

CHART NO. 2
 Ground Organization for the Hollandia - Aitape Operations
 (Amphibious Phase)

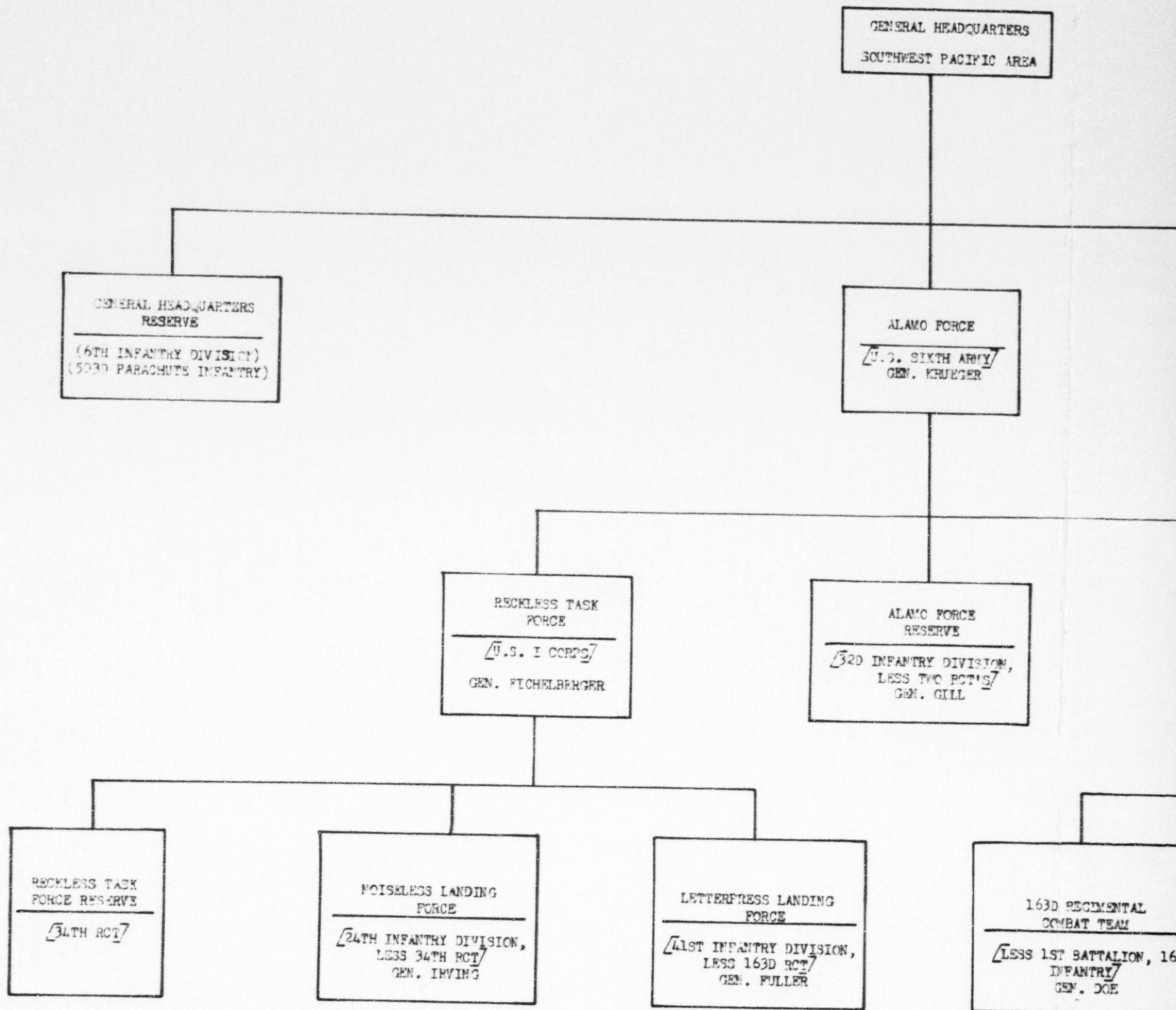
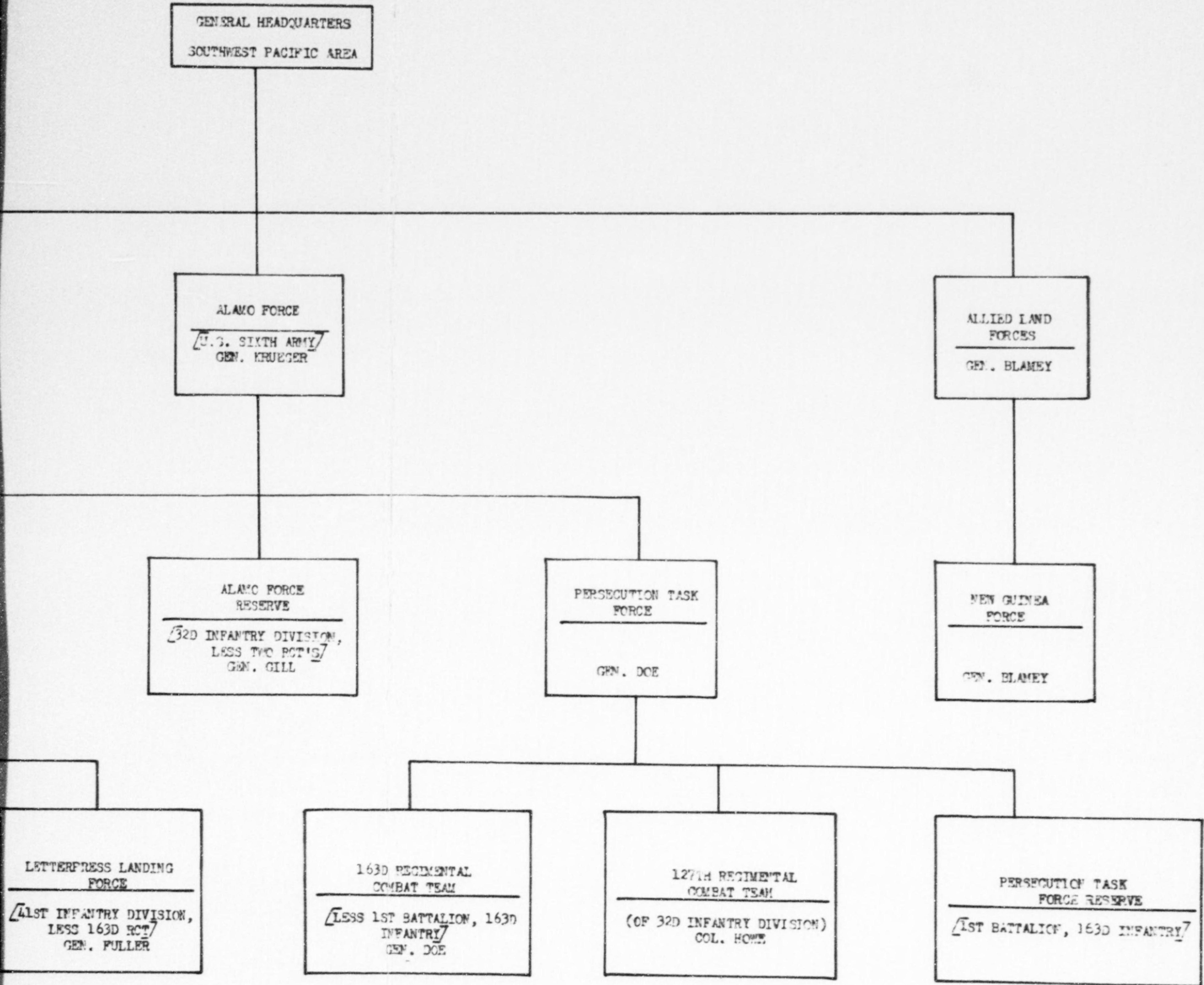


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Ground Organization for the Hollandia - Aitape Operations
(Amphibious Phase)



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G - 2 Estimate of the Enemy Situation, PERSECUTION (Aitape), 24 Jan 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 26 Jan 44; GHQ SWPA, G - 2 DSEI's Nos. 710 - 761, in G - 3 GHQ Jnls, 1 Mar - 22 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA, G - 2 Estimate of the Enemy Situation, 22 Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 22 Mar 44.

result of these estimates, 2 1/3 reinforced divisions, totalling almost 50,000 combat troops, were made available to ALAMO FORCE for the assault phase of the Hollandia - Aitape operation.³⁵

35 GHQ SWPA OI No. 46 (Revised), 28 Mar 44.

Responsibility for ground operations at Hollandia was delegated by General Krueger to Headquarters, U. S. I Corps, which was designated for the campaign the RECKLESS TASK FORCE. Commanded by Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger, I Corps headquarters had seen action during the Papuan Campaign. Since then it had been based in Australia, operating as a training and defense command. Early in 1944, the corps headquarters had moved to Goodenough Island, off the eastern tip of New Guinea, to prepare for the now cancelled Hansa Bay operation. At Hollandia, I Corps was to control the action of the 24th and 41st Infantry Divisions (the latter less one regimental combat team). The 24th Division, when alerted for the Hollandia operation, was finishing amphibious and jungle training at Goodenough Island in preparation for the Hansa Bay campaign. Elements of the 41st Division, which was commanded by Maj. Gen. Horace H. Fuller, had participated in the Papuan Campaign, while other parts of the unit had gained experience in the Lae - Salamaua operations. At the time it was alerted for Hollandia, the 41st Division was rehabilitating and re-training in Australia.³⁶

36 ALAMO FORCE FO No. 12, 23 Mar 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 20 - 23 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA, G - 3 Hist Div, Chronology of the War in
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the SWPA, copy in OCMH files; memo, CINGSWPA for COMSOPAC, Comdr AAF SWPA, Comdr ANF SWPA, et al., 9 Feb 44, sub: Outline Plan Hansa Bay Operation, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 9 Feb 44; RECKLESS TASK FORCE (RTF) Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 6.

Two regimental combat teams of the yet untried 24th Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Frederick A. Irving, were to land at Tanahmerah Bay, while two regimental combat teams of the 41st Division were to go ashore at Humboldt Day.³⁷ At Aitape, the 163d Infantry of the 41st

³⁷ RTF FO No. 1, 27 Mar 44, attached to RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia; RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 6.

Division was to make the initial landings and on the next day the 127th Infantry of the 32d Infantry Division was to arrive there. The latter regiment had seen action during the Papuan Campaign and in the drive to clear the Japanese from the Huon Peninsula of eastern New Guinea.

Operations at Aitape were to be controlled by Headquarters, PERSECUTION TASK FORCE, commanded by Brig. Gen. Jens A. Doe, the Assistant Division Commander of the 41st Division. The PERSECUTION TASK FORCE, organized on 23 March, was an Allied headquarters especially set up for the Aitape operation. It was to exercise its command functions directly under ALAMO FORCE and was on the same level of command as the RECKLESS TASK FORCE.³⁸

³⁸ ALAMO FORCE FO No. 12, 23 Mar 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 20 - 23 Mar 44; PERSECUTION TASK FORCE (hereinafter cited as PTF) FO No. 1, 6 Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 5 - 6 Apr 44.

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Until a beachhead was secured in the Aitape area, control of the landing and operations ashore was to be vested in Admiral Barbey as the Attack Force commander, who was to be represented at Aitape by the Commander, Eastern Attack Group, Capt. Albert G. Noble (USN). General Doe was to assume command of operations at Aitape upon the seizure of the beachhead, at which time the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was automatically to pass from the control of the navy to AMAMO FORCE.

At Hollandia, the control of operations was to pass from the commanders of the Western and Central Attack Groups to the commanders of the 24th and 41st Divisions, respectively, when those units had secured their beachheads. Admiral Barbey was apparently to retain some control over ground in the Hollandia area until General Eichelberger saw fit to move his RECKLESS TASK FORCE headquarters ashore. The task force would then revert from naval control to the supervision of ALAMO FORCE.³⁹

39 ALAMO FORCE FO No. 12, 23 Mar 44; ANF SWPA Opn - Plan 4 - 44, 1 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA OI No. 46 (Revised), 28 Mar 44.

Supporting Forces and Reserves

To reinforce the 24th and 41st Divisions for the Hollandia - Aitape operation, there were made available three separate field artillery battalions, four engineer combat battalions, seven (plus) antiaircraft and coast artillery battalions, a tank destroyer battalion, and the bulk of three engineer boat and shore regiments.

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Other reinforcing units included a medium tank company of the 1st Marine Division (then on New Britain) and another from the 1st Cavalry Division (operating on the Admiralty Islands). Among the service organizations assigned to the operation was the No. 62 Works Wing, Royal Australian Air Force, to which was assigned the task of rehabilitating an airfield at Aitape by D plus 1.⁴⁰

40 Annex No. 1, Tentative Troop List, 13 Mar 44, to GHQ SWPA Warning Order No. 4, 7 Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 7 Mar 44; ALAMO FORCE FO No. 12, 23 Mar 44.

General Headquarters Reserve for the operation was the untried 6th Infantry Division, then finishing training for amphibious and jungle warfare at Milne Bay, New Guinea. About a week before the landings, the 503d Parachute Combat Team, veterans of one combat jump in eastern New Guinea, was designated as an additional General Headquarters Reserve.

ALAMO FORCE Reserve for the Hollandia - Aitape operation was originally the 127th Infantry (and regimental combat team attachments) of the 32d Division. It was brought out of reserve and assigned to the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE because, as D Day approached, General Krueger became increasingly concerned over the capabilities of the Japanese 18th Army, concentrating some 50,000 strong at Wewak, only ninety-four miles east of Aitape. The Intelligence Section of General MacArthur's headquarters estimated that a large part of the 18th Army could march overland from Wewak to Aitape in two weeks (an opinion

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not shared by the Operations Section of the same headquarters). The 18th Army, estimated General MacArthur's intelligence officers, could be expected to make determined efforts to recapture the Aitape area.⁴¹

41 GHQ SWPA, G - 2 Estimate of the Enemy Situation, Hollandia, 22 Mar 44, in G - 3 Jnl, 22 Mar 44; Amendment No. 2, 17 Mar 44, to GHQ SWPA, G - 2 Estimate of the Enemy Situation with Respect to an Operation Against Hollandia, 17 Feb 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 29 Feb 44; GHQ SWPA, G - 2 DSEI's Nos. 710 - 761, 1 Mar - 22 Apr 44; in G - 3 GHQ Jnls, 1 Mar - 22 Apr 44; remarks of Maj Gen Stephen J. Chamberlin, ex-ACofS G-3 GHQ SWPA, at Hist Div SSUSA Seminar, 23 Jan 48, in OCMH files.

General Headquarters considered General Krueger's commitment of the 127th Regimental Combat Team to operations at Aitape at least premature, if not unnecessary. General MacArthur had planned to relieve the 32d Division, then at Saidor on the Huon Peninsula, with Australian troops. The division was to be staged at Saidor for an operation against the Wakde - Sarmi area in quick exploitation of expected success at Hollandia and Aitape. However, it was known that Aitape might ultimately have to be reinforced. Reluctant consent was therefore given to General Krueger's plan and General MacArthur made provision to use other units at Wakde - Sarmi. ALAMO FORCE Reserve then became the 32d Division less the 127th Regimental Combat Team and less another regimental combat team which was to remain in the Saidor area for an indeterminate period.⁴² RECKLESS TASK FORCE Reserve

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42 GHQ SWPA OI No. 46, 18 Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Mar 44; ALAMO FORCE FO No. 12, 23 Mar 44; rad, ALAMO to 32d Div, (no number), 13 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 13 Apr 44; memo, ACofS G - 3 GHQ SWPA for CofS GHQ SWPA, 14 Apr 44, (no sub); rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF - 2393, 14 Apr 44; rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C - 10671, 14 Apr 44. Last three documents in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 14 Apr 44.

at Hollandia was the 34th Infantry (and combat team attachments) of the 24th Division. PERSECUTION TASK FORCE Reserve during the landings at Aitape was the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry, and the 127th Regimental Combat Team was also to be considered in reserve until committed to action.⁴³

43 RTF FO No. 1, 27 Mar 44; PTF FO No. 1, 6 Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 5 - 6 Apr 44.

Forces of the South Pacific Area, operating under General MacArthur's strategic direction, were to continue their ground campaigns in the Solomon Islands and the Bismarck Archipelago during the Hollandia - Aitape attack. The South Pacific Area was also to continue its air and naval blockade of the Bismarcks and Solomons, assist in aerial reconnaissance missions required to cover the operations of both Task Force 58 and the movement of Southwest Pacific forces to the objectives, and halt Japanese seaborne reinforcement and supply activities within its zone of responsibility.

