
Appendix G
“Inspection of MRL, Bataan”

HEADQUARTERS*
United States Army Forces in the Far East
Office of the Engineer
In the Field

HJC/pn

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Subject: Inspection of MLR, Bataan.

To: Commanding General, USAFFE

1. Between March 3 and March 6 accompanied by Major Gay, assistant, I made an inspection on foot of the entire line MLR position from the west to east coast of Bataan. The Corps Engr and his Asst as well as representatives of Subsector Commanders in the I Corps, and representatives of the 41st and 21st Divisions in the 11 Corps, as well as some of the Regimental Bn and most of the company and platoon commanders joined and accompanied us on the inspection over those reaches in their respective fronts.

2. In general the degree of improvement varied inversely with accessibility to the respective positions indicating that positions easily inspected by the higher commands were inspected and improved and stretches difficult of access had not been adequately inspected nor improved.

3. The positions organized by the U. S. Air Corps and by the 11 (h) infantry were outstanding y excellent. Other positions were reasonably well prepared. on certain positions, the type and extent of improvement are inexcusable, considering the time available for their improvement. It is not intended for this report to criticize specific positions in which a number of defects occur as such defects were pointed out during the inspection. It is desired however to secure general corrective action on the following general deficiencies observed.

4. The following are general findings applicable to many positions.

*Note: This document has been retyped but retains the spelling, punctuation, and style of the original. The original is in the Research Collections of the Office of History, Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Hugh J. Casey Papers, Folder 11.

A. Fire positions.

(1) In numerous cases, (at least 300 personally so observed) the foxholes or trenches with such shelter as is provided, are so constructed as to prevent the soldier from giving aimed fire to his front. Restricted clearance space below the overhead cover interfere to such a degree that the soldier, when sighting, can only aim and fire at an upward angle at and above tree tops to his front. If he fires at all, generally parallel to the ground to his front, he can do so only without aiming.

(2) This indicates two things: (a), that certain soldiers are concerned far more in their own cover protection during combat than in dealing effective fire on their enemy (which is actually their best protection in an attack) and (b) that platoon leaders, company commanders and other officers have not checked individual shelters and trenches with their troops in fire position to ensure the effectiveness of the preparation and defense of the position.

(3) Even in many cases where no overhead cover was provided and only open fire trenches or foxholes were utilized, numerous instances were noted where positions were constructed on downward sloping terrain and long parapets were constructed horizontally such that aimed fire could not be delivered parallel to the ground over which the enemy could advance but only above the heads of the enemy.

(4) In numerous other cases, long firing grooves were cut thru the parapet in a straight rather than flaring direction so that the soldier could fire only to cover a few yards of his front rather than targets to his right and left front as well.

B. Machine Gun Positions

(1) The principal basic errors with respect to machine guns consisted of

(a) Faulty location whereby plunging as compared to grazing fire was secured.

(b) Frontal rather than enfilading fire.

(c) Inability to secure aimed fire from a number of the positions.

(d) Lack of continued training in the operation of their weapon instructions and directives to MG personnel relative to their functions on final

protective line, failure to provide definite steps to mark traverse limits or final protective line for night firing.

(e) Carelessness in the construction of the emplacement and failure to provide adequate mount foundation such that the machine gun (many of which had not been test fired at all on their present positions) would jar loose due to failure of its inadequate foundation, at the critical moment when it would be vitally needed.

(2) With respect to (a), there are many cases where the forward movement of a machine gun 10 to 50 yards would increase the effectiveness of the gun from 200 to 500 times. The importance of grazing as against plunging fire is apparently not fully appreciated. If the trajectory is parallel to the ground the bullet is effective over the entire 300 to 500 yd reach in front of the gun whereas when the gun fires from an elevation onto flat ground in front, the bullet is effective only over the few yards immediately adjacent to where it strikes. This is a most important factor in night firing where the enemy cannot be seen. Inasmuch as most attacks will occur at night, it seems vital that every effort should be made to secure grazing and effective fire, including giving greater priority and consideration thereto than to how readily a machine gun can be most easily evacuated. A machine gun well located will not need evacuation. A gun poorly located will have to be evacuated due to its ineffectiveness during attack.

(3) With respect to (b), insufficient effort has been made to get the best enfilading fire possible. In a number of cases all organizational machine guns are distributed generally uniformly over the front, firing (except for some small horizontal traverse) solely to the front. If these weapons were placed with respect to certain topographic features, bends in the front or in coordination with those of adjacent units so as to attain enfilading fire, a far greater and more effective coverage of the front could be secured – particularly so for night defense. If the trace of the barbed wire were varied more to conform to the bands of enfilading fire from such machine guns, delaying the enemy in passing thru such bands, an almost impassable position (until such guns are destroyed) is assured. Marked improvement in the defensive strength of certain positions can be so secured.

