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rounded up ships to send the 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team to Aitape, where the unit arrived on 27 June. It was decided to keep No. 71 Wing at the Tadjai strips and a 155-mm. artillery battalion was shipped to Aitape a few days after the 112th Cavalry. At the same time, General Krueger changed his mind about employing a regiment of the 31st Division and ordered preparations made to move the 124th Infantry of that division to Aitape. Simultaneously, efforts were made to speed the shipment of the 43d Division from its New Zealand staging area to Aitape.

17 Rads, ALAMO to PTF, WF - 3970, 20 Jun 44, and WF - 4060, 21 Jun 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 20 - 25 Jun 44.

Change in Command

When all the reinforcements arrived, the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE's strength would equal 2 2/3 divisions. General Krueger therefore decided that a corps headquarters would be needed at Aitape. The corps commander chosen to assume command at Aitape was Maj. Gen. Charles P. Hall who, together with his staff of the XI Corps headquarters, had recently arrived in New Guinea from the United States. The change in command was not to entail a change in the principal mission of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE--defense of the Tadjai airstrips. To carry out this mission, General Hall was instructed to break the initial impetus of the apparently impending 18th Army attack and, when the strength of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE and the tactical situation permitted, undertake a vigorous counterattack. With these instructions in mind, General Hall assumed command of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE as of midnight 27 - 28 June.

18 Ltr OI, CG ALAMO to CG XI Corps, 25 Jun 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 27 - 29 Jun 44.

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While this change in command was being effected, more information concerning the plans of the 18th Army was obtained from Ultra Secret sources. It became known that the 20th Division was to cross the "Hanto" River on 29 June, with the 80th Infantry leading. After that regiment was across the Hanto, the 78th Infantry was to follow and attack south, presumably toward Afua, while the 2d Battalion, 79th Infantry, was to move against Anamo (on the beach just west of the mouth of the Driniumor) and East Sector headquarters. ¹⁹

19 Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C - 14205, 26 Jun 44; rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 1884, 28 Jun 44. Both rads in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 27 - 29 Jun 44.

General Headquarters forwarded this information to ALAMO FORCE with little attempt at interpretation, but the ALAMO FORCE Intelligence Section decided that the Hanto River was probably the Driniumor. The prospective attack, ALAMO FORCE believed, would be launched during the night of 28 - 29 June at a point about two miles inland from the mouth of the Driniumor. It was considered probable that the attack of the 78th Infantry would be aimed at gaining control of the Afua - Palauru trail, while the 80th Infantry moved on Anamo. ALAMO FORCE believed it possible that the 80th Infantry would be supported by the Yamashita Battalion, a unit tentatively identified as the 2d Battalion, 79th Infantry.

Assuming the success of its initial attack, the 20th Division apparently planned to assemble at "Hill 56," which ALAMO FORCE tentatively located as lying about 4,000 yards northwest of Afua, and then push on toward the Tadji airfields. ALAMO FORCE estimated that the maximum strength with which the 20th Division could attack was about 5,200 men. ²⁰

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20 Rad, ALAMO to PTF, WF - 1027, 27 Jun 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl
Hollandia, 27 - 29 Jun 44.

If this interpretation of available information was correct, General Hall had but one day to prepare his new command to meet the attack of the 18th Army.

Reorganizations and Redispositions

As soon as General Hall and the few members of his XI Corps staff that he had brought forward became acquainted with the situation in the Aitape area, Headquarters, XI Corps assumed the role of PERSECUTION TASK FORCE headquarters, using many men of Headquarters, 32d Division, until the rest of the XI Corps staff could reach Aitape. Next, the command structure of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was rearranged, and some changes in troop dispositions were effected.

In the stead of the West, Center, and East Sectors, three new area commands were established. ²¹ Extending west from the eastern

²¹ The description of reorganization is based upon PTF FO No. 5, 29 Jun 44, in PTF G-3 Jnl, 27 Jun - 3 Jul 44; other orders and memos contained in the PTF G-3 Jnl, 8 - 11 Jul 44.

side of the Tadjil airstrips was the Western Defense Command, under Brig. Gen. Alexander N. Stark, Jr., ²² whose area of responsibility

²² General Stark, the Assistant Division Commander of the 43d Division, had just arrived at Aitape with an advance echelon of division headquarters.

covered the ground previously assigned to the West and Center Sectors.

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Since no enemy attack was expected from the west or southwest, only amphibious or aviation engineers were assigned to the Western Defense Command. The next command eastward was the Eastern Defense Area, commanded by General Gill. This organization was to hold the eastern part of the Main Line of Resistance and also an Outpost Line of Resistance which was established along the west bank of the Nigia River. The eastern Defense Area's headquarters was identical with Headquarters, 32d Division, and the troops assigned to General Gill comprised the 32d Division less those elements assigned to the Eastern Defense Command.

The latter organization, placed under General Martin's command, took the place of the East Sector and was made responsible for delaying action along the Driniunor and west of the Nigia. Initially, the Eastern Defense Command was subordinate to the Eastern Defense Area, but on 29 June General Hall placed General Martin's unit directly under task force control. Supply, administration, and evacuation for the Eastern Defense Command were responsibilities of the 32d Division which, for these purposes, acted in its administrative capacity rather than in its tactical role of Eastern Defense Area.

The similarity in the names of the two eastern components of the task force soon proved confusing and on 8 July all nomenclature was changed. General Martin's command was redesignated the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE; General Gill's the Eastern Sector, and General Stark's the Western Sector. At the same time the western boundary of General Martin's area was moved eastward to a new line running south from the coast along Akanai Creek and the X-ray River, which lay about midway between the Nigia and Driniunor Rivers.

While these administrative changes were being made, the 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team (less the 148th Field Artillery) had arrived at Blue Beach. The new force was attached to the 32d

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Division for administration and on 29 June was placed under General Martin's operational control. The combat team was commanded by Brig. Gen. Julian W. Cunningham, while the dismounted (and oft disgruntled about it) men of the 112th Cavalry Regiment, the nucleus of the combat team, were led by Col. Alexander M. Miller, III.²³

²³ The 148th Field Artillery, equipped with 105-mm. howitzers, arrived at Aitape in mid-July. It did not then revert to General Cunningham's control but instead operated as part of the general artillery support under PTF (XI Corps) artillery.

The 112th Cavalry Regiment was somewhat less than two-thirds of the strength of an infantry regiment. It comprised only two squadrons, each composed of three troops, as opposed to the three battalions of four companies each in an infantry regiment. Instead of the three heavy weapons companies organic to the corresponding infantry unit, the 112th Cavalry had only one heavy weapons troop. Moreover, the cavalry unit had arrived at Aitape with less than its authorized personnel. At no time during operations at Aitape did it number more than 1,500 men, in comparison with the 3,000-odd of an infantry regiment.²⁴

²⁴ Interv, author with Lt. Col. P. L. Hooper, ex-Executive Officer, 112th Cav RCT, 25 Mar 48, in OCMH files.

Initially, it was planned that the 112th Cavalry would take up positions in the Palauru area. There it was to defend the right rear of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE and act as General Martin's reserve. General Hall, deciding that the Driniumor River line needed strengthening, changed this plan and on 29 June sent the regiment forward to

CHART NO. 7b
 THE PERSECUTION TASK FORCE
 (22 April - 25 August 1944)

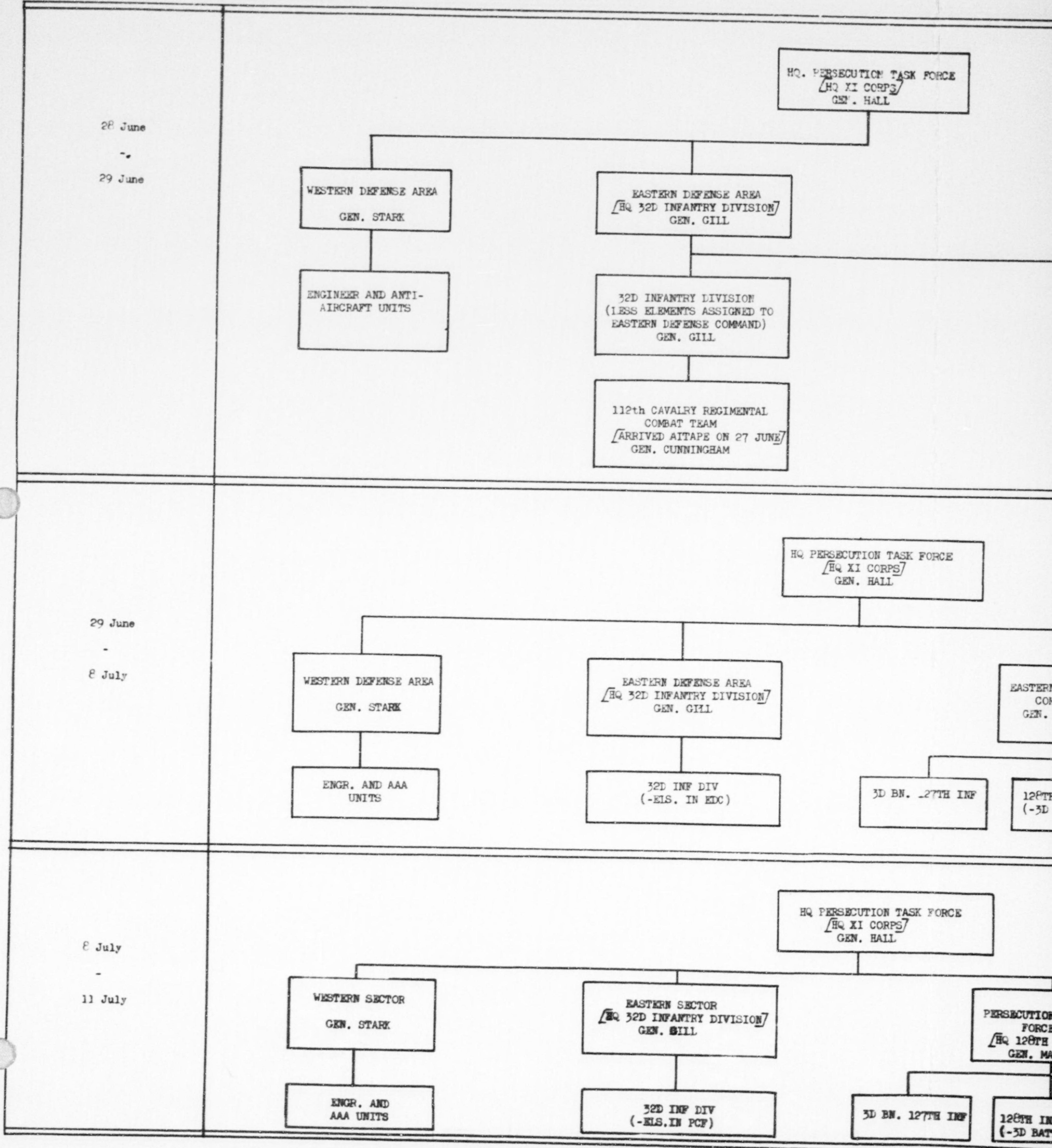
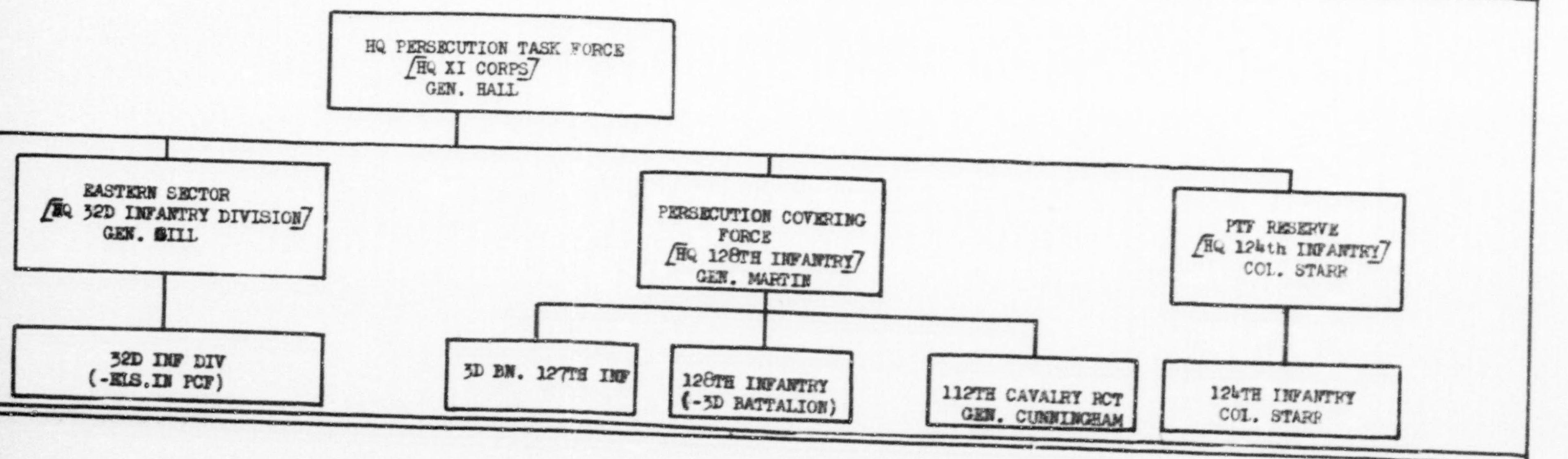
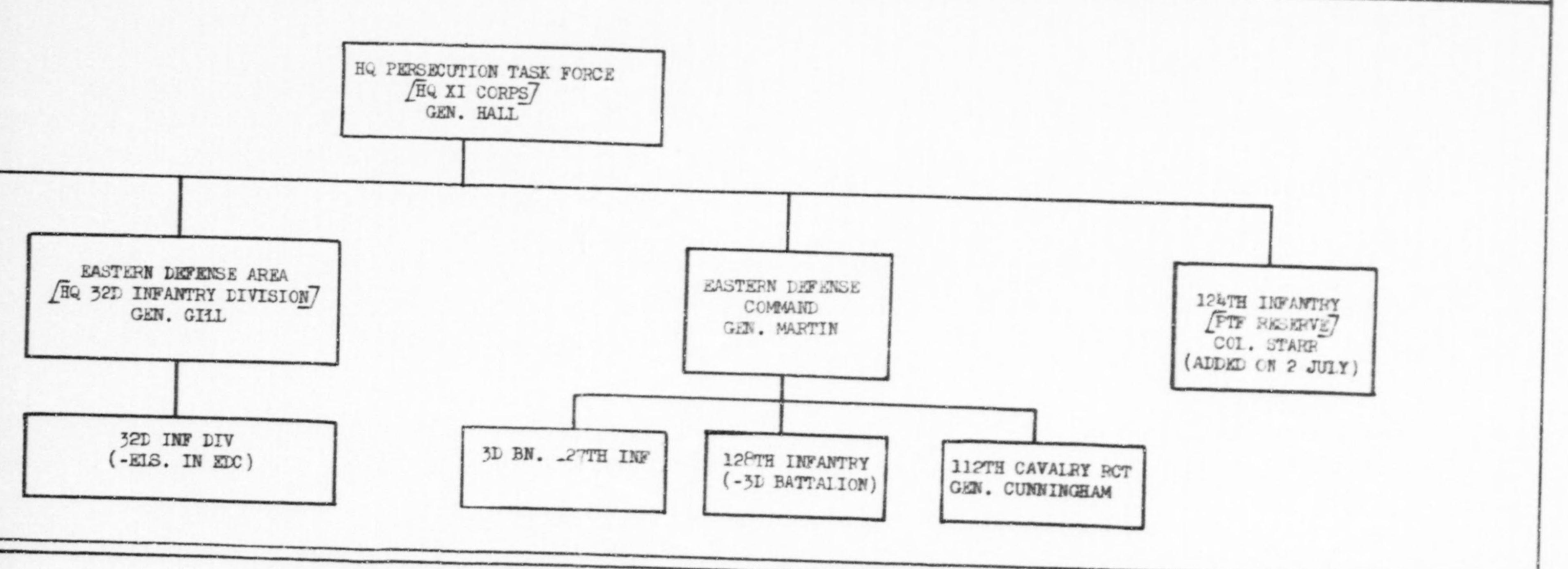
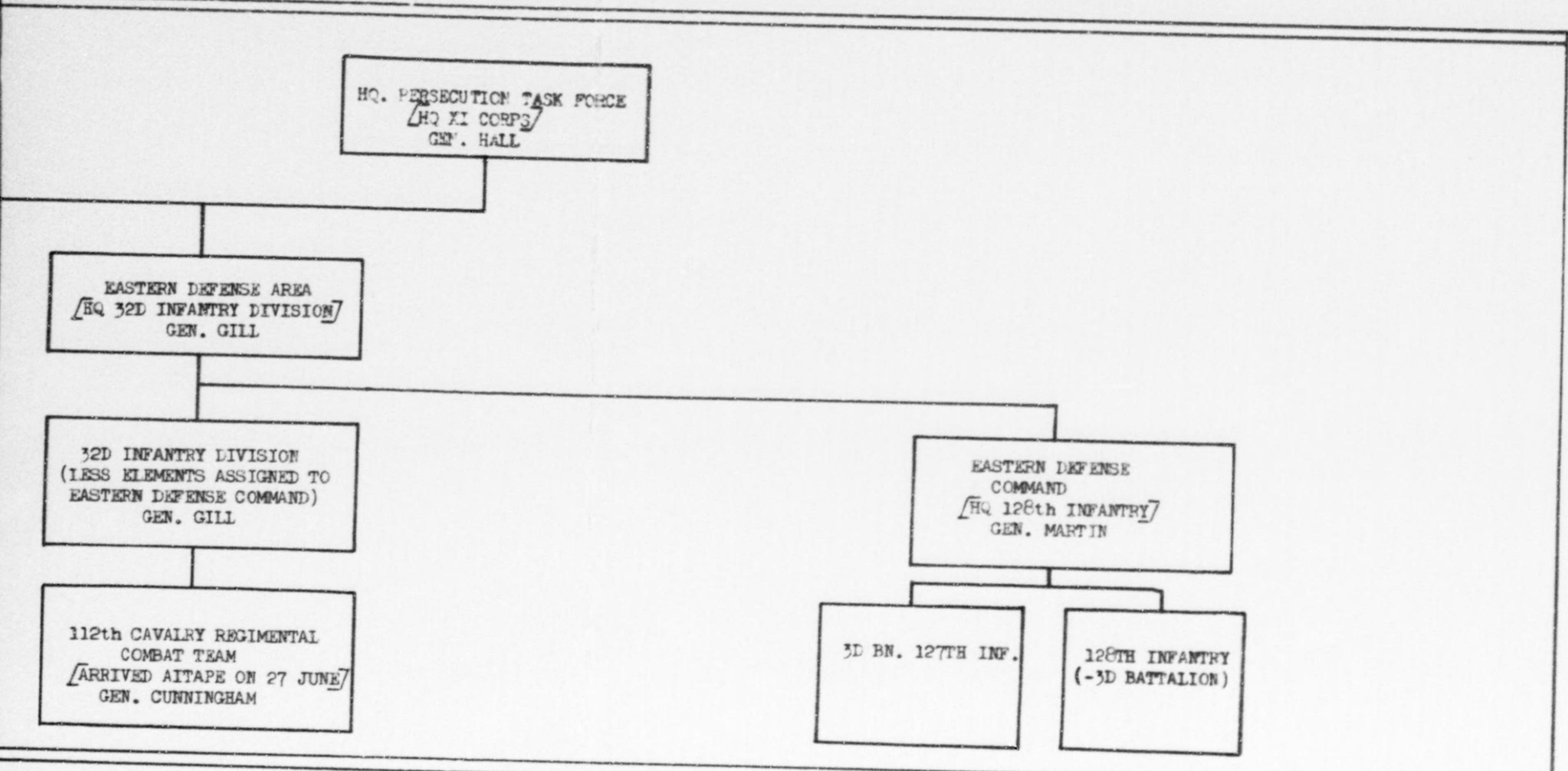


CHART NO. 7b
 THE PERSECUTION TASK FORCE
 (22 April - 25 August 1944)



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the X-ray and Driniumor Rivers. Leaving the rest of the regiment on the X-ray, the 2d Squadron moved on to the Driniumor and took up defensive positions in the Afua area. Upon the arrival of this squadron on the river, the extent of the Driniumor defenses previously the responsibility of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was reduced and operational control of the infantry battalion passed to General Cunningham. This addition still did not bring the strength of the latter's command up to that of an infantry regiment.²⁵

²⁵ Ibid.; PTF G-3 Jnl, 27 Jun - 3 Jul 44; 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 1-4. The 112th Cavalry RCT did not submit a report for the Aitape campaign, but merely endorsed that of the 112th Cavalry Regiment.