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NEW GUINEA FORCE, commanded by General Blamey and consisting principally of Australian troops, was to continue pressure already underway against 18th Army elements southeast of Wewak. This action, it was expected, would help to prevent the 18th Army from moving westward at will either to attack or to by-pass the Aitape area. NEW GUINEA FORCE was also to defend all the eastern New Guinea area it then occupied.⁴⁴

44 GHQ SWPA OI No. 46 (Revised), 28 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA OI No. 46, 18 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA OI No. 48, 24 Mar 44.

Logistic support of the Hollandia - Aitape operation was the responsibility of the United States Army Services of Supply, Southwest Pacific Area, known within the theater simply as USASOS. The magnitude of the logistic problem is illustrated by the fact that the grand total of all Southwest Pacific Area forces assigned directly to the Hollandia - Aitape operation was 84,000 men. There were approximately 50,000 ground combat troops, which were to be supported by almost 23,000 personnel of all types of service units. Allied Air Forces units scheduled to move forward to Hollandia and Aitape during the opening stages of the operation, including both ground and air echelons, totalled over 12,000 men. Of the 84,000 troops assigned to the operation, about 52,000 men were to land in the objective areas by the evening of D plus 3, considered the end of the assault phase.⁴⁵

45 Annex No. 1, Tentative Troop List, 13 Mar 44, to GHQ SWPA Warning Order No. 4, 7 Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ

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Jnl 7 Mar 44, GHQ SWPA OI No. 46, 18 Mar 44, and OI No. 46 (Revised), 28 Mar 44; ALAMO FORCE FO No. 12, 23 Mar 44.

Logistics

The strength of the forces assigned greatly complicated the logistic problems presented by the decision to seize the Hollandia and Aitape areas, for never before had an operation of such magnitude been undertaken within the Southwest Pacific Area. But other problems, some directly related to the size of the force and some only indirectly, also existed and heading the list was the theater's chronic (and sometimes acute) shortage of ships. There were to be three widely separated beaches, each far more distant from supply bases than had been the case in earlier operations in the theater. The necessity for hurried airdrome construction at the objectives made it imperative that large quantities of engineering equipment and materiel be sent to Hollandia and Aitape during the first two or three days of the operation. The plan to develop Hollandia into a major air center and logistic base involved a long-range program of construction. Staging the troops was complicated by the fact that the units were scattered from points in southern Australia to the Admiralty Islands and from the Huon Peninsula to western New Britain.

The Logistic Plan

While logistic support of the Hollandia - Aitape operation was a responsibility of the Services of Supply, ALAMO FORCE was responsible for the co-ordination of all detailed logistic planning.⁴⁶ For the purposes of

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46 The material in this section is based principally on: Annex No. 4, Logistics, to GHQ SWPA OI No. 46, 18 Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ SWPA OI No. 46, 18 Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Mar 44, USASOS Logistics Instructions No. 46/SOS, 2 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 3 Apr 44; ALAMO FORCE Administrative Order No. 7, 6 Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 20 - 23 Mar 44.

co-ordination, ALAMO FORCE was authorized to call to its headquarters representatives of the Services of Supply, the Allied Air Forces, and the Allied Naval Forces. The Allied Naval Forces was responsible for the logistic support of its own elements, but in case of emergency, it could draw supplies from Services of Supply stocks.

All air force technical supplies required to support air force units moving to Hollandia or Aitape were to be provided by the Allied Air Forces. That headquarters was to be prepared to fly emergency supplies ^{to} both Hollandia and Aitape upon call from ALAMO FORCE. The latter organization was to provide maintenance and rations for troops staging for Hollandia and Aitape, establish initial supply bases at the objectives, and initiate numerous construction projects at Hollandia and Aitape. Starting airfield rehabilitation at Aitape was also a responsibility of ALAMO FORCE.

To insure supply of units moving to Hollandia and Aitape, the Services of Supply was to provide at forward bases a thirty-day supply of rations, unit equipment, clothing, fuels, and lubricants. Six Southwest Pacific Area units of fire ⁴⁷ of all types of ammunition were

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47 While it is known that a SWPA unit of fire differed from time to time from the unit of fire set up by the War Department, available documents do not contain information concerning these differences.

to be stockpiled for ground assault troops. Construction materiel, in amounts and types determined by ALAMO FORCE, was also to be provided at forward Services of Supply bases. The responsibility for obtaining these supplies from the Services of Supply and assembling them at RECKLESS and PERSECUTION TASK FORCE staging areas was vested in ALAMO FORCE.

Assault units of the RECKLESS and PERSECUTION TASK FORCES were to carry ashore a 5-day supply of rations. Additional rations to assure food until D plus 20 for all units of the RECKLESS TASK FORCE landed through D plus 3 were to be moved to Hollandia with those units. Sufficient rations were to be loaded for PERSECUTION TASK FORCE assault echelons to supply them through D plus 29. Both task forces were to take with them a fifteen-day supply of unit equipment, clothing, fuel, and lubricants. Engineer construction materiel was to be loaded on D Day - D plus 3 ships to the minimum amount prescribed by ALAMO FORCE and in additional quantities as required by the commanders of the RECKLESS and PERSECUTION TASK FORCES. Fifteen days' supply of other types of construction and maintenance materiel was to be moved to Hollandia and Aitape during the assault phase of the operations.

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Provision for ammunition supply was more complex and depended to a large extent upon the nature of individual combat organizations. Assault troops moving to Hollandia were to carry ashore at least two units of fire for all weapons. On the other hand, the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was to be supplied with four units of fire for the landing. Sufficient ammunition for field and antiaircraft artillery weapons, 4.2-inch mortars, and hand grenades was to be shipped forward on assault convoys to provide both task forces with six units of fire by D plus 3. Other types of ammunition, to establish a total of five units of fire by D plus 3, would also be shipped to Hollandia and Aitape. Resupply of ammunition for the RECKLESS and PERSECUTION TASK FORCES was a responsibility of ALAMO FORCE. Two units of fire for all weapons was to be brought forward on convoys scheduled to arrive at the objectives on D plus 8. After this first automatic resupply, the two task forces would requisition from ALAMO FORCE ammunition as needed.

Extra rations, fuel lubricants, and ammunition were to be stockpiled at forward bases so as to insure uninterrupted flow of these items to the objectives. The Services of Supply was to hold two large cargo vessels empty at a forward base for possible emergency use until D plus 30, and was also to furnish, prior to D Day, 1,000 tons of space on small ships for emergency use. The Allied Naval Forces and the Services of Supply were to cooperate in providing tankers for movement of bulk-loaded aviation gasoline, barges for handling such fuel at the objectives, and essential harbor and lightering craft. Through D plus 45 the control of all shipping moving to

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Hollandia and Aitape was to rest with Allied Naval Forces. After that date, the Services of Supply was to assume that responsibility. Principal supply and staging bases were to be at Goodenough Island (off eastern New Guinea) and Finschhafen. The latter base would be the point of departure for resupply ships controlled by Allied Naval Forces. Services of Supply shipping was to use such Services of Supply bases as might be determined by that headquarters.

Obtaining the Shipping

Early plans for the operation had indicated that 32,000 troops with 28,500 measurement tons of supplies would be ample to secure the Hollandia area. Enough shipping could have been scraped up within the Southwest Pacific to carry out an operation of that size, but the scope of the undertaking was entirely changed by the enlargement of the forces and the decision to seize Aitape. The 52,000-odd troops finally assigned to the assault phase of the operation would require 58,100 tons of supplies and equipment. There was not enough shipping within the theater to stage an operation of such magnitude.⁴⁸

48 Annex No. 4, Logistics, to GHQ SWPA OI No. 46, 18 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA, Hollandia Outline Plan Draft, 28 Feb 44, and attached, unsigned, undated memo, sub: Comments on Hollandia Outline Plan, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 2 - 14 Mar 44.

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Some additional shipping was obtained by borrowing for a limited period assault vessels from the South and Central Pacific Areas and by utilizing some theater ships normally engaged in training activities or operations in rear areas, substituting civilian-manned vessels for the latter. By mid-March, it appeared that these steps had secured the minimum shipping space necessary to carry out the Hollandia - Aitape operation. However, the need for hurried airdrome and base construction made it necessary to add more service troops and larger quantities of engineer equipment to assault cargoes than had been contemplated when arrangements for borrowing ships were first completed.⁴⁹

49 Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, XC - 1753, 5 Mar 44; rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF - 1012, both in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 2 - 14 Mar 44; memo, G - 3 GHQ Opns Div to ACofS G - 3 GHQ, 25 Mar 44, sub: Shipping Borrowed from SOPAC, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Mar 44; memo, ACofS G - 3 ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, 27 Mar 44, (no sub), in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 24 - 27 Mar 44.

ALAMO FORCE proposed that additional shipping space be obtained by using large cargo vessels (AK's) which were not usually employed during assaults. These vessels, often of the Liberty-Ship type, differed from Attack Cargo Ships (AKA's) principally in that they did not carry enough small boats to unload themselves. Four Navy- or Coast Guard-manned AK's were operating in rear areas in the theater where dock facilities and large

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cranes were available. ALAMO FORCE requested that these four be made available for the Hollandia - Aitape operation, a request seemingly justified in the light of expected Allied air superiority at the objectives, and which had a precedent in Japanese practice during the early months of the war in the Pacific.⁵⁰

50 Memo, GHQ SWPA, (no addressee), 1 Mar 44, sub: Considerations Affecting the Plan to Seize Humboldt Bay Area with Strong Support of Carriers, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 2 - 14 Mar 44; memo, G - 3 ALAMO Plng Div for ACofS G - 3 ALAMO, 11 Mar 44, (no sub), in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 2 - 14 Mar 44; rad, Com7thFlt to ALAMO, 150703/Z Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 16 Mar 44.

Admiral Barbey, in charge of the amphibious phase of the operation, initially opposed this plan. He felt that AK's were vulnerable to attack in the forward areas, especially if they were to remain at the objectives until completely unloaded of a capacity cargo. Some members of the Supply Section of General MacArthur's headquarters did not agree with the admiral. One of them, Col. Harold E. Eastwood, expressed the opinion that all shipping in forward areas risked being sunk -- a calculated risk acceptable to General Headquarters. That command, said Colonel Eastwood, considered that AK's "...should be operated with a view to support rather than preservation of naval facilities..."⁵¹

51 Memo, ACofS G - 2 ALAMO to CofS ALAMO, 15 Mar 44, (no sub), in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 15 - 18 Mar 44;

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memo, ACofS G - 3 ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, 27 Mar 44, (no sub), in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 24 - 27 Mar 44; ltr, Col H. E. Eastwood to ACofS G - 4 ALAMO, 26 Mar 44, in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb - 2 Apr 44. The quotation is from the latter document.

Finally, Admiral Barbey decided that two lightly loaded AK's would arrive at Hollandia on D Day. These two ships were to depart from that area on D plus 2 whether or not their unloading was completed. Another AK was to reach Aitape on D Day and the fourth would arrive at the same place on D plus 1. Both these ships were to be loaded to capacity and were to remain at Aitape until their cargoes were completely discharged. During the period that the four AK's were to operate in the forward area, the Services of Supply was to provide civilian-manned vessels totalling equivalent tonnage for operations in the rear area.⁵²

52 Rad, Com7thFlt to ALAMO, 150703/Z Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 16 Mar 44; rad, ComServFor7thFlt to CTF 76, 151206/Z Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 16 Mar 44; rad, CTF 76 to ALAMO and ANF SWPA, 010015/Z Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 31 Mar - 1 Apr 44; rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C - 10273, 1 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 1 Apr 44; rad, CTF 76 to ALAMO and Com7thFlt, 011347/Z Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 2 - 4 Apr 44; Annex No. 6, Assignment of Shipping, 1 Apr 44, to ALAMO FORCE FO No. 12, 23 Mar 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 20 - 23 Mar 44.

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The fact that the AK's scheduled to arrive at Hollandia on D Day were not to be completely loaded resulted in a reduction of tonnage space -- space which ALAMO FORCE believed necessary for the success of the operation. During the discussion concerning the dispatch of AK's to Hollandia, the Allied Naval Forces had made available six Landing Ships, Tank (LST's) which had not previously been assigned to the operation, apparently in the hope that ALAMO FORCE would accept these vessels in lieu of the AK's. Even with this addition, space was lost which could have held 3,800 tons of engineering equipment and other cargo that ALAMO FORCE desired to send forward with the initial convoys. Therefore, only the supplies most sorely needed by the assault units could be sent forward in the early convoys.⁵³

⁵³ Memo, ACofS G - 3 ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, 27 Mar 44, (no sub), in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 24 - 27 Mar 44; rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, CX - 10175, 28 Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 28 Mar 44.

As another result of the limitations on cargo space, the quantity of supplies to be carried forward on Services of Supply ships manned by civilian crews after the assault phase was increased beyond that originally contemplated. In addition, some of the ships sailing with the D Day through D plus 3 convoys would have to unload at Hollandia and Aitape, return to eastern New Guinea bases for reloading, and go back to the forward objectives with a new series of convoys beginning on D plus 8.⁵⁴

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54 Memo, ACoS G - 4 ALAMO for ACoS G - 4 USASOS, 9 Apr 44, (no sub), in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 3 - 16 Apr 44; CTF 77 Opn - Plan 3 - 44, 3 Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 4 - 5 Apr 44.

The first detailed plans for the Hollandia operation had been drawn up during the last week of February 1944. The last major changes in the plans were completed in the second week of April. As a result of the various changes, ships scheduled to arrive at the objectives during the assault phase of the operation had increased as follows:

Plan of 28 February

4 APA's
1 AKA
1 LSD
10 APD's
30 LCI's
27 LST's
- -

Attack Troop Transports
Attack Cargo Ships
Landing Ship, Dock
Destroyer Transports
Landing Craft, Infantry
Landing Ships, Tank
Cargo Ships

Plan of 9 April

8 APA's
2 AKA's
3 LSD's
14 APD's
31 LCI's
51 LST's
4 AK's

After 9 April the number of assault vessels was not changed and the quantity of personnel and supplies scheduled to be landed through D plus 3 remained substantially the same.
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55 GHQ SWPA, Hollandia Outline Plan Draft, 28 Feb 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 2 - 14 Mar 44; ALAMO FORCE FO No. 12, 23 Mar 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 20 - 23 Mar 44. The second column includes the AK's, shipping listed in CTF 77 Opn - Plan 3 - 44 of 3 Apr 44, the ships carrying the 127th RCT to Aitape (shipping which was committed to the assault phase on 9 Apr), and miscellaneous other additions in the period prior to 9 Apr. The totals agree with those set forth in ALAMO FO

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No. 12 and with the naval reports of the operation, although not with the naval plans.

Loading and Unloading Problems

Because of the shipping shortage, it was extremely important to make use of all available cargo space on each vessel. One plan considered was to lash supplies to prefabricated platforms which could be easily loaded aboard the cargo ships. For unloading, these platforms could be lowered by deck cranes into small boats or into the water and dragged behind small craft to the beach. This system, called pallet-loading, had already been successfully used during operations in the Central and South Pacific Areas, but had been practically ignored in the Southwest Pacific. The system had the advantage of saving much time and labor by reducing to a minimum the handling of individual boxes, crates, and cartons.

But pallet-loading required more space than standard combat-loading, previously used extensively in the Southwest Pacific. The latter method provided that the most needed supplies would be the last loaded at staging areas, and the most important materiel would be aboard ships first to beach or to be unloaded, thus insuring that such cargo would be the first ashore at the objective. To save all possible space and take advantage of theater experience, ALAMO FORCE decided that combat-loading would be employed for the Hollandia - Aitape operation.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Memo, ALAMO G - 3 Plng Div for ACofS G - 3 ALAMO, 11 Mar 44, (no sub), in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 2 - 14

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Mar 44; memo, ALAMO QM for ACofS G - 4 ALAMO, 21 Mar 44, (no sub), in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb - 2 Apr 44.

Another problem was that of lighterage at the objectives. Since the AK's did not carry small craft with which to unload the engineering equipment they were to carry, provision had to be made to secure such boats. For Aitape, ALAMO FORCE believed that one Landing Craft, Tank (LCT), and twenty Landing Craft, Mechanized (LCM) would be required on D Day and twice that number on D plus 1, when the second of the two AK's were scheduled to arrive. General Krueger therefore requested that Allied Naval Forces set up an LCT - LCM convoy or its equivalent in other landing craft to arrive at Aitape on D Day.