(4) With respect to (c), it was found that in some machine gun positions, the clearance to overhead cover was so restricted as to prevent delivery of aimed fire, even without a helmet. This was particularly the case in a number of instances where the gun had to be depressed to give grazing fire over downward slopes in front of the position. In other cases it was impossible to traverse the weapon with its rear sight up or to correct stoppages because of

inadequate vertical clearance. Because of the lack of a few inches of excavation or raising of head cover, and failure of adequate inspection, vital machine guns would be ineffective in combat.

(5) With respect to (d), it was found that a number of machine gunners are not adequately instructed and trained in their duties, with insufficient or no information on their "final protective line," limits of fire, ranges to know points. Written or typed instructions and sketches should be furnished to each gun position showing sector of fire, protective line etc. and definite stops or marks established for critical limits. Closer supervised training appears desirable.

(6) With respect to (e), mount foundations should be checked preferably by test firing, to assure that guns will function when needed, including careful inspection of mount foundations to assure that foundations won't fail (as they would in several guns inspected) at the first firing. In some cases only an inch or so of clay, easily broken off, supported the rear tripod leg.

C. Location of trenches.

(1) Serious errors have been made in many cases in the location of the trenches with respect to the terrain and potential field of fire. In numerous cases, trenches are located as close as 5 to 20 yds behind the military crest, limiting the field over which men can fire to this short distance, with the major distance over which the enemy must approach left defiladed. Relocation of these trenches a short distance further forward (utilizing existing trenches for support trenches or for better shelter) will immeasurably increase the defensive strength of the position.

(2) In certain cases the enemy is permitted to come down the opposite slope, cross a stream, climb the near slope and get to within hand grenade distance of the trenches without coming under fire, a dangerous situation for any night attack. Relocation of the trenches to where this defiladed approach area would be under continuous fire would greatly strengthen the position and make it almost impossible to take under any determined defense.

(3) Officers responsible for the siting and construction of such defense positions should critically review present locations from in front of and also from within the actual or proposed trench positions and select and develop that position which they can visualize would be the most difficult to approach and take.

D. Coordination between Adjacent Units.

(1) From Corps, thru Divisions, Regts, Bns. down to Platoons there appears to be a lack of sufficient coordination and cooperation in connection with the mutual supporting action of adjacent units, insofar as the organization of the ground and disposition of units are concerned.

(2) Each unit commander should know and confer frequently with the corresponding adjacent unit commander with respect to coordinating their positions for best mutual support.

(3) There is a strong tendency particularly in the lower units, to be concerned solely with its own unit and front, without recourse to mutual supporting action of adjacent guns or units. In numerous cases unit commanders did not know and had not consulted with commanders of adjacent units. There are many cases where a unit can do its most effective defense by covering by enfilade fire the front of an adjacent unit rather than its own, securing similar coverage of its own front from the adjacent units. In some cases the defensive strength can be increased many fold by such action.

(4) It is recommended that closer coordination between units be effected to include the tie - in between I and II Corps on the Pantingan River, the closure of the gap between the 31st and 21st Divisions, as well as numerous smaller cases thruout the front.

E. Shortening of line.

(1) In a number of cases, the line appears to be unduly extended, requiring greater forces or a thinning of the line because of the tendency to follow back up river valleys, edges of recessed wood clearing, etc. rather than generally straight across such features. On the Pantingan River Valley for example, the line extends well back up the valley and back again whereas a shorter line (keeping present line as a support or reserve line) would release men for reserves, prevent an infiltration in force by the enemy to the unprotected corridor, and permit a stronger defense of the shorter line, leaving auxiliary positions (the present one plus additional lines constructed across the valley) for successive defense in depth against any strong penetration.

F. Reserves and development in depth.

(1) Greater effort should be made to provide more reserves and to develop the position in depth. The 41st Division is well organized insofar as this feature is concerned. Reserves can be made available by a shortening of the line, as above indicated, and by a thinning out of those portions of the front of great natural defensive strength. The distribution of men along the front appears almost uniform, in a continuously occupied trench line clear across the front. Not sufficient attention has been given to the organization of strong points, combat groups, etc. which by proper utilization of terrain features and without continuous occupation of the front, can by mutually supporting fire, cover adjacent unoccupied reaches. It is appreciate that in the jungle, the occupation must be relatively uniform and continuous but even there greater strength should be given to natural avenues of approach (ravines, trails etc.). However in open areas mutually supporting combat groups rather than continuous occupation should be employed.

(2) It seems important to again stress the urgent need of an elastic defense. The enemy by a concentration of strength and fire at a point of his choosing can force, at a price, a penetration of the position. Reserves must be available to eject him. If they are all on the line, they cannot be withdrawn. The greatest assurance of having the maximum strength where and when most critically needed is by assurance of a mobil and adequate reserve. It is felt that in both Corps, greater reserve (Bn, Regimental and Divisional) can be built up by better utilization of combat groups rather than continuous front line occupation.

(3) The positions for Bn and Regt Reserve lines should be built up (now generally underdeveloped or not provided) to provide auxiliary positions against any local infiltration.