About the same time, the mission of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE was changed. Previously, it had been assumed that the force would gradually be forced back by enemy pressure, but now General Martin was ordered to delay such a withdrawal as long as possible and retreat only in the face of overwhelming pressure. The 112th Cavalry had been released to General Martin's control to aid in the execution of the new mission and the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, was also made available to him. On 29 June the infantry battalion took over about 3,000 yards of the Driniumor line between the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry. The artillery strength of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE was also augmented as the 105-mm. howitzers of the 120th and 129th Field Artillery Battalions were emplaced near Anamo. More fire support was supplied when Company B, 632d Tank Destroyer Battalion, moved forward to the mouth of the Driniumor.²⁶

²⁶ PTF G-3 Jnl, 27 Jun - 3 Jul 44.

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Gathering Combat Intelligence

General Hall had strengthened the Driniumor line in the expectation that the 20th Division would attack on or about 29 June. But there was no attack on that date. It was therefore decided that the information upon which the expectation was based had been incorrectly interpreted. If so, greater credence had to be placed on conflicting evidence from radio intercepts and captured documents which suggested that the 18th Army was to attack on 10 July. This interpretation was given some corroboration when a prisoner captured on 30 June divulged that the 20th Division was planning to move against the Driniumor line between 1 and 10 July.²⁷

²⁷ ALAMO FORCE, G-2 Estimates of the Enemy Situation, Aitape, 30 Jun and 1 July 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 30 Jun - 3 Jul 44; rads, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 1948, AE - 1953, and AE - 1957, 30 Jun 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 30 Jun - 3 Jul 44; rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO Adv Hq, C-14133, 24 Jun 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 20 - 25 Jun 44.

Reconnaissance in Force Eastward

General Hall, in an attempt to locate the 20th Division, ordered the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE to send strong patrols east of the Driniumor to the Harech River. A few patrols, moving along the coast, got almost as far as Yakamul, but so efficient had the Japanese counter-reconnaissance operations become that this was as close as any Allied patrols came to the Harech River during the period 30 June through 10 July. In the southern sector of the Driniumor line patrols confirmed previous reports that the Japanese maintained a counterreconnaissance screen along Niumen Creek. Here Japanese units were digging in and holding wherever and whenever patrol contacts were made.

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However, these enemy groups were not large, nor did the Japanese patrols encountered in the Yakamul area appear to be particularly strong. All American patrol efforts failed to disclose any evidence of large, organized Japanese units or movements. Yet, it was known that at least two regiments of the 20th Division and probably elements of the 41st Division were located somewhere in the area between the Harech and Driniumor Rivers.

28 PTF G-3 Jnl's, 4-8 and 8-11 Jul 44; rads, PTF to ALAMO, (no numbers), 6 and 7 Jul 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 4-9 Jul 44.

The fact that no large enemy units could be located east of the Driniumor caused considerable worry at ALAMO FORCE headquarters. General Krueger was afraid that the development of the situation in front of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE was being left to the volition of the Japanese. On 8 July he therefore instructed General Hall to seize the initiative by sending a strong reconnaissance in force across the Driniumor to ascertain the enemy's intentions and dispositions.

29 Interv, author with Lt. Gen. Charles P. Hall, ex-commander of the PERSECUTION TF and XI Corps, 27 Mar 47, copy in OCMH files; rad, ALAMO to PTF, WH - 1120, 8 Jul 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 4 - 9 Jul 44.

General Hall now had at his disposal twelve infantry battalions and two understrength, dismounted cavalry squadrons. Three infantry battalions and the two cavalry squadrons were committed to action under General Martin. To accomplish his primary mission--defense of the Tadji airstrips--General Hall considered it necessary to hold at

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least six infantry battalions near the dromes. ³⁰ These dispositions

30 Interview with General Hall, 27 Mar 47. Throughout the Aitape operation, infantry units were disposed by battalion. The regimental cannon companies and other regimental units were often detached for guard or labor duties around the airfields and at Blue Beach.

accounted for the infantry of the 32d Division and for the 112th Cavalry. In addition to these units there was available to General Hall the 124th Infantry, 31st Division, which had arrived in echelons at Blue Beach beginning 2 July.

The reconnaissance in force instructions got a cool reception at PERSECUTION TASK FORCE headquarters. General Hall had planned to send at least two battalions of the 124th Infantry on an amphibious enveloping movement down the coast to Nyaparake, where a successful landing would place American units in the rear of the suspected location of the 20th Division. Although he preferred this amphibious envelopment plan to an overland movement, General Hall could not argue the point with ALAMO FORCE. He postponed the attack of the 124th Infantry until 13 July and ordered General Martin to begin the reconnaissance in force on the morning of 10 July. The maneuver was to be carried out in an aggressive manner. Minor opposition was not to slow the advance, but the forces engaged in the movement were to push rapidly eastward to the Harech River. Once on the Harech, the reconnaissance units were to consolidate, patrol to the south and east, and prepare for further advances on order from General Hall. ³¹

31 PTF G-3 Jnl, 8 - 11 Jul 44; interview with General Hall, 27 Mar 47; rad, PTF to PCF, (no number), 9 Jul 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl

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Hollandia, 10 - 12 Jul 44; 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 1 - 3;
rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 1053, 9 Jul 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia,
4 - 9 Jul 44.

General Hall's plans for airdrome defense and amphibious envelopment made it necessary for the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE to provide the units for the reconnaissance in force. General Martin chose the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, and the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry. The infantry was to advance along the coast and the cavalry directly overland from Afua. Contact between the two groups, which would be separated by five miles of heavily jungled terrain, was to be maintained by reinforced platoon patrols sent out by the units remaining on the Driniumor.³²

32 Rads, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 1053 and AE - 1200, 9 Jul 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnls Hollandia, 4 - 9 and 10 - 12 Jul 44, respectively; rad, PTF to PCF, (no number), 9 Jul 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 10 - 12 Jul 44.

The reconnaissance units started moving about 0730 on 10 July when the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, Company B leading, waded across the mouth of the Driniumor. Progress down the coast was rapid and uneventful until 1000 when, at a point about three miles east of the Driniumor, the leading elements were held up by a Japanese unit, estimated to be a company in strength which was dug in along the coastal trail. The infantry could not take the enemy position by assault and artillery support from the 105-mm. howitzers at Anamo was requested. This fire, quickly and accurately delivered, killed some Japanese and scattered the rest. Company B resumed the advance, but was stopped again at enemy positions on the banks of a small stream

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300 yards further east. This time one artillery concentration failed to dislodge the Japanese and, finding it impossible to out-flank the enemy defenses, the forward infantry units were disengaged while a second artillery concentration was brought down on the enemy positions.

After the artillery fired, Company B continued the advance until 1745, by which time it had reached a point less than a mile west of Yakumul. In terrain which afforded good positions for night defenses, the company dug in, while the rest of the battalion established a perimeter running westward along the coastal trail. Not more than fifty Japanese had actually been seen during the day. Casualties for the 1st Battalion were five killed and eight wounded.³³

33 PTF G-3 Jnl, 8 - 11 Jul 44; 1st Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 27 Jul 44. The battalion's casualty figures are from the battalion journal and do not agree with other sources.

At the southern end of the Driniumor line the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, right arm of the reconnaissance in force, delayed its departure until the 1st Squadron moved up to the Driniumor from the X-ray River and did not leave Afua until 1000. The 2d Squadron did not follow any trail but, having been ordered to avoid contact with the enemy during the first part of the movement eastward, cut its way through heavy jungle over alternately hilly and swampy terrain. The nature of the terrain so slowed progress that at 1445, when the advance was halted for the night, the squadron was not more than a mile east of the Driniumor. No contact with enemy forces had been made during the day and there were no casualties.³⁴

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34 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 5 - 9; PTF G-3 Jnl, 8 - 11 Jul 44; interview with Colonel Hooper, 25 Mar 48. The records state that the squadron advanced 1 3/4 miles during the day, but the figure used in the text is that provided by Colonel Hooper. Orders to the squadron to avoid contact were apparently given locally, presumably by the regimental commander, and do not appear in the records.

General Hall was not satisfied with the progress the two arms of the reconnaissance had made during the day. He was especially disappointed in the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, which, he felt, should have been able to move further eastward than squad-size patrols had earlier in the week. Both the infantry and cavalry units were ordered to resume the advance eastward in a more aggressive manner on the morrow. Further efforts were to be made by both units to maintain contact with forces back on the Driniumor and with each other. The 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, had been unable to maintain contact, either physically or by radio, with regimental headquarters. The platoon patrols which were to have maintained contact between the two arms of the reconnaissance had not accomplished their mission. ³⁵

35 PTF G-3 Jnl, 8 - 11 Jul 44. The records of the PTF, the PCF, and the units along the Driniumor contain no evidence that the platoon patrols had even been sent out.

Redisposition Along the Driniumor

Back on the Driniumor River sweeping changes in dispositions had taken place. ³⁶ The 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, had to assume re-

36 Information in this section is from: PTF G-3 Jnl, 8 - 11

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Jul 44; PCF G-3 Jnl, 9 - 12 Jul 44; interview with Captain Lowry,
Apr 47; 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 28
Jun - 27 Jul 44.

sponsibility for the positions vacated by the 1st Battalion. The 2d Battalion's sector now extended from the mouth of the Driniumor to the junction of the Anamo - Afua trail with the river bank. This was a straight line distance of about 5,000 yards, but configurations of the Driniumor's west bank made it over 6,000 yards on the ground.

Company F, 128th Infantry, was on the left of the 2d Battalion guarding the west bank from the mouth inland about 3,900 yards. The northern portion of the company zone was very well organized, having been developed by various units since the middle of May, but positions in the southern quarter of the sector had not been completed. To the right of Company F was Company E, in position along a front of 1,250 yards. South of Company E, tying its right flank into the left of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was Company G, spread over a front of about 1,000 yards. Company G's strong points and pillboxes were closer together--about sixty to seventy-five yards apart--than those of the other 2d Battalion companies. The company also had some low barbed wire strung in front of its position. Company E had little or not wire and its strongpoints were about ninety yards apart. Company G's lines were shortened about 100 yards late in the afternoon when a rifle platoon of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, assumed responsibility for that much of the company's area.

By nightfall all the riflemen of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, were in their defensive positions. The heavy machine guns of Company H were disposed along the bank of the river between the infantry strongpoints, their lines of fire tied in with those of the rifle companies' light machine guns and automatic rifles (BAR's).

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Company H's 81-mm. mortars were emplaced about 200 yards west of the river and were registered in on area targets along the bed and east bank of the Driniumor. The 60-mm. mortars of the three rifle companies had targets overlapping those of the larger weapons. The forward command post of the battalion was about 800 yards west of the Driniumor, behind the center of Company E's sector. The remainder of the battalion headquarters, together with a tank destroyer platoon, was located on the coast just west of the river's mouth. The battalion had no reserve which it could move to meet a Japanese attack.

South of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, the 3d Battalion of the 127th Infantry had a sector about 2,500 yards long. Company I was on the left, with every available man in position along 1,400 yards of curving river bank. Strongpoints were about 100 yards apart and the company had no protecting wire. Company K, with a nearly straight stretch of bank about 1,100 yards in length to hold, was on the right of Company I. The dispositions of Company M's heavy weapons were similar to those of Company H of the 128th Infantry. Company L of the 127th, which had sent many patrols east of the Driniumor during the day and which had lent one of its rifle platoons to Company G, 128th Infantry, was not on the line. Instead, the company guarded the battalion command post, which was situated about 700 yards west of the Driniumor behind Company K.

The 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, south of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was responsible for about 3,000 yards of the Driniumor line. This distance was divided about equally between Troop B on the left (tying into the lines of Company K, 127th Infantry) and Troop A on the right. The line extended to a point about 500 yards south of Afua, where Troop C took up support positions. Troop C did not place many men along the river, but concentrated at Afua to refuse the south

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flank of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE and to provide a reserve for the 112th Cavalry. Weapons Troop's heavy machine guns were disposed for the most part in the sectors of Troops A and B. Headquarters of the 112th Cavalry and General Cunningham's command post were situated about 200 yards west of the Driniumor behind Troop B. A small rear echelon group of the 112th Cavalry remained on the X-ray River at the Afua - Palaura trail crossing to protect the overland line of communications back to Blue Beach.

Along the coast west of the Driniumor, at Anamo, Anopapi, and Tiver, were located field artillery units and the headquarters installations of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE and the 128th Infantry. Communications from these units to those on the river were carried out for the most part by radio, although some telephone wire was used. After dark, especially in the southern sector of the Driniumor line, radios did not operate efficiently. Units along the river communicated with each other by means of sound-power telephones.

Intelligence, 10 July

Many bits of information concerning the intentions of the 18th Army were now available to the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE. When no attack occurred on 29 June as originally anticipated, intelligence from Ultra Secret sources was re-evaluated as indicating that the 20th Division, possible supported by elements of the 41st Division, was to attack about 10 July. The prisoner captured on 30 June had corroborated this interpretation by stating that such an attack would take place between the 1st and the 10th of July. Similar information was acquired on the morning of 10 July when the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, captured a member of the 237th Infantry, 41st Division. This prisoner divulged that an attack on the Driniumor was to be made within the next day or two. He said that the 41st Division was to attack along the coast while the 20th Division was simultaneously to strike the river

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line midway between Afua and the mouth of the Driniumor. The two divisions, after successfully breaching the American defenses along the river, were to move on Anamo and the other Paup Villages.³⁷

37 Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 1339, 10 Jul 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 10 - 11 Jul 44; 32d Div, G-2 Rpt No. 11, 10 Jul 44, in PTF G-3 Jnl, 8 - 11 Jul 44.

In addition to the foregoing information, the units remaining on the Driniumor reported increasing enemy activity east of that river during the 10th. Japanese movements seemed especially intensified in the zone patrolled by the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry. One battalion patrol, returning to the Driniumor on 10 July after three days along Niumen Creek, reported having seen at least two large groups of Japanese, one about fifty-five strong, along the east bank of the Niumen. These troops appeared to have been moving in a purposeful manner along freshly cut trails, and were said to have been in good condition, well-clothed, and strongly armed. Another patrol of the same battalion worked its way east of the Niumen on the morning of 10 July and discovered a recently established Japanese bivouac area, capable of holding about sixty-five troops. On its way back to the Driniumor, this patrol ambushed two small, well-armed parties of Japanese only 700 yards east of the 3d Battalion's lines.³⁸

38 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; PTF G-3 Jnl, 8 - 11 Jul 44.

Another patrol, moving east in the northern sector of the 3d Battalion zone, encountered two groups of enemy troops on the west

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bank of the Niumen. These two parties, both of platoon size and well-armed, were moving rapidly south along new trails. The American patrol saw only a few more Japanese during the day, but discovered many signs of heavy Japanese movement between the Niumen and Driniumor. The patrol leader, an unusually imperturbable sergeant of Company I, 127th Infantry, who had had extensive patrol experience, was greatly excited by the many signs of Japanese activity. Although his patrol had not actually seen more than fifty enemy soldiers, the sergeant felt that a strong attack on the lines of Company I, 127th Infantry, or Company G, 128th Infantry, was imminent.

39 Interview with Captain Lowry, Apr 47.

On the basis of this and other patrol reports Lt. Col. Edward Bloch, 3d Battalion commander, alerted his force to expect a Japanese attack during the night. The sergeant's information and conclusions also prompted Colonel Bloch to assign a rifle platoon of his reserve company, L, to Company G, 128th Infantry, on his left flank. There is no evidence that Colonel Bloch informed higher headquarters of his actions and there is no indication that the Company I patrol sightings were reported to an echelon higher than General Cunningham's headquarters.

40 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; PCF G-3 Jnl, 9 - 12 Jul 44; PTF G-3 Jnl, 8 - 11 Jul 44; 112th Cav Summary of Msgs, 1 Jul - 29 Aug 44.

North of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, patrols of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, reported only one unusual contact during the 10th. A party from Company G, operating near Niumen Creek, en-

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countered a combat patrol of twenty Japanese. A running fire between the two groups ensued, and the American patrol was forced back to the Driniumor. A report of this action was sent to regimental headquarters, but there is no evidence that it was relayed to any higher echelon of the task force.⁴¹

41 2d Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 27 Jul 44; PCF G-3 Jnl, 9 - 12 Jul 44; PTF G-3 Jnl, 8 - 11 Jul 44.

In the zone of the 112th Cavalry, a patrol from the 1st Squadron, moving east along a line parallel to and north of the 2d Squadron, surprised a party of ten Japanese about 1,200 yards east of Afua. These enemy, who were armed with at least one machine gun, retired to prepared defenses after a sharp skirmish. The American patrol leader estimated that there were at least forty Japanese, all well-armed, milling around in the same vicinity. This information reached task force headquarters late in the afternoon.⁴²

42 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, p. 5; 112th Cav Summary of Msgs, 1 Jul - 29 Aug 44; PTF G-3 Jnl, 8 - 11 Jul 44.

Despite the fact that cumulative intelligence now presented strong evidence that a major Japanese attack was about to be launched against the Driniumor River line, the Intelligence Section of Headquarters, PERSECUTION TASK FORCE apparently did not believe that such an attack was imminent. This attitude was apparently shared by most of the staff officers and high ranking unit commanders, with the probable exception of Colonel Bloch of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry. Some sort of attack was expected at an indefinite future date, but the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE daily intelligence report for

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10 July, published about 1800 that day, gave little indication that an immediate Japanese assault could be expected: "Westward movement of strong enemy patrols including intense activity just E [east] of NIUMEN CREEK [sic] indicates possible strong outposts to cover assembly of main body in preparation for attack."⁴³

⁴³ PTF, G-2 Daily Rpt No. 10, 10 Jul 44, in PTF G-3 Jnl, 8-11 Jul 44.

General Hall, accepting his intelligence officers' estimate at its face value, had not the slightest expectation that the Japanese might attack during the night of 10 - 11 July.⁴⁴ About 2330 he radioed

⁴⁴ Interview with General Hall, 27 Mar 47.

to ALAMO FORCE that the situation in the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE's area gave every indication that the reconnaissance in force eastward could be resumed the next morning.⁴⁵ Within fifteen minutes after the

⁴⁵ Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 1339, 10 Jul 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 10 - 11 Jul 44.

dispatch of this message, it became evident that the situation along the Drinimor was anything but well-suited to the plans of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE for resuming the reconnaissance in force.

The 18th Army Moves West

At approximately 2345 Japanese light artillery (70-mm. or 75-mm.) began lobbing shells into the river bank positions of Companies E and G, 128th Infantry, and into the area occupied by the common post of

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the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry. This fire--which was the first indication that the Japanese had moved artillery weapons so far west--was augmented within a few moments by mortar and machine-gun fire aimed at the right flank defenses of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry. At the same time, it was later reported, the Japanese began jamming the frequencies used by PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE radios and cutting telephone lines all along the river front. At 2355 the Japanese artillery ceased fire. At this signal, Japanese infantry began charging across the Driniumor into the defenses of Companies E and G, 128th Infantry.⁴⁶

46 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 2d Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; PCF G-3 Jnl, 9 - 12 Jul 44; PTF G-3 Jnl, 8 - 11 Jul 44; interview with Captain Lowry, Apr 47. The jamming of radio frequencies is mentioned only in American accounts and was more probably the result of atmospheric conditions than of Japanese action.

The 18th Army's Plan

The 18th Army had been long preparing its attack and had developed elaborate plans for the "annihilation" of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE. The Allied landings at Hollandia and Aitape had caught the 18th Army in the midst of a difficult withdrawal from the Madang area across the mouths of the Sepik and Ramu Rivers to Hansa Bay and Wewak. The army had been ordered to strengthen both Hollandia and Aitape and, prior to 22 April, had dispatched elements of the 20th and 51st Divisions westward from Wewak to accomplish this mission. But after the Allied landings the orders to the 51st Division were cancelled and the few men of the 20th Division who had reached Aitape withdrew eastward. Plans for the future employment of the 18th Army now had

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⁴⁷
to be revised.

47 18th Army Opns, III, 28 - 32, 40 - 41, 47.

On 2 May, Imperial General Headquarters ordered the 18th Army to by-pass Hollandia and Aitape and join the 2d Army in western New Guinea. General Adachi, the 18th Army commander, had no stomach for such a maneuver. A previous by-passing withdrawal from the Huon Peninsula, in early 1944, had cost his army dearly and now the movement across the Ramu and Sepik Rivers gave promise that his losses of men and supplies would increase at an alarming rate. He believed that a withdrawal through the hinterland to western New Guinea might literally decimate the 18th Army and perhaps result in much greater loss than would an attack on Hollandia or Aitape. On the other hand, should it remain immobile at Wewak, the 18th Army could contribute nothing to the Japanese war effort and would lose all vestiges of morale. Moreover, the terrain in the Wewak area was not suited to protracted defense nor to farming which could make the 18th Army self-sufficient. Supplies available in the Wewak area could only last until September. The only means by which more supplies could be obtained, morale kept high, and the Japanese war effort furthered, was to attack Allied positions.⁴⁸

48 Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, pp. 111 - 13; 18th Army Opns, III, 56 - 64.