Admiral Barbey would not approve this plan. He felt that it would not be practical for LCM's and LCT's to move to Aitape under their own power nor to be towed there by large ships. The distance from staging areas to Aitape would increase the possibility of mechanical failures on the part of the LCT's and LCM's moving under their own power. Towing would decrease the speed of the assault convoy, lessen the chance for tactical surprise at the objectives, and increase the possibility of Japanese air attacks on the convoys. Admiral Barbey therefore felt that the unloading plan would have to be based on the use of small craft carried forward by the assault shipping scheduled to arrive at Aitape on D Day.⁵⁷

57 Rad, ALAMO to CTF 76, WF - 4237, 25 Mar 44; rad, CTF 76 to PTF, 251143/L, Mar 44; memo, ACofS G - 3

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ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, 27 Mar 44, (no sub), all three in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 24 - 27 Mar 44; memo for record, G - 3 ALAMO, 28 Mar 44, sub: Status of Planning, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 28 - 30 Mar 44.

To obtain some additional lighterage, it was decided to carry extra landing craft on all large assault ships arriving on Aitape on D Day.⁵⁸ In addition, the three

58 Available documents do not indicate how many landing craft were to be so carried forward nor on what large ships they were to be carried.

Landing Ships, Dock (LSD's) scheduled to arrive at Hollandia and Aitape on D Day were ordered to make a rapid return trip to eastern New Guinea bases to pick up another load of small craft. On the return trip the three LSD's were to carry a total of three LCT's and twenty-four LCM's to Aitape, which, together with one LCT and six LCM's that could be loaded on D-Day shipping, was considered ample by ALAMO FORCE. It was hoped that this return trip of the LSD's could be accomplished by the afternoon of D plus 3. However, because of the distances involved, Admiral Barbey could not promise that the LSD's would arrive at Aitape on their second trip prior to the morning of D plus 4.⁵⁹

59 Memo, ACofS G - 3 ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, 31 Mar 44, (no sub), rad, ALAMO to CTF 76, WF - 5127, 31 Mar 44, both in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 31 Mar - 1 Apr 44; rad, ALAMO to CTF 76, WF - 834, 6 Apr 44; rads, CTF 76 to ALAMO, 060206/Z and 070055/K Apr 44. Latter three rads in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 6 - 7 Apr 44.

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It was not necessary to unload as much engineering construction equipment at Hollandia during the assault phase as at Aitape. Therefore, the lighterage problem at Hollandia did not appear acute prior to the landings. It was thought probable that such shortages of lighterage as might occur there would be eased by sending forward extra small craft aboard the ships of the first resupply convoy, which was to reach Hollandia on D plus 8.^{59a}

59a Rad, CTF 76 to Com7thFlt, 070048/K Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 6 - 7 Apr 44; CTF 77, Opn - Plan 3 - 44, 3 Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 4 - 5 Apr 44.

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A third problem of supply movement was to find a method of transporting supplies from the water's edge to dump areas by means other than the conventional, time-consuming individual handling of each item or container. ALAMO FORCE decided that beach sleds -- sleds which could be dragged any place on a beach negotiable by wheeled vehicles, tractors, or bulldozers -- would be the answer. About 150 sleds had been manufactured in Australia for use by the 1st Cavalry Division in the Admiralties, but had not been ready in time for that operation. ALAMO FORCE obtained a high shipping priority for the movement of thirty-four sleds from Brisbane, Australia, to the staging area of the 24th Division at Goodenough Island. These sleds arrived at Goodenough too late to be loaded on the Hollandia convoy.⁶⁰

60 Rad, G - 4 ALAMO to ALAMO G - 4 Liaison Officer (LO) at Hq USASOS, WF - 2088, 14 Mar 44, in 24th Div G - 4 Planning Jnl, Hollandia; rad, GHQ Chief Regulating Officer at Goodenough Island to G - 4 ALAMO, WA - 409, 15 Mar 44, in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb - 2 Apr 44; memo, Asst ACofS G - 4 ALAMO for ALAMO G - 4 LO at USASOS Base B, 23 Mar 44, (no sub), in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb - 2 Apr 44; memo, ACofS G - 4 ALAMO for ALAMO Engr, 18 Apr 44, (no sub), in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 17 - 29 Apr 44; ltr, ALAMO G - 4 LO at Hq USASOS to ACofS G - 4 ALAMO, 9 Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 3 - 16 Apr 44.

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Meanwhile, ALAMO FORCE had discovered that another twenty-six sleds were on the way from Australia to Oro Bay, New Guinea, and that the remainder of the original 150 had supposedly been shipped during March to Cape Cretin, New Guinea.⁶¹ From the middle of March to the

61 Memo, Asst ACofS G - 4 ALAMO for ALAMO G - 4 LO at USASOS Base B, 23 Mar 44, (no sub); memo, G - 4 ALAMO for ALAMO Engr and ALAMO Ord O, 31 Mar 44, (no sub). Both in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb - 2 Apr 44.

middle of April the Supply Section of ALAMO FORCE headquarters directed a widespread search for these two shipments, all trace of which had apparently been lost. An officer from the Ordnance Section of ALAMO FORCE headquarters looked for the sleds to no avail at various Services of Supply bases in New Guinea and Australia. Finally, official channels having failed, the ALAMO Supply Liaison Officer at Oro Bay, who was also engaged in the search, "followed a hunch." He had a sergeant from his liaison group informally establish contact with a supply sergeant at the Oro Bay Base Engineer Section. This supply sergeant immediately located sixty beach sleds at the base engineer supply dump.

These sleds were perhaps not the particular ones for which the search was being conducted, since their dimensions differed slightly from those specified. However, the liaison officer was acting on instructions from ALAMO FORCE to get some beach sleds to Cape Cretin, where some of the Hollandia-bound convoy was loading, no

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later than 17 April. He therefore drew the sixty sleds from the base engineer and had them shipped forward from Oro Bay by small boat. This action, taken by the liaison officer on his own responsibility, assured at least a partial supply of beach sleds for the RECKLESS TASK FORCE at Hollandia.⁶²

62 Rads, ALAMO G - 4 LO at Base B to ALAMO, WO - 1702 and WO - 1710, 14 and 15 Apr 44, respectively; ltr, ALAMO G - 4 LO at Base B to ACofS G - 4 ALAMO, 15 Apr 44. All three documents in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 3 - 16 Apr 44.

Problems of Subordinate Commands

While sufficient supplies were on hand within the Southwest Pacific area to provide assault units with almost all the materials they needed for initial operations, some shortages did exist which could not be filled prior to the assault. Other logistic difficulties were caused by the rather hurried organization of the task forces and by the fact that units assigned to the operation were scattered all over the eastern part of the theater. RECKLESS TASK FORCE complained that many units scheduled to engage in the operation were assigned to the task force so late that it was nearly impossible to ascertain their supply shortages. ALAMO FORCE had originally approved a plan to make the task force responsible only for the supply of units specifically assigned to it. However, the task force was later ordered to assure completeness and serviceability of supplies and equipment of all units scheduled to be controlled by the task force at Hollandia,

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whenever assigned.

63 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 65; ltr, CofS I Corps (RECKLESS TF) to ACofS G - 4 ALAMO, 15 Mar 44; ltr, ACofS G - 4 ALAMO to CofS I Corps, 22 Mar 44; rad, ALAMO to I Corps, WF - 96, 1 Apr 44. Latter three documents in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb - 2 Apr 44.

In order to carry out its broad supply duties, the RECKLESS TASK FORCE Supply Section decentralized responsibility for the supply and equipment of various attached units to the headquarters' Special Staff Sections of corresponding services. This step, which speeded communication between the task force headquarters and the scattered attachment units, made possible quick and accurate determination of shortages and insured that steps would be taken to fill requisitions from the attached organizations. Nevertheless, because so many units were assigned to the task force quite late, the Ordnance Section declared that determination of numerous ammunition shortages could be made only on "suspicion."⁶⁴

64 Rad, I Corps to ALAMO, RM - 2362, 7 Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 3 - 16 Apr 44; RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 36, 65.

Another means by which the RECKLESS TASK FORCE solved some of its logistic problems was to make minor modifications in the Tables of Equipment and Basic Allowances of various units assigned or attached to the task force. ALAMO FORCE approved this step only on the condition that such changes

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would not materially affect unit tonnage and space requirements, thereby creating a need for more shipping space or causing major last minute changes in loading plans.⁶⁵

65 Rad, I Corps to ALAMO, RM - 1103, 25 Mar 44;
rad, ALAMO to I Corps, WF - 4218, 25 Mar 44, both in
ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb - 2 Apr 44.

Subordinate units of the RECKLESS TASK FORCE had their own supply problems. During the first week of March, the 41st Division was in Australia. By the 8th of the month it had begun moving to Cape Cretin, New Guinea, where it was to stage for Hollandia. On such short notice, a good portion of the division's supply shortages could not be filled on the Australian mainland. The division sent liaison officers to Services of Supply headquarters, to ALAMO FORCE headquarters, and to headquarters, to ALAMO FORCE headquarters, and to Services of Supply Services of Supply/forward bases in New Guinea to find out where shortages could be filled and to start the movement of necessary items to Cape Cretin. Most shortages were filled without undue difficulty from the New Guinea bases, but one permanent shortage was wheeled vehicles. The 41st Division had no 2 1/2-ton 6x6 trucks and only 50 percent of other authorized vehicles. Some of these vehicles were supplied from New Guinea bases, but the fulfillment of authorized allowances had to await post-assault shipment to Hollandia and Aitape.⁶⁶

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66 Rad, ALAMO to 41st Div, WF - 1247, 8 Mar 44; memo, ACoS G - 4 41st Div for Asst Div Comdr 41st Div, 11 Mar 44, (no sub), both in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb - 2 Apr 44.

The 24th Division, staging at Goodenough Island, had especial difficulty in procuring certain types of ammunition. The division was unable to procure enough 2.36-inch bazooka rockets to build its stocks to the prescribed level of five units of fire. Theater stocks of bazooka rockets were so low that the success of future operations might have been jeopardized if all available were issued for the Hollandi - Aitape attacks. Therefore, only three units of fire of the 2.36-inch rockets could be issued to the 24th Division and only two units of fire were issued to units attached to the division for operations at Hollandia.⁶⁷

67 ALAMO FORCE Admin Order No. 7, 6 Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 20 - 23 Mar 44; rad, ALAMO to USASOS, WF - 4530, 27 Mar 44; rad, USASOS to ALAMO, ABO - 265, 27 Mar 44. Both rads in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb - 2 Apr 44.

Some lots of 60-mm. mortar ammunition supplied to the 24th Division were found to be defective -- a condition which obtained for a large portion of theater stocks of this item. The division was advised that it would have to use the 60-mm. ammunition issued, and that the defective lots were not to be fired over the heads of friendly troops.⁶⁸

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68 Ltr, Ord O 24th Div to Ord O I Corps, 29 Mar 44, and attached, undated memo for record from Ord Sec ALAMO, in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb - 2 Apr 44.

One regiment of the division was short of both 60-mm. and 81-mm. mortar shells. Most of these shortages were made up from stocks in Services of Supply bases in New Guinea and the stocks were shipped to Goodenough Island by small craft. The remainder was shipped by air from these bases or Australia to Goodenough in time to be loaded on the vessels carrying the 24th Division to Hollandia.⁶⁹

69 Ltrs, ALAMO G - 4 LO with 24th Div to ACofS G - 4 ALAMO, 6, 11, and 15 Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 3 - 16 Apr 44.

Like the RECKLESS TASK FORCE, the 24th Division was not made responsible for the supply of many attached units until late in March. Some of these units had difficulty obtaining needed supplies and equipment, although they had made efforts to fulfill their requirements. General Irving, the division commander, felt so strongly about the difficulties of attached units that he requested investigation of the failure on the part of some Services of Supply bases to provide spare parts and maintenance supplies for attached artillery and tank units. Spare parts for artillery mounts, tractors, and tanks were ultimately located at various Services of Supply installations and shipped to Goodenough. However, all the desired spare parts for

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engineering and ordnance equipment could not be found before the division left its staging area and provision had to be made to ship such items to the objective on resupply convoys.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Notes of Conf between Ord O's 24th Div and I Corps, 30 Mar 44, and attached, undated notes by ALAMO Ord O, in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb - 2 Apr 44; ltrs, ALAMO G - 4 LO with 24th Div to ACofS G - 4, 6 and 15 Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 4 Jnl Hollandia, 3 - 16 Apr 44. Apparently nothing ever came of General Irving's request for investigation.

The PERSECUTION TASK FORCE had few separate logistic problems. The principal assault element of the task force was the 163d Infantry of the 41st Division and that regiment's supply problems were solved along with those of the division. The 167th Field Artillery, which was to support the 163d Infantry at Aitape, had some difficulties. Because of the shortage of shipping space, the battalions organic transportation could not all be sent forward on assault convoys. Therefore, the unit's radio and wire would have to be manhandled at the objective, and liaison and fire control parties attached to the battalion were to be without their usual transportation.⁷¹

⁷¹ 167th FA Bn Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 1 - 2.

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The Tactical Plans

While the problems of logistics were being solved, the tactical plans for the Hollandia - Aitape assault were being drawn up. Limited knowledge of the terrain at the objectives was a major obstacle to detailed planning, but by early April the ground, air, and amphibious force commanders, in co-operation, had solved most of their problems and had published their final tactical plans.

The Aitape Plan

Knowledge of beach conditions in the Aitape area was obtained principally from aerial photographs and the landing beach for the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was chosen with reference to beach exits and shore objectives as they appeared on these photographs. The shore line opposite the Tadki airfield, the task force objective, was uniform and sandy for long distances. There were clear approaches to the beaches, which had a medium rise. The landing point selected for the task force was located near Korako, a native village on the coast about seven miles southeast of Aitape. From this landing point, which was designated Blue Beach, a track passable for wheeled vehicles ran directly inland to the Tadji airstrips, only 1,000 yards from the shore.⁷²

72 CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay - Humboldt Bay - Aitape, p. 29; CTG 77.3 (Eastern Attack Group) Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 1 - 2.

The landing of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was to begin on 22 Apr at 0645, high tide time in the Aitape area. Air support operations were to begin at first light on D Day and were to be carried out principally by planes from

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eight escort carriers attached to Captain Noble's Eastern Attack Group. The carrier-based fighters were to have freedom of action until H minus 30 minutes, when carrier-based dive bombers were to begin attacking the native village in the landing area, the beaches, and known and suspected Japanese concentration points along the shore and at the Tadjil strips. Upon completion of this bombing, or beginning when the first wave of landing craft was 1,500 yards offshore, all available carrier-based fighters were to strafe the landing beach. This attack was to halt when the landing craft were within 300 yards of the shore.

This plan underwent two changes in detail. General Doe, the task force commander, believed that the close-in strafing would endanger the troops aboard the landing craft. It was, therefore, decided that the strafing would begin when the leading boat wave was 4,500 yards offshore (expected to be at H minus 15 minutes) and would end when that wave approached to within 1,200 yards of the shore, about for H minus 4 minutes. The other change postponed the bombing of the native villages and dispersal area by carrier-based planes from H minus 30 to H minus 15 minutes.⁷³

⁷³ CTF 77 Opn - Plan 3 - 44, 3 Apr 44, and Change No. 1, 10 Apr 44, thereto, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 4 - 5 Apr 44; CTF 78 Opn - Plan D2 - 44, 12 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Apr 44.

The Allied Air Forces was also to have important air support missions at Aitape. A squadron of attack bombers (A - 20's or B - 25's) was to be in the air over the landing

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zone from 0830 to 1030 on D Day. After 1030 these planes were to drop their bombs on previously designated target areas on the flanks of the beach if no earlier calls for bombardment had been made. Two squadrons of attack bombers were to be maintained on daily alert at a field in eastern New Guinea for as long as the situation at Aitape required. After D Day, land-based aircraft would provide support for ground operations at Aitape upon the request of ALAMO FORCE.⁷⁴

74 AAF SWPA OI No. 49 (Revised), 28 Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 28 Mar 44.

Naval fire support for the landings on Blue Beach was to be carried out by 5 destroyers (DD's), 9 high-speed troop transports (APD's), and 1 cargo ship (AK). This was to be the first time that APD's and an AK had been used for fire support missions during an amphibious operation in the Southwest Pacific Area. Destroyer fire, massing on Blue Beach and its flanks, was to begin at H minus 45 minutes and continue until H minus 15. One destroyer was to cover the trail from the beach to the Tadji strips and also a suspected enemy assembly point at the eastern end of the fields. Another destroyer would fire on a river crossing west of Blue Beach. Six APD's were to fire on St. Anna and Tadji Plantations (west of the airfields), on enemy defensive installations in and around the town of Aitape, and on the offshore islands of Tumleo, Ali, and Seleo. The AK was to deliver its 5-inch fire on Tumleo and Ali. Close support would be provided for the leading landing waves from 0642 to 0645 by rocket and automatic weapons fire from two submarine chasers (SC's). All DD's,

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SC's, and the AK were to deliver fire upon call from forces ashore after H Hour and would undertake counterbattery fire missions if any enemy shore-based artillery was discovered.⁷⁵

75 CTF 77 Opn - Plan 3 - 44, 3 Apr 44; CTG 77.3 Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 2 - 3.

At 0645, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 163d Infantry, were to land abreast on Blue Beach. As soon as a beachhead was secured, the 1st Battalion would come ashore, and, upon orders from task force headquarters, would initiate a drive toward the airfields, aided by the 2d Battalion. After the capture of the airfields, the 2d Battalion was to defend the task force's western flank, while the 1st Battalion established a perimeter defense around the southern edge of the airfield area. The 3d Battalion was to move to the eastern flank of the beachhead. Field and antiaircraft artillery going ashore on D Day was to protect and support the infantry's drive to the airstrips and engineer rehabilitation of a fighter strip. Some engineer units and other service troops were to unload shipping, improve the main track inland, and clear dump and bivouac areas.

The PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was to be reinforced by the 127th Infantry (and combat team attachments) on D plus 1, at which time intensive patrolling west and east of the initial beachhead was to be initiated, and a drive aimed at the quick capture of Aitape was to begin.⁷⁶

76 PTF FO No. 1, 6 Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 5 - 6 Apr 44.

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Humboldt Bay

Two regimental combat teams of the 41st Division were to start landing operations at Humboldt Bay on 22 April at 0700, high tide time in the Hollandia area. Simultaneously, two regimental combat teams of the 24th Division were to go ashore at Tanahmerah Bay. After securing their beachheads, the two divisions were to drive inland through successive phase lines to complete a pincers movement aimed at the rapid seizure of the Japanese-held airfields on the Lake Sentani Plain.

It was intended that the main effort should be made from Tanahmerah Bay by the 24th Division, since known and suspected Japanese defenses seemed concentrated at Humboldt Bay. While the RECKLESS TASK FORCE Reserve (the 34th Regimental Combat Team of the 24th Division) might actually be more needed by the 41st Division at Humboldt Bay, General Eichelberger, the task force commander, planned to land the reserve at Tanahmerah Bay in an endeavor to exploit expected enemy weaknesses there. RECKLESS TASK FORCE headquarters and most of the reinforcing units and service organizations were also to land at Tanahmerah Bay. The 41st Division was to be prepared to drive inland from Humboldt Bay, but it might be relegated to a holding role in order to contain Japanese strength which might otherwise move against the 24th Division. Nevertheless, the 41st Division's plans were made to take advantage of whatever weaknesses might be found in enemy defenses at Humboldt Bay.⁷⁷

77 RTF FO No. 1, 27 Mar 44; RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p.6.

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The Humboldt Bay landing areas selected for the 41st Division, White Beaches 1 - 4, presented complex problems of co-ordination and control. From the northwestern and southeastern shores of the inner reaches of Humboldt Bay run two low sand spits, divided one from the other by a narrow channel which leads from Humboldt Bay southwestward into smaller Jautefa Bay. Narrow, sandy beaches line the Humboldt Bay side of the two spits, but the Jautefa Bay shore is covered with tangled mangrove swamps.

White Beaches 1 - 3 were located on the two sand spits. None of the three was ideally located in relation to division objectives, but the beaches were the best in the area. Access to the mainland from the spits could be obtained by movement along the Humboldt Bay side until the limits of the backing mangrove swamps were reached near the point at which both peninsulas joined the mainland. The northern spit is flanked at its inland end by an open-topped height (called Pancake Hill), which was suspected to contain Japanese defensive installations. North of Pancake Hill, toward the town of Hollandia, are wooded hills rising to a height of over 1,000 feet. The southern spit opens on marshy ground along the southeastern shore of Humboldt Bay.

White Beach 1, about 800 yards long and 70 wide, ran along the northern spit south from the point at which that peninsula joined the mainland. White Beach 2 was at the outer end of the same spit, while White Beach 3 was located at the northern end of the southern peninsula. White Beach 4 was on the western shore of Jautefa Bay, and was situated just north of Pim, a native village at the eastern terminus of a motor road running inland to

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Lake Sentani and the task force objectives.⁷⁸

78 LETTERPRESS LANDING FORCE (41st Inf Div) FO No. 1, 9 Apr 44, in G - 3 Annex to 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia.

Close air support for the landings of the 41st Division was the responsibility of planes aboard the carriers of Task Force 58. These aircraft were to maintain combat air patrols over the enemy air strips in the Hollandia area from earliest light on D Day until H plus 60 minutes (0800) or until such patrols proved unnecessary. Fighter planes engaged in these patrol missions were to have freedom of action over the entire Hollandia region until H minus 30 minutes, after which they were to confine their operations to targets two or more miles inland from the landing beaches at both Humboldt and Tanahmerah Bays.

At Humboldt Bay, from H minus 15 minutes until H minus 4, or until the 41st Division's leading landing wave was within 800 yards of the shore, carrier-based aircraft were to hit enemy antiaircraft batteries and other known and suspected defensive positions around Humboldt Bay, especially on the hills north of White Beach 1 and south of White Beach 4. At H minus 4 minutes, carrier-based bombers were to drop their bombs on the beaches in an attempt to detonate possible beach mines. At H minus 3, when the first wave was scheduled to be 500 yards from the shore, antipersonnel fragmentation bombs were to be dropped on White Beach 1.

Naval fire support at Humboldt Bay was to be provided by three light cruisers (CL's) and six destroyers, all ships of the U. S. Navy. The support fire was to begin at H minus

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60 minutes. Principal targets were Hollandia, Pim, the heights north of White Beach 1, Cape Soedja at the northwestern end of Humboldt Bay, and the four landing beaches. Two rocket-equipped Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI's) were to accompany the leading boat waves, one to fire on Pancake Hill and the other to bombard the heights north of Pancake. A single destroyer was to accompany the first waves to bombard Capes Pie and Tjewri (the tips of the two sand spits) and to support movement of amphibian tractors (LVT's) from White Beach 2 to White Beach 4.⁷⁹

79 CTF 77 Opn - Plan 3 - 44, 3 Apr 44.

The first landings were to take place on White Beach 1 where, at H Hour, the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, was to go ashore. After landing, the battalion was to push rapidly north along the beach to the mainland, strike up the mainland shore between Humboldt Bay and the heights north of Pancake Hill, and make ready to descend into Hollandia from the hills south of that town. One company reinforcing the 3d Battalion was to move west around the northern end of a mangrove swamp at the spit's inland terminus and establish a block across the road connecting Hollandia and Pim. The seizure of the northern section of the Hollandia - Pim road was assigned to the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, which was to land on White Beach 1 and H plus 35 minutes. The unit was to push up the road toward Hollandia and assist the 3d Battalion in securing that town. The 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, was to land at White Beach 1 later and was to move inland and assemble as division reserve.

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White Beach 2 was to be seized at H Hour by a reinforced rifle platoon from the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry. This platoon was also to secure Cape Pie, the southern tip of the spit. White Beach 2 was to be used by the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, which, aboard LVT's, was to move across the spit, through the backing mangrove swamp, and on to White Beach 4 across Jautefa Bay. From White Beach 4 the battalion was to clear neighboring hills and advance south toward Pim along the Hollandia - Pim road. The rest of the 186th Infantry was to land on White Beach 1 after H Hour and was to move inland around the northern side of the mangrove swamp. The 1st Battalion was to follow the 3d to Pim, while the 2d Battalion was to assemble in division reserve.

The capture of White Beach 3, on the southern sand spit, was designed as a security measure, and the beach was to be seized by a rifle company of the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, at H Hour. This unit was then to secure Cape Tjeweri, at the northern tip of the spit, and patrol southeastward from the peninsula along the shore of Humboldt Bay to ward off or delay any Japanese counterattacks from that direction.

Artillery landing on D Day was to take up positions either on the northern spit or near the Hollandia - Pim road and, from those positions, provide support for infantry advancing inland and toward Hollandia. Antiaircraft artillery was to be grouped initially on or near White Beach 1. The first principal duties of engineers were to unload ships, construct or improve exit roads from White Beach 1 to the Hollandia - Pim road, and improve the latter track. The 41st Reconnaissance Troop was to scout along the shores

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of Humboldt Bay as far as Tami Airstrip, eight miles southeast of Hollandia, and to Imbi Bay and Cape Soedja at the northwestern limits of Humboldt Bay.⁸⁰

80 LETTERPRESS LF FO No. 1, 9 Apr 44.

Tanahmerah Bay

Landing points chosen for the 24th Division at Tanahmerah Bay were designated Red Beaches 1 and 2. The division was to make its principal thrust over Red Beach 2, situated on the east-central shore of Tanahmerah Bay. This beach ran north and south about 800 yards, had clear approaches from the sea, and was steeply inclined. It was known to be narrow and backed by a swamp, the nature of which could not be ascertained prior to the landing. Red Beach 1 was located at the southern end of Deprare Bay, a southeastern arm of Tanahmerah Bay. The approach to Red Beach 1 led through narrow Deprare Bay, flanked on either side by hills only 600 yards from the central channel, and the landing area was fronted by a coral reef, the characteristics of which were unknown before D Day.

Red Beach 1 opened on a small flat area at the native village of Deprare, near the beginning of the only road between Tanahmerah Bay and the inland airfields. Little was known about this road, but it was believed extensively used by the Japanese, passable for American wheeled vehicles, and subject to rapid improvement. To the west and south of Red Beach 1 lay a swamp backed by heavily forested hills. On the north was more difficult terrain, dominated by three prominent hills overlooking both Red

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Beaches 1 and 2. It was thought that a road, running along the sides of these heavily forested hills, connected the two beaches, which were separated by an overland distance of some two miles.⁸¹

81 NOISELESS LANDING FORCE (24th Inf Div) FO No. 1, 5 Apr 44, in 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 24ff.

H Hour at Tanahmerah Bay was the same as for Humboldt Bay, 0700, and carrier-based aircraft from Task Force 58 were to support the landings of the 24th Division as well as those of the 41st. Close air support operations at Tanahmerah Bay were to begin at H minus 15 minutes with strikes against the heights behind and on the flanks of Red Beaches 1 and 2. These strikes were to continue until H minus 4 minutes, or until the leading wave of landing craft was 800 yards from the shore. Then the beaches and a fronting strip of water 100 yards wide were to receive a bombardment designed to detonate enemy beach mines. Antipersonnel strafing and bombing runs over the beaches were to begin at H minus 3 minutes, or when landing craft approached to within 500 yards of the shore.

Naval fire support at Tanahmerah Bay would be provided by two Australian cruisers and by Australian and American destroyers. From H minus 60 until H minus 30 minutes, the two cruisers were to direct their fires principally against the Red Beach 2 area, bombarding known and suspected enemy defenses, dumps, and assembly points on the beach or on the hills to the rear and flanks of the Beach. At the same time, some of the destroyers were to shell Cape

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Tanahmerah, at the northern entrance to the bay, and also targets on the southwestern shores of the bay. Beginning at H minus 30 minutes and continuing until Task Force 58 planes started their bombing runs, the destroyers were to mass their fires against the Red Beach 2 area. Only one destroyer was assigned to fire on Red Beach 1, but, after H Hour, all fire support ships would be available to fire on targets of opportunity or objectives designated by the forces ashore. One LCI was to support the leading waves to Red Beach 2 with rocket and automatic weapons fire directed on that beach and its flanks. This fire was to begin when the carrier-based planes finished their close support missions (about H minus 4 minutes) and was to continue until the first troops were safely ashore.⁸²

82 CTF 77 Opn - Plan 3 - 44, 3 Apr 44.

On the left, or northern half of Red Beach 2 the 19th Infantry (less one battalion in division reserve) was to lead the assault. The two battalions first ashore were to secure half the beachhead, establish left flank security for the rest of the division, prepare to assume responsibility for the protection of the entire beachhead, and undertake mopping up north of the beach. Simultaneously with the landings of the two 19th Infantry battalions, the bulk of two battalions of the 21st Infantry were to push ashore on the southern half of Red Beach 2. These battalions, after securing their sectors of Red Beach 2, were to push overland and south toward Red Beach 1. It was planned to improve the road which supposedly connected the two beaches or, if necessary, construct a new road between the two in

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case no good water route to Red Beach 1 could be found.

Initial landings on Red Beach 1 were to be undertaken by three reinforced rifle companies of the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, and were to begin at H plus 25 minutes, 0725. The primary missions of this force were to report the size and condition of possible additional landing points in the Deprare area and to initiate reconnaissance inland over the road leading to Lake Sentani and the airfields. The patrolling inland was to start before the Japanese could organize defenses along that portion of the road which wound snake-like over rugged hills southeast of Deprare.

The Allied Naval Forces had originally objected to the landing on Red Beach 1 and, by arrangement with RECKLESS TASK FORCE, had removed that landing from the amphibious plan. But the 24th Division staff, wishing to provide for every contingency in a landing area of practically unknown terrain conditions, recommended to the division commander that the Red Beach 1 landing remain part of the plan, even if naval fire support for such an assault could not be obtained. It was considered possible that failure quickly to secure the entrance to the Deprare - Lake Sentani road might have disastrous consequences were it found impracticable to build a good road from Red Beach 2 to Red Beach 1. General Irving therefore made personal pleas to General Eichelberger and Admiral Barbey, and succeeded in having the landing reinstated in the plan. This proved to be one of the most important tactical decisions of the Hollandia operation.⁸³

⁸³ NOISELESS LF FO No. 1, 5 Apr 44; 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 23.

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Preliminary Operations and the Approach

Intelligence Operations

Early in 1944, General MacArthur's Intelligence Section had noted that the Japanese were increasing their activities in the Wewak area and nearby Hansa Bay. As D Day for the Hollandia - Aitape operation approached, it was discovered that the bulk of the Japanese 18th Army was withdrawing from its forward bases at Madang and Alexishafen and was moving rapidly westward across the Ramu and Sepik Rivers to Wewak and Hansa Bay. These activities seemed to indicate that the Japanese probably expected the next Allied attack to be aimed at the Wewak - Hansa Bay area as, indeed, it had been before that operation had been cancelled in favor of the long jump to Hollandia and Aitape.

Every effort was made to foster in the mind of Lt. Gen. Hatazo Adachi, commanding the 18th Army, the growth of the idea that a major assault in the Wewak sector was imminent. During March and early April Wewak was heavily bombed by the Allied Air Forces, not only to prevent the Japanese from using their airfields at Wewak, but also to lead the enemy into the belief that the usual aerial softening-up process prior to an amphibious operation was taking place. Minor naval bombardments of the Wewak and Hansa areas were carried out in March and early April, and Motor Torpedo Boats (PT's) of the Allied Naval Forces patrolled actively along the coast north from Madang to Wewak. By various means propaganda was spread telling the 18th Army that a landing was to be made at Wewak, and dummy parachutists were dropped in the same vicinity. Allied Naval Forces submarines launched empty rubber life rafts along the coast near Wewak in an

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endeavor to make the Japanese believe that reconnaissance partols were active in that area.⁸⁴

84 Memo, GHQ SWPA for ANF SWPA, AAF SWPA, and ALAMO, 30 Mar 44, (no sub), in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 2 - 4 Apr 44; rad, Com7thFlt to CTF 75, 050033/Z Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 5 Apr 44; rad, CINCSWPA to COMINCH, 110817/Z Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 12 Apr 44; 18th Army Opns, III, pp. 17 - 20 and 39 - 40, in OCMH files.

One effort was made to obtain terrain information and knowledge of enemy troop strength and dispositions in the Hollandia area. About two weeks prior to the landing a Seventh Fleet submarine landed an Allied reconnaissance patrol at Tanahmerah Bay. The venture proved completely abortive. Local natives betrayed the patrol to the Japanese, and the members were killed, captured, or dispersed. A few men of the original party eluded the Japanese and were found alive after the Allied landings at Hollandia and Aitape.⁸⁵

85 ALAMO FORCE Opns Rpt Hollandia - Aitape, pp. 20 - 21.

Air Operations

The scheduled strike by Task Force 58 against the Palaus, designed both for strategic support of the Hollandia operation and the destruction of enemy air and surface units, was carried out on 30 - 31 March. Other islands in the western Carolines, including Yap, Ulithi, Ngulu, and Woleai were hit during the same two days or on 1 April. The raids resulted in the loss for the Japanese of almost

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150 aircraft either in the air or on the ground. Two enemy destroyers, four escort vessels, and 104,000 tons of merchant or naval auxiliary shipping were sunk and many other ships, of both combat and merchant classes, were damaged. In addition, airfields and shore installations at all objectives were damaged and the main channels into the Palau fleet anchorage at least temporarily blocked by mines.

