marines spotted a Japanese artillery position near Magicienne Bay. He could not contact the FDC using his own SCR 300 radio, therefore, he had to relay his fire requests by contacting another artillery observer who then told the FDC. The 1st Battalion could not respond to the request because it was firing a mission with a higher priority. The 1st Battalion contacted the regimental FDC by land line, only to discover that all the other batteries of the 14th Marines also were engaged in firing. The regimental FDC phoned XXIV Corps Artillery, whose 155mm howitzers fired the mission. Using this combination of radio and telephone links, the Army guns destroyed the target. This complicated procedure could not have succeeded without the smooth-working relationship and strong sense of teamwork so obvious in all artillery operations during the capture of Saipan and Tinian.¹⁷

On D plus 6, General Smith ordered, "Hold present lines." While it was a day of rest and replenishment for most units on Saipan, this was not true for the 14th Marines. The cannoneers continued to fire on targets of opportunity, destroyed suspected Japanese positions in front of the 4th Division, and reinforced the fires of the 27th Division's artillery. At this time, another example of interservice cooperation surfaced. While ammunition supplies never reached critically low levels, resupply continued to be Colonel DeHaven's biggest headache. At his request, the Army willingly

supplied the 14th Marines from its own ammunition reserves until the Marines' replacement stocks arrived.¹⁸

The morning of 24 June 1944 brought a tempest as great as any turbulence that rocked the Pacific area in World War II. Marine General Holland M. Smith, dissatisfied with the performance of the 27th Infantry Division, relieved Major General Ralph C. Smith, USA, of his command. Major General Sanderford Jarman, USA, took temporary command of the 27th Division until Major General George W. Griner, USA, arrived on the island. The dark clouds created by this storm hung over this operation and marred interservice relations for years to come. Another unfortunate outcome of this incident was that General Harper's daily conferences were curtailed soon afterward.*

The next day the 1st Battalion moved four of its pack howitzers to the northeast slopes of Hill 600. This position permitted close, direct fire missions for the assault battalions. At this same time, enemy fire from "Purple Heart Ridge" hampered actions in the 4th Marine Division's sector. To resolve this problem, Headquarters, 14th Marines asked for and received permission to fire into the 27th Division's zone of action. The enemy guns remained silent for the rest of the day, and allowed RCT 23 to continue its drive across the Kagman Peninsula. By late afternoon the

*Holland M. Smith presented his personal view in *Coral and Brass*. In the official histories, Shaw, Nalty, and Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive* and Crowl, *Marianas* present the views of the respective services; Isley and Crowl, *Amphibious War* is another good source.



National Archives Photo 127-N-86002

LtCol Justice M. Chambers, left, discusses the tactical situation with the 14th Marines operations officer, LtCol William F. Thyson, Jr., prior to 3d Battalion, 25th Marines' assault on Hill 500, an assault heavily supported by the 1st and 2d Battalions, 14th Marines.

Americans had occupied the entire peninsula and had begun mopping up.¹⁹

To support the 4th Marine Division's rapid drive up the right side of Saipan, the 14th Marines had to displace and move to positions located between Aslito Airfield and Hill 500. To the south, infantrymen of the 27th Division tried to seal off the Nafutan Peninsula. On the night of 25-26 June more than 500 Japanese attacked Aslito Airfield and Hill 500. At about 0530, elements of this force struck the 14th Marines' positions. The blow hit the 2d Battalion full force. At first, the cannoneers held their fire, thinking the attack force was an expected patrol returning to American lines. The gunners leapt into action when they discovered the true identity of the approaching force. All along the line heavy machine guns spit tracers at the enemy. Gun crews swung their field pieces around to face the attackers. Gunners lowered muzzles and cut fuses short. The howitzers fired rapidly into the mass of humanity moving toward them in the darkness. Rifles and hand grenades joined the chorus of firing as the Japanese moved forward. When the smoke cleared and daylight arrived, 143 enemy bodies lay in front of the 2d Battalion. The previous

In the 4th Marine Division's rapid drive up the right side of the island, the 14th Marines displaced to positions between Aslito Airfield and Hill 500. Here a 75mm gun section fires a round while an observer notes the location of impact and adjusts subsequent fire.