Although his orders to withdraw to western New Guinea were not cancelled until mid-May,⁴⁹ General Adachi, apparently on the basis of

49 Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 55 - 58; Hist of Army Section

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Imperial GHQ, p. 113; 18th Army Opns, III, 61-64. The date for both the origination and cancellation of the orders for the 18th Army to withdraw to western New Guinea varies according to the source. From internal evidence, the best dates seem to be 2 May for the origination and 16 May for the cancellation.

earlier broad directives from the 2d Area Army,⁵⁰ had already produced

⁵⁰ Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 48-51, 66-67. On 22 April the 2d Area Army issued General Adachi a broad order promptly to defeat the Allied forces which had landed at Aitape and Hollandia. On pp. 66-67 of the source cited here, it is indicated that General Adachi first suggested an attack on Aitape and that the 2d Area Army thereupon assigned him the task.

an outline plan for an attack against the Hollandia - Aitape area. At first he considered retaking Hollandia, with the seizure of the Aitape region as a necessary preliminary step. However, he soon realized that the Hollandia venture was overambitious and he therefore limited the project to an attack on Allied forces at Aitape.

The initial plans for a move against Aitape were evolved at 18th Army headquarters on 26 April and set 10 June as the date for the completion attack preparations. The assault units were to be the 20th and 41st Divisions supported by the 66th Infantry of the 51st Division and the main line of attack was to be along the coast. The base of operations was Wewak, and principal supply points were to be there, at But, and at Marubian, while a forward supply base was to be established at Yakumul. By 20 May a motor road was to be completed from Wewak to Marubian, and from Marubian to Yakumul by 10 June. This motor road was to be the main supply route, but a

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pack route over the principal east - west inland trail was also to
be completed as far west as Chinapelli by the end of May. ⁵¹

51 18th Army Opns, III, 56-64, 66-76.

On or about 1 May General Adachi's outline plan was supplemented by an attack order setting forth details of objectives, assignments, and timing. The 20th Division, already ordered to secure the Yakumul area and screen the deployment of the rest of the 18th Army, was now instructed to soften all Allied resistance east of the Nigia River. General Adachi ordered the 20th Division to have the ground east of the Nigia cleared and the Chinapelli area secured by the end of June. It appears that General Adachi believed the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE's Main Line of Resistance to be located along the Nigia and there are indications that as early as the first week of May he thought that the first strong Allied defensive positions would be encountered along the Driniumor River.

After securing the area west to the Nigia River, the 20th Division was apparently to throw its strength against the Nigia defenses while the 41st Division, after the 20th had broken through the Nigia line, was to move from Chinapelli northwest toward the Tadjl airfields. The 20th Division's attack was apparently to be made along a narrow front at some point between Chinapelli and the mouth of the Nigia, for provision was also made for a simultaneous assault along the beach to divert Allied attention from the main offensive. The date for the assault on the supposed Main Line of Resistance of ⁵² the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was now set for 10 July.

52 18th Army Opns, III, 77-80.

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The first step in mounting the offensive against Aitape was to concentrate most of the available strength of the 18th Army at Wewak. By the end of May, over 50,000 troops of that army had been withdrawn across the Ramu and Sepik Rivers and, with the exception of the regiments of the 20th Division already dispatched toward Aitape, were reorganizing at Wewak. The total strength which General Adachi could muster for the offensive was about 55,000 men. ⁵³ By no means were all

53 The strength of the 18th Army at this time is a highly debatable figure, but 50,000 - 55,000 for the number of men finally moved to Wewak or westward toward Aitape is probably not far off.

these troops trained in ground combat. Many of them were service personnel, others belonged to air force ground units, and some were naval troops which had recently passed to the control of the 18th Army.

The 20th Division's three infantry regiments were greatly understrength, and probably totalled a few more than 3,000 trained infantrymen. The entire strength of the division, including about 1,000 men of the 26th Field Artillery Regiment and other organic or attached troops, was about 6,600 as of the end of May. The 41st Division contained less than 4,000 infantry effectives and a total strength of some 10,700. The 66th Infantry of the 51st Division, also scheduled to participate in the attack on Aitape, did not number more than 1,000 men. Altogether, General Adachi mustered for service in the attack about 20,000 troops. Of these, not more than 8,000 were trained infantrymen. About 2,500 were artillerymen with thirty guns (70-mm. and 75-mm.), some 5,000 were to be engaged in supply operations in direct support of the infantry and artillery, and the remaining 4,500 were various types of overhead and service personnel

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who were to fight as infantry or engage in normal duties such as signal operations, maintenance, headquarters work, and the like. Another 15,000 troops were to be engaged in the movement of supplies forward from Wewak toward the front. The remaining 20,000 troops of the 18th Army were to garrison the Wewak area or, because of shortages of supply and poor physical condition, could not be expected to engaged in active operations. ⁵⁴

54 18th Army Opns, III, 56-61, 156-59; 18th Army Opns, Annex A --Statistics, Chart I.

Considering his supply situation, General Adachi was possessed of a rather remarkable degree of aplomb when he ordered the 18th Army to attack. He considered that his men had enough infantry weapons (although there were only 13,142 rifles, 726 machine guns, 561 grenade discharges, twenty-two light mortars, thirty-six 75-mm. mountain guns, and forty-two 70-mm. guns) but only half enough ammunition. Ammunition for the 70-mm. and 75-mm. guns were critically short. Signal equipment was nearly gone, and was not expected to last through June. There were serious shortages of clothing, blankets, and mosquito nets. The last-named deficit promised a high incidence of malaria, and there was a critical shortage of malaria preventives. Other types of medical supplies were sufficient except medicines for diarrhea and skin diseases. Food, even with half-rations for all troops, would not last beyond the end of August. Except for a single submarine mission late in May, the 18th Army could get no more supplies by sea or air, and General Adachi knew it. The army had few trucks or barges with which it could move the supplies it possessed and had little equipment with which to improve existing roads or build new ones. Barge and truck movements could be made only at the

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mercy of Allied air and sea patrols (mostly Australian aircraft and Seventh Fleet PT boats based at Aitape) while heavy rains further hampered troop and supply movements over all roads and trails west from Wewak.

55 18th Army Opns, III, 56-61, 89-93.

General Adachi soon found that his sanguine expectations of clearing the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE from the area east of the Nigia River before the end of June were not to be realized. Westward movement by the 20th Division had been delayed in the series of skirmishes along the coast east of the Driniumor in late May and early June. Further delay occurred as inclement weather and increasing Allied air and PT activity made the 18th Army depend entirely upon hand-carry for supply movement. The 20th Division's forward units ran out of supplies in mid-June and halted, as did advance elements of the 41st Division. By that time the 78th and 80th Infantry Regiments of the 20th Division were bivouacked along the Harech River from the coast inland about four miles. With these two regiments was division headquarters, elements of the 26th Field Artillery and the attached 1st Battalion, 237th Infantry. The rest of the latter regiment, a part of the 41st Division, was in bivouac along eastern branches of the Harech and near Ulau Mission, together with elements of Headquarters, 41st Division, and the bulk of the 41st Mountain Artillery Regiment. The remainder of the 41st Division, slowly moving westward from Wewak, was now assigned the task of hand-carrying supplies forward. Division medical units, attached field hospitals, and the attached 8th Independent Engineer Regiment were pressed into hand-carry service, and the bulk of the 237th Infantry and the 41st Mountain Artillery were temporarily withdrawn from their

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forward bivouacs to aid the supply movement.

56 18th Army Opns, III, 89-97; 2d Bn 80th Inf Field Diary,
31 May - 14 Jul 44, as translated in 32d Div G-2 Files, in ORB AGO
collection; POW interrogations and translations of enemy documents
in PTF and Eastern Sector (32d Div) G-2 Jnls, Jun and Jul 44.

Practically the only result of the employment of the 41st Divi-
sion as a service unit was a complete loss of troop morale. The
division's efforts to improve the supply situation proved futile, the
physical stamina of the troops dropped because of unsanitary condi-
tions, and the units engaged in supply movements found it next to
impossible to even sustain themselves. Part of the 20th Division
had temporarily to exist on less than eleven ounces of food per day,
and some of the forward units subsisted for a short while solely on
sago palm starch.

Since no reserve of supplies could be built up in the forward
area, clearing of the area east of the Nigia River by the end of June
became impossible. By this time, General Adachi realized that he was
almost certainly going to encounter a strong American force along the
Driniumor but even an attack against that river line could not be
mounted by the end of June. On the 19th of the month, he therefore
postponed efforts to attack the expected defenses along the Driniumor
until at least 10 July, leaving to an undetermined date an attack on
the Nigia line.

57 18th Army Opns, III, 89-97.

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Deployment for the Attack

By the end of June, General Adachi, taking a realistic view of the situation, knew that his supply problems alone had already defeated him. Nevertheless, he felt that he could not withdraw without offering battle and, exhorting his troops to overcome Allied material and numerical advantages by relying on their spirit, ordered the 20th and 41st Divisions to attack the Driniumor defenses on the night of 10 - 11 July.

58 18th Army Opns, III, 97-99; MO (the 18th Army's code name for operations against Aitape) Opn-Order No. 5, 3 Jul 44, as cited in 18th Army Opns, III, 100-101.

This final attack plan, issued at 1500 on 3 July, instructed the 20th Division to cross the Driniumor beginning at 2300 on 10 July. After forcing a crossing of the Driniumor, the division was to clear the Afua area, advance to Chinapelli, and scout to the Allied Main Line of Resistance. One regiment of the 41st Division was to attack on the north simultaneously and, after crossing the Driniumor, was to clear the Paup Villages and then reconnoiter Allied defenses along the Nigia. Following the success of these maneuvers, the divisions were to prepare for an assault on the Tadji airstrip area, while the 66th Infantry, 51st Division, was to by-pass the airstrips to the south and attack the Main Line of Resistance from the Kapoam Villages, south-east of the airfields.

59 Ibid.; MO Opn-Orders No. 10, 4 Jul 44, and Nos. 15 and 16, 10 Jul 44, as cited in 18th Army Opns, III, 102-06.

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The focal point of the 18th Army's attack on 10 July was to be an island in the Driniumor on the left of the sector held by Company E, 128th Infantry. This island was designated by the Japanese Kawanaka Shima (literally: Middle of the River Island). The main body of the 237th Infantry, commanded by Col. Masahiko Nara, was to cross the Driniumor at Kawanaka Shima beginning at 2200. Support fire was to be delivered by the 1st Battalion, 41st Mountain Artillery (less the Headquarters and 1st Batteries) and was scheduled to begin at 2150. Elements of the 8th Independent Engineers were to reinforce the 237th Infantry. After crossing the Driniumor, Colonel Nara's force was to move west to Koronal Creek and thence north to the Paup villages.

South of Kawanaka Shima and on the left of the 237th Infantry, the 20th Division was to begin its attack at 2300, under cover of support fire by guns of the 26th Field Artillery. The 20th Division's units were divided into two groups. The Right Flank Unit, under the command of Col. Tokutaro Ide, consisted of the 80th Infantry, a company of the 33d Independent Engineers, a few guns of the 26th Field Artillery, and attached medical personnel. Also operating under Colonel Ide was the Yamashita Battalion, which because of conflicting information in available documents, is almost impossible to identify but which seems to have been actually the 1st Battalion, 237th Infantry. That unit had been operating under 20th Division control for some time as a scouting force and originally had been ordered to join the rest of the 237th Infantry for the attack on the
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Driniumor.

60 18th Army Opns, III, 102. This source does not mention any Yamashita Battalion, but the unit was mentioned in contemporary radio intercepts and documents captured at Aitape and by prisoners taken by

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the PTF. The 237th Infantry was late in getting to the Driniumor on the 10 July, and it may well be that its 1st Battalion therefore remained under 20th Division control for the attack. One Japanese POW source identified the unit as the 1st Replacement Battalion, 237th Infantry, which supposedly arrived at Wewak in early 1944 but which, upon arrival, was assigned to the 20th Division. Another source identifies the unit as the 2d Battalion, 79th Infantry, but according to available Japanese documents, the latter organization was not in the forward area on 10 July. In any case, the Yamashita Battalion disappears from enemy records dated after 10 July 1944. It may have been wiped out or, if it was the 1st Battalion, 237th Infantry, which seems the most likely solution, rejoined its parent regiment once across the Driniumor.

Colonel Ide's command was to line up opposite the right of Company E, 128th Infantry. To the south, across from Company G, 128th Infantry, was the Left Flank Unit, under Maj. Gen Sadahiko Miyake, commander of the Infantry Group, 20th Division. General Miyake's force consisted of the 78th Infantry (under Col. Matsujiro Matsumoto), headquarters personnel of the 20th Division, a company of the 20th Engineers, the bulk of the 26th Field Artillery, and attached medics. The Right Flank Unit, after crossing the Driniumor, was to move to Chinapelli directly overland, while the Left Flank Unit was to clear the Afua area and then move to Chinapelli over the Afua - Palauru trail.

In addition to the three attack units lined up along the Driniumor, there was a fourth Japanese assault force. This was the Coastal Attack Force, commanded by Maj. Iwataro Hoshina, commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, 41st Mountain Artillery. Major Hoshino's force consisted of the 1st Battalion, 41st Mountain Artillery (less

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the 2d and 3d Batteries), a machine gun section of the 6th Company, 237th Infantry, and the Regimental Gun Company, 237th Infantry. The Coastal Attack Force, which was the unit that had held up the advance of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, on its reconnaissance in force east along the coast during the 10th of July, was to co-operate with the attack of the 237th Infantry, and pin down Allied units along the coast both east and west of the Driniumor with artillery fire. ⁶¹

61 18th Army Opns, III, 107-09, 102; 2d Bn 80th Inf Field Diary, 31 May - 14 Jul 44; POW interrogations and translations of enemy documents in PTF and Eastern Sector G-2 Jnl's, Jul and Aug 44.

During 10 July the two attack units of the 20th Division moved into positions. Part of the 78th Infantry got into the area designated for the 80th, causing a great deal of confusion and probably accounting for the movements of Japanese troops in various directions observed by PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE patrols during the day. Because of communication difficulties, the 237th Infantry and the 41st Mountain Artillery were not alerted for the attack until 7 July and more delay was caused by supply difficulties. As a result, the two 41st Division units did not start moving forward until 9 July, and their final attack orders were not issued until the afternoon of the 10th. Therefore, the 237th Infantry's rear elements were just moving into line along the Driniumor when the guns of the 26th Field Artillery opened fire at the scheduled hour. ⁶²

62 18th Army Opns, III, 109 - 14. Japanese accounts of this action speak of it as beginning at 2150, rather than approximately two hours later as described by American documents. This discrepancy may be due to differences in time zones used by the two forces. It is

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also possible that the attack may have been delayed two hours by the confusion in the 20th Division or by the late arrival of the main body of the 237th Infantry along the Driniumor.

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CHAPTER VII

The Battle of the Driniumor Phase I: The 18th Army Attacks

Retreat of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE

Action During the Night of 10 - 11 July

The first Japanese unit to swing into action against the Driniumor defenses of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE was the 1st Battalion, 78th Infantry, which, about 2355, charged across the river along a narrow front against Company G, 128th Infantry. ¹ The

¹ Information in this section is based principally on: 2nd Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 27 Jul 44; 3rd Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; PCF G-3 Jnls, 9 - 12 and 12 - 14 Jul 44; PTF G-3 Jnls, 8 - 11 and 11 - 15 Jul 44; interview with General Hall, 27 Mar 47; interview with Captain Lowry, Apr 47; 18th Army Opns, III, 109 - 114; 2nd Bn 80th Inf Field Diary, 31 May - 14 Jul 44. The narrative after action reports of American units for this and most other phases of the operations along the Driniumor are inadequate and sometimes misleading.

Japanese attacked in two or three screaming waves, broadening the front after the first assault by throwing in the rest of the 78th Infantry and possibly elements of the 80th Infantry. Japanese reconnaissance had been good--they knew the locations of company and battalion command posts all along the American defenses--but not quite good enough. The enemy did not know that Company G had been reinforced during the afternoon of 10 July nor, apparently, had he discovered that the company's front was protected by low barbed wire.

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The attacks of the 78th Infantry were thrown back with heavy losses. Machine gun and mortar fire from the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, accounted for many dead Japanese, numbers of whom were caught as they tried to negotiate the barbed wire in front of Company G. According to Japanese sources, the results of American artillery fire were even more disastrous. As soon as the enemy attack had begun, the 120th and 129th Field Artillery Battalions had started firing at previously mapped concentrations along the bed and east bank of the Driniumor. The Japanese units in or near the impact area of this barrage suffered heavy casualties. The 1st Battalion, 78th Infantry, was quickly reduced from 400 to 30 men principally as a result of the American artillery fire, which also destroyed large numbers of artillery weapons, machine guns, and mortars.

About twenty minutes after the initial attack and while fighting continued in front of Company G, another enemy force struck Company E, 128th Infantry. The 18th Army had not managed to execute its planned attack of three regiments abreast, and the assault on Company E apparently marked the entry of the main body of the 80th Infantry into the action. Despite the fact that strongpoints in Company E's sector were separated by distances up to 100 yards, the Japanese attack was unsuccessful. However, a second wave of attackers, probably the 237th Infantry and uncommitted portions of the Right Flank Unit, poured across the Driniumor at approximately 0200. This force overran Company E's command post and surrounded most of the widely separated strongpoints. Fighting then continued in the Company E sector in isolated segments, but the defenders could not long withstand the enemy pressure. Company organization broke down and, worse still, the men began to run out of ammunition. The unit began a general withdrawal from its defenses.

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The headquarters of Company E, the 1st Platoon, and Weapons Platoon retreated to the northwest. About dawn on 11 July they found the command post of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, which had itself been forced to move 500 yards northwest to get out of the impact area of Japanese artillery and mortar fire. About twenty-five men of the 2d and 3d Platoons withdrew northward into Company F's positions, as did a few of the Company H men who had been manning supporting weapons in the Company E sector. A few other Company E men made their way independently to the coast up the Anamo - Afua trail and a few stragglers from right flank positions found refuge with Company G. Some men of Company E were lost for three days. No accurate count can be found of the company's casualties, but it appears that the unit did not lose more than 10 killed and 20 wounded.

By 0300 the Japanese were in possession of a gap in the American lines some 1,300 yards wide. By this time the impetus of the first Japanese attacks had spent itself, and the scene of action quieted down for about two hours. Company G took this opportunity to restore some of its left flank positions and Company F discovered and reported that Company E had disappeared. All units remaining along the Driniumor made preparations to withstand further attacks.

Sharp fighting resumed on the left of Company G and on the right flank of Company F about 0500, continuing in the Company G sector until after dawn. It is probable that this fighting marked the movement across the Driniumor of rear elements of the assault regiments, headquarters personnel, medical units, and artillery weapons. The 237th Infantry had become confused during the initial attacks, and the new action may have indicated the passage of elements of that unit across the river. Reorganization of the regiment was no easy task, for the Japanese were in unfamiliar terrain and Colonel Nara himself had become lost and did not rejoin his unit until 12 July. The two

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regiments of the 20th Division had less trouble and by daylight on 11 July they had re-assembled on heavily forested high ground about 800 yards northwest of Company G, 128th Infantry.

There was very little fighting along the rest of Driniumor line during the night of 10 - 11 July. Company F of the 128th Infantry had but one or two minor skirmishes on its right flank. At the beginning of the action a few Japanese artillery shells had fallen near the command post of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, and into the perimeter of the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry. After that, only stray machine-gun or rifle fire was directed at units south of Company G, 128th Infantry.

Most of the night of 10 - 11 July had been bright and moonlit along the Driniumor. Men of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, could see some of the action on their left flank, but could not leave their positions to succor Company E of the 128th Infantry, for the battalion had its own important defensive missions. Moreover, communications had been disrupted all along the Driniumor during the attack and Colonel Bloch, the battalion commander, had no way of learning the extent of the action nor of finding out where and when to attack. Finally, the battalion could not leave its positions without orders from higher headquarters. Such instructions were not immediately forthcoming.

The Decision to Withdraw

General Martin, commander of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE,² was faced with a complete breakdown of communications. He had

² Information in this section is taken from: 1st Bn, 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 27 Jul 44; 112th Cav Summary of Msgs, 1 - 29 Jul 44; PTF G-3 Jnls, 8 - 11 and 11 - 15

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Jul 44; PCF G-3 Jnl, 9 - 12 Jul 44; 18th Army Opns, III, 111 - 114;
PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44, pp

little more knowledge of the situation after the beginning of the Japanese attacks than did a private in a foxhole along the Driniumor. He had no reserve with which he could close the gap in the river line-- a gap which he soon learned existed but the extent of which he could not ascertain in the middle of the night. He therefore decided to pull back to the Driniumor the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, and the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, which had been sent east of the river on a reconnaissance in force on the morning of 10 July. He further determined to wait until dawn before making any attempt to restore the situation along the Driniumor.

Orders to the two units east of the river to fall back on the Driniumor were issued about 0130, 11 July. At the same time, elements of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE stationed along the coast between the mouth of the Driniumor and Tiver were ordered to withdraw to the latter village. The 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, received the withdrawal order about 0135, and had started moving west from its night bivouac by 0200. Because of communication difficulties, the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, did not receive the word until 0800. After a forced march along the coast, the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, arrived at Anamo about 0530, picking up Company F from the latter's river positions on the way. General Martin immediately ordered the battalion to attack down the Anamo - Afua trail to close the gap in the Driniumor line.