Unfortunately, Task Force 58 had been sighted by Japanese search planes prior to its arrival off the Palaus and many enemy combat ships and a number of merchant vessels had fled from the area. However, the desired results were achieved -- the enemy naval units at Palau were removed as a threat to the Hollandia - Aitape operation and driven back to more westerly bases. Task Force 58 lost twenty planes, but its ships suffered no damage.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS), The Campaigns of the Pacific War, (Washington, 1946), p. 207; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 34, Naval Operations in the Western New Guinea Area, 1943 - 45, p. 11; No. 60, The A - GO Operation, 1944, p. 2, copies in OCMH files.

The efforts of Task Force 58 had been supplemented by South and Southwest Pacific aircraft which, from bases in eastern New Guinea and the Admiralties, bombed islands in the eastern Carolines and undertook many long reconnaissance missions. Meanwhile, Southwest Pacific aircraft had been neutralizing enemy air bases in western New Guinea and eastern islands of the Netherlands East Indies. The bulk of the strategic support missions flown to western

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New Guinea were undertaken by U. S. Fifth Air Force planes while the Royal Australian Air Forces Command assumed responsibility for most of the strikes against the islands in the eastern Indies. These operations were intensified about six weeks prior to the landings at Hollandia and Aitape. From Wewak to the Vogelkop Peninsula of western New Guinea, and from Biak to Timor the Allied Air Forces destroyed Japanese planes and airfield installations, rendered many air bases at least temporarily unusable, and hindered enemy attempts to fly air reinforcements to New Guinea from the Philippines.⁸⁷

87 USSBS, op. cit., p. 179; GHQ SWPA OI No. 48, 24 Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 24 Mar 44; rad, CINCSWPA to CINCPAC et al., CX - 10718, 15 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 15 Apr 44; AAF SWPA OI No. 49 (Revised), 30 Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Mar 44.

Spectacular results were achieved by the Fifth Air Force at Hollandia. In the face of continued Allied air attacks the Japanese 4th Air Army had withdrawn its 6th Air Division from Wewak to Hollandia in late March. At Hollandia the headquarters of the 4th Air Army settled down and the 6th Air Division received strong reinforcements. The air unit conserved its planes, apparently waiting to see where the Allies would strike next.⁸⁸

88 AAF SWPA Intelligence Summary No. 193, 25 Mar 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 24 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA, G - 2 DSEI's Nos. 737 and 742, 26 Mar and 3 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 26 Mar and 3 Apr 44; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 38,

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Southeast Area Naval Operations, 1942 - 1944, pp. 29, 36, copy in OCMH files; 18th Army Opns, III, 4 - 9, 17 - 20.

The Japanese waited too long.

The Fifth Air Force shifted the weight of its attack from the Wewak area to Hollandia, and, during the period 30 March through 3 April, destroyed or damaged a total of 288 Japanese aircraft, most of them on the ground, at Hollandia. On 30 March, when over 100 planes were destroyed at Hollandia, the Japanese had been caught completely unprepared. Faulty intelligence, resulting from insufficient radar warning facilities, found many Japanese planes on the ground refueling after early morning patrols and others left idle upon receipt of reports that a large Allied air formation had turned back eastward after bombing Aitape. Finally, earlier Fifth Air Force attacks had so cratered runways and taxiways of two of the three enemy fields at Hollandia, that there was little room to disperse the planes. The Fifth Air Force, in a series of low-level bombing attacks, covered and aided by new long-range fighters, found enemy aircraft parked wing tip to wing tip along the runways. By 6 April the Japanese had only twenty-five serviceable aircraft at Hollandia.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ 18th Army Opns, III, 35 - 37; AAF SWPA Intel Sum No. 197, 8 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 7 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA, G - 2 DSEI No. 742, 3 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 3 Apr 44.

These losses wiped out Japanese air power at Hollandia and prompted the relief of the Chief of Staff, 4th Air Army,

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and the commanding general and other staff officers of the 6th Air Division. Planning of the 4th Air Army and of the 2d Area Army, under the control of which both the 4th Air Army and the 18th Army were operating at this time, was thrown askew. The enemy had to decide whether he could again afford to risk a large number of planes in the forward area or whether he should withdraw his remaining air power still farther westward. The 2d Area Army, with the blessing of Imperial GHQ, had already determined to establish its main defensive line west of Hollandia. The decision was therefore obvious -- no large numbers of aircraft were to be sent to Hollandia. After 3 April Fifth Air Force raids on Hollandia were met by only a small number of enemy fighter planes which made but desultory attempts at interception. The headquarters of the 4th Air Army moved from Hollandia to the Celebes on 15 April and the 6th Air Division also made plans to move westward.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ 18th Army Opns, III, 41 - 46; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 72, History of the Army Section Imperial GHQ, 1941 - 1945, pp. 110-11; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 31, History of the 2d Area Army, 1943 - 1945, pp. 30-44, cys of both latter in OCMH files; ALAMO FORCE Opns Rpt Hollandia - Aitape, pp. 45-48; AAF SWPA Intel Sum No. 197, 8 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA, G - 2 DSEI No. 760, 21 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 21 Apr 44.

The Japanese then built up a small concentration of air strength farther west at Wakde - Sarmi and continued airfield development at still more westerly bases. The Fifth Air Force and Australian aircraft increased their efforts

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against these latter installations,⁹¹ while planes of

91 GHQ SWPA, G - 2 Estimate of the Enemy Situation, Wakde - Sarmi, 8 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 8 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA, G - 2 DSEI No. 760, 21 Apr 44.

Task Force 58 effectively neutralized Japanese air power at Wakde - Sarmi just prior to 22 April. Task Force 58's efforts at Wakde and Hollandia on D minus 1 and D Days bagged an estimated thirty-three aircraft shot down. Damage to planes on the ground at either objective was difficult to access because of the degree of destruction previously achieved at both places by the AAF SWPA.⁹²

92 USSBS, op. cit., p. 208; ALAMO FORCE Opns Rpt Hollandia - Aitape, pp. 45 - 46.

Attack Force Preparations

Meanwhile, Allied ground and amphibious forces had been engaged in final preparations and training for the coming assault and, on 8, 9, and 10 April had undertaken last rehearsals. The 24th Division's rehearsal at Taupota Bay, on the coast of New Guinea south of Goodenough Island, was incomplete. Little unloading was attempted, and the area selected for the rehearsal did not permit the employment of naval gunfire support. The 41st Division had a more satisfactory rehearsal, with realistic unloading and naval fire, near Lae, New Guinea. A rehearsal for the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was held near Finschhafen, New Guinea.⁹³

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93 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 37; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanaherah Bay - Humboldt Bay - Aitape, p. 29; RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 3; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr - 4 Mar 44, p. 1; 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 1.

Final loading began on 10 April. The LCI's of the RECKLESS TASK FORCE left their loading points on 16 April in order to allow the troops aboard to disembark on the Admiralty Islands for a day of exercising, resting, and eating. Other vessels of Hollandia-bound convoys left the Goodenough Island and Cape Cretin staging areas on 17 and 18 April. The ships carrying the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE moved out of the Finschhafen area on 18 April and on the same day rendezvoused with the vessels bearing the 41st Division toward the Admiralties.

All convoys moved north around the eastern side of the Admiralties and, at 0700 on 20 April, the various groups assembled at a rendezvous point northwest of Manus Island. Moving at a speed of about nine knots, the massed convoys steamed westward from the Admiralties all day and at dusk turned southwest toward Hollandia. At a point about eighty miles off the New Guinea coast between Hollandia and Aitape, the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE convoy, the Eastern Attack Group, broke off from the main body and swung southeast toward Aitape, to arrive off that town at 0500 on D Day. The ships bearing the RECKLESS TASK FORCE proceeded to a point twenty miles offshore between Humboldt and Tanahmerah Bays. There, at 0130 on D Day, this convoy split. The Central Attack Group, with the 41st Division aboard, turned southeast toward Humboldt Bay, and arrived

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in the transport area at 0500. The ships of the Western Attack Group, carrying the 24th Division and the remainder of the RECKLESS TASK FORCE, moved into Tanahmerah Bay at the same time.⁹⁴

94 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, Map No. 1, p. 5; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay - Humboldt Bay - Aitape, pp. 9 - 10; CTF 77.2 (Central Attack Group) Opns Rpt Humboldt Bay, p. 3; CTG 77.3 Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 1 - 2.

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CHAPTER III

The Hollandia Operation

First light in the Hollandia area on 22 April 1944 disclosed a heavily overcast sky from which a light drizzle intermittently fell upon the ships bearing the RECKLESS TASK FORCE to its objectives. The weather gave no promise that aircraft aboard the carriers of Task Force 58, standing offshore between Humboldt and Tanahmerah Bays, would be able to execute all their assigned support missions. On the other hand, the weather conditions aided Allied forces, for the approach of the convoys to Hollandia was at least partially concealed from Japanese eyes. Chances for local surprise seemed excellent.

The Landings at Tanahmerah Bay

The assault ships of the Western Attack Group, carrying the 24th Infantry Division to Tanahmerah Bay, anchored some 10,000 yards off Red Beach 2, about a mile farther than planned. This change was due to the bad weather, which obscured landmarks which the ships' pilots expected would guide them to the proper anchorage. The troops of the 24th Division quickly breakfasted and assault personnel then began clambering down nets into the waiting landing craft of the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. The transfer to the small craft, although hampered by rough seas in the transport area, was completed about 0535, and

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the leading waves formed rapidly.

The Assault

Naval fire support vessels, operating under the command of Rear Adm. V. A. C. Crutchley (RN), picked up their landmarks through the mist as best they could and, at 0600, the roar of 8-inch guns from the heavy cruisers HMAS Australia and HMAS Shropshire shattered the silence of the steaming tropical morning.¹ To this din was added the sharper crack of 5-inch

1 Unless otherwise noted information in this and the following section is taken from: 24th Div [NOISELESS LANDING FORCE] Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 56 - 80, 222 - 225; 24th Div G - 3 Jnl, Hollandia; 21st Inf Jnl, Hollandia; 19th Inf Jnl, Hollandia; RTF G - 3 Jnl, Hollandia; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay - Humboldt Bay - Aitape, p. 24; ltr, CG 2d Engr Special Brig to Comdr ALAMO FORCE, 24 Apr 44, sub: Observations, D Day, RED BEACH, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 25 - 26 Apr 44; Ch. VII, "The RECKLESS TASK FORCE," pp. 13 - 20, of draft MS "History of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade," copy in OCMH files.

and 4.7-inch weapons from American and Australian destroyers. In order to insure good observation of the most important target areas, all the fire support ships stood as close inshore as the weather conditions and incomplete knowledge of the waters at Tanahmerah Bay allowed. The fire continued until 0645, by which time 600 rounds of 8-inch and 1,500 rounds of 5-inch and 4.7-inch

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ammunition had been expended. The naval bombardment was carried out according to plan and without response from Japanese shore defenses. At its conclusion, Allied destroyers moved still closer inshore to fire on targets of opportunity.

Despite the unfavorable weather, Task Force 58 had managed to maintain planes on air alert over the Hollandia area since dawn. No enemy aircraft flew up from the Hollandia fields, and the few apparently operational planes sighted on those strips were strafed. In general, there were no indications that Japanese defenses or defenders existed in the Tanahmerah Bay area. Therefore, Task Force 58's scheduled bombing and strafing missions for that region were cancelled.

As the leading wave of Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel (LCVP's) approached Red Beach 2, which was obscured by smoke resulting from the naval bombardment, a rocket barrage was laid on the landing area by one Seventh Fleet LCI and two Landing Craft, Support (LCS's) of the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. Machine guns mounted aboard the leading LCVP's kept up a steady fire against the beach. There was no answer from the Japanese, and the only opposition to the landing was scattered small arms and light automatic weapons fire from points far on the flanks of the beach and from a small island in Tanahmerah Bay. This fire was so quickly silenced by supporting destroyers that the assault waves suffered no casualties prior to reaching shore.

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The first group of LCVP's, carrying men of the 3d Battalion, 19th Infantry, and the 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry, was eight or nine minutes late in reaching Red Beach 2. But this tardiness did not prevent a successful landing, and the boats of the first wave touched shore safely at 0709. After orders were issued to add eight minutes to the starting time of each, succeeding waves were almost perfectly timed. Tactical surprise was evidently complete. No Japanese defended the beaches and the two assault battalions had no difficulty in securing the initial beachhead.

The 3d Battalion, 19th Infantry, quickly expanded its portion of the beachhead -- the north, or left sector -- and patrols were immediately dispatched to the east and north to probe suspected enemy positions. The 1st Battalion followed the 3d ashore and went into an assembly area to act as local reserve and to make ready to aid in unloading supplies at the water's edge if that proved necessary. The 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry, secured the southern half of Red Beach 2 with similar ease. The 3d Battalion of that regiment quickly followed the 2d ashore and sent Company I south beyond the right flank of the beachhead to look for the trail expected to connect with Red Beach 1 at Deprare.

Company A of the 21st Infantry led the way to Red Beach 1 aboard amphibian tractors (LVT's) of the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, protected by the 2d Engineer Special Brigade's Support Battery Craft. Scheduled for 0725, Company A's landing actually took place about twenty minutes late. LVT's on the

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flanks of the initial waves had to cross coral barrier reefs on their way to the shore, while in the center, only two LVT's at one time were able to proceed abreast through a narrow channel in the reefs. The landing was unopposed, and the remainder of the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, moved ashore quickly.

Red Beach 1 was found to contain a veritable maze of trails which crossed each other, re-crossed, and wandered off toward all points of the compass. This made it difficult for the 1st Battalion to accomplish one of its principal missions -- finding the beginning of the main road leading inland to Lake Sentani and the airfields. After an hour's search, the entrance to this important Deprare - Lake Sentani road was located about 500 yards south-southeast of Deprare. While this reconnaissance was underway, the beachhead was secured and expanded. Huts which had survived the naval bombardment were carefully searched, footpaths throughout the area were explored, a few Japanese stragglers were killed, and some potential supply dispersal areas were located.

Back at Red Beach 2, which had been intended as the principal landing area for both troops and supplies, operations were not proceeding according to plan. General Irving, when he assumed command ashore at 0930, found the terrain at Red Beach 2 much more difficult than he or members of his staff had anticipated. A major change in landing plans, not only for the 24th Division but also for the rest of the RECKLESS TASK FORCE, was indicated.

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The Landing Plans Are Changed

Contrary to estimates, which had been based primarily on interpretation of aerial photographs, Red Beach 2 proved to be but thirty yards deep. Behind this narrow beach was discovered a wide swamp which occupied most of the area where the task force had planned to set up bivouacs and supply dispersal dumps. The swamp was soon found to be impassable for everything except individual infantrymen bearing only small arms. Power tools were useless in the morass. Neither time nor men and equipment were available to adapt Red Beach 2 to the role originally planned for it.

A limited dispersal area, rendered inaccessible by a small stream and by an arm of the swamp, was discovered at the northern edge of the beach and ultimately the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment constructed a road into this space. Heavy artillery, ashore within an hour after the initial landing, was emplaced there to deliver fire on inland targets. But the fill used to build this road stopped the flow of the little stream which had drained the swamp into Tanahmerah Bay. To prevent a rise in the swamp's water level, a drainage canal was cut directly through the center of the beach. This speeded the outward flow of swamp water, lowered the water level a little, and created a small additional dry area behind the beach. This drainage did not provide sufficient dry land for dispersal of all the troops and supplies scheduled to land on Red Beach 2.

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Meanwhile, other obstacles to the execution of the original logistic plans had been discovered. First, it proved impracticable to build planned roads inland 500 yards on both sides of Red Beach 2 to dry areas behind the swamp. Then it was found that there was no road connecting Red Beach 2 with Red Beach 1 or with the Deprare - Lake Sentani road. This was an especially serious circumstance, for the landing plans had called for moving almost all troops and supplies overland from Red Beach 2 to the road inland. Construction of a road between the two beaches was soon found impracticable and after a day and a half of hard work by engineers had succeeded in driving a few yards of road into the hills south toward Red Beach 1, the project was discontinued. The small completed stretch did serve some useful purpose. On D Day, two batteries of 105-mm. howitzers were dragged down the road to a cramped position on a little ridge immediately south of Red Beach 2. From this site the howitzers could deliver some fire support for troops advancing inland from Red Beach 1, but the direction of this fire was limited by nearby hills. The completed stretch of road also provided dispersal space for a few of the many vehicles which had been unloaded at Red Beach on D Day.