National Archives Photo 127-N-85328





National Archives Photo 127-N-88352

A typical 105mm howitzer position, here firing in support of the assault on Garapan.

long hours of drill with infantry weapons paid big dividends on that morning.²⁰

The terrain characteristics of central Saipan made accurate fire support extremely difficult. The island was a vast tangle of indistinguishable ravines and ridges, all covered by dense underbrush. Place names like "Death Valley," "Hell's Pocket," and "Purple Heart Ridge" were nicknames given to some of these locations by the participants. To advance through this area, General Smith ordered an attack with all three divisions abreast: The 2d Division on the left, 27th in the center, and 4th on the right. The plan faltered because of an uneven advance over the rough terrain. The two flanks moved rapidly while the center remained anchored near its original line of departure. The irregular front lines, compounded by inaccurate maps and faulty land navigation, caused several near-tragic accidents when artillery landed on or near American lines. A shower of green flares shooting skyward brought an immediate ceasefire until the problem could be worked out. Soon, the primary mission for most artillery became deep support and counterbattery fire. Light tanks, self-propelled 75mm guns, and the 37mm guns of the infantry regiments were the primary direct support weapons during this stage of the fight.

Another important fire support assignment for the artillery at this time was preparatory fire on a clearly defined objective. Places like Hill 767, "Radar Hill," and "Fourth of July Hill" were pounded by volley after volley of 75mm and 105mm fire from the 14th Marines. These "prep fires" knocked out few actual posi-

tions, but kept the enemy groggy, disrupted communications, and prevented troop movement. When used properly the artillery proved to be an effective weapon even in this difficult zone.²¹

As the campaign drew to a close, artillery support played a larger role because the flat terrain made target acquisition easier, fewer units were on the front line, and there were fewer counter-battery missions. All these factors increased the number of guns available per maneuver unit along the front. When the 4th Marine Division assaulted the 0-8 Phase Line, it called on the massed fires of the 10th Marines, the 14th Marines, and XXIV Corps artillery. When Japanese fire from a small hill held up RCT 24, fire from eight artillery battalions pounded the enemy position for one half-hour. An example of the effectiveness of the 14th Marines occurred when one of its phosphorus shells struck a Japanese dual-purpose gun being wheeled in and out of a cave near the beach. The enemy gun exploded in front of a Marine rifle company that cheered the result.

On the west coast, VAC attached the 3d and 4th Battalions, 10th Marines to the 4th Marine Division to support RCT 23's drive toward Marpi Point. On the night of 6-7 July, a large Japanese force penetrated the lines of the 27th Division. At about 0500 this force probed the position manned by the 10th Marines. Soon the Japanese charged out of the darkness in an attempt to overrun the artillerymen. In the ensuing hand-to-hand combat the 10th Marines lost a battalion commander, Major William L. Crouch; Private First Class Harold C. Agerholm earned a posthumous

Medal of Honor; and the 10th Marines received a Naval Unit Commendation for its gallant stand.²²

The futile Japanese attack on 7 July broke the back of the enemy resistance on Saipan. American forces pushed north at a rapid pace and gained Marpi Point. General Smith declared the island secure at 1615 on 9 July 1944. Horror, not joyous celebrations of victory, colored the end of the Saipan campaign. As the Americans watched helplessly, Japanese soldiers and civilians jumped from the rocky cliffs into the ocean rather than submit to capture by American forces. Humanitarian efforts failed to halt the wholesale slaughter. It was a sad ending to the 25 days of bitter conflict that marked the struggle for Saipan.

Saipan was a resounding victory and a strategic success which yielded many rewards—a major defeat for the Japanese fleet and its naval air arm, interdiction

of Japanese lines of communication, acquisition of heavy bomber bases within range of Tokyo, and a jumping off place for the attack on Tinian. The campaign, however, became synonymous with the inter-service hostility caused by the relief of General Ralph Smith. It is important to note that artillery operations on Saipan made a lie of the myth that the Marines and the Army could not work in harmony; in fact, the relationships between the two services were cordial and effective throughout both Saipan and Tinian. The 14th Marines landed on D-Day in DUKWs developed by the U.S. Army, using techniques pioneered by the U.S. Army. The calm, efficient leadership of Brigadier General Harper, an Army officer, impressed all Marine leaders. Marine and Army artillery units shared rations, supplies, ammunition, and information in an unselfish manner; each reinforced the fire of the other at one time or another during Operation Forager.