This movement started at 0700, with Company C leading south out of Anamo. The first 1,600 yards of the advance were passed without incident. But, about 1030, about six machine guns, manned by the 237th Infantry, opened fire from the south banks of a small stream

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crossing the trail. Company C tried to develop a base of fire in the dense jungle along both sides of the track. This maneuver was forestalled as Japanese infantrymen threatened the leading platoon's line of communications to the main body by attacking from the south and north flanks. The rest of the company could not move forward through the Japanese cross fire and the terrain prevented flanking movements.

At 1145 the battalion commander ordered Company C to withdraw north into the lines of Company B, 100 yards to the rear. This action was taken none too soon. As the last elements of Company C cleared the south bank of the stream, the Japanese rushed out of the jungle along both sides of the trail and up the stream bed from the southwest. The enemy attack was stopped at the trail crossing by fire of rear guard squads, which had to fight their way back into Company B's lines. At 1230, on orders from higher headquarters, the entire battalion withdrew to Tiver. The action had cost the American unit 13³ men wounded, 3 killed, and 3 missing.

³ Reference to the withdrawal order can be found only in the 1st Battalion Journal for 11 July. There is no trace of it in the task force, covering force, or regimental Journals or Journal Files, and was apparently delivered by word of mouth. The account of this action is taken primarily from a narrative written by the 1st Battalion S-3 and filed with the battalion Journal.

As a result of the strong opposition and counterattack encountered by the 1st Battalion, General Martin considered the entire left flank of the Driniumor line untenable. He therefore ordered the forces in the northern sector to set up a second delaying position south from Tiver along the line Koronal Creek - X-ray River and halt

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preparations to return to the Driniumor. Since this withdrawal would leave the 112th Cavalry and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, in an exposed salient on the south, General Martin also ordered those two units to retreat to the X-ray.

Withdrawal of the 112th Cavalry

The 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, had arrived back at Afua shortly after 1000 on the 11th.⁴ Less than an hour later General Cunningham

⁴ Information in this section is taken primarily from: 112th Cav Opns and Intel Diary, Aitape; 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, p. 6; 112th Cav, Summary of Msgs, 1 - 29 Jul 44; interview with Colonel Hooper, 25 Mar 47; interview with General Cunningham, Apr 47.

was alerted to prepare the 112th Cavalry and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, for movement back to the second delaying line. This retreat was scheduled to begin at 1500, but General Cunningham, knowing that the trail to the X-ray was nearly impassable as a result of heavy rains, requested and received permission to withdraw in two echelons. The first was to consist of headquarters personnel and the 1st Squadron, to begin moving as soon as possible. The second echelon was to include the 2d Squadron and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry.

General Cunningham's command post and the 1st Squadron cleared Afua about 1130 and closed on the X-ray at the Afua-Palauru trail crossing about four hours later. The 2d Squadron started moving west about 1500. By this hour an afternoon rainstorm had turned the trail west from Afua into a quagmire. The leading troops of the second echelon took over five hours to reach the X-ray River and Weapons Troop did not arrive at that stream until 2330. Troop F, acting as rear guard, was caught by darkness and rain midway between

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Afua and the X-ray and did not join the rest of the 112th Cavalry until 0730 on the 12th.

Once on the X-ray the units spread themselves thinly over their portion of the second delaying line. This sector ran along the west bank of the river from a point nearly 1,500 yards south of the trail and north almost 3,000 yards to a swamp where the X-ray divided to form the Akanai and Koronal Creeks. Positions along the X-ray had been partially developed by the 112th Cavalry during the first week of July. However, this long defense line could not be fully manned because a change in plans had delayed the arrival of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, at the X-ray. Any concerted enemy attack could probably have driven the 112th Cavalry still farther west, but the night of 11-12 July proved quiet along the river.

While the main body of the regiment was withdrawing, small patrols were sent east of the Driniumor and up the west bank of that river south of Afua. A patrol east of Afua saw many signs of enemy activity and was followed back to the village late in the afternoon by a strong party of Japanese which, however, did not choose to engage in a fire fight. Another patrol, late in the morning, had a brush with an enemy party near a waterfall on the Driniumor about 2,000 yards south of Afua. This enemy group appeared to be the point of a much larger force. About 1500, other patrols reported that the Japanese were crossing the river in some strength about 500 yards south of Afua. It was the opinion at General Cunningham's headquarters that this enemy force, the strength of which was estimated as high as 1,200 troops,⁵ was a strong flanking unit. Efforts were

⁵ This high estimate was made by one of the patrols and no such figure was relayed to higher headquarters.

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made to delay the enemy movement by placing artillery fire on the suspected crossing point. Rear guard patrols reported at dusk that the Japanese force had moved up to the Afua-Palauru trail from the south and were occupying the Kwamagnirk area, about 1 1/4 miles northwest of Afua.

No Japanese accounts of the action, captured documents, nor interrogations of prisoners tell of any large enemy force being south of Afua on 11 July. It is probable that the Japanese unit was merely a reconnaissance group probing the south flank of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE in conjunction with action in the center of the Driniumor line or in preparation for flanking movements. Had any large enemy force been in the Afua area on the 11th, it would undoubtedly have followed the retreating 112th Cavalry toward the X-ray River, for the Japanese had very definite orders to move on to Chinapel-⁶ li as soon as possible.

⁶ MO Opn-Orders No. 5, 3 Jul 44, and Nos. 15 and 16, 10 Jul 44, in 18th Army Opns, III, 100-101, 105-06.

Withdrawal of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, and Company G, 128th Infantry

General Cunningham's initial plan was to have the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, close to the right on Afua and follow the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, back to the X-ray River.⁷ Poor communications and

⁷ Information in this section is from: Interview with Capt Lowry, Apr 47; 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 2d Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 112th Cav Opns and Intel Diary, Aitape; PTF G-3 Jnl, 11 - 15 Jul 44; 18th Army Opns, III, 109-111.

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infiltration of Japanese patrols between the 3d Battalion and the 112th Cavalry forced a change in this plan. Late in the forenoon of 11 July, General Cunningham ordered the 3d Battalion to prepare to move directly overland to the X-ray River instead of moving first to Afua. He wanted to co-ordinate this overland movement with the withdrawal of the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, along the Afua - Palauru trail and therefore did not send marching orders to the 3d Battalion until mid-afternoon. Poor communications delayed the receipt of this message and it was half an hour after the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, had left Afua before Colonel Bloch could assemble his force and dispatch the first echelon westward.

Battalion headquarters and the bulk of Companies K, M, and L gathered on high ground about 800 yards west of Company K's river position and at 1530 began moving westward along the bed of a small stream. The force found a north-south trail following East Branch, Koronal Creek, crossed that stream, and pushed onward through rain and mud until 1845. Then, on the west bank of East Branch at a site only $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of the starting point, the first echelon bivouacked for the night. The withdrawal was resumed at 0700 on 12 July and about 1400 the same day, the group reached the X-ray River 1,000 yards north of the Afua-Palauru trail crossing. The movement westward had been accomplished without enemy interference. The force immediately began manning defensive positions on the left of the 112th Cavalry in case the enemy decided to attack the X-ray line.

The remainder of the 3d Battalion and Company G of the 128th Infantry (which had been attached to Colonel Bloch's battalion for the purpose of withdrawal) received their movement orders about 1530 on 11 July. This echelon's route of retreat was to be via a trail running west from the river positions of Company I, 127th
8
Infantry. In charge of this group was Capt. Leonard Lowry,

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8 An American Indian of the Modoc Tribe, California.

commanding officer of Company I, 127th Infantry. Captain Lowry's was a heterogeneous force:

Company I, 127th Infantry
HMG Platoon, Co. M, 127th Inf.
81-mm. mortar observer party,
Co. M, 127th Inf.
Forward Observer Party, 129th
Field Artillery Battalion.
Forward Observer Party, 120th
Field Artillery Battalion.

Company G, 128th Infantry
HMG Platoon, Co. H, 128th Inf.
81-mm. Mortar Section, Co. H,
128th Inf.
Ten or twelve stragglers of
Cos. E and F, 128th Inf.

Total: About 500 men of all ranks.

Waiting until Company G could be withdrawn from its defensive positions, Captain Lowry started his force westward about 1600, Company G in the lead. About 1730 the unit was held up at a Japanese trail block--manned by the 78th Infantry--on a hill about 1,300 yards west of Company I's Driniumor positions. A sharp fight ensued. Because of the delay thus occasioned, the advent of darkness, and increasingly muddy terrain, Captain Lowry decided to pull off the trail and bivouac for the night.

At dawn on 12 July the group started out again along the trail, Company G still leading. The march had no sooner begun than the company was fired on from the same ambush at which progress had been halted the previous night. Company G made repeated attempts to break through the trail block, but without success. Realizing that the company was worn out and dispirited after its fight against superior Japanese forces on the Driniumor, Captain Lowry relieved it with Company I, 127th Infantry. This fresh unit succeeded in turning the enemy's right flank and, under cover of this action, the rest of the force moved off the trail and by-passed the trail block to the south. Company I then broke contact and the entire group continued overland

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during the rest of the day through dense jungle. Bivouac for the second night of the retreat was at a point still 1,500 yards east of the X-ray River.

Captain Lowry started his men moving again at dawn on 13 July. Leading elements started to straggle into the 112th Cavalry's positions along the X-ray about 0730, but it was mid-afternoon before the entire force had closed on the river. Captain Lowry then found that the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, and most of the 112th Cavalry were already starting back to the Driniumor along the Afua - Palauru trail. His force was instructed to rest along the X-ray during the remainder of the day and through the night of 13-14 July. It was to regroup and follow the rest of the command back to the Driniumor on the morning of the 14th.

Restoration of the Driniumor Line

By morning on 12 July the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE was as firmly entrenched along its second line of defense as available troops permitted. The 112th Cavalry was on the X-ray River north and south of the Afua - Palauru trail crossing and part of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was on the cavalry's left. The 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, was at Tiver. From that village the battalion pushed a defensive line about 1,500 yards south along the west bank of Koronal Creek. Elements of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, as they straggled into Tiver, strengthened the 1st Battalion's defenses. The distance between the latter unit and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was almost 4,000 yards. Most of the intervening terrain was swampy and heavily jungled, and considered by the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE to be impassable for any large body of troops. During the 12th a few patrols maintaining contact over this long gap between the two sections of the new defense line encountered only a few enemy

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9
stragglers.

9 PCF G-3 Jnl, 9 - 12 Jul 44; PTF G-3 Jnl, 11 - 15 Jun 44;
1st Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 112th Cav Opns and Intel
Diary, Aitape.

1. Preparations for Counterattack

Even while the secondary defenses were being completed, preparations were underway to re-establish the Driniumor line. Back at ALAMO FORCE headquarters, General Krueger did not believe that the original withdrawal had been necessary. He felt that the troops at General Hall's disposal, plus air and naval support which was also available, should have enabled the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE to halt the Japanese attack. Acting on this assumption, he ordered General Hall to take aggressive action to drive the enemy east of the Driniumor.¹⁰

10 Rads, ALAMO to PTF, WF-1545 and 1498, 11 Jul 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 10-12 Jul 44.

The PERSECUTION TASK FORCE commander took immediate steps to carry out these instructions. On the morning of 12 July he ordered General Martin to retire no farther except before overwhelming enemy pressure, and he forbade the withdrawal of any unit not in actual contact with superior enemy forces. He also considered it feasible to start a counteroffensive on the 12th. For this purpose the 124th Infantry of the 31st Division (less one battalion) was attached to the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE. The regiment was to move to Tiver, clear the coast between that village and Anamo, and, on the morning of the 12th, attack south along the Anamo-Afua trail.¹¹

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11 Rads, PTF to ALAMO, AE-1052 and AE-1512, 12 Jul 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 1-12 Jul 44; 124th Inf Jnl, 12 Jul - 10 Aug 44.

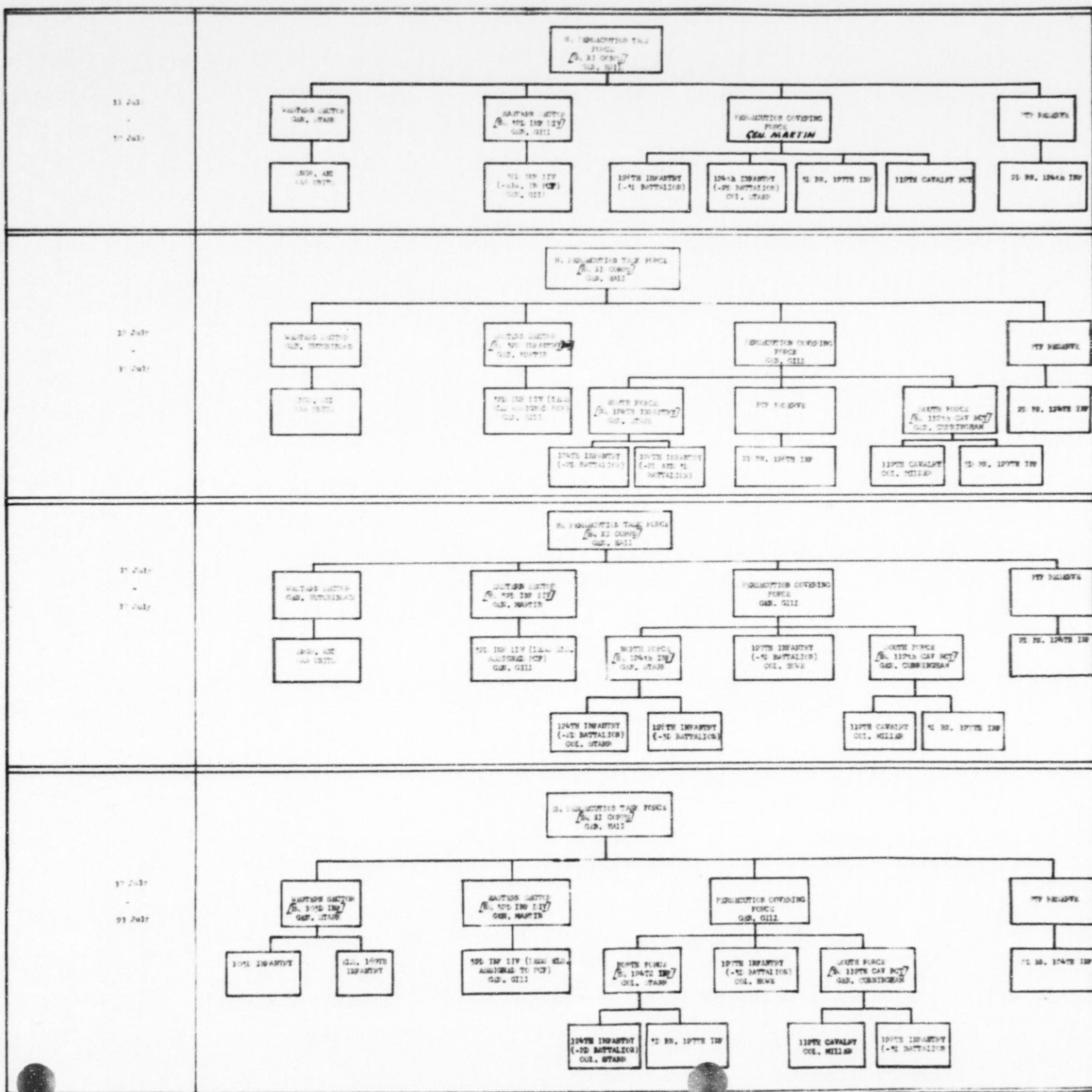
During the morning of 12 July General Hall decided to change commanders of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE. General Martin, who had been in charge of operations east of the Nigia River since 19 May, had seen his forces steadily pushed back by a series of Japanese attacks. This succession of defeats, culminating in the action of 10-11 July, had not been a result of lack of ability on General Martin's part--for most of the period his force had been small and his mission merely a delaying one. However, General Hall apparently felt that another officer might be better suited to lead the counter-¹² attack. At any rate, he relieved General Martin and placed General

12 Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE-1550, 12 Jul 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 10-12 Jul 44. In this radio General Hall speaks of General Martin as being "not aggressive enough."

Gill in command of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE. At the same time General Martin took General Gill's place as the commander of the ¹³ Eastern Sector.

13 PTF FO No. 7, 12 Jul 44, in Ptf G-3 Jnl, 11-15 Jul 44. The circumstances surrounding this change in command later caused some confusion. The PCF had been operating directly under Headquarters, PTF. At 0915 hours on 12 July General Hall issued an order re-attaching the PCF to the 32d Division. PTF FO No. 7, issued later the same day, placed General Martin in command of both the 32d Division and the Eastern Sector, thus putting Brigadier General Martin in the

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anomalous position of being over Major General Gill, his successor in command of the PCF. General Martin, apparently on the basis of the 0915 message, evidently considered that he retained some control over the PCF. General Hall was therefore forced to revise PTF FO No. 7, an action taken on 20 July. The revised version left out any mention of the 32d Division. General Martin was later promoted to the rank of major general and was given the command of the 31st Division.

Upon assuming control of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE General Gill divided his new command into two sections--North Force and South Force. General Stark, previously in charge of the Western Sector, was placed in command of North Force. Units under his control were the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, and the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 124th Infantry. South Force was assigned to General Cunningham, who was again to command the 112th Cavalry and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry. PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE Reserve was to be the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, which was to reorganize at Tiver and hold a perimeter around that village. The 120th Field Artillery was to support South Force, while the 129th Field Artillery and the 149th Field Artillery (the latter of the 31st Division) were to support North Force. These three battalions were equipped with 105-mm. howitzers. Their fires would be augmented as necessary by the 155-mm. ¹⁴ howitzers of the 181st Field Artillery.

¹⁴ PCF FO No. 1, 12 Jul 44, in PTF G-3 Jnl, 11-15 Jul 44. General Stark's post as Western Sector commander was taken over by Brig. Gen. Joseph C. Hutchinson of the 31st Division, who had arrived at Aitape with the 124th Infantry. South Force was also called Baldy Force--a rather uncomplimentary reference to the condition of General

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Cunningham's pate.

General Gill found it expedient to postpone the counterattack. The two battalions of the 124th Infantry could not get in position in time to start an attack early on 12 July and the other elements of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE could well use an extra day for reorganization and resupply. Therefore, General Gill decided to delay the 124th Infantry's movement in favor of a co-ordinated counter-attack by the entire PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE (with the exception of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry) at 0800 on 13 July.

Then, the two battalions of the 124th Infantry were to clear the Anamo-Afua trail south to the point at which that track met the Driniumor. The 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, was to clear the coast from Anamo to the mouth of the Driniumor and then move down the west bank of the river and establish contact with the 124th Infantry. South Force was to start moving east at 1000 on the 13th. It was to attack along the Afua-Palauru trail to the Driniumor and restore the river line from Afua north to the 124th Infantry's positions.¹⁵

15 PTF G-3 Jnl, 11-15 Jul 44; 124th Inf Jnl, 12 Jul - 10 Aug 44; PCF FO No. 1, 12 Jul 44; 112th Cav Opns and Intel Diary, Aitape.

Action in the Coastal Sector

In order to secure a line of departure for the 1st Battalion's attack on the 13th, Company B of the 128th Infantry moved from Tiver to Anamo just before dark on 12 July.¹⁶ At 0730 on the 13th, the

16 The principal source for the operations of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, described in this section is a narrative account of

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the action written by the Battalion S-3 and filed in the Journal, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, 28 June - 25 August 1944. Information on the Japanese side of the story is taken principally from 18th Army Operations, III, 11-114.

rest of the 1st Battalion, supported by a platoon of Company B, 632d Tank Destroyer Battalion, and, from offshore, engineers LCM's, moved out of Tiver toward the east. The 1st Battalion marched through Anapopi and Anamo, passing Company B, without incident. About 1000 Companies A and C arrived at Chakila, 1,000 yards east of Anamo. On the far side of a small stream entering the ocean just east of Chakila, the jungle grew almost to the edge of the beach and at the stream crossing, only one platoon of Company C, leading, could be deployed. The rest of the battalion had to follow in narrow column. The leading platoon crossed the stream about 1050 and immediately found itself in the midst of a Japanese ambush.

Major Hoshino's Coastal Attack Force had crossed the Driniumor during the night of 11-12 July. It had brought its 70-mm. and 75-mm. howitzers across the river and had set up these guns to support the advance of the 237th Infantry to the Paup Villages and the Nigia River. Apparently, communications to the Coastal Attack Unit had broken down, and the morning of 13 July found Major Hoshino's unit dug in along the coast east of Chakila awaiting further orders and preparing to defend the beach approach to the Driniumor.

The Coastal Attack Force let the leading scouts of Company C, 128th Infantry, pass through its first defenses. As the rest of the company started to cross the small stream, Major Hoshino's men opened up with rifles, machine guns, light mortars, and 75-mm. howitzers. The American platoon hastily retreated into the bed of the small stream, where 5-foot high banks afforded protection from the Japanese

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fire. Another platoon deployed along the west bank of the creek to establish a base of fire. Tank Destroyers were brought up to the west bank and began bombarding the Coastal Attack Force's positions. One Tank Destroyer was almost immediately damaged by the Major Hoshino's artillery, the fire from which soon became so intense that the Tank Destroyers and LCM support craft were forced to retire to the west.