Other difficulties were encountered at Red Beach 2. As soon as LST's touched shore, they began disgorging tanks, 90-mm. antiaircraft weapons, and 155-mm. artillery mounts. Practically all the artillery mounts mired to their hubs in deep mud at the

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inner side of the beach. Bulldozers then had to be taken off essential road construction projects to pull the vehicles out of the way. The 2d and 3d Platoons of Company A, 1st Marine Tank Battalion, ashore at 0830, could not be used tactically and had to find space to bivouac on the beach or on the road to the south. When it was found that the available beach area

2 Co A, 1st Tank Bn, 1st Mar Div, Opns Rpt 15 Apr - 13 May 44, p. 1.

was inadequate to hold the many tracked and wheeled vehicles still aboard the LST's, plans were shifted to start unloading bulk cargo. Roller conveyors were set up on the beach, but could not be extended into the cargo decks of the LST's because those decks were still so tightly packed with vehicles. A long stream of men had to proceed to the stern of each LST to bring out the heavy bulk supplies by hand through narrow spaces between vehicles.

Since it was impossible to move the supplies inland, they were piled on the beach, where many stacks of boxes or crates soon reached heights up to eight feet. The beach quickly became so crowded that it was soon obvious that the efforts of ALAMO FORCE to secure beach sleds for the 24th Division had been in vain -- there was simply no room to use them. But, despite the seemingly patent impossibility of finding room for all men and supplies on Red Beach 2, the APA's and LST's bearing cargo for the division's two assault regiments were unloaded by 1900

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on D Day. By that time the beach was almost solidly covered with supplies, troops, tanks, vehicles, and gun emplacements. It was clearly evident that supplies and personnel of Headquarters, RECKLESS TASK FORCE, the task force reserve, miscellaneous service units, and various organizations attached to the 24th Division could not possibly be squeezed on to the beach. Unless Red Beach 1 provided materially greater dispersal space, convoys scheduled to reach Tanahmerah Bay on D plus 1 and D plus 2 would have to be held at eastern New Guinea ports or diverted to other landing areas.

Now the beneficial results of General Irving's determination to keep Red Beach 1 in the landing plans became apparent. Behind that beach were found some additional dry, flat, dispersal areas. Access to the beach was hampered by the fronting reef. The 24th Division solved this problem by setting up a shuttle system from Red Beach 2. Shallow-draft boats carried the supplies to the entrance to Deprare Bay. There, on the water, materiel was transferred to LVT's, which served as ferries to the shore. At high tide, small boats could reach Deprare (only two could beach there at a time) and at 1730 hours Landing Craft, Mechanized (LCM's) took the 2d Platoon and the command section of Company A of the 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division, to Deprare through the reefs. ³ Ultimately,

³ Co A, 1st Tank Bn, 1st Mar Div, Opns Rpt 15 Apr - 13
May 44, p. 1.

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the water approach to Deprare was improved when naval demolition
4
personnel blasted a wider and deeper channel through the reef,

4 From a minesweeper (YMS) accompanying the Western Attack Group. The men worked under the direction of the Naval Beach Party commander.

thus giving small landing craft continuous access to Red Beach 1.

The shuttle to Deprare continued throughout the night of 22 - 23 April. Some of the congestion on Red Beach 2 was thereby relieved and, by dint of almost superhuman effort, the cargo on seven LST's of the D plus 1 convoy was unloaded on that beach and the AKA of the D plus 1 echelon was unloaded by noon on the 24th. Transshipments to Red Beach 1 were continued, but by noon on 23 April, it had become obvious that there was no space to be found anywhere along the shores of Tanahmerah Bay to unload the supplies and troops aboard the D plus 2 convoy.

Meanwhile, advance elements of the 24th Division had pushed far inland on their way toward the airfields over the Deprare - Lake Sentani road. Contrary to expectations, this road was found to be ungraded and extremely narrow. It was a mere track which, winding in a series of hairpin turns over the Takari Hills east of Deprare, hung precariously along the sides of steep hills and had some slopes of 60 degrees. It was far from being the well-traveled motor road expected. Neither the Army's wheeled vehicles nor the Marine's tanks could reach the crest of the

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Takari Hills over this road. The tanks were relegated to the role of perimeter defense around Deprare.⁵ Heavy construction,

5 Co A, 1st Tank Bn, 1st Mar Div, Opns Rpt 15 Apr - 13 May 44, pp. 1 - 2. There being no possible way to employ the tanks in their proper roles in the Tanahmerah Bay area, they merely bivouacked in that region until 2 May, when they were sent to Humboldt Bay. There, the services of the tank company were not needed, and on 4 May the company left the Hollandia area via IST. It rejoined the rest of the 1st Tank Battalion on Pavuvu Island in the Solomons on 13 May.

which was destined to be impeded by many landslides, would be necessary before the trail inland could be used for the movement of large bodies of troops and as a main supply line as originally planned. Until it was improved, only a small number of men could be sustained over the track, and all their supplies would have to be hand-carried forward of Deprare.

To Headquarters, RECKLESS TASK FORCE, the logistic difficulties inherent in supporting a large-scale drive inland over the Deprare - Lake Sentani trail far outweighed the tactical advantages of such a movement. Moreover, the 41st Infantry Division was meeting with unexpectedly rapid success in its drive to the airfields from Humboldt Bay, the shores of which seemed better suited to troop and supply dispersal than did those at Tanahmerah Bay. The task force staff therefore recommended

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that a sweeping change in plans be made. General Eichelberger, commander of the RECKLESS TASK FORCE, accepted these recommendations. He decided to make the Humboldt Bay area the principal task force landing point and to change the emphasis of the attack to the 41st Division's drive inland. Accordingly, about noon on D plus 1, the D plus 2 convoy to Tanahmerah Bay was directed to be diverted to Humboldt Bay. Task force headquarters, the task force reserve, and miscellaneous service units, all of which were still awaiting a chance to unload at Tanahmerah Bay, were also directed to move to the Humboldt Bay beaches. A part of the task force headquarters which had already landed on Red Beach 2 was reloaded on an LST and sent to Humboldt Bay.

6 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 46.

Red Beaches 1 and 2 had proved able to provide dispersal areas for a bare minimum of supplies for the 24th Division's two assault regiments, but were inadequate for the larger load assigned to them prior to the landings. The division would therefore have to support its drive inland with only the supplies and equipment unloaded at Tanahmerah Bay through D plus 1.

The 24th Division's Drive to the Airfields

The 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. Thomas E. Clifford, Jr., had started up the Deprare - Lake Sentani trail at 0837 on D Day. At any one of the numerous

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hairpin turns and defiles over the first two or three miles of the track, a squad of Japanese riflemen could have delayed an entire infantry division. Surprisingly, no determined opposition was encountered, and prepared enemy positions at important points were found to be unoccupied. Many of these Japanese defensive installations had not been completed. The enemy had not been ready for the attack and those who had been in the Tanahmerah Bay area had apparently fled in panic when the 24th Division began to land. The 1st Battalion was therefore able to advance as rapidly as terrain conditions and necessary security measures permitted.

The First Day of the Advance

Moving through fire lanes down which no bullets flew and past pillboxes in early stages of construction, the 1st Battalion column reached the village of Mariboe at 1047 hours. Only

7 Unless otherwise indicated, material in this and the following three sections is based on: 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. - ; 24th Div G - 3 Jnl, Hollandia; 21st Inf Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. - ; 21st Inf Jnl, Hollandia.

a few scattered enemy rifle shots had been encountered during this advance, and the village was secured without opposition. Over three miles by trail inland from Deprare, Mariboe was the 24th Division's first inland objective and was located at the eastern limit of the division's First Phase Line of advance.

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It was evident from scattered Japanese equipment in and around Mariboe that the Japanese had evacuated that village not long before the 1st Battalion's arrival.

Colonel Clifford now halted his men. Since radio communications with the division command post on Red Beach 2 had been lost, he sent messengers back over the tortuous trail to report progress to General Irving, the division commander. At the same time, patrols were sent toward Kantome, nearly two miles by trail east of Mariboe. While the main body rested, these patrols reported few signs of enemy activity along the trail beyond Mariboe. Colonel Clifford apparently did not wait to re-establish contact with higher headquarters but, acting on his patrols' reports, ordered the battalion to push on. Encountering little opposition on its way eastward along the main trail, the unit reached Kantome about noon.

From that village, patrols were sent ten miles eastward along the trail through Paipou, Jangkema, Walbron-Baroe, and Walbron-Bano to Dazai, the division's intermediate objective. The patrols encountered no active resistance, although signs of recent enemy occupation abounded at numerous points along the trail to Dazai. Colonel Clifford then sent the main body of the battalion on to Jangkema, which lies about eight miles by trail inland from Deprare. At Jangkema, the Advance was again halted because night was approaching and because Colonel Clifford could maintain only sporadic radio contact with regimental or division headquarters.

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The battalion commander possessed little or no knowledge of the situation to the rear other than the difficulties presented by terrain. Ahead, 10,000 Japanese were thought to be concentrated around the airfields. Jangkena was on flat, swampy ground, and was not an easily defensible position. Should the battalion push on to Dazai, also on flat ground, Japanese troops might outflank the unit, cut its line of communications to Deprare, and destroy it at leisure. If the Japanese by-passed the battalion, they could cut off the advance of the rest of the 21st Infantry at any one of the many defiles over the first two or three miles of the trail inland from Deprare. Colonel Clifford therefore decided to pull his battalion back to Kantome for the night, leaving only outposts along the trail east of that village. Kantome was located near the eastern edge of the Takari Hills, which he thought would present a formidable obstacle to any Japanese flanking maneuvers.

The soundness of Colonel Clifford's decision was demonstrated about midnight when a small Japanese force, which had apparently moved overland around the 1st Battalion's outposts, struck the battalion from the left rear. The jungled hills in the Kantome neighborhood prevented further enemy movement and the Japanese force, although it managed to keep the 1st Battalion awake most of the night, did not penetrate the Kantome perimeter. At dawn on the 23d, the Japanese gave up their attempts to cut the trail to the rear of the 1st Battalion and withdrew.

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About the time that the 1st Battalion had started withdrawing to Kantome for the night, radio communications with Red Beach 1 had been re-established. It was then learned that the 3d Battalion, 21st Infantry, had moved from Red Beach 2 to Deprare. During the morning of D Day the 3d Battalion, under the command of Lt. Col. Chester A. Dahlen, had been engaged in probing the southern flank of Red Beach 2. However, it had soon become apparent that no Japanese were in that area, and General Irving had accordingly ordered the unit to move to Red Beach 1 to support the advance of the 1st Battalion. This move was accomplished prior to noon, and the 3d Battalion (less Company I, which was moving overland from Red Beach 2) quickly started up the Deprare - Lake Sentani trail from Red Beach 1. By nightfall, the 3d Battalion had crossed the crest of the Takari Hills and had set up a defensive perimeter a few yards west of Mariboe.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the 21st Infantry had also moved to Red Beach 1, responsibility for the defense of Red Beach 2 passing to the 19th Infantry. Col. Charles B. Lyman, commanding the 21st Infantry, moved his command post to Deprare about noon. By the morning of the next day, 23 April, the bulk of the 2d Battalion was concentrated at Deprare. Company I rejoined the regiment about 1000 the same day after an overland march through the incredibly rough, jungled terrain from Red Beach 2. Colonel Lyman now had his entire regiment under his

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control, ready to exploit the initial success of the 1st Battalion. Orders issued late at night on D Day instructed the 1st and 3d Battalions to resume the advance eastward at 0700 on D plus 1.

Logistic Problems Delay the Advance

The 1st Battalion began moving eastward from Kantome on schedule on the 23d and by 1045, the main body had re-entered Jangkena. Shortly after 1200, the unit reached Dazai, farthest limit of patrol advance the previous day, and then pushed on to Sabron, 1,000 yards to the east. No signs of enemy opposition, other than a few rifle shots from woods on both sides of the trail, had been encountered. At 1445, after lunch and a rest, the battalion moved cautiously out of Sabron. About 1,500 yards beyond that village a small stream crossed the main track. This crossing had been reconnoitered by patrols early in the afternoon, and they had found there the first evidences of strong, organized resistance.

Two platoons of Company B, leading the advance out of Sabron, safely crossed the small stream, but soon found themselves in the middle of a well-concealed Japanese ambush on the eastern bank. Rifle and heavy machine-gun fire made the steep banks of the stream untenable, and the forward platoons hurriedly withdrew to the west, leaving four dead men behind. Over his now well-functioning radios, Colonel Clifford requested air support. The message was relayed to Task Force 58 carriers

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lying offshore and three planes quickly appeared to strafe the enemy position. In addition, the 1st Battalion's 81-mm. mortars and heavy machine guns were also brought forward to lay a barrage on the enemy defenses. But all this fire failed to dislodge the Japanese. In an attempt to outflank the enemy position, Colonel Clifford sent small patrols across the stream both above and below the crossing. These efforts proved futile, for the patrols could not locate the enemy flanks and were kept away from the main Japanese position by small arms fire. After a lively fire fight at the crossing had lasted almost to dusk, Colonel Clifford decided to have the 1st Battalion retire to Sabron before dark.

During the night, 105-mm. howitzers of the 52d Field Artillery Battalion fired on the enemy positions at the crossing for over an hour. The Japanese replied with mortar, grenade, and small arms fire which was directed against the 1st Battalion's perimeter at Sabron. About 2100 a Japanese field piece, believed to have been a dual purpose 90-mm. antiaircraft gun, opened fire on the battalion from the vicinity of the airfields. The enemy's harassing fire continued almost to dawn on the 24th, and again the unit was kept awake much of the night.

The rest of the 21st Infantry was now echeloned along the trail behind the 1st Battalion. The 3d Battalion, which had advanced to within 1,000 yards of Dazai, was also harassed by Japanese fire during the night of 23 - 24 April, but the area

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of the 2d Battalion (which had moved up to Mariboe from Deprare) was quiet. The 2d and 3d Battalions' advances had been made without opposition.

Even with the support of the remainder of the regiment echeloned on the trail to its rear, the position of the 1st Battalion was not enviable. The battalion was over twelve miles by trail inland; it had only enough rations left for breakfast; and it was running low on ammunition. The unit had received no supplies since landing, and it faced the prospect of hard fighting on the 24th.

Fortunately, the 24th Division, in planning for the Hollandia operation, had taken into consideration many of the potential logistic problems that it might encounter in the Tanahmerah Bay area. The division Supply Section had made a detailed study which had shown that a full infantry regiment could be supplied by hand-carry from Red Beach 2 over the Deprare - Lake Sentani trail inland as far as Jangkena. When no road connecting Red Beach 2 with Red Beach 1 had been found, the division moved to Deprare the main supply point from which the advance inland would be supported. With this change in plans, the division Supply Section undertook new computations and calculated that the hand-carry distance could be extended to Dazai. This conclusion was based on the assumption that adverse weather conditions would not make the Deprare - Lake Sentani road nearly impassable.

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Heavy rains, which began on the 23d, now started to turn the road into a quagmire through which struggling men could scarcely carry their own equipment and food, to say nothing of extra supplies for the leading battalion. By evening on the 23d, logistic support of the 21st Infantry had therefore become a major problem. There was no question but that the regiment would have to be supported by hand-carry, for it was estimated that at least two weeks' hard work by engineers would be required before the road from Deprare as far as Mariboe could be made passable even for jeeps. But the 1st Battalion had already advanced east of Dazai, beyond which point, according to the Supply Section's estimates, support by hand-carry would be impossible.

When the 2d and 3d Battalions had moved inland on the 23d, both had carried extra supplies, principally food and ammunition, with them, but these supplies were inadequate to support the 1st Battalion. The 24th Division thereupon decided to increase the number of men assigned to hand-carrying duties. The overwater shuttle system from Red Beach 2 to Deprare was now working smoothly and few combat troops were needed at Red Beach 2 to assist in moving supplies or to defend that area, which had proven bare of Japanese forces. Therefore, the 2d Battalion, 19th Infantry, (initially division reserve) was moved to Deprare on D plus 1, 23 April. The Antitank and Cannon Companies of both the 19th and 21st Infantry Regiments were also dispatched to Red Beach 1 on the same day. To speed the flow

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of supplies inland, all these troops were stationed at various points along the trail from Deprare to Mariboe. The supplies were moved by a combination of a shuttle system and forward displacement of companies.