G. Barbed Wire.

(1) Wire is in many cases located too close to the trenches or machine guns. It should generally be beyond hand grenade distance from the line protected. Greater care should be placed in its location with respect to automatic weapons so that a band of fire can be placed down and along its front, so that the enemy is subjected to enfilading fire while delayed in getting thru the wire.

(2) Stakes or pickets should be solidly emplaced so that the wire can not be readily pushed down or removed.

H. Clearing Field of Fire.

(1) Fields of fire should be cleared to attain the maximum possible range of aimed fire in front of the position. This does not mean however in the jungle or heavily wooded areas that every tree and all brush must be removed. Only that portion of the underbrush, lower branches, etc., as furnish concealment 5 to 6 feet above the ground should be removed, leaving the overhead cover untouched. If the entire belt is cleared of all trees, vegetation, etc., the enemy from the air can readily see the exact location of the position and more easily bomb and strafe or give aerial observation and more accurate fire direction to artillery fire against the position, with resultant greater casualties to our forces.

I. Communication Trenches.

(1) Greater effort should be placed on the construction of communication trenches to the position so that protected approaches are available for supply of rations, ammunition and replacements or reinforcements during an attack. A few hours of work now will save lives and the position later.

J. Sanitation and Health.

(1) Greater control is necessary on sanitation. A command with 10 to 25 percent sick is reduced in combat efficiency to an even greater degree.

(2) Latrines should be adequate in number (1 per squad for convenience where unit is spread out). Discipline should be improved to ensure that latrines are used, and that feces are covered and not exposed to flies. (A number of latrines were observed with thousands of flies in them, which could migrate between latrines and soldiers' food contributing to sickness). One unit's latrines were located in advance of the front line. Insufficient attention is given to boiling water. Many organizations reported they boiled their water but inquiry developed that this was to be done by the individual soldier rather than the organization. That is laziness or neglect on the part of the unit Commander. A Filipino who is thirsty is not going to start a fire, boil his water 20 minutes, wait for it to cool and then satisfy his thirst. All organizations, by company or platoon, should be provided boiled water from a central source to their men to assure that they will drink only safe water.

(3) Sickness varied from little to as much as 25 percent or more of a command dependent on location, type and health resistance of soldiers, and efficiency and energy of the commanders. In most of the units, it was reported that no quinine is being furnished, except to those actually sick with malaria. In view of the small bulk of quinine and relative ease of getting quantities in, and its vital importance in the prevention of malaria, it is not believed we should run out of quinine. It is recommended, if combat efficiency is to be kept up that quinine issues be resumed, particularly to units having present high malaria rates and that first priority be given to replenishing and keeping up adequate stocks.

(4) Few of the troops have blankets. Special effort should be made to provide them before the rainy season. In order to make something available, I have directed that the remaining burlap in Engr Supply Depot be used for blankets rather than for camouflage or sandbags.

K. Rations and Cigarettes.

(1) Some special measures appear desirable to make at least occasional special ration issues to the units and the American officer personnel with them. It would appear possible to make a special issue to some unit, even if only once each week or two, to give them a little pickup from their daily routine, rotating the units to which such issues are made. It would also be a welcome change to many to get a hash or part hash issue occasionally in place of canned fish each day. Special consideration should be given to interior front divisions which cannot supplement their ration by fresh fish or other items available to coast and rear units. There is no question but that there is a marked difference between rations issued and available to front line units, who are in probably greatest need of them, as compared to the Service Command and Ft. Mills units, a situation which occasions some dissatisfaction and loss of morale.

(2) There is a dire lack of cigarettes among the front line units. Soldiers will pounce upon any discarded cigarette stub for a single puff. There is, in time of war no difference between the physical needs of smokers as between front and rear echelon units, unless the need at the front is greater. It would appear only just to make an equal allocation insofar as issues and the privilege to purchase are concerned, between all officers and men, at the front, in the rear echelon and at Ft. Mills. Troops should not be in the position of paying 2 Pesos per package of cigarettes, and even then being unable to get them when those in rear can secure them in plenty at 10 centavos.

(3) It is recommended that a uniform quota be established of present available stocks for the entire command, in the interest of improving morale in our most important elements, the front line units.

L. General.

(1) It is not intended to convey the impression that everything is wrong as might be inferred from reading general deficiencies listed in the foregoing report. Much good work has been done, and the units, now better seasoned, are determined to hold. The deficiencies indicated are pointed out with suggested corrective action only in the hope and with the objective of improving to a far greater degree the defensive strength of our position. Much of the foregoing improvement is already under way as when these deficiencies were pointed out to the respective unit commanders or the representatives of higher echelons, immediate corrective instructions were issued.

(2) The accomplishment so readily and quickly attained dictated one final recommendation namely that higher commanders and their staffs execute frequent personal reconnaissances on foot of their respective positions, personally checking units, training, defensive organization, etc. and not rely solely on subordinate reports or inspections of next lower echelon CP's. Nothing takes that place of personal reconnaissance.

HUGH J. CASEY,
Brig General, U. S. A.
Engineer,