Artillery support was called for and the 129th Field Artillery was quickly successful in putting out of action most of Major Hoshino's field pieces. The 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, then resumed its advance, behind continuing field artillery fire which was placed as close as fifty yards in front of the leading troops. Two infantry platoons, one each from Companies A and C, forced a second crossing of the creek at 1300. Two Tank Destroyers quickly followed and, from the beach, delivered enfilade fire on positions of the Coastal Attack Force at the edge of the jungle. As the rest of the 1st Battalion crossed the stream, Major Hoshino and his men, having lost their artillery, fled inland.

Behind a rolling barrage, Companies A and C pushed on eastward. One Tank Destroyer moved along the beach and another along the coastal track, which here ran through the jungle about seventy-five yards inland. The two forward companies reached the mouth of the Driniumor about 1800 and the rest of the battalion closed on the river shortly thereafter. Company A pushed down the west bank of the river about 2,000 yards without finding any sign of the 124th Infantry which was driving south along the Anamo-Afua trail. As it was getting dark, the company set up night defenses. Company B moved into position on A's right rear to refuse the battalion's south flank, and the rest of the battalion dug in near the mouth of the Driniumor.

In the course of the day's fighting the Coastal Attack Force had lost all its artillery weapons and had suffered heavy casualties (the

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1st Battalion had counted over sixty dead Japanese during the day). Additional losses were sustained on succeeding days, but Major Hoshino and his men were not completely removed as an irritant until the night of 16-17 July. During that night, remnants of of the Coastal Attack Force, about thirty-five men strong, attacked the command post installations of North Force at Anamo. At 2300 the group charged out of the jungle from southwest of the Anamo perimeter. Repulsed by machine-gun fire, the enemy temporarily disappeared, only to reappear at 0300 on 17 July moving west against Anamo along the beach. Machine-gun fire from the American positions broke up this second attack, but about 10 minutes later the Japanese tried again, this time moving on Anamo from the north by wading in from the sea.

Once ashore, Major Hoshino's men broke up into small groups, attempting to destroy mechanized equipment, automatic weapons positions, and communications installations. The Coastal Attack Force remnants had apparently scouted well, for they were reported to have moved purposefully toward the most important installations and easily found their way about in terrain they had vacated only four days previously. Whatever Major Hoshino's plans were, they were not realized. Thirty to forty of his men were killed and the rest dispersed.
17

17 The story of the attack on Anamo is reconstructed from: PTF, G-2 Daily Rpt No. 17, 17 Jul 44; PCT, G-2 Daily Rpt No. 18, 17 Jul 44; msg, G-2 Eastern Sector to 126th and 128th Inf Regts, 170925/K Jul 44, all in 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 27 Jul 44; ALAMO FORCE, G-2 Wkly Rpt No. 58, 13 Sep 44, copy in G-2 DofA files; 18th Army Opns, III, 111-114. Allied estimates of the strength of the Japanese force engaged in this action range from 35 to 80 men. The Japanese source gives a

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figure of "Major Hoshino and 30 survivors." Major Hoshino was himself killed during this action.

While this final debacle wiped out the Coastal Attack Force, that unit had ceased to exist as an effective support force on 13 July, when its artillery was destroyed or lost. Without the artillery support it had expected, the 237th Infantry, still somewhere south of Anamo and west of the Driniumor, could no longer seriously endanger PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE positions.

The Attack South from the Paup Villages

The 124th Infantry (less the 2nd Battalion) had started its attack toward the Driniumor about 0700 on 13 July. The 3rd

18 Information in this section is from: 124th Inf Jnl, 12 Jul - 10 Aug 44; 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 5-6; ltr, CO 124th Inf to CG 31st Div, 22 Jul 44, (a copy of this letter was lent to the author by Col. Edward M. Starr, commanding officer of the 124th Infantry, but no copy exists in official files); PTF G-3 Jnls, 11-15 and 15-19 Jul 44; PCF G-3 Jnl, 14-16 Jul 44; 128th Inf, 28 Jun - 27 Jul 44; 1st Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 2nd Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 18th Army Opns, III, 111-114.

Battalion struck south from Anopapi along a route 1,000 yards west of the Anamo-Afua trail. The 1st Battalion moved out along the trail from Anamo at 0830. Documents captured by early morning patrols disclosed that the 237th Infantry was preparing an attack on Anamo and both battalions of the 124th Infantry expected some fighting.

At 0800 the 3rd Battalion began to encounter opposition, and, not more than 500 yards south of Anamo, the point was held up by a

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Japanese force of platoon strength. In the dense jungle, it was an hour before the Japanese could be dispersed. Half an hour and another 500 yards later, a well-concealed but lightly-held enemy ambush again halted the advance. Allowing the bulk of the 3rd Battalion to pass through the ambush, Japanese machine gunners and riflemen opened fire on the rear guard. Finally Company L drove the enemy force (which was probably from the 1st Battalion, 237th Infantry) into the jungle and at 1000 the advance was resumed. Now the 3rd Battalion swung to the southeast toward the Anamo-Afua trail, encountering only scattered rifle fire the rest of the day. At 1700 the unit reached the trail at a point about 1,000 yards west of the Driniumor and 2,000 yards north of the trail-river junction. There it set up night defenses.

The 1st Battalion had met no organized resistance as it advanced south along the Anamo--Afua trail and had reached the west bank of the Driniumor some 1,500 yards north of the trail--river junction about 1700. Somehow, the unit had moved off the main trail during the afternoon and had missed its objective--the junction. Apparently, the two battalions of the 124th Infantry had unwittingly crossed each other's line of advance sometime during the afternoon. They had had no contact with each other all day, although at one point they could not have been more than 400 yards apart.

During the ensuing night there were four separate perimeters in the North Force sector of the Driniumor line. The battalions of the 124th Infantry remained out of contact with each other, although both had radio communication with North Force headquarters. Companies A and B of the 128th Infantry were north of the 124th Infantry's units but out of contact with them. The fourth perimeter was that of the remainder of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, at the mouth of the Driniumor. The 128th Infantry units, like those of the 124th Infantry,

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had radio contact with North Force headquarters. Early on the morning of 14 July the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, moved on to the Drinimor to the right of the 1st Battalion of that regiment. During the same period, the 1st Battalion established contact with the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, which, by nightfall, had consolidated its own lines.

The attack of the 124th Infantry had disrupted plans of the 237th Infantry to clear the Paup Villages, but not before that unit had caused some trouble at Tiver. There the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, reorganizing after its withdrawal from the Drinimor, had established a defensive perimeter. Colonel Nara, commanding the 237th Infantry, had rejoined his regiment (having been lost since the night of 10-11 July) about noon on 12 July. In compliance with previous orders, he immediately sent scouts out toward the Nigia River. Finding that the Americans had established a defensive line along Koronal Creek, he ordered the 1st and 2d Battalions to attack the new positions. Shortly after dark on 12 July, the 1st Battalion struck Company F, 128th Infantry, and succeeded in overrunning one machine-gun position. Company F was reinforced by Company A which did not arrive until the Japanese had already withdrawn.

Colonel Nara tried to organize more attacks for 13 July, but his deployment was partially frustrated by the advance of the two battalions of the 124th Infantry, which apparently struck the right flank of the 237th Infantry. Finally, late in the afternoon of 13 July, the 2d Battalion, 237th Infantry, by-passed by the 124th Infantry, attacked from the southeast against the lines of Company E, 128th Infantry, extending a few hundred yards south from Tiver in wet ground along the east bank of the Koronal. The company held, and the Japanese were thrown back. But the elements of the 237th Infantry then swung to the northeast, apparently in an attempt to

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reach less swampy terrain near the beach. By 1900 the entire front of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, was being subjected to a series of small-scale attacks, which, combined with sporadic outbreaks of enemy machine-gun fire, continued throughout the night of 13-14 July. At dawn on the 14th, the remaining elements of the 237th Infantry withdrew into the jungle south and southeast of Tiver. They had suffered heavy losses and had found the combination of swampy ground along the Koronal and the defensive fires of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, too much. Colonel Nara abandoned plans to clear the Paup Villages and, after 14 July, only a few minor patrol skirmishes occurred in the Tiver area.

South Force and the Gap

General Cunningham's South Force had begun moving eastward from the X-ray River on schedule at 1000 on 13 July.¹⁹ The 1st Squadron,

19 This section is based on: 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 6-8; 112th Cav Opns and Intel Diary, Aitape; 112th Cav Summary of Msgs, 1-29 Jul 44; 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, p. 6; 124th Inf Jnl, 12 Jul - 10 Aug 44; 3rd Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; interview with General Cunningham, Apr 47; interview with Colonel Hooper, 25 Mar 47; interview with Captain Lowry, Apr 47; PTF G-3 Jnls, 11-15 and 15-19 Jul 44; PCF G-3 Jnls, 14-16 and 16-20 Jul 44; 18th Army Opns, III, 107-115. Additional information was supplied by General Cunningham and Colonel Hooper who, during January 1950, read and made notes on draft chapters of the volume concerning operations at Aitape. These notes, a copy of which are in the OCMH files, are hereinafter cited as: Cunningham Notes.

112th Cavalry, led out over the Afua - Palauru trail, followed by the 2d Squadron and part of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry. At a

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stream crossing on the trail about 2,200 yards east of the X-ray, the leading troop of the 1st Squadron was halted by approximately seventy-five Japanese who were dug in across the track. This force, probably elements of the 78th Infantry, was quickly dispersed when Troop A crossed the stream on the left of the trail. A second enemy position was encountered at another stream crossing about 1,500 yards west of Afua. The 1st Squadron, after a short but sharp fire fight, was able to break through this opposition also. About 1430 Australian aircraft from the Tadji strips bombed and strafed the Afua area. Fifteen minutes later the South Force column reached the Driniumor.

The 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry (less Company I and elements of Company M), pushed north up the Driniumor to its old defensive positions, while the 112th Cavalry spread out along the Driniumor near Afua. Patrols of the 3d Battalion pushed up the river as far as the Anamo - Afua trail junction, but could find no sign of the 124th Infantry. The latter unit had reported earlier in the day that it had reached the trail - river junction, but, unfamiliar with the terrain along the Driniumor, had undoubtedly erred in estimating its position. On the morning of 14 July General Cunningham sent patrols 1,500 yards north of the junction, but still no trace of the 124th Infantry could be found. The South Force commander thereupon dispatched Troop E, 112th Cavalry, north beyond the lines of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, to close the wide gap which obviously existed in the Driniumor line. The gap had probably been at least 2,500 yards wide during the night of 13 - 14 July, but was narrowed on the latter day by South Force extension northward. However, it remained about 1,500 yards wide at nightfall on the 15th.

The Japanese had some knowledge of this weakness in the American lines and took advantage of it, especially during the hours of darkness.

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During daylight, the enemy stayed away from the river for the most part, and American forces could usually move through the gap during the day with only occasional rifle fire to oppose them. Their own use of the gap sometimes caused the Japanese dearly, and during the night of 14 - 15 July about 135 enemy were killed in the area by the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry.²⁰

²⁰ This enemy casualty figure is from: ltr, CO 124th Inf to CG 31st Div, 22 Jul 44.

By nightfall on the 15th General Cunningham was becoming sensitive about the gap. He had been ordered to close it, but could not convince General Gill, at PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE headquarters, that South Force had already extended its lines almost 1,000 yards beyond its assigned sector without finding any elements of the 124th Infantry. General Cunningham felt that the 124th Infantry was not giving him much co-operation. He claimed that without his permission the infantry regiment had held Troop E within its lines during the night of 15 - 16 July and he complained that the infantry was giving no protection to South Force wire parties which were trying to establish telephone communications with headquarters installations on the coast.

PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE headquarters was critical of South Force's communications, but General Cunningham did not believe criticism was justified. He pointed out that his wire parties received no help, that wire was continually being cut by the enemy or by accidents, and that atmospheric conditions caused radio malfunctioning in the South Force area after dark. In view of his communications difficulties and the trouble in closing the gap, General Cunningham requested that South Force be reinforced by an infantry battalion. This request could not be complied with for some days.

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Meanwhile, the 124th Infantry continued to report that it had pushed far south of the trail - river junction without encountering any troops except Japanese stragglers. Headquarters, PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE, apparently accepted the 124th Infantry's reports at face value, but there is little doubt that the 124th Infantry incorrectly reported its locations. The regiment was in combat for the first time and was unfamiliar with the terrain along the Driniumor. On the other hand, the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, had been operating along the river since late June. It can be presumed that the men of that battalion could recognize on 13 July the positions they had occupied as late as the morning of the 11th. Late on the afternoon of 15 July, Col. Edward M. Starr, commanding the 124th Infantry, apparently concluded that his regiment had not moved as far south as earlier reported. At that time he ordered his regiment to adjust its lines to the south and extend its defenses up the Driniumor to the left flank of South Force.

At 0800 on the 16th, the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, using Troop E of the 112th Cavalry as point and guide, started moving south to close the gap. Troop E had scarcely moved out of its night bivouac when it was met by heavy fire from enemy positions on both sides of the Driniumor. Learning that the 237th Infantry was in serious danger of being cut off west of the Driniumor by the American restoration of the river line, the 18th Army had made efforts to keep the original crossing point open. For this purpose two companies of the 1st Battalion, 239th Infantry, had been hurriedly sent forward from the Marubian area. Simultaneously, Colonel Nara, defeated in his attempts to clear the Paup Villages, had turned the 237th Infantry back toward Kawanaka Shima area, and ordered his 3d Battalion to attack the American rear.

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Most of the fire on Troop E probably came from the two companies of the 1st Battalion, 239th Infantry, on the east side of the river. While Troop E was seeking cover from this fire and fighting off a few Japanese who attacked from the left flank, the 3rd Battalion, 237th Infantry, hit the right flank of the 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry, close behind Troop E. The Japanese succeeded in splitting the American force. Companies I and K, 124th Infantry, halted to face the enemy attack from the west, while Troop E, Company L, and most of Company M pushed on southward through increasing opposition from the 239th Infantry's companies. Fighting every foot of the way, the three American units arrived in the South Force lines about 1500. They had killed about forty Japanese during the move south and had closed the larger portion of the gap.

To the north, Companies I and K, 124th Infantry, dug in for the night. During the next day, 16 July, attempts made to close a remaining 500 yards of the gap were unsuccessful, although an additional forty-five Japanese were killed as the elements of the 237th and 239th Infantry Regiments continued their efforts to keep the gap open. Late on the 17th, the gap was temporarily closed, but it was reopened during the succeeding night for a distance of about 300 yards, probably by elements of the 237th Infantry. The last small portion of the gap was closed by the 124th Infantry on the morning of 18 July. Then, the remnants of the 3rd Battalion, 237th Infantry, withdrew to the west, while the 239th Infantry's force, its commander killed, withdrew eastward. The PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE's Driniumor River line was once again solid from Afua to the coast, a week after the 18th Army had made its first breakthrough.

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OPERATIONS WEST OF THE DRINIUMOR

General Hall realized that the re-establishment of the Driniumor line might leave strong Japanese units west of the river. These enemy troops, although cut off from their sources of supply, could harass the rear of the Driniumor line, move south to cut the Afua-Palauru trail, or continue to annoy the North Force command post area. Notwithstanding the fact that he had been ordered to counterattack when the impetus of the 18th Army's initial assault had been spent, General Hall did not feel that the time for counterattack was at hand, but decided that the most immediately pressing problem was to clear all Japanese units from the area west of the Driniumor. Furthermore, he wished to await the arrival at Aitape of at least one regimental combat team of the 43rd Division, a reinforcement which would make possible release of units already acquainted with the terrain in the Driniumor area from positions on the Main Line of Resistance. Finally, the task force commander believed it necessary to locate the main body of the 20th Division before launching a counterattack. Only the 78th Infantry of that division had so far been identified in the Driniumor area, but it was believed that the rest of the division had participated in the attack during the night of 10 - 11 July.²¹

²¹ Interview with General Hall, 27 Mar 47; rads, PTF to ALAMO, AE-1914, 14 Jul 44, and AE-2145, 16 Jul 44, both in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 13-16 Jul 44.

Operations Behind North Force

For the purpose of clearing the enemy from the area west of the Driniumor, General Hall released the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 127th

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Infantry, from their positions on the Main Line of Resistance around the Tadji airstrips and placed them under General Gill's operational control. ²² This action left on the Main Line of

22 Information in this section is taken from: PTF G-3 Jnl, 12 - 14 and 15 - 17 Jul 44; PCF G-3 Jnl, 16 - 20 Jul 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, Sec. II, pp. 4 - 6; 127th Inf Jnl File, 10 - 31 Jul 44; 1st Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 2nd Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 6 - 8; 124th Inf Jnl, 12 Jul - 10 Aug 44.

Resistance the 126th Infantry and the 3rd Battalion, 128th Infantry. The only infantry unit not now assigned a specific task was the 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry, which was designated mobile reserve for the task force and held near Blue Beach.

The 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, moved to Tiver from the Main Line of Resistance during the afternoon of 15 July, and the 1st Battalion arrived at the same village the next morning. It was planned that the 2nd Battalion would clear the enemy in an area bounded on the west by Koronal Creek, on the east by the Driniumor River, and on the south by an imaginary line drawn about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles inland from the coast. The 1st Battalion was to move south along Koronal Creek beyond the 2nd Battalion's sector, establish a patrol base between the Koronal and the Driniumor, and then locate and destroy any enemy units found in its area. After clearing the ground assigned to it, the 2nd Battalion was to follow the 1st up the Koronal and the two units were then to join forces and drive all Japanese they could locate south into the Torricelli Mountains.

Early on the morning of 16 July, the 2d Battalion moved 2,000 yards up the Koronal from Tiver, turned, and faced east in a battalion

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front over, 1,000 yards wide. Company G was on the left, Company E in the center, and Company F on the south. At 0900 the three started a concerted drive eastward. There was about 300 yards separating each company and all three soon lost contact with each other in the heavily jungled terrain. By noon, all three had encountered elements of the 237th Infantry, and from then on the battalion attack was unco-ordinated.

By nightfall Company E was split into two parts. One section had retired to the Koronal after a fire fight had divided the company, and the other part was in bivouac about 1,000 yards west of the Anamo - Afua trail. Company F was about 1,500 yards southeast of the forward section of Company E. Company G had crossed the trail and was between it and the Driniumor at a point about 1,000 yards south of the coast. The next morning Company G moved back to Tiver along the Anamo - Afua trail and the beach road. Company E regrouped and, with Company F, continued patrolling in the battalion area all day, making only a few scattered contacts with enemy troops. The two companies returned to Tiver on the morning of the 18th.

While the largest group of Japanese actually encountered by the 2nd Battalion from 16 through 18 July was not more than fifty men strong, many larger enemy parties were believed to have been milling around in the battalion area. Documents captured during the patrolling indicated that the 237th Infantry had planned another effort to seize the Anamo-Tiver area. The maneuvers of the 2nd Battalion, albeit unco-ordinated, had helped to disrupt these plans and, as described previously, Colonel Nara of the 237th Infantry, on 16 July, had ordered his 3rd Battalion to attack the rear of the 124th Infantry's Driniumor lines. While the principal purpose of the latter attack had been to keep open a crossing point on the Driniumor, Colonel Nara's plans were no doubt influenced by the operations of the 2nd Battalion,

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127th Infantry, and that unit's maneuvers actually resulted in a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the battalion did chase many Japanese from North Force's rear, but on the other hand its pressure on the 237th Infantry indirectly caused much of the difficulty the 124th Infantry had in closing the gap along the Driniumor.

The 124th Infantry had another problem equally pressing as closing the gap on its right flank. One of the regiment's assignments was to keep open the Anamo-Afua trail south from the coast to the trail-river junction. This trail was the shortest supply route to the 124th Infantry and to South Force and, unless it could be employed, ration trains had to use the exposed bed of the Driniumor or the long route from Blue Beach to Afua via Palauru and Chinapelli. To keep open the upper section of the Anamo-Afua trail, the 124th Infantry, on 14 July, set up a trail block about 1,600 yards above the trail-river junction. This outpost managed to keep that section of the trail open most of the time during the next two days, but on 17 July was driven back to the Driniumor by Japanese troops who were probably retreating in front of the 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry. The trail was not again cleared until the afternoon of 18 July, when the 127th Infantry's battalion returned to Tiver and ceased driving groups of the 237th Infantry southward and eastward toward the Driniumor. Thereafter, only a few Japanese stragglers were encountered along the upper part of the trail by 124th Infantry patrols.

New Japanese Attempts to Open a River Crossing

After the retirement of the 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, and the closing of the gap between North and South Forces, the 124th Infantry's sector along the Driniumor remained quiet for three days. 23

23 Information in this section is from: 2nd Bn 169th Inf Opns

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Rpt Aitape, pp. 2-3; 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 6-9; 124th Inf Jnl. 12 Jul - 10 Aug 44; PCF G-3 Jnl, 22-26 Jul 44; 3rd Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 18th Army Opns, III, 114-120; POW interrogations and translations of enemy documents in PTF and Eastern Sector G-2 Jnls, Jul and Aug 44.