But the best efforts of three infantry battalions and four antitank or cannon companies proved inadequate to assure continued support of the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry. In addition, trail conditions were becoming worse and hand-carrying progressively more difficult. General Irving therefore requested that aircraft (the nearest base for which was at Nadzab, almost 500 miles east of Hollandia) drop supplies at Jangkena on 24 April so that the 1st Battalion could continue its advance without depending on hand-carrying parties.

General Irving himself reconnoitered the trail forward from Deprare on the afternoon of 23 April. After his trip, he realized that continued rapid advance inland was no longer possible under the hand-carry scheme. He also learned that the weather was so threatening that little dependence could be placed on the expedient of air supply. Accordingly, late in the afternoon of the 23d, he ordered the 21st Infantry to consolidate its forward positions at Sabron and Dazai. Elements of the regiment not already at those two villages were to remain echeloned to the rear for the hand-carrying duties. Further offensive efforts were to be limited to patrol action until the inland supply situation could be improved.

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Supply Difficulties, 24 - 25 April

By exhaustive work during the afternoon of 23 April and the following night, rear elements of the 21st Infantry had managed to build up a small reserve of rations and ammunition at Dazai. The next morning the 1st Battalion, 19th Infantry, moved to Deprare from Red Beach 2 to augment the number of hand-carrying parties along the road inland. The Cannon and Anti-tank Companies of the same regiment, carrying extra supplies, pushed over the Takari Hills to Mariboe and Jangkena, respectively. Colonel Lyman, knowing that there were some extra supplies at Dazai and that the number of carrying parties along the trail to the rear was being increased, ordered his 21st Infantry to resume the advance toward the airfields at 0700 on the 24th. His plan, which was apparently approved by the division commander, was to keep the 2d Battalion echeloned by companies along the trail west of Dazai to speed the forward movement of supplies while the 1st and 3d Battalions pushed on toward the airdromes.

The two attack units moved out of Sabron on schedule, advancing parallel on a wide front to make sure that no Japanese troops would be by-passed and left behind to cut the tenuous supply line back to Deprare. The advance was temporarily held up by Japanese fire at the scene of the previous day's ambush and was subsequently slowed as patrols searched the terrain far to both sides of the main trail. Mortar or artillery fire

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cleared Japanese from two or three small defensive positions, but the two battalions were stopped late in the afternoon by previously silent and well-concealed Japanese defenses to the left front. Artillery fire from Red Beach 2 took care of this opposition and by dusk Colonel Clifford's command had reached a point on the main trail about 1,700 yards east of Sabron. There it established a night perimeter, while Colonel Dahlen's 3d Battalion pulled back to a position immediately west of Sabron.

The advance during the day had been slow and laborious and little ground had been secured. Japanese delaying action had been skillfully and tenaciously conducted for the past thirty-six hours and the main body had been continuously held up while patrols outflanked or probed known or suspected Japanese defensive positions. Finally, the forward battalions had been ordered not to move beyond the distance at which they could be supplied from Dazai, and this limit had been reached before dark despite the slowness of the advance.

During the day, most of the 2d Battalion, 19th Infantry, and the Antitank and Cannon Companies of the 21st Infantry had been hand-carrying supplies from Deprare to Mariboe and by dark a small supply dump had been established at the latter village. The 1st Battalion, 19th Infantry, had been handling supplies all day at Red Beach 1 and had also taken over responsibility for the security of that beach. The Cannon Company, 19th

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Infantry, had moved forward with extra supplies to Mariboe, and the Antitank Company of the same regiment had reached Jangkena with extra rations and ammunition. The Cannon and Antitank Companies of both the 19th and 21st Infantry Regiments had, perforce, left their organic weapons and transportation behind them, and were acting purely in the capacity of service troops. The 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry, on 24 April, had spread itself from Dazai back to Mariboe, its companies acting as links in the chain of hand-carrying parties.

In spite of the efforts of all these units, the supply of rations, ammunition, and medical materiel for the two advance battalions was but little augmented on the 24th. Worse still, the scheduled air drop at Jangkena had been cancelled because of poor weather, and the continuing rain was turning most of the Deprare - Lake Sentani road into a sea of mud. There was little hope for quick improvement in the situation.

But General Irving was optimistic and he felt sure that conditions would improve on the 25th. He requested another air drop which, in order to get the supplies farther forward, he wanted made at Dazai. On the basis of this request, because the number of carrying parties along the main trail had been increased, and since some extra supplies had been moved to Dazai on the 24th, the division commander ordered the 21st Infantry to continue its advance the next day. First objectives were wooded hills on either side of the main road about 1,300 yards east of

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the 1st Battalion's night bivouac and about 3,000 yards beyond Sabron.

The 25th of April dawned heavily overcast and rain threatened, auguring ill for the proposed air drop. Nevertheless, advance patrols of the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, moved out at 0500. The plan of movement was similar to that employed on the 24th: advance along a wide front in order to sweep the enemy from both sides of the main trail. After an artillery bombardment of known and suspected enemy positions, the main bodies of the 1st and 3d Battalions followed the advance patrols. Colonel Clifford's men started out on the right of the trail, while Colonel Dahlen's advanced both along the road and to the left. Only scattered small arms fire slowed progress. About 1115, the advance stopped temporarily while demolition teams destroyed two recently abandoned Japanese armored vehicles.⁸

⁸ One report states that these vehicles were light tanks, but all other sources describe them as armored cars.

The first objectives were cleared before noon and a few moments later the battalions reached the Dajoe River. An enemy delaying position at the river crossing was quickly outflanked by patrol action and by mid-afternoon both battalions had moved across the stream and were approaching Julianadorp. Automatic weapons fire was received from Japanese guns emplaced north of that farm settlement. Scouts sent out to locate the source of

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this fire reported finding enemy antiaircraft gun emplacements which were protected by both riflemen and machine gunners. These positions were soon neutralized by mortar fire and the two battalions resumed their advance about 1530.

Progress was slow during the rest of the afternoon. Japanese patrols, which threatened the line of communications, became active north of the main road. In addition, the two battalions were now forced to advance in column because heavily jungled terrain on both sides of the road had made it impracticable for large bodies of troops to move overland. The advance halted as a series of minor patrol actions dispersed the Japanese on the left flank. These operations were not finished until 1700, at which time the regimental commander, decided to halt the advance for the night. The two forward battalions established defenses near Julianadorp.

The supply situation in the forward area had been little improved during the 25th. It had rained steadily all day, there had been no airdrop, and the Deprare - Lake Sentani road had become practically impassable. The 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry, had moved forward through Sabron to Dazai, laboriously hand-carrying supplies as it struggled eastward in the rain and mud. By this means, small supply dumps had been built up at both villages by dusk, but the battalion's displacement had left a large gap in the carrying line. West of Dazai, the next sizeable carrying party was the Antitank Company of the 19th Infantry,

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stationed at Paipou. Behind that unit was the Cannon Company, 19th Infantry, at Mariboe. General Irving ordered both companies to move at dawn on the 26th to Dazai, carrying with them all possible supplies.

These movements would leave the trail from Dazai west to Mariboe bare of hand-carrying parties, thus disrupting the supply relay system. General Irving therefore ordered the 1st Battalion, 19th Infantry, to move to Jangkena and instructed a company of the 2d Battalion of the same regiment to push on to Mariboe. The remainder of the 2d Battalion, which was to be assisted by miscellaneous artillery, medical, and quartermaster units, was made responsible for moving supplies up the trail from Deprare as far as the crest of the Takari Hills. Finally, the Antitank and Cannon Companies of the 21st Infantry were ordered to push from Mariboe to Dazai, hand-carrying extra supplies as they advanced.

Thus, by morning of the 26th, three infantry battalions, two antitank companies, and two cannon companies were assigned to carrying supplies. These troops were supported by parts of the Service Companies of both the 19th and 21st Infantry Regiments, by elements of various engineer and quartermaster organizations, and by volunteer groups from medical and artillery units whose services were not needed for their normal duties. At least 3,500 combat troops were directly employed in moving supplies to the two forward battalions.

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Since these two units were now beyond the range of the 52d Field Artillery's 105-mm. howitzers at Red Beach 2, Colonel Lyman asked that 4.2-inch mortars of Company A, 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion, be sent inland. Such was the condition of the Deprare - Lake Sentani road that plans were made to move only one mortar. A mortar detachment comprising two gun crews and the ammunition carriers of an entire mortar platoon, were detailed for the task and the movement of this weapon was given highest priority. At the same time, a single 105-mm. howitzer was started over the Takari hills. Neither weapon was to reach a position from which it could be employed to support the 21st Infantry's advance on 26 April.

While these steps were being taken to deliver both supplies and support weapons to the front, General Irving had decided to order the advance continued. He reached this decision despite the fact that the supply situation was still serious. It had been impossible to drop supplies from the air on the 25th and even hand-carry had been stopped late in the afternoon by heavy rains, which had flooded many small streams. Parts of the Deprare - Lake Sentani trail were now knee-deep in water. The two forward battalions were low on ammunition, and they would have to go on half-rations if the supply situation were not quickly improved. But General Irving was again optimistic about the weather, and he believed that air supply would be successful on the 26th. In addition, he had received

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information which indicated that the Japanese were evacuating the airfield area. For these reasons, he considered that a continuation of the advance would not be unduly hazardous.

In ordering the advance for the 26th, the division commander was knowingly pushing his men far beyond the limit at which they could be supplied by hand-carry. If the air drop should again fail or if track conditions should not improve, one of the two forward battalions would probably have to be echeloned back along the trail to augment the carrying parties, and the advance would probably have to be halted. Should enemy opposition prove stubborn, the forward battalions might have to withdraw, perhaps as far as Dazai, to replenish their meager supplies of rations and ammunition. General Irving was taking a calculated risk which assumed the success of the air drop and an absence of determined Japanese opposition.

The Airfields Are Secured

After passing an uneventful night, the 1st and 3d Battalions, 21st Infantry, resumed their advance at 0830 on 26 April. Opposition was negligible, and the battalions were halted only momentarily at Ebeli Plantation where, about 1130, they paused to clear out a Japanese bunker. Minutes later, forward patrols reached the outermost dispersal areas of Hollandia Drome, the most westerly of the three Japanese airfields on the north shore of Lake Sentani. The advance was stopped as the battalions regrouped and a new attack order was issued. The 1st Battalion was to seize a Japanese encampment area on the left of the trail and north of the center of Hollandia Drome. The 3d Battalion was to push on to the airfield, secure it, and then advance

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as far as the edge of a swamp lying southeast of the strip.

By 1350 the 1st Battalion had secured its objective, having encountered little resistance. The 3d Battalion's forward patrols reached the western edge of the main runway about the same time and, locating no opposition worthy of mention, arrived at the eastern end of the field half an hour later. At 1530, Colonel Lyman radioed to division headquarters that the entire Hollandia Drome area had been secured. By dark, the 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry, had closed at Hollandia Drome and for the first time since 23 April Colonel Lyman had the bulk of his regiment under his immediate control.

The bad weather which had forced cancellation of attempted air drops on 24 and 25 April had finally broken sufficiently for a few planes from eastern New Guinea to get through to Hollandia. Twelve B - 25's of the 17th Reconnaissance Squadron, Fifth Air Force, flew the nearly 500 miles from Saidor to drop rifle, carbine, machine gun, and mortar ammunition, hand grenades, and rations at Dazai.⁹

⁹ The information on the air drop on 26 April was supplied to the author on 24 May 1949 by Capt. Bernhardt L. Mortensen, Air Historical Group, Headquarters, USAF. C - 47's could not be used for the transport because the nearest Allied air bases were beyond practicable round trip range of such aircraft. While the B - 25 mission did not fill all the needs of the forward battalions, other rations brought over the trail on the 26th, coupled with larger air drops on the 27th and succeeding days, saved the situation from becoming critical.

Moreover, the 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry, had managed to bring for-

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ward some extra rations, ammunition, and medical equipment. As the rain stopped fresh carrying parties following the 2d Battalion found trail conditions greatly improved. Finally, some wheeled transport was now available at both ends of the Deprare - Lake Sentani road. Hard work by engineers had made the road passable for jeeps from Deprare halfway up the first steep slopes of the Takari Hills. At Hollandia Drome, the 21st Infantry had captured a few Japanese trucks. These were sent west from the airstrip as far as possible along the main trail, which was passable to a point near Julianadorp. There the supplies dropped from the air during the day, as well as those still being hand-carried overland from Deprare, were picked up and taken back to the airfield area.

As soon as Hollandia Drome was secured, patrols of the 21st Infantry pushed on toward Weversdorp, a farm about 2,500 yards beyond the eastern end of the field. At 1645, between Weversdorp and the airdrome, contact was established with elements of the 186th Infantry, 41st Division, which had been attacking westward from Humboldt Bay into the airfield area.¹⁰

¹⁰ This final paragraph is based on 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 80; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 8; 21st Inf Jnl, Hollandia. These sources disagree as to the locations of the meeting between the 24th and 41st Division units on the afternoon of 26 April; the 186th Infantry report putting it west of Weversdorp and the 21st Infantry journal placing it east of that farm. From a close check of the timing of all reports concerning this contact, it seems that a point

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some place between Weversdorp and the eastern edge of Hollandia
Drome is correct.

The Seizure of Hollandia Town

While the 24th Division had been driving inland to Hollandia Drome, the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments of the 41st Division had pushed toward the fields from Humboldt Bay, twenty-five miles east of Tanahmerah Bay. The 41st Division's plan was to begin landing on White Beaches 1 - 4 on the shores of Humboldt Bay at 0700 on 22 April. Initial landings were to be made by the 162d Infantry which, going ashore on sand spits across the inner reaches of Humboldt Bay, was to drive northward from its landing beaches to seize the town of Hollandia. The 186th Infantry was to follow the 162d ashore and was to drive southwest and inland from Humboldt Bay to the airfields on the Lake
11
Sentani Plain.

11 LETTERPRESS LT FO No. 1, 9 Apr 44, in G-3 Annex to 41st Div
Opns Rpt Hollandia.

The Beachhead at Humboldt Bay

The convoy bearing the 41st Division to Humboldt Bay did not have the same difficulty locating landmarks as did the ships at Tanahmerah Bay, and the ships found their assigned transports and fire support areas without much trouble. The naval fire support conducted by American light cruisers and destroyers and the air support missions flown by Task Force 58 planes were executed as planned. There was no

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opposition to either the naval gunfire or the aircraft bombing and strafing and surprise was as complete as that achieved at Tanahmerah Bay. Assault troops of the 41st Division quickly unloaded from the destroyer transports (APD's) which had carried them to Humboldt Bay and boarded Landing Craft, Personnel, Ramp (LCPR's) coxswained by naval personnel, for the short run to the beaches. The first of these boats touched shore exactly on schedule at 0700. The landing waves of landing craft were supported by rocket fire from two Seventh Fleet Landing Craft, Infantry, (LCI's), which fired principally on Pancake Hill, just north of White Beach 1, and by rocket or automatic weapons fire from two Landing Craft, Support (LCS's) of the 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment.¹²

12 CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay - Humboldt Bay - Aitape, pp. 5, 26 - 27; CTG 77.2(Central Attack Group) Opns Rpt Humboldt Bay, pp. 3 - 4.

The initial assault was made by Companies K and L, 162d Infantry, which landed along an 800 yard front on White Beach 1, located on the northern of the two sand spits dividing Humboldt Bay from Jautefa Bay.¹³

13 Information in this and the following section is based on: 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. - ; 162d Inf Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. - ; 41st Div G - 3 Jnl, Hollandia; 162d Inf Jnl, Hollandia; 186th Inf Jnl, Hollandia; Ch. VII, pp. 7 - 8, 30 - 31, of draft MS 2d Engr Special Brig history.

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Succeeding waves of the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, came ashore on Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel (LCVP's) and Landing Craft, Mechanized (LCM's) manned by the Boat Battalion, 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment.

Simultaneously with this unopposed landing, a reinforced rifle platoon of Company A, 162d Infantry, was put ashore from army LCVP's on White Beach 2, immediately south of White Beach 1. Company I of the 186th Infantry, landed in the same manner on White Beach 3, which was situated on the southern sand spit. There was no enemy opposition to these two secondary landings. Within half an hour, the remainder of the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, the 1st and 2d Battalions of the same regiment, six tanks of the 603d Tank Company, and elements of the 116th Engineer Battalion were all safely ashore on the northern spit, site of White Beaches 1 and 2.