CHAPTER 6

Tinian, 1944

The assault on Tinian was one of the most obvious operations of the Second World War, a fact not lost on the island's Japanese defenders, most of whom were spectators while the battle of Saipan raged only a few miles away. Since there was virtually no chance for strategic surprise as at Roi-Namur or Saipan, the American planners relied on tactical surprise alone. This resulted in a brilliant scheme of maneuver and fire support unparalleled in originality and effectiveness during World War II in the Pacific. This masterful use of the "indirect approach" took place under a heavy umbrella of supporting arms, utilized an original logistical plan, and followed a convincing feint that left the Japanese in disarray because they were unable to identify the correct landing area. After the war, General Holland M. Smith labeled Tinian "the perfect amphibious operation."¹

Tinian lay about three and one-half miles south of Saipan's Nafutan Point. It sat in the azure Pacific waters like a misplaced billiard table. It had a relatively flat interior, and, other than the steep cliffs that surrounded it, Tinian's only height of note was Mount Lasso, which rose only 564 feet above sea level. In 1944, the main industry on Tinian was the raising of sugar cane, and thick cane fields covered about 90 percent of the island's surface. The only urban area, Tinian Town, centered around the sugar refinery.

Before the invasion, Marine reconnaissance teams located only three beach areas suitable for an amphibious landing. The most favorable, in terms of terrain, was at Tinian Town. A second was at Asiga Bay on the east coast. The least likely, because of its small size, was on the island's northwest corner and had two extremely narrow beaches codenamed White 1 and White 2. The major military targets of note were the airfields which cut across the cane fields at four different locations. Indeed, Tinian's flat terrain and its suitability for constructing the long airstrips necessary for the U.S. Army Air Force's B-29 bombers were a major reason for the selection of Saipan and Tinian as objectives for Operation Forager. Of particular interest were the two fields near Ushi Point and the one just inland of Gurguan Point, about midway down the island's west coast. In general, the flat terrain of Tinian

could support rapid movement by tank-infantry teams without natural obstacles barring the way. The enemy forces on Tinian were a mixture of Japanese Army and Navy units under the command of Colonel Keishi Ogata. Colonel Ogata commanded the *50th Infantry Regiment, 29th Division*, plus a battalion of the *135th Infantry Regiment* (reinforced), and the *56th Naval Guard Force*. The Americans estimated the total number of Japanese available to defend Tinian at just over 9,000 men.²

Immediately after the battle for Saipan, the 4th Marine Division changed hands. Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith became Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, and Major General Harry Schmidt, until then the commanding general of the 4th Marine Division, received appointment as the new Commanding General, VAC. Major General Clifton B. Cates, later Commandant of the Marine Corps, took over the 4th Marine Division. General Schmidt's first task was to complete planning for the capture of Tinian, scheduled to begin a fortnight after the securing of Saipan. After careful study, the landing force staff recommended a plan that took full advantage of the military principle of surprise. Rather than force a landing at the most obvious spot, it recommended sneaking in the "back door." The 2d Marine Division would conduct a demonstration landing at Tinian Town to hold the Japanese main forces in place, while the actual assault would consist of the 4th Marine Division landing over the miniscule White Beaches to the north. One of the major determinants in General Schmidt's approval of this controversial plan was that the White Beach landings could occur under the massed fires of 13 different artillery battalions shooting from Saipan. At Tinian, as at Roi-Namur, the advantages of shore-based artillery were apparent. The ability of the artillery to conduct accurate fire missions without regard to weather was very important, as the typhoon season was approaching rapidly, and a storm might strike the Marianas sometime during the Tinian campaign. The location of the firing positions, close to their resupply dumps, eased the logistical burden. The stable land platform provided by Saipan allowed careful selection and destruction of targets without fear