On the 21st the regiment received reinforcements when the 2nd Battalion of the 169th Infantry, 43rd Division, moved to the Driniumor.²⁴ The

²⁴ The 169th Infantry had arrived at Blue Beach on 20 July.

new arrivals took over about 1,000 yards of the river line on the right flank of the 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry, permitting the latter unit and other elements of North Force to shorten and strengthen their sectors. The reinforcements had arrived none too soon.

Although defeated in its attempts to re-open a river crossing during the period 16-18 July, the 18th Army had made new plans to break the Driniumor line. All elements of the 41st Division still engaged in hand-carrying supplies were relieved of that mission and sent forward to the Yakumul area to deploy for attack. The 239th Infantry, supported by elements of the 41st Mountain Artillery and the 238th Infantry, was to strike at a point about 1,000 yards south of Kawanaka Shima and advance thence on the Paup Villages. Initially, this attack was to take place on 27 July, but on the 19th, the 18th Army decided to accelerate the attack and move immediately, with the 66th Infantry of the 51st Division leading an assault on Kawanaka Shima.

Neither the 66th Infantry nor the recently released elements of the 41st Division could mount any sort of an attack soon after 19 July. However, the orders to attack had apparently reached some of the forward units, for during the night of 21-22 July the 3rd Battalion,

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124th Infantry, received considerable mortar, machine-gun, and rifle fire from east of the Driniumor. This fire probably originated from elements of the 1st Battalion, 239th Infantry, already in the area. On the morning of the 23d enemy fire on the 3d Battalion increased, this time from both sides of the river, and about noon elements of the 237th Infantry attacked from the west.

The first Japanese attack was "finally broken up by a bayonet charge"²⁵ made by elements of the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, but

25 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, p. 8.

was followed by another enemy attack undertaken by about two companies of Japanese. By 1400 the 3rd Battalion, aided by a company of the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, had thrown back the second attack. As these actions were going on, other Japanese troops, probably from the 1st Battalion of the 239th Infantry, attempted to move across the Driniumor from the east. The situation in the 124th Infantry sector was not under control until 1700, for the 2d Battalion of the 169th Infantry not only had to aid the 3d Battalion of the 124th Infantry but also and simultaneously was completing relief of the latter unit's right flank companies. However, after 1700, the Japanese temporarily abandoned their efforts to re-open the crossing point. Before darkness set in, the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, counted 155 dead Japanese along trails to its right rear. That unit and the 2d Battalion of the 169th Infantry reported their own losses²⁶ as five men killed and twenty-five wounded.

26 The report of the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, gives a total of 274 Japanese killed during the day, a figure which was probably an estimate and which seems high. The American casualty figure is from

an entry timed 1710, 22 July, in the 124th Infantry Journal, and was reported by the 3d Battalion of that regiment. A Journal entry timed 2345, 22 July, apparently a regimental report, gives total American casualties as 11 killed, 24 wounded, and 20 non-battle.

The Japanese were not finished in the Kawanaka Shima area. At 0035 on the 23rd, the 1st Battalion, 239th Infantry, behind an ineffectual smoke screen laid in the bed of the Driniumor, again attacked the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, and the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry. Three attempts were made by the enemy to cross the river before dawn, but each effort was broken up by fire from the 149th Field Artillery and from the troops along the river. The 124th Infantry estimated that about 350 additional Japanese were killed during the night.

The operations from 21 - 23 July marked the end of large-scale enemy attacks in North Force's area, which remained relatively quiet thereafter. There was one minor flare up during the night of 24 - 25 July where the lines of the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, joined. During that night a few enemy troops, probably from the 239th Infantry, tried to cross the Driniumor from the east. Mortar and machine gun fire from the 3rd Battalion, 127th Infantry, drove the Japanese off.

Further Operations West of the Driniumor

While the 124th Infantry was preventing the Japanese from opening another crossing on the Driniumor, the 127th Infantry had continued mopping up operations west of the river. ²⁷ On 16 July, when the 2nd

²⁷ This section is based principally on: 127th Inf Jnl File, 10 - 31 Jul 44; 1st Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 2nd Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, Sec. II, pp.

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4-6; PTF G-3 Jnls, 15-19 and 19-21 Jul 44.

Battalion of the latter regiment started its maneuvers behind North Force, the 1st Battalion had moved south from Tiver about mid-morning, Company B leading. Shortly after 1200, Company B was halted by an enemy force dug in along both banks of Koronal Creek at a point approximately 2,000 yards south of Tiver. The rest of the day was spent in developing the enemy positions which, with the aid of artillery fire, were destroyed late in the afternoon. The attack southward was resumed early on 17 July, with scattered rifle fire from elements of the 237th Infantry being the only opposition encountered during the day. By 1800, the 1st Battalion had secured its initial objective, an island in the X-ray River 6,000 yards south of Tiver. Plans for the 18th were to move 2,000 yards east of the X-ray and set up a patrol base. This base was to be established on East Branch, Koronal Creek, at a point some 2,000 yards north of the Afua - Palauru trail.

On the 18th, the 1st Battalion moved eastward through heavily jungled, hilly terrain, making contact with small enemy patrols on both flanks and to the front. To allow its own patrols to keep in touch with these enemy parties, the battalion moved very slowly, and bivouacked for the night still 400 yards west of East Branch. Before dark information was received from headquarters, PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE, that the 78th Infantry was located between the 1st Battalion and the positions of the 112th Cavalry at Afua. This was easy to believe, for the battalion's patrols had been unable to move far from the main body in a south or southeasterly direction all afternoon. The 112th Cavalry reported that it had encountered large groups of Japanese in the Kwamagnirk area, about 1,900 yards northwest of Afua and 2,000 yards southeast of the 1st Battalion. Nonetheless, the

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battalion moved on to East Branch on the morning of 19 July without encountering any opposition.

Meanwhile, a fresh outbreak of Japanese activity along Koronal Creek just south of Tiver had prompted General Gill to send the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, south after the 1st. Company G moved south from Tiver late in the afternoon of 18 July and before dark succeeded in eliminating a lightly-held 237th Infantry trail block at the branching of the Koronal. The rest of the 2d Battalion followed Company G on the 19th. About noon on 20 July, the battalion arrived at the 1st Battalion's patrol base, after an overland march opposed only by a few Japanese riflemen.

The two battalions were now isolated in a heavily jungled area and, insofar as they knew, might have been surrounded by a strong enemy force. Overland supply was both dangerous and slow, and for the next two days the units were supplied principally by air drop. Communications with Headquarters, PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE or with units along the Driniumor were, at best, sporadic. Telephone lines could not be kept in service and radios would not work much of the time.

The battalions had not yet located any large body of enemy troops west of the Driniumor. Therefore, on the morning of 20 July, General Gill ordered the units to ready themselves for movement southeast toward the 112th Cavalry and Afua, where a great deal of enemy activity had broken out two days earlier. Time was to be taken before departure from the patrol base to co-ordinate plans with South Force and to make additional attempts to locate the main body of the 20th Division, which, General Hall suspected, might be west of the Driniumor.

During the next three days, the two 127th Infantry battalions sent out patrols in all directions. No large bodies of Japanese

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troops were located, but a number of small parties, all apparently from the 78th Infantry of the 20th Division, were encountered. This patrolling continued while efforts were made by Headquarters, PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE to obtain some understanding of the steadily deteriorating situation of South Force in the Afua area.

THE JAPANESE ATTACK ON THE SOUTH FLANK

Even while South Force had been going about the business of restoring its section of the Driniumor line and helping to close the gap between South and North Forces, the Japanese had begun new offensive maneuvers in the Afua area. The night of 13 - 14 July--South Force's first back on the Driniumor--was quiet, and only scattered contacts were made with enemy forces the next day. But on the 15th, there was a noticeable increase in Japanese activity in South Force's area, especially in the vicinity of Afua.

Japanese Attack Preparations

On 15 July, patrols of the 112th Cavalry encountered many small parties of Japanese in the Afua area and found indications that larger bodies of enemy troops were in the same region. The next day, groups of Japanese were observed crossing the Driniumor in both directions at a fording point about 2,500 yards south of Afua. About the same time, it was discovered that the enemy had blazed a rough track lying south of the Afua-Palauru trail and running along the foothills of the Torricelli Mountains from the Driniumor to the headwaters of the
28
X-ray River.

28 Information in this and the following sub-section is based principally on: 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 7-9; 112th Cav Opns and Intel Diary, Aitape; 112th Cav Summary of Msgs, 1 - 29 Jul 44; PTF

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G-3 Jnl's, 15 - 19, 19 - 21, and 21 - 26 Jul 44; PCF G-3 Jnl's, 14 - 16, 16 - 20, and 20 - 22 Jul 44; interview with General Cunningham, Apr 47; interview with Colonel Hooper, 25 Mar 48; 18th Army Opns, III, 110-123. In the latter source are cited MO Opn-Orders Nos. 17, 14 Jul; 21, 16 Jul; 22, 19 Jul; 23, 21 Jul; and 24, 21 Jul 44; upon which reconstruction of Japanese plans is principally based.

While it would obviously have been desirable to block this new trail, especially at the point where it crossed the Driniumor, General Hall did not feel he could spare any troops for this task. He was not greatly concerned about enemy movements on the right of South Force and he did not believe that the enemy could or would move any large force west along the new trail. He also knew that the enemy could find other routes to by-pass South Force even if the one trail was cut. Nevertheless, South Force was ordered to do everything in its power to stop Japanese westward movements. General Cunningham was instructed to send strong patrols south of Afua to harass Japanese force on the new trail, and he was also ordered to keep the Afua-Palauru trail clear of enemy troops in order to keep open the overland line of communications to Blue Beach via Chinapelli and Palauru.

Prior to receiving these instructions, General Cunningham, who believed that South Force was being outflanked by large numbers of Japanese, had wanted to shorten his lines by retiring north of Afua. The new orders disapproved such a withdrawal. In order to protect his south flank, General Cunningham therefore bent his right back along the Afua - Palauru trail west some approximately 600 yards from the Driniumor. On high ground at the western extremity of this new line he stationed Troop A, 112th Cavalry. The remainder of the 1st Squadron was posted at Afua and along the Driniumor to a point about 800 yards north of that village. All South Force units were

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alerted to the possibility of attack from the south and west. The Japanese had been preparing just such an attack.

On 11 July, the assault units of the 20th Division had begun assembling in high ground west of the Driniumor and had started preparations for further movement westward. The overland withdrawal of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, and Company G, 128th Infantry on 11 July had apparently prevented the Left and Right Flank Units from reorganizing as rapidly as had been hoped and the return of South Force to the Driniumor, beginning on the 13th, had found the two Japanese attack forces still trying to concentrate for movement westward. On the 15th, the two units were combined as the Miyake Force, and placed under the command of Maj. Gen. Sadahiko Miyake, commander of the Infantry Group, 20th Division. General Miyake was ordered to secure Afua and the high ground to the west in preparation for a concerted drive northward toward the coast when the rest of the 20th Division arrived in the forward area.

Although General Miyake was unable to organize any rapid assault on Afua, his first objective, the contacts which the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, made with units in the Afua area on 15 and 16 July probably marked Miyake Force preparations for the attack. By evening of the 16th, however, General Adachi had realized that the 18th Army's initial breakthrough along the Driniumor had not achieved decisive results. Instead, the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE had managed to wipe out the Coastal Attack Force, cut off and inflict heavy losses on the 237th Infantry, greatly reduce the 78th Infantry's strength, restore the Driniumor line with greater strength than had been stationed on the river prior to 10 July, and seriously threaten the Miyake Force's lines of communication. Under such conditions, the 18th Army commander knew it was impossible to execute an attack on the Allied Main Line of Resistance around the Tadjil airfields, in preparation for which the Miyake Force's drive to the coast had been ordered. General Adachi therefore abandoned his original plan in favor of

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attacking the immediately available American forces along the Driniumor, forces which he now believed to represent the main body of Allied troops in the Aitape area.

To start this new attack, those elements of the 20th Division still east of the Driniumor were ordered to cross that river and drive toward Afua from the south. Earlier orders to the 66th Infantry, 51st Division, to aid the forward elements of the 41st Division by an attack in the coastal sector were cancelled and the regiment was attached to the 20th Division for operations in the Afua area. The new efforts by the 20th Division were to be carried out in conjunction with the attack against Afua which the Miyake Force had already been ordered to undertake.

The Japanese Retake Afua

On 17 and 18 July the Miyake Force slowly maneuvered into position on the right rear of the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry. On the evening of the 18th the 3rd Battalion, 78th Infantry, and the 2nd Battalion, 80th Infantry, poured out of the jungle west and northwest of the 1st Squadron's command post and the contiguous perimeter held by Troop A, west of Afua. The two South Force units were pushed 250 yards to the northeast, where they rapidly established new positions. Reinforcements--two rifle platoons from the 1st Squadron and one rifle platoon of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry--arrived at the new perimeter at dusk. The next morning the composite force attacked south and regained the ground vacated the previous night. The Miyake Force units fled northwest into the jungle without firing a shot.

Early in the afternoon of 19 July fresh Japanese units began to surround the Troop A position, moving in from the north, northwest, west, and southwest. The 1st Squadron commander called for artillery fire to break up this enemy maneuver. Upon the cessation of this fire, Troop A attacked to the south and west for a second time.

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Driving at least a company of Japanese before it, the troop pushed 600 yards southwest of its original positions astride the Afua - Palauru trail and temporarily disrupted enemy plans to seize the position.²⁹ About 140 Japanese had been killed during the two day's

²⁹ The Japanese account has these actions occurring on 17 and 18 July but all American sources state that the attacks against Troop A and the 1st Squadron command post occurred on the 18th and 19th of the month.

operations around the Troop A area. South Force, at the same time, lost 8 men killed and 29 wounded, all from the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry.³⁰ There were strong indications that more attacks might be

³⁰ The American casualty figures, apparently exactly accurate, are from 112th Cavalry records. According to the Cunningham Notes, the figure for Japanese casualties was based on an actual count of Japanese dead by Colonel Miller, the commander of the 112th Cavalry Regiment.

expected in the 1st Squadron area, but Troop A was not destined to take part in any such action. It was replaced by Troop C on the 21st.

After this change, South Force positions were as follows: The 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry (Captain Lowry's group had by now returned to the Driniumor and Company G of the 128th Infantry had returned to its battalion via the lines of North Force), held about 1,200 yards of river bank south from the junction of the Anamo - Afua trail with the Driniumor. Two companies were on the line, one in reserve, and the heavy weapons company was in general support. South of the 3d Battalion was the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, with two troops on the line. Troop E was in reserve near an open space, 200 yards west of

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the river, employed for air dropping supplies to South Force. In a patch of banana trees just south of this dropping ground were Headquarters, South Force, and the headquarters of the 112th Cavalry. The 1st Squadron defended the west bank of the river north from Afua, 1,200 yards, tying its left into the right of the 2d Squadron. About 550 yards west, and slightly north, of Afua were Troop C and Headquarters, 1st Squadron. Most of Troop C's defenses face north and northwest. The troop's southeast flank was tied loosely into the lines of Troop B, at Afua, but this connection was more theoretical than actual and contact between the two was maintained principally by patrols and sound-power telephone.

Even as Troop C was replacing Troop A, the Japanese were making new plans for attack. Orders were issued on 19 July for the entire 20th Division immediately to attack and clear the Afua area. The Miyake Force (to which was now attached the 237th Infantry of the 41st Division in addition to the 78th and 80th Infantry Regiments of the 20th Division) was to attack from the north and west, while the rest of the 20th Division, including the 79th Infantry, was to attack from the south. The 66th Infantry, having difficulty moving forward and suffering from a series of changes in orders, was now to remain in reserve east of the Driniumor and turn its supplies over to the Miyake Force.

It appears that this attack by the entire 20th Division, reinforced by the 237th Infantry, was to have begun on 19 July. However, only the isolated action by Troop A, 112th Cavalry, occurred that day. Probably the Japanese were unable to get organized on schedule, an occupational disease which marked all Japanese operations in the Aitape area. The 79th Infantry and Headquarters, 20th Division, did not cross the Driniumor until 18 and 19 July. Moreover, the remnants of the 237th Infantry had not yet joined the Miyake Force, the other

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two components of which apparently had some difficulty reorganizing after their operations on the evening of the 18th and the morning of the 19th. By evening on 21 July, however, the Japanese were ready.

At 1645, a Japanese 75-mm. mountain gun opened point blank fire on the semi-isolated perimeter of Troop C, 112th Cavalry. After a few rounds from this weapon, an enemy force (estimated by the cavalrymen to be about a battalion strong and which probably was part of the 79th Infantry) attacked Troop C from the south and west, cutting it off from the rest of South Force. Troop B, at Afua, tried to re-establish contact with Troop C, but was prevented from so doing by enemy parties stationed along the Afua - Palauru trail. Two rifle platoons of Company I, 127th Infantry, were sent southwest from their river positions to aid Troop C. One platoon reached the cavalry unit during the night, but the other was forced to fall back to South Force's command post. Heavy rifle, machine-gun, and mortar fire, and even hand-to-hand fighting continued in the Troop C area throughout the night. At the same time, other enemy forces, probably part of the Miyake Force, attempted to overrun South Force headquarters installations.

At dawn on the 22d, Troop B made several more efforts to reach Troop C and General Cunningham sent out his reserve, Troop E, in another attempt to relieve the beleaguered force. All these actions proved futile, for the Japanese had managed to secure control over all the commanding ground west and northwest of Afua. Not knowing what other plans the Japanese might have in mind, General Cunningham did not believe he could safely pull any more troops away from his river defenses. Moreover, he now considered that his right flank was untenable. He therefore withdrew Troop B north of Afua about 1,000 yards and used the unit to form a new defense line which ran westward 500 yards from Troop A's right flank on the Driniumor. South Force's

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right flank was now refused and additional protection had been secured for the medical, supply, and command post installations at the dropping ground and banana patch. Troop C was left isolated behind Japanese lines, and Afua was again released to the enemy.

Changes in PERSECUTION TASK FORCE Plans

American forces had been back on the Driniumor since 13 July and the Driniumor line had been restored from Afua to the coast by evening on the 18th. Only four days later, the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE had found it necessary to give up a portion of the restored line. Even before this second retreat, task force headquarters had been considering strengthening the units along the Driniumor, a step which became possible when, on 20 July, elements of the 43rd Infantry Division began arriving at Aitape. General Hall decided that he could employ the fresh units to stabilize the situation in the Afua area and to stop what he believed to be Japanese attempts to seize control of the Afua-Palauru trail.

Initially, General Hall planned to move the 112th Cavalry west from Afua to new positions astride the Afua-Palauru trail about midway between the Driniumor and X-ray River. Then, the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 127th Infantry, were to move to the Driniumor from their recently established patrol base on the East Branch of Koronal Creek, join the 3rd Battalion, 127th Infantry, on the river, and take over all of South Force's Driniumor defenses. The 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry, still in reserve at Blue Beach, was to join the rest of its regiment on the Driniumor while one battalion of the 169th Infantry, 43rd Division, was to move to Palauru to provide additional outer security southwest of the airfield Main Line of Resistance. The remainder of the 43rd Division, upon its arrival at Blue Beach, was to man defenses along the Main Line of Resistance or stand by in

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31
task force reserve.

31 PTF G-3 Jnl, 19 - 21 Jul 44; PTF FO No. 9, 20 Jul 44,
in PTF G-3 Jnl, 19 - 21 Jul 44.

These plans were never realized. First, it was discovered that the 169th Infantry had brought to Aitape many unserviceable or badly worn automatic weapons and mortars. Then it was found that it would take days to unload many of the regiment's crew served weapons. The unit had not been combat loaded, for it and the rest of the division had moved forward from New Zealand expecting only to stop at Aitape for staging and not to be committed to combat with the PERSECUTION
32
TASK FORCE. Some replacements for unserviceable weapons could be

32 43rd Div Movement Order No. 16, 17 Jun 44, in 43rd Div Opns Rpt Aitape; interview, author with Maj. Joseph L. Manz, ex-Adjutant, 169th Infantry, 11 May 48, copy in OCMH files; interview with General Hall, 27 Mar 47.

found in limited stocks at Aitape, but the rest had to await shipment from Services of Supply bases in eastern New Guinea.

The condition of the 169th Infantry's weapons, combined with the delays in unloading the regiment, limited that unit's usefulness. General Hall, who deemed the immediate dispatch of one battalion to Palauru to be urgently necessary, therefore sent the 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry, to that village, where it arrived on the afternoon of 21 July. The 2nd Battalion, 169th Infantry, (first unit of the 43rd Division to arrive at Aitape) was sent to Anamo the same day and on the 22nd moved on to the river on the right of the two battalions of
33
the 124th Infantry already there.