The rifle platoon of Company A, 162d Infantry, advanced rapidly south along the spit and at 0745 secured Cape Pie at the peninsula's southern extremity. This unopposed action, intended to safeguard the rest of the regiment from Japanese attack, also secured the southern end of the spit for the planned movement of the 186th Infantry across the peninsula on its way to White Beach 4, on the western shore of Jautefa Bay. Company I of the 186th Infantry, unopposed, quickly secured Cape Tjeweri, at the northern tip of the southern spit, and then began moving southeast along the shore of Humboldt Bay toward Hollekang to forestall any Japanese counterattacks from that direction.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry had

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landed on White Beach 1, and started north to secure Pancake Hill which, located at the inland end of the northern peninsula, overlooked all the 41st Division's landing beaches. So surprised had the Japanese been by the landings and by the speed of the 3d Battalion's advance, that the 3d Battalion troops, encountering only scattered rifle fire, were able to take Pancake Hill before 0800. Atop that important terrain feature they found a Japanese antiaircraft gun from which the canvas weather covering had not been removed. This weapon had not been touched by the pre-assault naval bombardment and was still in perfect condition. Had the Japanese antiaircraftmen been alert, they could have created havoc among the 41st Division troops landing on the beaches below Pancake Hill.

After the hill was occupied, most of the 3d Battalion pushed on northwestward up the shores of Humboldt Bay, while one company moved overland due north of Pancake Hill. No resistance worthy of mention opposed this two-pronged attack the objective of which was to surround and seize another dominating terrain feature, Jarremoh Hill. This hill, rising some 1,000 feet, overlooked both the two sand spits and the shores of Challenger Cove. On the northwest shore of the latter northwesterly arm of Humboldt Bay was located the town of Hollandia.

Hollandia Falls

By 1430 the 3d Battalion had cleared Jarremoh Hill and was digging in for the night along a ridge overlooking Hollandia. The battalion commander had wished to push on into the town before dark, but General Fuller, commanding the 41st Division, had vetoed this proposal. On

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the basis of intelligence reports which indicated that the Japanese were occupying Hollandia in some strength, General Fuller had decided that the seizure of the town would have to wait until the morning of the 23d. During the night, naval guns and 105-mm. howitzers of the 146th Field Artillery Battalion (the artillery was emplaced firm ground north of White Beach 1) bombarded Hollandia, softening the 3d Battalion's task for the morrow.

In the meantime, the 2d Battalion had begun advancing from White Beach 1 to the track connecting Hollandia with Pim, a village on the western shore of Jautefa Bay. Company E led off on the left at 0756, circling Pancake Hill to the west. Company G took a route to the east of the hill. The rest of the battalion soon started out after Company E, but found the terrain west of Pancake Hill unexpectedly swampy and rough going for a large body of troops. The battalion commander therefore ordered the units on that side to turn and follow Company G. Company E kept on overland, and quickly reached the Pim - Hollandia track at a point about 1,000 yards west of Pancake Hill. By mid-morning, Company G had arrived on the trail midway between Pancake and Jarremoh Hills. The rest of the battalion concentrated on the trail between Companies E and G early in the afternoon.

Contact was soon established with the company of the 3d Battalion which had advanced to the Pim - Hollandia road from Pancake Hill earlier in the day. The 2d Battalion then moved up the road toward Hollandia, and by nightfall, had joined the 3d on the ridge overlooking Hollandia. Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion had gone into

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division reserve at the base of Pancake Hill.

By dark on the 22d, the 162d Infantry had carried its advance to the 41st Division's first phase line. To that time, opposition had been so light that American casualties, including those of the 186th Infantry, totalled only six men killed and sixteen wounded. As at Tanahmerah Bay, the Japanese had made no effort to man their prepared defenses which, though not as extensive as had been expected, could have given the 41st Division considerable trouble during the landing. The division staff was both pleased and worried by the lack of enemy resistance, and could make no estimate as to the character of Japanese opposition which might be met on the 23d. Nonetheless, it was expected that the 162d Infantry would have little trouble seizing Hollandia, and that action was ordered.

The 2d and 3d Battalions, 162d Infantry, jumped off at 0730 on the 23d. The units moved rapidly down the ridge to Hollandia and at 1115 reported that they had secured the town. There was no opposition.

During the morning, the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, relieved a battalion of the 186th Infantry which had been waiting in division reserve west of Pancake Hill. The 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, after helping the 3d to secure Hollandia, moved into high ground west and northwest of that town. During the remainder of the attack phase of the Hollandia Operation, the entire 162d Infantry patrolled the hilly environs of Hollandia, securing the northern shores of Humboldt Bay, the beaches of Challenger Cove, and the rough hills along the western side of Jautefa Bay. To the 186th Infantry fell the task of driving

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inland to the main objective, the airfields on the north shore of Lake Sentani.

The Drive Inland from Humboldt Bay

The Landing of the 186th Infantry

LVT's carrying Companies K and L of the 186th Infantry hit White Beach 2 about 0715 (ten minutes ahead of schedule) on 22 April. ¹⁴

¹⁴ Information in this and the following two sections is based principally on: 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. - ; RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. - ; 41st Div G - 3 Jnl, Hollandia; 186th Inf Jnl, Hollandia, 186th Inf Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. - ; Ch. VII, pp. 32 - 34, of draft MS 2d Engr Special Brig history.

Original plans had provided that these LVT assault waves would cross White Beach 2 and the mangrove swamp to its rear and proceed over-water across Jautefa Bay to White Beach 4, near Pim at the eastern terminus of the main road leading inland to the airfield. But the mangrove swamp proved impassable for the LVT's. The amphibians withdrew from the beach and, under cover of Support Battery craft of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade, proceeded into Jautefa Bay through the narrow channel between Cape Pie and Cape Tjeweri.

At 0810, Company L started moving ashore about 900 yards north of Pim. Company K landed 500 yards farther north about 0825. The remainder of the 3d Battalion (less Company I, which was operating on White Beach 3) arrived in the White Beach 4 area about 0915. The

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first objective was Leimok Hill, lying 1,800 yards northwest of Pim. The hill was secured by part of the battalion by 1000 while other elements of the unit advanced southward toward Pim. That village and its usable jetty were secured against light opposition by 1645. Suikerbrood Hill, on Jautefa Bay south of Pim, was cleared by 1800. The danger that enemy troops atop dominating heights near Pim might make White Beach 4 untenable was over.

The 3d Battalion established a night perimeter at Pim. These defenses were extended along a trail leading west from that village to the point at which the Pim - Hollandia track joined the main road inland to Lake Sentani. By this extension of its lines, the battalion secured the roadhead from which movements to the inland objectives had to begin. The 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, had followed the 162d Infantry ashore on White Beach 1, whence it had proceeded north and west around the mangrove swamp and down the Pim - Hollandia track to Leimok Hill. There it relieved the 3d Battalion and established a night defensive perimeter. The 2d Battalion (less two rifle companies) moved into divisional reserve at a point on the Pim - Hollandia track west of Pancake Hill. The remaining two companies of the 2d Battalion stayed afloat until D plus 1. Orders were issued late at night on the 22d to the 186th Infantry, Col. Oliver P. Newman commanding, to move out at daylight the next day. The objective was the airfield area inland on the north shore of Lake Sentani. The axis of advance was to be the Pim - Lake Sentani road.

Back on White Beach 1, the Naval Beach Party and the 532d

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Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment (the Shore Party, which was augmented by the Cannon Companies of the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments) worked hard to unload all D Day shipping before dark. Seven LST's were unloaded on White Beach 1. Roller conveyors were used for the 375 tons of bulk cargo each LST carried in addition to its mobile load. Cargo and equipment aboard the APA HMAS Westralia was lightered to White Beach 1 by small craft. Since White Beach 2 was very steep and had no suitable landing spots, most cargo had to be unloaded on the White Beaches 1 and 2 sandspit. That spit was already cluttered with Japanese stores; it was narrow; and exits to inland dispersal areas were limited. These factors combined to lead to a great deal of congestion on the northern spit.

To the Shores of Lake Sentani

At 0800 on 23 April the 1st Battalion left its night positions on Leimok Hill and started out over the main track, taking over the brunt of the attack from the 3d Battalion. The movement was supported by the 205th and 218th Field Artillery Battalions, set up near Cape Pie, and by aircraft from the carriers of Task Force 58. By 0900, the 1st Battalion had reached Brinkman's Plantation, about 2,200 yards by trail southwest of Pim. So far, there had been no opposition. At this point Companies A and C parted from the main body to patrol northwest up the Borgonjie River. Proceeding to a fork about 2,000 yards upstream, the two companies repulsed a series of unco-ordinated attacks which were launched against the right flank of the 186th Infantry during the afternoon by a force estimated at 150 Japanese. The two companies remained at the stream branching during the night of 23 - 24

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April, and on the latter day they moved southwest overland to rejoin the main force on the Pim - Lake Sentani trail.

Leaving Companies A and C to guard its flank, the remainder of the 1st Battalion had continued advancing along the main trail encountering negligible opposition. The 3d Battalion moved out of its bivouac area at Pim about 1000 on the 23d in order to support the forward units. By noon, the 1st Battalion had reached the outskirts of a large Japanese dump and storage area about 2,500 yards beyond Brinkman's Plantation. The unit halted to await the results of an air strike on suspected enemy positions west of the storage area and for the 3d Battalion to close a gap which existed along the trail to the rear.

It was hoped that the 186th Infantry could reach the second phase line, Koejaboe and the northeast shores of Lake Sentani, during the afternoon of the 23d, but air observers and forward patrols had reported considerable Japanese activity along the trail west of the Japanese storage area. Colonel Newman apparently felt that the now understrength 1st Battalion did not have enough men to continue an advance against what might prove to be strong enemy defenses. The 3d Battalion's movement from Pim had been slow and the unit did not reach the Japanese storage area until 1500. It was then necessary to halt for the day, because General Fuller had ordered that offensive action other than patrolling cease each day at 1500 so that defensive positions, including wire, could be well-prepared before darkness. Worse still, heavy rains had begun to turn spots of the Pim - Lake

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Sentani road, which was the best yet found by American troops in New Guinea, into great mudholes. LVT's, which had started out over the trail from Pim to support the advance, bogged down along the road. The forward elements of the 186th Infantry set up their night perimeters on the eastern edge of the Japanese storage area.

Colonel Newman suggested to division headquarters that on the 24th the advance be resumed with the 3d Battalion passing through the 1st. The latter was to remain in the storage area until rejoined by Companies A and C, after which it would follow the 3d Battalion and protect the right flank of the advance by patrolling in high ground north of the main trail. The 3d Battalion's initial objective was to be a jetty on Lake Sentani, a jetty which was to be secured as a base for future operations. Company I, scheduled to rejoin the 3d Battalion on the 24th, was assigned the task of seizing Koejaboe and its jetty, southeast of the first jetty. The 2d Battalion was to remain in reserve in the Pim area and along the track west of that village.

Permission to carry out Colonel Newman's plan came from 41st Division headquarters at 0630 on the 24th and at 0845 the 3d Battalion moved out. During the night of 23 - 24 April Japanese air action had succeeded in firing the American ammunition and ration dumps on White Beach 1, so the advance of the 186th Infantry had to be made on half-rations, and the troops were ordered to conserve ammunition. Luckily, little enemy opposition was encountered during the morning and by 1100 3d Battalion patrols were within 500 yards of the initial objective.

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Light fire from an estimated 150 Japanese then temporarily delayed the advance, but the jetty and its environs were secured shortly after noon.

It had meanwhile become apparent that the 1st Battalion was too dispersed to carry out its assigned support and follow-up roles. Two companies followed along the main track as best they could, but extensive patrolling on the high ground north of the trail proved necessary because small parties of Japanese were continually being discovered wandering about on the right flank. While these Japanese parties did not seem aggressive in most cases, Colonel Newman wisely chose to take no chances by leaving his flanks unprotected. Companies A and C were again assigned to the arduous patrolling task. The 3d Battalion was now far inland and practically unsupported. General Fuller therefore released the 2d Battalion, still in division reserve, to Colonel Newman's control.

The 2d Battalion pushed rapidly westward from Pim, passed through such elements of the 1st Battalion as were still on the trail, and took up positions on the right of the 3d Battalion late in the afternoon. The two units then set up night perimeters in the vicinity of the jetty. The 3d Battalion was established along a line running 700 yards inland from Lake Sentani and the 2d Battalion refused the right flank by extending its lines northeast 500 yards to the right rear. About 1630, Companies A and C rejoined the main body of the 1st Battalion in a night perimeter at the junction of the main Pim - Lake road with a track which led to Koejaboe and its jetty, still not captured. The 1st Battalion's position was about 3,500 swampy yards east of the 2d and 3d Battalions.

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During the day, the 34th Infantry of the 24th Division, RECKLESS TASK FORCE Reserve, had been transferred from Tanahmerah Bay to Humboldt Bay. Its arrival had allowed the task force commander to release Company I, 186th Infantry, from White Beach 3, and that company had started inland to rejoin its regiment. One battalion of the 34th Infantry had relieved the 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, in the vicinity of Pim, thus enabling General Fuller to send the latter unit inland to regimental control.

Amphibious Movement on Lake Sentani

Colonel Newman's plans for the 25th of April were issued to his battalion commanders early that morning. The regimental commander envisaged using his entire regiment in a combined amphibious and overland advance to the airfields, and he based his expectations of a successful movement on the protection the 34th Infantry could now give to his line of communications back to Pim. Colonel Newman ordered the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, to move west along the main road to Nefaar, six and one-half miles beyond the night bivouac area. The 1st Battalion was to load on LVT's at the jetty which had been captured the previous afternoon. From that jetty, the troops were to move over Lake Sentani to a point on the shore west of Nefaar and, upon landing, were to aid the 1st Battalion to secure that village. Two companies of the 2d Battalion were to clear scattered enemy troops from high ground on the right flank, whence the Japanese had harassed the battalion's night bivouac. As soon as this task was accomplished, the 2d Battalion would re-assemble as regimental reserve and follow the

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3d Battalion along the main track toward Nefaar. Company I had not reached the 3d Battalion the previous day, and was therefore ordered to operate with the 1st Battalion, at the perimeter of which Company I had arrived just before dark. Company B was lent to the 3d Battalion to bring that unit up to full strength for the advance west.

The 3d Battalion started moving at 0800 on the 25th and by 1000, the unit had pushed almost 3,000 yards westward, encountering no opposition. The Japanese who had delayed the advance on the 24th had vanished. Company K, moving to the north of the main road on the right flank of the rest of the battalion, flushed the few enemy seen during the morning.

LVT's of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade had now moved up to the jetty which the 3d Battalion had captured on the 24th. At 1000 on the 25th, two companies of the 1st Battalion were loaded on the amphibians at the jetty and departed for Nefaar. No Japanese fire from the shores of Lake Sentani greeted this landlocked amphibious maneuver, and at 1150 the two companies landed at Nefaar about six miles west of the starting point. The remainder of the 1st Battalion moved by LVT to Nefaar later in the day and at 1530 the 3d Battalion reached that village after an uneventful march overland. The 2d Battalion closed on the village shortly thereafter.

Vigorous patrolling north and west of Nefaar characterized action the rest of the afternoon, during which only slight resistance was encountered. Expected strong enemy opposition had not as yet materialized, but before dark a platoon of Company A made a brief

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reconnaissance of Cyclops Drome, most easterly of the three Japanese fields on the north shore of Lake Sentani, and reported evidences of considerable enemy movement and strong defensive positions. Despite these reports, Colonel Newman was confident that his troops would have little or no difficulty in securing Cyclops Drome on the 26th, for he now believed that the enemy had vacated the airfield area.

The principal reason that the 186th Infantry had not reached the airdromes on the afternoon of the 25th was that fire from 24th Division artillery units was falling on those fields. Because of radio communication difficulties between Humboldt and Tenahmerah Bays, it had not been possible to stop this fire before the time came to set up night defensive perimeters. The 1st Battalion established its position about 1,700 yards west of Nefaar and out-posted high ground 700 yards north of the main trail. The 3d Battalion went into bivouac about 1,000 yards east of the 1st, while the 2d Battalion remained at Nefaar for the night.

On the morrow, Colonel Newman planned to send the 1st Battalion to seize the northwestern half of Cyclops Drome. A company of the 3d Battalion was to secure the southeast section of that field, and the remainder of the unit was to act as general reserve. The 2d Battalion was to move by LVT from Nefaar to a jetty on the lake shore about 2,000 yards southeast of Sentani Drome, seize that airfield, and clear the village of Ifaar.

The 1st and 2d Battalions moved out on their assigned missions shortly after 0800 on the 26th and by 1040 the 1st Battalion had

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