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33 PTF G-3 Jul, 19 - 21 Jul 44; interview with General Hall, 27 Mar 47. From internal evidence in task force documents, it appears that the 2nd Battalion, 169th Infantry, was originally moved to Anamo as reserve for the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE. General Gill moved it into the line, still without some of its crew-served weapons, possibly to strengthen the 124th Infantry's two battalions with the leaven of an experienced combat unit. The 169th Infantry's battalion had had a good deal of combat experience in the South Pacific, while the 124th Infantry was in its first combat.

While these dispositions were being made, Japanese activity in the Afua area so increased that General Hall decided it would not be wise to move the 113th Cavalry away from the Driniumor. Instead, he now planned to send the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 127th Infantry, from the East Branch, Koronel Creek, southwest to strengthen South Force and relieve Troop C, 113th Cavalry.

34 PCF, Fragmentary FO, (no number), 22 Jul 44, in PCF G-3 Jul, 27 - 31 Jul 44; PTF G-3 Jul, 21 - 25 Jul 44. The original plans for the employment of the 127th Infantry were never formally revoked but seem to have died a natural death after it proved impracticable to move the 113th Cavalry away from the Driniumor. Plans for the movement of the 127th Infantry's two battalions were drawn up by General Cunningham and Colonel Howe (the commander of the 127th Infantry) during the afternoon of 22 July. Colonel Howe, with a small escort, made his way overland through enemy-infested territory from the East Branch patrol base to South Force headquarters during the morning of the 22nd.

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The 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, left its East Branch base at 0745 on 23 July and moved directly eastward through dense jungle to the lines of the 3rd Battalion, 127th Infantry. Then the unit turned south and about 1530 reached the South Force command post area at the banana patch. There the battalion's arrival was welcome and timely. Troop E, 112th Cavalry, had been attempting all day to move south from the command post to relieve Troop C, which was still cut off. But Troop E had met with little success and was pushed back by increasingly aggressive Japanese units which now threatened to attack the South Force command post, capture the dropping ground, and over-³⁵run the entire right flank of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE.

35 127th Inf Jnl File, 10 - 31 Jul 44; 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 9 - 10; 112th Cav Opns and Intel Diary, Aitape; PTF G-3 Jnl, 21 - 26 Jul 44.

The 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, crossed to the right bank of East Branch about 0800 on the 23rd and struck overland southeast toward the Afua-Palauru trail, passing through many abandoned but recently occupied Japanese bivouacs. In mid-morning the battalion found a narrow track leading toward Kwamagnirk and at 1200 the unit was atop a low ridge just south of that village, which by now had been obliterated by artillery and mortar fire. The 2nd Battalion was now almost within view of the isolated Troop C perimeter and had attained an apparently excellent position from which to launch a ³⁶counterattack to relieve the cavalry unit.

36 127th Inf File, 10 - 31 Jul 44; 2nd Bn 127th Inf, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44. Kwamagnirk was originally a hamlet of five or six native huts. It and two other even smaller settlements in the same area had

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been so pounded by artillery and mortar fire that its exact location was and is impossible to determine, but it is assumed to be in the position depicted on the 1:63,360 map used by the PERSECUTION TASK and COVERING FORCES.

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CHAPTER VIII

The Battle of the Driniumor
Phase II: The 18th Army Retreats

Securing the Afua Area

With the arrival of the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, in his area, and knowing that the 2d Battalion was also on its way south, General Cunningham decided to make another attempt to relieve Troop C, 112th Cavalry. The troop's position had been uncertain for two days, but it was finally located on the morning of 23 July when the platoon of Company I, 127th Infantry, which had reached Troop C on the evening of the 21st, fought its way from the isolated perimeter back to the South Force command post. After the infantry platoon reported Troop C's location, General Cunningham sent part of the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, to relieve Troops A and B, 112th Cavalry, from their positions on the Driniumor north of Afua. The two cavalry units were ordered to assemble and attack west from the Driniumor toward Troop C's perimeter. Simultaneously, the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was to attack toward Troop C from the northwest.

The Relief of Troop C, 112th Cavalry

The double envelopment maneuver got under way about mid-morning and at first was closely co-ordinated, orders to both units being issued through a radio aboard an artillery liaison plane hovering in the vicinity. ¹ But

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, information on American units in this and the following four sub-sections concerning operations to secure the Afua area is from: 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. - ; 112th Cav Opns and Intel Diary, Aitape; 112th Cav Summary of Msgs, 1 - 29 Jul 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, Sec. II, pp. 7 - 11; 127th Inf Jnl File, 10 - 31 Ju; 44; 1st, 2d, and 3d Bns, 127th Inf, Jnls, 28 Jun - 25 Aug 44; PTF G - 3 Jnls, 21 - 26 Jul and 26 Jul - 1 Aug 44; PCF G - 3 Jnls, 22 - 25 Jul, 25 - 27 Jul, 27 - 31 Jul, and 31 Jul - 5 Aug 44.

shortly after the two attacks began, Troops A and B had to withdraw eastward to avoid fire from the advancing 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry. Troop A then re-took Afua against light opposition and during the afternoon the

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two cavalry units established new defenses around Afua and extended their lines about 300 yards west of the village.

About 1500 the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, having encountered only scattered resistance, moved into the Troop C perimeter from the northwest, just as Japanese infantry launched another strong attack against the cavalry position from the southwest. A lively fire fight developed and darkness had come before the enemy was repulsed. Plans for a continued advance by the 2d Battalion had to be abandoned. The 2d Battalion -- Troop C perimeter was harassed by mortar and rifle fire, for the most part coming from the south, throughout the night, and the two troops in the Afua area experienced similar fire.

Early on the morning of 24 July the 2d Battalion sent patrols out to probe enemy positions around the still-surrounded perimeter. Strong enemy defenses were found on commanding ground both to the north and to the south, and later attempts by the 2d Battalion and Troop C to break through the enemy lines to the southeast toward the Afua - Palauru trail proved unavailing. Company B, 127th Infantry, attacked southwest from the South Forces command post area in an effort to open a line of communications from another direction to the 2nd Battalion. This maneuver was also unsuccessful, as was an attempt of Company E, 127th Infantry, to move northeast out of the perimeter to establish contact with Company B. A Japanese force of over company strength had by now pushed into the heavily jungled ground northeast of the 2d Battalion -- Troop C position and was tenaciously defending tracks, trails, and ridgelines in that area.

By this time Headquarters, PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE was becoming worried about the situation in the Afua area, for General Gill considered that SOUTH FORCE had sufficient troop strength at its disposal to drive off the Japanese without difficulty. General Gill's headquarters apparently believed that South Force was making no concerted effort to clear up the situation in the area west and northwest of Afua, and there was a definite feeling that the situation in the Afua vicinity was not at all critical. The Intelligence Section of the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE considered that the Japanese around Afua were remnants of the 78th Infantry. It was thought that these troops, having been cut off from the main body of the 20th Division by the restoration of the Driniumor line, were merely making unco-

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CHART NO. 7a
 THE PERSECUTION TASK FORCE
 (22 April - 25 August 1944)

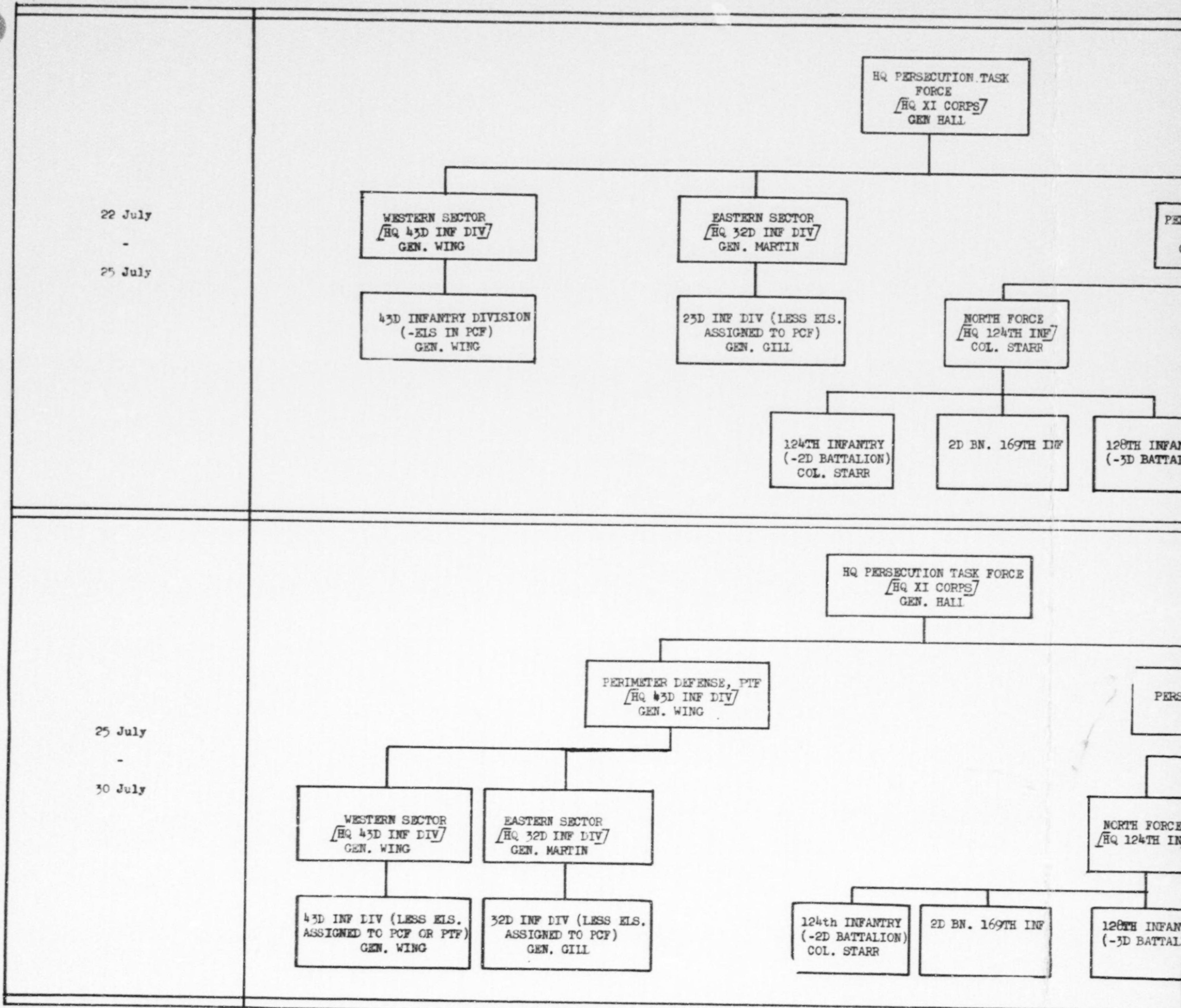
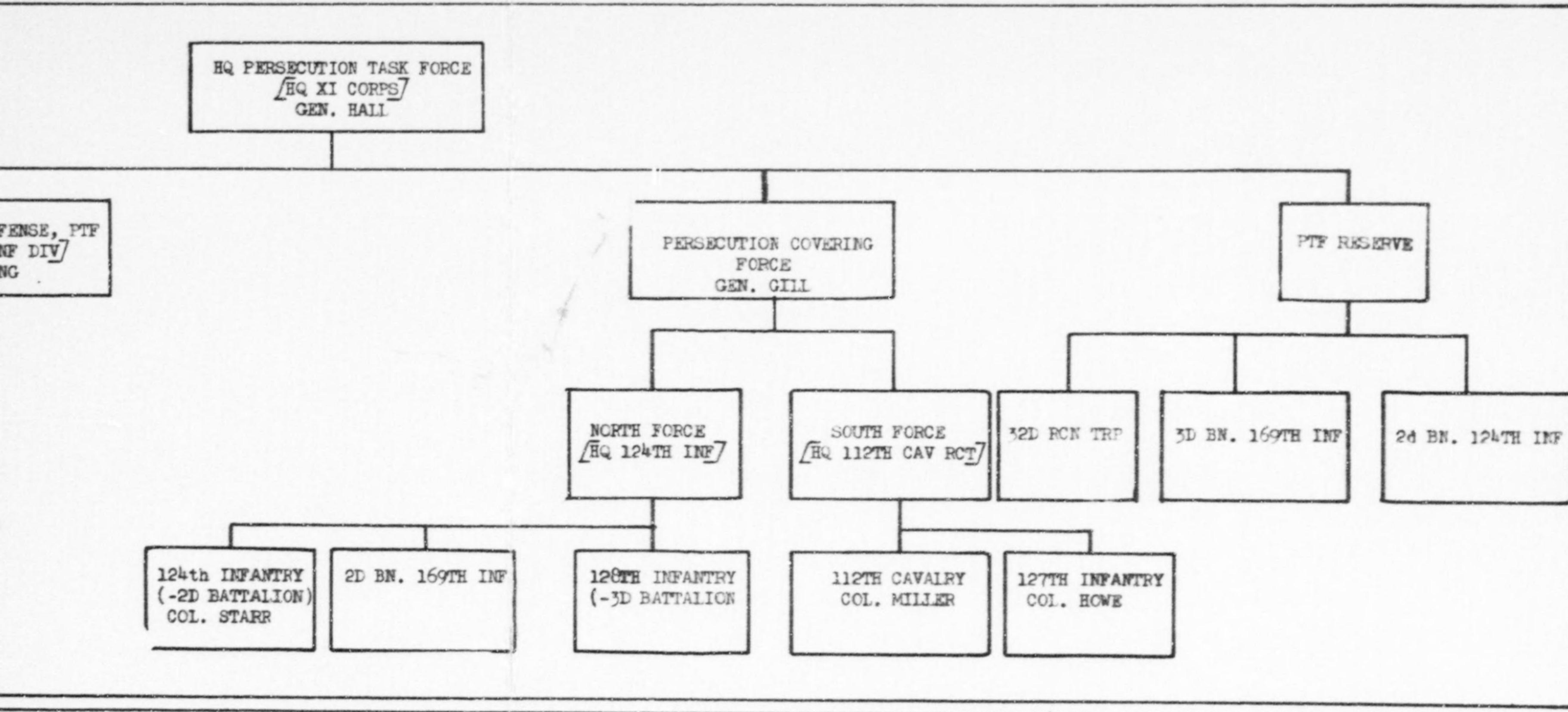
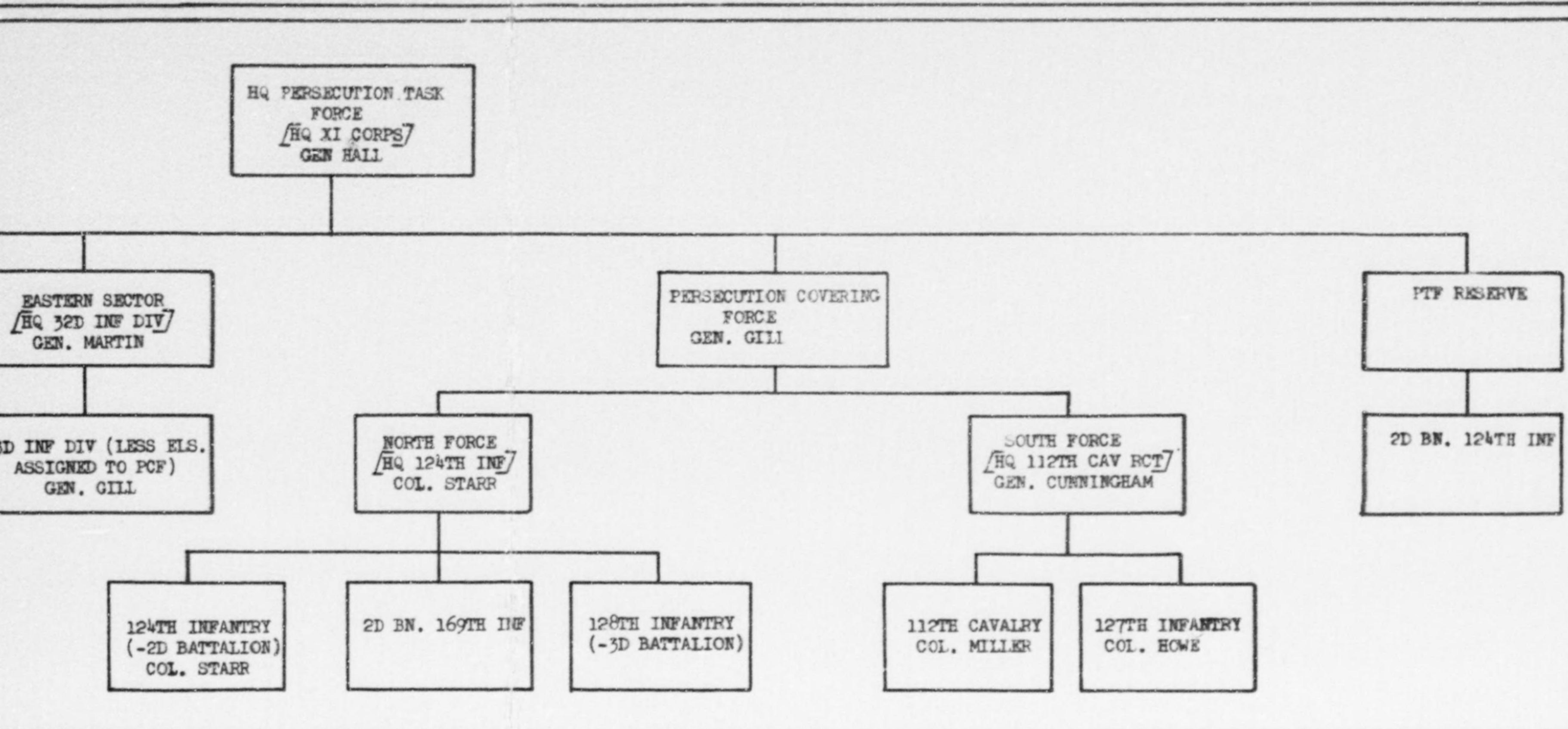


CHART NO. 7d
 THE PERSECUTION TASK FORCE
 (22 April - 25 August 1944)



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ordinated attempts to break through that line to the east. If this were not the case, then, the Intelligence Section believed, the Japanese in the Afua area were only attempting to raid South Force bivouacs in order to find food.

But General Cunningham believed that the enemy force on his right and rear comprised not only remnants of the 78th Infantry but also fresh troops of the 80th Infantry, identifications of which had recently been found by South Force patrols west of Afua. General Cunningham also believed that the Japanese were making determined efforts to outflank South Force and seize control of the Afua -- Palauru trail. The South Force commander felt that he was doing everything possible to drive the Japanese away, but he pointed out to the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE that the enemy troops were dug in on commanding ground throughout the hilly and heavily jungled terrain west and northwest of Afua. Each of these enemy positions had to be knocked out by slow and costly infantry assaults. Finally, said General Cunningham, the 127th Infantry had not yet been able to deploy its entire strength in the battle area and bear its share of the necessary fighting.²

2 The attitude of Headquarters, PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE at this time is based on statements made in G-2 documents and messages sent to South Force as contained in the COVERING FORCE G-3 Jnl for the period. General Cunningham's attitude is from: interview with General Cunningham, Apr 47; interview with Colonel Hooper, 25 Mar 47; ltr, Comdr South Force to RANGOON SIX [Comdr, PCF], 30 Jul 44, sub: Operations South Sector, copy in OCMH files.

In the light of information acquired after the battle, General Cunningham had much the better of this discussion, although even he underestimated the Japanese scale of effort in the Afua area at the end of July. By 24 July, the Miyake Force had been concentrated north and northwest of Afua behind South Force's Driniumor lines.³ Under General Miyake were remnants

3 Enemy information in this and the following four sub-sections is based principally on: 18th Army Opns, III, 107 - 108, 111, 120 - 125, 130 - 138, 156 - 159; POW interrogations and translations of enemy documents in PTF and Eastern Sector G-2 Jnls, Jul and Aug 44; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 47, 18th Army Operations, Annex B -- Maps, Maps Nos. 32, 36, and 37, copy in

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OCMH files. The details of Japanese plans are based principally on MO Opns-Orders Nos. 24, 21 Jul; 34, 26 Jul; 37, 26 Jul, and 49, 31 Jul 44, as translated on the pages cited above in 18th Army Opns, III.

of the 78th and 80th Infantry Regiments, some 26th Field Artillery troops fighting as infantry, and a few men from the 20th Engineers and the 33d Independent Engineer Regiment. The general's force totalled over 1,000 men. Moreover, relatively fresh troops of the 79th Infantry and the headquarters of the 20th Division were in action in the Afua area. At least the 1st Battalion, 79th Infantry, had participated in the attacks west of Afua from the 21st through the 24th, and the rest of the regiment, together with division headquarters personnel, was deployed south and southwest of Afua by dark on the 24th. By that time, there were at least 2,000 Japanese troops on the right flank and at the rear of South Force.

⁴ No American or Japanese sources give any adequate figure for Japanese strength in the Afua area at this time, and the figure used in the text is the author's estimate.

South Force operations on 25 July met with more success than had been anticipated, for heavy fighting had been expected. Early that morning, Companies E and B, 127th Infantry, established contact about 500 yards northeast of the 2d Battalion - Troop C perimeter. So far, few Japanese had been encountered, and over the escape route opened by the two infantry units, Troop C, 112th Cavalry, withdrew to the dropping ground, ending its four days of continuous combat against superior Japanese forces. With Troop C relieved, the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, turned its attention south toward the Afua - Palauru trail.

The Third Withdrawal From Afua.

To exploit the success of the early morning effort, General Cunningham decided to launch an attack south and west from the dropping ground. The forces engaged in this drive were to clear the area between the dropping ground and the position of the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, and were to push all Japanese found in the area south of the Afua - Palauru trail and into the Torricelli Mountains.

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About 1100 on the 25th Company A of the 127th Infantry moved into position at the edge of the dropping ground at a point about 200 yards west of the Driniumor and faced south. Company B lined up on the right of A, and Company E was on the west flank at the edge of a series of jungled ridges. One platoon of Company G was to maintain contact between Companies B and E, which were separated by some 200 yards of thick jungle. Company C was in reserve. The 2d Battalion (less Company E and Company G platoon) was to remain at the old Troop C perimeter until it was sure that no more Japanese were in that area. Then it was to push south to the Afua - Palauru trail west of Company E.

About 1130, the attack jumped off. Companies B and E soon met strong opposition, but Company A, closely followed by Company C, pushed rapidly toward the Afua - Palauru trail, encountering only scattered rifle fire. Late in the afternoon Company A reached the trail at a point about 300 yards west of Afua. There it tied its left flank into the lines of the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, which had been back in Afua since the 23d. Company A pushed through its right about 200 yards west along the trail to the left flank of Company B. The latter unit had not been able to bring its entire strength up to the Afua - Palauru trail. On its right, the Japanese held a strong-point on a low ridge over which the trail passed, and Company B had to bend its lines about 150 yards to the north and west around this enemy position.

Company E and the platoon of Company G, meeting increasing resistance, fought their way back to the 2d Battalion's perimeter in the early afternoon. The entire 2d Battalion then started moving south toward the Afua - Palauru trail. By dusk, the battalion had crossed the trail and was digging in about 100 yards south of that track. There was a gap at least 100 yards wide between the left of the 2d Battalion and the lines of Company B and there was another gap on the battalion's right, or west, flank, where Company G had become cut off during the attack south. At nightfall the company was located on a ridge crossing the trail about 150 yards northwest of the main body and about 800 yards west of Afua.

The advance south had been generally successful, but by late afternoon there were clear indications that many Japanese troops remained in

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a triangular area formed by the dropping ground, Afua, and Company G's ridge-line position. Rifle fire, intensifying as darkness approached, harassed the rear and right flank of the two battalions all afternoon. Moreover, the Japanese had apparently discovered the location of the 2d Battalion command post, the personnel in which were forced to stay under cover. At the same time, the Japanese began intermittently to drop light artillery or mortar shells into the banana patch area, where were located the command posts of South Force, the 112th Cavalry, and the 127th Infantry. Finally, Japanese patrols, coming in from the west, had scouted the banana patch area during the day action which seemed to presage an enemy attack during the night. To get out of range of the enemy fire and danger of enemy attack, General Cunningham moved the command post installations 500 yards to the north before dark.

During the night an unknown number of Japanese troops moved around the right rear of the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, joining enemy units which had been by-passed the preceding afternoon. By early morning on the 26th, these Japanese troops had secured control over a trail which led southeast through heavy jungle from the banana patch to a point on the Afua - Palauru trail near the 2d Battalion's command post. During the morning, 127th Infantry patrols found a Japanese map which indicated that the 66th Infantry, 51st Division, was assembling or had already concentrated in the Kwamagnirk area. A reconnaissance patrol sent to that vicinity found no Japanese troops, but reported discovering many recently improved, albeit unoccupied, enemy bivouacs.

As a result of the information concerning the 66th Infantry and because of the growing Japanese activity south and west of the banana patch, General Cunningham decided to change South Force dispositions. The 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, was withdrawn from its lines along the Afua - Palauru trail and sent back to the dropping ground. There the battalion established a new perimeter which faced west in expectation of Japanese attacks from that direction. The 2d Battalion extended its lines to the east to cover the area vacated by the 1st, and, at the same time, managed to eliminate the Japanese salient which had held up Company B the previous afternoon. Because of enemy patrol action, efforts to extend the 2d Battalion's lines west to Company G were unsuccessful. At nightfall on the 26th, that unit

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was still in its isolated ridge outpost 150 yards beyond the main body's right flank.

All day on the 26th Japanese troops milled around to the rear -- north and northwest -- of the 2d Battalion. At the same time, the battalion received continuous harassing rifle and machine-gun fire from the south, its front. There were expectations that the Japanese might attack from the south and west during the afternoon, and plans were made for the 2d Battalion's withdrawal to Afua if the enemy attacked from more than one direction. However, the enemy scale of effort in the afternoon did not seem to warrant such a withdrawal. The battalion therefore remained in its positions and managed to push its lines slightly south. General Cunningham alerted all South Force to expect an enemy attack on the night of 26 - 27 July, but the hours of darkness proved almost abnormally quiet.

Nevertheless, General Cunningham's redispersions and plans to withdraw the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, had been well-advised. Japanese forces in the Afua area had lost heavily as a result of American infantry and artillery action from the 24th through the 26th of July. Other enemy troops were dropping out of combat from starvation and disease, for the 18th Army had been unable to send any appreciable amount of supplies west of the Driniumor since the 17th. Nevertheless, General Adachi, commanding the 18th Army, was determined to clear the Afua area, and continually sent fresh troops across the Driniumor south of Afua.

The 66th Infantry, which, with attached units, was at least 1,000 men strong, had crossed the Driniumor on or about 24 July. By-passing the right flank of SOUTH FORCE the regiment, as General Cunningham had suspected, had moved into the heavily jungled high ground west of the banana patch and dropping ground. In addition, the remaining elements of the 237th Infantry, probably not more than 300 men strong, had arrived in the Afua area on 25 July and had passed to the control of the Miyake Force. Finally, rear elements of the 20th Division, including additional elements of the 26th Field Artillery and engineer units, had also crossed the Driniumor south of Afua. The number of Japanese troops in the SOUTH FORCE area by nightfall on the 26th of July was well over 2,000 men, and may have been over 3,000.

Actually, neither the Japanese nor SOUTH FORCE apparently had any accurate knowledge of each other's strengths and dispositions in the Afua

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area. Both sides complained that each held isolated strong points, none of which appeared to be key positions; both were working with very inaccurate maps; and both had a great deal of difficulty in reconnaissance work.

On the morning of the 27th, General Cunningham decided to use the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, to resume an advance southward to locate Japanese forces below the Afua - Palauru trail and to overrun an enemy observation post on high ground about 500 yards southwest of Afua. After an artillery barrage against suspected enemy concentrations south of its lines, the 2d Battalion started moving at 1000. Only scattered rifle fire was encountered and, by 1245, the battalion had taken the observation post. A new defensive line, anchored on the Driniumor just above Afua and running generally 400 yards south of the Afua - Palauru trail, was set up. The battalion's right flank was about 800 yards west of the river, near the outpost of Company G, which did not participate in the southward drive.

Apparently, General Cunningham had wanted the 2d Battalion to develop its new line as a base for future operations. However, Japanese units had moved on to the Afua - Palauru trail behind the battalion, threatening its communications, and the unit was therefore ordered to return to the morning line of departure. Since the enemy made little effort to hold his trail positions, this withdrawal was accomplished with incident by 1800. An outpost of platoon size was left on a ridge about 200 yards southwest of Afua. The rest of the battalion, still less Company G, dug in along the Afua - Palauru trail in essentially the same positions it had occupied the previous night.

Meanwhile, the 66th Infantry had become active in the high ground 300 yards west of the dropping ground and banana patch, and elements of that unit or the Miyake Force again began patrolling along the jungle track leading southwest from the banana patch. During the morning Japanese patrols armed with light machine guns occupied two low ridge lines west and southwest of the dropping ground, while other enemy groups moved into high ground immediately west of South Force's new command post area.

These Japanese maneuvers seriously threatened the safety of South Force command and supply installations. General Cunningham therefore

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ordered the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, and part of the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, to clear the enemy from the high ground west of the dropping ground. By late afternoon, these troops, by dint of foot-by-foot advances against stubborn opposition, had cleared the Japanese from three strong ridge line positions west and southwest of the dropping ground. This action gained at least temporary security for South Force's supply base and apparently discouraged the 66th Infantry from making any more attacks for the time being.

The next morning, 28 July, the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, continued mopping up west of the dropping ground and occupied some enemy ridge defenses which had held out overnight. The rest of South Force engaged in local patrolling without finding any trace of strong groups of Japanese. Despite this absence of contact, General Cunningham was certain that large scale Japanese attacks were imminent. He therefore decided to shorten his lines to obtain stronger defenses and to secure a base of operations for further attempts to clear enemy troops from the banana patch -- Afua -- Company G triangle.

Late in the afternoon, in accordance with these plans, the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, moved north from the Afua - Palauru trail and set up a defensive line which ran south from the dropping ground parallel to and about 200 yards west of the Driniumor. This line faced west, and tied in with the westward-facing defenses of the 1st Battalion north of the dropping ground. Company G, 127th Infantry, remained in its isolated perimeter on the ridge 800 yards west of Afua. On the Driniumor were the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, (south from the Anamo - Afua trail-river junction) and the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, the right flank of which was about 2,000 yards north of Afua. The 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, was withdrawn from its perimeter around Afua. The squadron moved back from the Driniumor, tied its right flank to the left of the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, and extended the new westward-facing perimeter from that point southeast to the southern end of the 2d Squadron's lines on the river.

Into the Triangle

On the morning of 29 July, the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, and the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, started a co-ordinated attack south and west

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into the triangle. The 1st Squadron encountered no opposition as it pushed up the west bank of the Driniumor and quickly reoccupied the river line to within 300 yards of Afua. The squadron then halted until the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, had moved equally far south. The latter unit had been delayed along the diagonal track leading southwest from the banana patch and a dangerous gap had been created between the two arms of the advance.

The 2d Battalion's attack had started at 0900, with Company F on the left (east), and Company E on the right. Small patrols, moving along ridge lines west of the main line of advance, protected Company E's right. The Japanese had set up trail-blocks along the diagonal track, thus delaying the battalion's progress, which was also retarded because it was necessary to probe the rough, jungled terrain on both sides of the trail for hidden enemy strong points. Company E, about 1015, found itself halted by a position containing an estimated company of Japanese infantrymen. In an attempt to carry this position by infantry fire and movement tactics, Company E lost 7 men killed and 9 wounded. The unit withdrew about 200 yards to the north and called for artillery and 81-mm. mortar support. This fire was soon forthcoming and Company E moved forward again at 1400. A few slight gains were made, but the Japanese, who had established a defense in depth, clung tenaciously to every foot of ground and the advance was again halted. More artillery fire was placed on the suspected locations of enemy strong points, and Company ^E started southward for a third time about 1530 hours.

While Company E was deploying to begin its third attack, the entire right flank of the 2d Battalion was harassed by Japanese patrols. As a result, the 1530 advance could not be developed, and about 1800, the right flank units of the battalion withdrew. While this withdrawal was underway, an estimated two companies of enemy infantry struck from a jungled ridge immediately west of Company E. Company F had not met much opposition during the day, but had moved slowly southward so as not to lose contact with the rest of the battalion. Now it was withdrawn into the main battalion perimeter to aid in throwing back the enemy attack from the west.

A sharp fire fight took place on the battalion's right, and 2 men were killed, 39 wounded, and 9 were counted as missing. Total casualties for the

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day were 11 killed, 50 wounded, and 9 missing. Harassing by enemy patrols continued, although the 2d Battalion was successful in beating back the main attack after some twenty minutes of hard fighting. General Cunningham felt that the battalion had done all that could be expected of it during the day and ordered it to withdraw to the dropping ground. This retreat, begun about 1930, was accomplished during the night of 29 - 30 July and the battalion reached the dropping ground about 0830 on the latter day. Because this withdrawal left the flank of the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, exposed to attacks from the northwest and west, the latter unit was withdrawn into the lines of the 2d Squadron north of Afua.

During the 30th and 31st of July only local patrol action was carried out by most units of South Force as General Cunningham prepared plans for another offensive into the triangle. Major combat action during the two days revolved around the withdrawal of Company G, 127th Infantry, from its exposed outpost nearby 800 yards west of Afua. On the afternoon of the 29th the unit had been driven over 400 yards east of its original position by Japanese attacks and had established new defenses on high ground not much more than 250 yards west of Afua. On the 30th the company was surrounded and spent all day fighting off a series of small scale attacks. The next morning the unit fought its way north to the dropping ground, where it arrived about 1330. Thence, it moved on to the Driniumor and joined the rest of the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, which by now had switched positions with the 3d Battalion.

South Force was now in a long, oval-shaped perimeter which faced both west into the jungle and east across the Driniumor and varied in depth from 400 to 800 yards. The 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was on the north, facing the river but with its left flank bent westward. On the Driniumor south of the 2d Battalion was the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, the lines of which extended to within 1,500 yards of Afua. Extending about 400 yards west of the 2d Squadron's southern flank was Troop C of the 1st Squadron. The remainder of the latter unit faced west and anchored its north flank on the banana patch. North of the 1st Squadron were the 1st and 3d Battalions, 127th Infantry, extending the western side of South Force's perimeter north through the dropping ground and 500 yards beyond to General Cunningham's command post.

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As of 31 July, South Force, since the 13th of the month, had suffered almost 1,000 casualties, of which 260 had been incurred by the 112th Cavalry. For the understrength cavalry regiment, this was a casualty rate of over 17 per cent. The 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, had also lost heavily and was in need of rest, reorganization, and re-equipment, needs which had prompted General Cunningham to change the places of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 127th Infantry. South Force casualties broke down as follows: 106 killed, 386 wounded, 18 missing, and 426 evacuated as a result of disease and sickness. South Force estimated that it had killed over 700 Japanese.⁵

5 These casualty figures are from: ltr, Comdr South Force to Comdr PCF, 30 Jul 44, sub: Operations South Sector, copy in OCMH files.

Allied and Japanese Plans.

General Cunningham planned to start a new attack south on 1 August with Company K, 127th Infantry, and Troop G, 112th Cavalry, moving southwest from the dropping ground in a reconnaissance in force to the Afua - Palauru trail. The two units were to probe for enemy defenses, avoid battle, and return to the dropping ground to report their findings before dark on the 1st. The entire 3d Battalion and one cavalry troop were to be combined in a striking force for an attack into the triangle on 2 August, aiming for objectives selected during the previous day's reconnaissance.

Not even the preliminary steps of this plan could be executed as scheduled. For days the Japanese had been bringing reinforcements forward to the Afua area. With these new troops, the enemy was to make more efforts to role up South Force's right flank, efforts which were to necessitate many changes in General Cunningham's plans.

Despite continued lack of success in achieving decisive results at Afua, the 18th Army had not given up efforts to wipe out the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE, although, by the 25th of the month, it had begun to appear to General Adachi that the 20th Division and the Miyake Force could not even secure the Afua area. The 18th Army commander had already devised a plan to send all elements of the 41st Division still east of the Driniumor across that river near Kawanaka Shima. This move was to entail operations by the 238th Infantry, the 239th Infantry, the 41st Engineer Regiment, the 41st Mountain Artillery

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Regiment, and the bulk of the 8th Independent Engineer Regiment, part of which was already west of the Driniumor with the 20th Division. Once across the Driniumor, the 41st Division units were to establish contact with the remnants of the 237th Infantry, send some men south toward the 20th Division to help cut South Force's lines of communications, and mount new attacks on the Anamo - Tiver area.

On the afternoon of 25 July, General Adachi himself moved up to the 41st Division's command post (apparently located on Niumen Creek east of Kawanaka Shima) to supervise that unit's preparations for attack. The 18th Army commander soon discovered that the 41st Division was in no condition to assault the Driniumor line and, at the same time, he learned that the operations of the 20th Division in the Afua area were not going as well as had been expected. Considering how best to employ the 41st Division, he decided to send that unit south along the east bank of the Driniumor, have it cross the river south of Afua, join the 20th Division on the west side, and participate in a two-division attack aimed at securing Afua, the banana patch, the dropping ground, and all other South Force positions north to the junction of the Anamo - Afua trail with the Driniumor.

Accordingly, on the morning of 26 July, General Adachi issued orders for the 41st Division to start moving south. The 1st Battalion, 239th Infantry, was left in the Kawanaka Shima area to set up a counterreconnaissance screen and to put up a show of strength designed to deceive the PERSECUTION COVERING FORCE as to the intentions of the rest of the division. The remainder of the 239th Infantry, together with division headquarters, the 238th Infantry, the 41st Engineers, the 8th Independent Engineers, and the 41st Mountain Artillery started south at 1600 on the 26th, aiming for a ford over the Driniumor about 1,200 yards south of Afua.

Final orders for the two-division attack west of the Driniumor were issued by the 18th Army on 28 July, orders which apparently were based on expectations that the 41st Division could complete its redeployment in time for the attack to begin on the evening of the 30th. This was too optimistic. The 238th Infantry, the 41st Mountain Artillery, and the 8th Independent Engineers were across the river in time but the 2d and 3d Battalions, 239th Infantry, had missed the crossing point on the Driniumor and were

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lost. Fortunately for the 18th Army, the withdrawal of the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, and the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, during the night of 29 - 30 July and the morning of the 30th, gave the 20th and 41st Divisions time to complete their organization. New orders were issued for the attack to start on 1 August, with the 20th Division on the west and the 41st Division on the east. The strength that the 20th Division (including the 66th Infantry, the 26th Field Artillery, the bulk of the 37th Independent Engineers, the 20th Engineers, remnants of the 237th Infantry, and various small service units) could muster for the attack was a little over 2,000 men. Most of these troops had been without supplies of food or ammunition for some time. They were suffering from starvation, malaria, skin diseases, and cracking morale. They were short of both ammunition and weapons. The 41st Division and its attached units, totalling nearly 1,750 men by the morning of 1 August, were in equally bad shape. Nevertheless, General Adachi was determined to make one last attack with the nearly 4,000 troops available to him in the Afua area.⁶

⁶ The foregoing strength figures have been derived from a mass of contradictory data and it is impossible to determine how many of the foregoing troops could be called infantry effectives since the 18th Army had apparently armed almost all its men west of the Driniumor as infantry. However, it appears that about 2,200 of the troops across the river as of 1 August were members of infantry regiments. The total estimate of nearly 4,000 may be wrong 1,000 men in either direction, but the evidence tends to indicate that the figure is conservative.

The Japanese Retreat from Afua

At 0620 on 1 August, about two companies of Japanese attacked from the southwest against the lines of Troop C, 112th Cavalry, situated about 1,500 yards north of Afua. General Cunningham immediately cancelled the planned reconnaissance in force into the triangle and turned his attention to this new Japanese threat. The first Japanese assault units were quickly reinforced, and the enemy moved forward against Troop C in massed waves along a narrow front. A bloody battle ensued as the enemy, apparently determined to commit suicide, continued his mass attacks. South Force called for

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artillery support, which was quickly forthcoming and which greatly helped Troop C to throw back the enemy assaults.

By 0800 the Japanese had withdrawn, and the battle area had become strangely quiet. Patrols were sent out from the cavalry perimeter to reconnoiter. These parties counted 180 dead Japanese in front of Troop C's lines, and it was considered probable that the enemy had carried off many more dead or wounded personnel. Troop C, on the other hand, had lost but 5 men killed and 6 wounded. Examination of the enemy dead disclosed that elements of both the 80th and 238th Infantry Regiments had participated in the attacks.

About 0830, Troop G moved southwest out of the Troop C area to undertake part of the planned reconnaissance in force. The troop patrolled 600 yards to the southwest, returning to Troop C early in the afternoon, having encountered only scattered rifle fire. Meanwhile, a platoon of Company K, 127th Infantry, had patrolled to high ground west of the dropping ground. This unit reported only minor opposition upon its return to South Force lines at 1600.

General Cunningham interpreted the lull in fighting after 0800 as indicating that the Japanese might be assembling stronger forces for another attack. Documents captured by Troop G and Company K patrols during the day supported this idea, and disclosed that the Japanese might launch an offensive during the night of 1 - 2 August or early on the 2d. About 0300 on the 2d, Troop G (which had moved to the southwest edge of the dropping ground the previous evening) was subjected to a small attack. This action turned out to be but a minor skirmish, and General Cunningham suspected that it was a reconnaissance maneuver in preparation for a stronger attack. In anticipation of such an assault, the remainder of the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, was removed from its river positions and disposed as a mobile reserve at the South Force's command post. The 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, stretched its lines to cover the river positions vacated by the 2d Squadron.

Although the movement of the 2d Squadron had apparently been well-advised, the Japanese did not attack the command post area. Instead, at 1900, elements of the 41st Division struck the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, at its lines south of the dropping ground. This attack was preceded by fire